

Corporate Ladder

The Collectable Business Card Game: Card & Board Game Convention Edition

Business cards. Those ubiquitous 3½ x 2 inch pieces of cardboard that allow us to effectively communicate our contact information. Ever notice how after a trade show or convention, you seem to take home more of them than you brought?

Business cards are *collectable*, and you trade them with other people. The only mystery is why it took so long to turn them into a collectable trading card game.

Corporate Ladder is a simulation of the day to day affairs of your typical game design studio if said affairs involved crushing your opponents and feasting on their remains. OK, maybe it's just a way to get rid of all those extra business cards you seem to end up with. It's "fast paced," "simple," "collectable," and 100% buzzword compliant. Plus you can't beat the price point.

Types of Cards:

There are seven types of cards based on the job title or position.

- **Upper Management:** President, CEO, CIO, CFO, DIS, or any other similar TLA (three letter acronym). Upper Management is the heart of your company.
- **Middle Management:** Producer, Director, Art Director, Line Manager, and so forth. These folks are responsible for getting things done in a timely manner and oversee the design and production.
- **Wordsmiths:** Game Designers, Writers, Editors and the like. They write and design your products. Without them, you wouldn't have a game concept to begin with.
- **Artists:** Artists, Graphic Designers, Illustrators, Layout People, and anyone else who produces visual art. C'mon, everyone knows it's the art that moves product off the shelf.
- **The Press:** Nothing can sink your company faster than an attack by the Press. You can't have any Press in your company, but they do make unstoppable attacks.
- **Freelancers:** Any card with the word "Freelance" or "Independent" in the job title. Not as powerful as someone with a *real* job, but much more flexible.
- **Other:** Interns, Quality Assurance, Computer Programmers, Janitors... The various other cogs and gears that make your company run smoothly.

Every Business card also has a **Strength** value. The Strength of the card is the first digit reading the card from left to right then top to bottom like a sheet of paper.

Cards only have a single digit Strength, meaning that Strength ranges from 0 to 9. Cards without digits have a Strength of 0.

Some Cards may have special abilities. If the card has "CL: ..." printed on it as part of the card **and** it has been signed by the person whose name appears on the card, then you can use the text after the "CL:" as a special ability in the game.

Setup:

Search your deck and choose an Upper Management card to be at the top of your Corporate Ladder. Shuffle your deck and add drawn cards to build a pyramid of three rows (6 cards total), or 4 rows (10 cards total) for a longer game. This is called your Corporate Ladder. Note that you must discard any Press cards drawn at this time and draw to replace them. Finally, once you have

your Corporate Ladder set up, draw five cards for your hand.

Play:

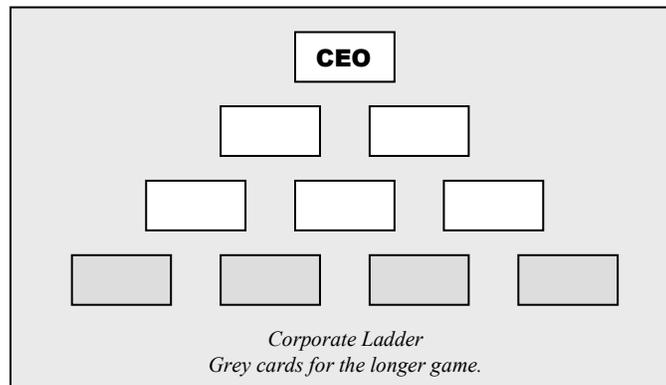
Players take turns playing cards to destroy their opponents' Corporate Ladders. You win when you have the only Corporate Ladder remaining.

You start your turn by drawing cards. If you have fewer than 4 cards in your hand, fill your hand to 5. If you have 4-10 cards in your hand, draw 2 cards. If you have more than 10 cards in your hand, don't draw and play your dang cards already.

You may then attack your opponent's Corporate Ladder. First, choose a card to attack. You can only attack cards that have no cards directly below them. Each card in the middle and upper levels has two cards below it. Those cards must be dealt with before you can touch the protected cards above them. However, if a card has no cards beneath it, you can attack it even if there are still cards remaining on a lower level.

Next, choose one or more cards (called a team) from your hand to attack. Here are the rules of engagement:

- **Middle Management always beat Wordsmiths:** If you play a Middle Management card from your hand to attack a Wordsmith, you win unless the player defends (see below).
- **Wordsmiths always beat Artists:** If you play a Wordsmith card from your hand to attack an Artist, you win unless the player defends (see below).
- **Artists always beat Middle Management:** If you play an Artist card from your hand to attack a Middle Manager, you win unless the player defends (see below).



- **Upper Management always beats Middle Management, Wordsmiths, Artists and Other:** If you play an Upper Management card from your hand to attack a Middle Manager, Wordsmith, Artist, or Other card, you win unless the player defends (see below).
- **Press always wins:** If you play a Press card from your hand, you immediately win and the other player is not allowed to defend.
- **The Cooperative Trio always wins:** If you play a Middle Manager, a Wordsmith, *and* an Artist from your hand, you immediately win and the other player is not allowed to defend.
- **Evil Twins always win:** If you play the exact same card as the one you are attacking, it is considered that card's Evil Twin and immediately wins and the other player is not allowed to defend. If you play the twin of a card that is part of a team, only that card is immediately discarded. You still need to beat the rest of the team. The team still has won against whatever card it was attacking.
- **Cards of the same type tie:** You can play a team of cards of the same type to attack a card (for example, playing a Graphic Designer and an Illustrator to attack an Artist). You win if your card meets or beats the Strength of the other card. Note that if you play a team of the same type of card, it is considered one card with the sum of the Strengths of all the cards of the team. This sum may be higher than 9, so if you team a Writer with a Strength of 8 with an Editor of Strength 5, their total Strength is 13.
- **Freelancers are half Strength:** Whether attacking or being attacked, Freelancers have half Strength, round down.
- **Other Cards are Neutral:** You cannot team up Other cards, but must attack them with Strength, or have them attack with Strength. Note that Upper Management still beats Other cards.
- **You can play to lose:** If you want to get the cards out of your hand for some reason.
- **You *must* narrate your play:** You can't simply say, "I attack your Illustrator with my Game Designer." Instead you must narrate your events, using the names and job titles on the cards involved. It's funnier that way. Trust me.

After you announce your attack, your opponent may then try to defend (if allowed) by playing cards from his or her hand to attack your attackers. Use the rules above for the defense attack. If you can defend against the defense attack, you may do so. And this can go back and forth until a player relents. All cards used in all the attacks are discarded. If, after all of that, you win, the defending player discards the card being attacked from

his or her Corporate Ladder. Keep these cards separate from the discard pile used in attacks.

You may make as many attacks as you want on your turn.

Rebuilding Your Corporate Ladder:

During your turn, you may discard a card from your hand to add a Freelance card from your hand to an open spot in your Corporate Ladder. Don't forget that Freelancers are at half strength during an Attack. You may only add one Freelancer per turn.

After the Game:

The winner of the game may choose any one of the cards from the other player's Corporate Ladder (or Press cards discarded when the Corporate Ladder was built) to keep as his or her own. If playing multiple people, you still get only one card, but you may choose from any of their Corporate Ladders.

Resolving Arguments:

Corporate Ladder is designed to be quick and fun. If you really get bogged down in a rules question, have the player whose turn it is throw one of the cards from his or her hand as high as possible. If it lands face up the player whose turn it is wins the argument. If it lands face down, the other player wins the argument. Return the card to its owner's hand afterward.

Deck Building:

Half the fun of a trading card game is building the deck. And for this game, you really do have to collect cards from other people, because it's the only way they become available.

Here are some deck building rules:

- Your deck may be as large as you want, but it must be at least 20 cards.
- Your deck may not contain two of the same card.
- Your deck must contain at least one Upper Management card, but not more than four.
- You may not have more than four cards from any one company in your deck.
- Your deck may not contain more than six Press cards.

Who Designed This Mess?

Corporate Ladder is Copyright © Insane Game Designer, Mike Young. Feel free to print and give away as many copies as you want, but you need my permission to sell it. Visit my web site at <http://www.intink.com>