

PROJECT

RUNNER

WORKING TITLE

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

EMEX
MACHINA



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CHANGELOG

VERSION	DATE	NOTES
V1.0	03/11/2021	INITIAL DOCUMENT

PREFACE

To help the reader make better sense of the content bellow it's best to keep in mind of these notes:

- Project RUNNER is currently considered a working title for the project;
- PLAYER will be referred as an it;
- Square brackets around text means it's a placeholder. Example: [The City].

EM | EX MACHINA

EM | EX Machina is a totally real game studio created in October 2021 by Pedro Dias Marques (pMarK) in Lisbon, Portugal.

There is a logic behind the name but that doesn't matter. I mean there's a studio in Boston called The Molasses Flood, named after an actual disaster. Compared to that, EM | EX Machina is pretty boring actually.

Currently it only serves to provide Project RUNNER with a legit sounding studio name to list as developer.

<https://emexmachina.com/>

 **EMEX** MACHINA

 **EMEX**
MACHINA

1. OVERVIEW

1.1. PITCH

Build a base from which you can strike into no man's land. Gather resources for [The City] and gain influence. Use it to gain power.

1.2. THEME

Project RUNNER is a 2D post-apocalyptic action RPG where the player becomes the head of a RUNNER CORP, responsible for venturing into no man's land and providing for [The City]. As providers, RUNNERS are seen as heroes, so they can choose to use that influence to shape [The City] itself.

1.3. UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

Lead your very own RUNNER CORP, responsible for providing everything [The City] needs. Hire key personnel to build up your organization into an ever more effective force. Perform RUNS, striking into no man's land, claiming resource nodes while eliminating various threats.

1.4. TARGET PLATFORM

Windows PC

1.5. TARGET AUDIENCE

Mature audience who enjoy post-apocalyptic settings, management with light political play and top-down action RPG games.

2. THE UNIVERSE

2.1. THE PAST

Effects from climate change lead to an ever increasing scarcity of water during the 20th century. This lead to conflict. During the last couple of decades of that century this situation boiled into full nuclear war.

Society broke down. The very concept of country disappeared. Those who survived became scavengers, eventually forming into small communities, pockets of the new civilization. These communities rarely come into contact with each other. The amount of these communities is unknown, nor the total population on Earth.

As time went on these communities grew larger, a new, but familiar, ever complexity increasing society. More complexity means new problems, varying and increasing needs. To satisfy these needs people have to venture further into No Man's Land, which is the name people gave to the uncharted, often irradiated wasteland that is now most of the planet. Those who venture forth are known as RUNNERS, the best of which become legends.

As more and more RUNNERS where needed, corporations started to form. They realized they could organize, become more effective and leverage the power that comes with being the hand that feeds the people.

2.2. THE PRESENT

The year is 2174. Well, people are pretty sure it is anyway. The player is a young, small time RUNNER living in [The City] who decides to create it's own RUNNER CORP.

2.3. CONCEPTS

2.3.1. [THE CITY]

[The City] is the player's home. Over time its population increase, needs with it. It's supplied by RUNNERS.

It's governed by a council of nine people, responsible for all the decision making, often influenced by RUNNER CORPS.

2.3.2. RUNNER CORP

A RUNNER CORP is an organized corporation whose main function is to perform RUNS to supply [The City]. The best ones have 4 wings:

- OPERATIONS, responsible for the planning of RUNS and in-the-field support for ongoing ones;
- LOGISTICS, responsible for coordinating continuous resource collection from claimed resource nodes on No Man's Land;
- R&D, responsible for the equipment used by the RUNNERS;
- MEDICAL, responsible for providing medical care to all personnel.

2.3.3. RUNNER

A RUNNER is any individual who ventures into No Man's Land to scavenge for resources.

2.3.4. RUN

A RUN represents a single incursion into No Man's Land. It's named that because of the limited time a RUNNER can stay on No Man's Land.

2.3.5. RUNNER EQUIPMENT

Every RUNNER is equipped with a RUNNER SUIT. Most RUNNERS also take a backpack and a weapon for personal defense. Successful RUNNER CORPS may have specially designed vehicles.

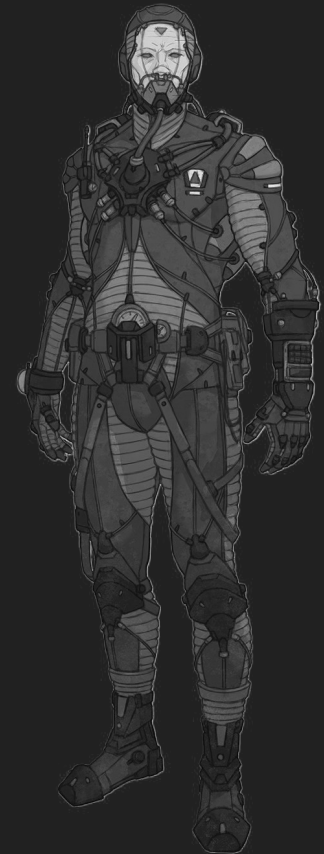


IMAGE CREDIT: NIKOLAY ASPARUHOV
<https://www.artstation.com/nikolayasparuhov>

2.3.5.1. RUNNER SUIT

The RUNNER SUIT is what makes incursions into No Man's Land possible. It offers protection against the harsh conditions, mainly radiation. To do this, it's powered by a rechargeable battery.

2.3.5.2. RUNNER VEHICLES

Only available to the most successful RUNNER CORPS, these specially designed vehicles allow for deeper RUNS into No Man's Land. Battery powered. Can be used to recharge RUNNER SUIT.

3. THE ECONOMY

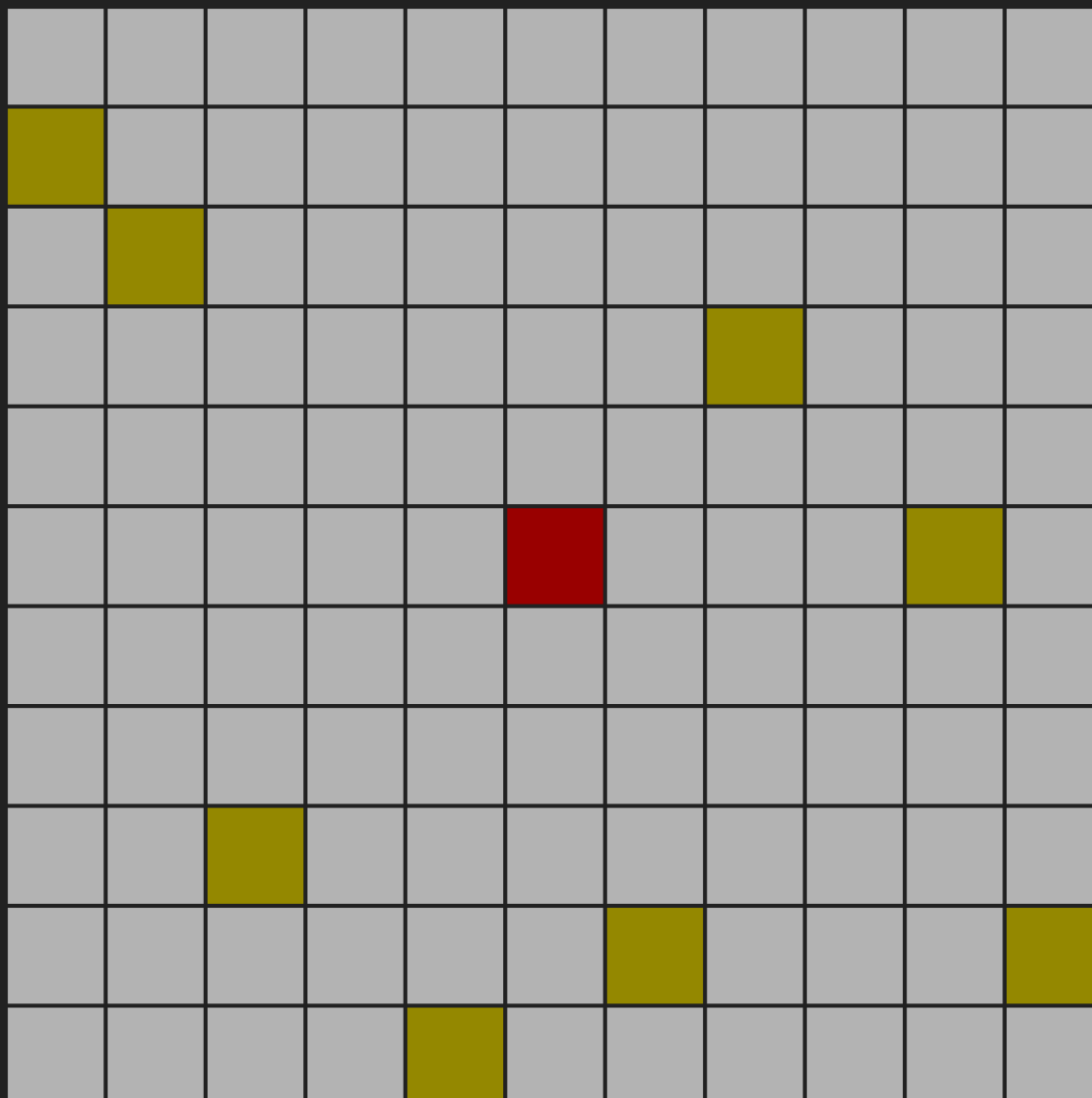
3.1. RESOURCES

RESOURCE	TYPE	SOURCE	CONSUMED BY
Food	Natural Resource	Pure Wasteland Maps	[The City] Deliveries, CORP Base Expansions and R&D
Water			
Common Minerals			
Rare Minerals			
Fuel			
Medical Plants		Everywhere	Medical Wing
Common Components	Specialized Resource	Pockets of Civilization Maps	R&D
Advanced Components			
ULTRA Components			

3.2. INFLUENCE

Influence is the main currency in the game. It's earned by making deliveries to [The City]. The player can spend influence to recruit personnel or buy things from [The City]. If the player is not delivering enough resources, it will start to lose influence daily.

4. THE GAME WORLD



■ **PURE WASTELAND**

■ **POCKET OF CIVILIZATION**

NOTE: NOT THE ACTUAL MAP

The game world is centered on [The City], surrounded by No Man's Land. Every square corresponds to a map that can be visited by the player during a RUN.

The base for the player's CORP is on the outskirts of [The City] but does not appear on the map.

4.1. MAPS

There are two different types of maps, distinguished mainly by the type of encounters and available resources. They also differ in how they are achieved during development. Every map has 2 transit points, one of which is the entry point and either can be used to exit the map.

All threats in a map reset after 10 game days.

4.1.1. PURE WASTELAND

Procedurally generated. The only enemy threats are wild animals. It's in these maps that the player will find the most **NATURAL RESOURCES**.

4.1.1.1. RESOURCE NODES

A **RESOURCE NODE** is a claimable continuous source of one specific **NATURAL RESOURCE**. They can only be found on **PURE WASTELAND** maps.

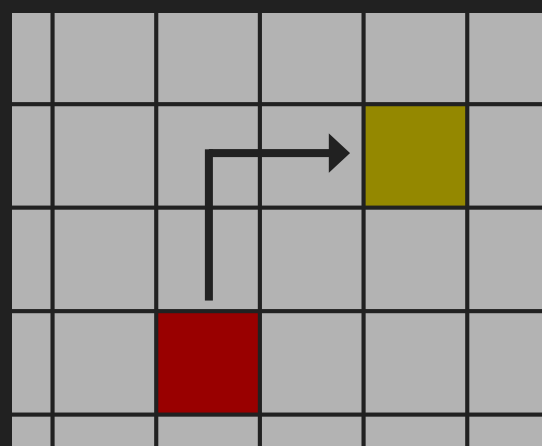
4.1.2. POCKETS OF CIVILIZATION

The player can find **SPECIALIZED RESOURCES** inside of lootable containers on these maps. Most combat against other humans will happen on these maps. Hand-made.

Just like the enemies, containers reset after 10 game days.

4.1.3. MOVING

To perform a **RUN** the player can move across the map horizontally and vertically. This is important because every move costs battery power.



EXAMPLE OF MOVEMENT

5. CORE GAMEPLAY

5.1. CAMERA

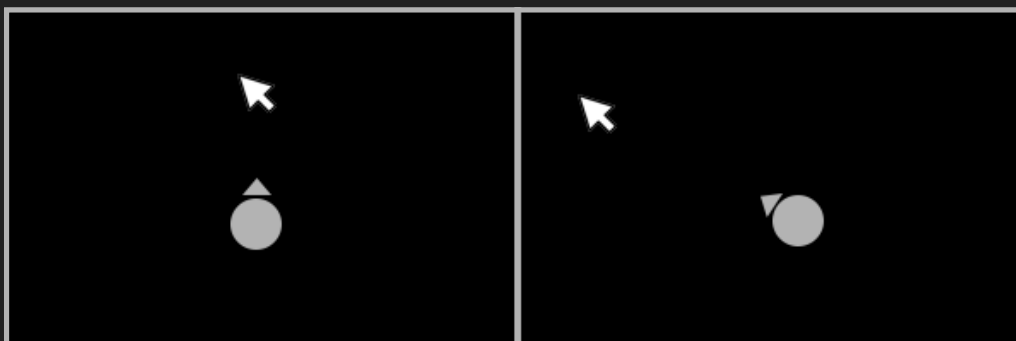
Top-view. Very limited perspective. Always centered on the player. Reference is the game Hotline Miami.



IMAGE CREDIT: HOTLINE MIAMI, DENNATON GAMES / DEVOLVER DIGITAL

5.2. CONTROLS

WASD movement in all directions. Player character is always facing the mouse cursor.



5.3. GAME LOOP



Player builds up its RUNNER CORP to increase the efficiency of RUNS. Player performs RUNS to build up its RUNNER CORP.

6. CORP MANAGEMENT

As head of its own RUNNER CORP the player is responsible for its management. All CORP management is done at the base of the CORP.

6.1. COMMAND

At the center of the base there is a COMMAND facility. It's here that the player can order the building of new facilities and (re)assign staff to a wing.

6.2. WINGS

A RUNNER CORP can have up to 4 wings: OPERATIONS, LOGISTICS, R&D and MEDICAL.

6.2.1. PERSONNEL CAPACITY

Every wing as a maximum amount of staff. Increased by corresponding facility level.

See "6.4. Facility Development" on page 19

6.2.2. WING LEVEL

A wing has a level rating ranging from 1 to 20 which is a numerical relation between the amount of personnel to the average proficiency in the corresponding field.

6.2.3. WING: OPERATIONS

Responsible for planning and in-the-field support of RUNS. Higher levels increase the value of available AI RUNS.

See "8.2. AI Runs" on page 27

6.2.4. WING: LOGISTICS

Responsible for coordinating continuous resource collection from claimed resource nodes on No Man's Land. Higher levels increase the LOGISTIC CAPACITY.

See "6.5. Logistics Capacity" on page 19

6.2.5. WING: R&D

Responsible for the research and development of the equipment used by RUNNERS. Higher levels unlocks research options and lowers production time.

See "9.1. R&D" on page 28

6.2.6. WING: MEDICAL

Responsible for providing medical care to injured personnel. Higher levels decreases recovery time.

See "7.3. Injury" on page 21

6.2.7. INTERACTING WITH A WING

To perform a WING specific action the player needs to physically interact with the WING's console that is inside the WING's facility.

6.3. PERSONNEL

People seeking work with RUNNER CORPS will appear over time. To hire them the player spends INFLUENCE.

6.3.1. PROFICIENCIES

Personnel have 4 proficiency ratings, each corresponding to the individual's proficiency in tasks related to each of the CORP wings. They range from 1 to 20.

6.3.2. (RE)ASSIGNING TO A WING

After being hired the individual is not automatically assigned to a wing. The player must do this manually. After assigning it to a wing the new staff member doesn't instantly count towards the wing level rating, only doing so the following day. The same applies to reassignments.

6.3.3. HIRED RUNNERS

The player can hire RUNNERS to his CORP just like other personnel but they are much rarer and expensive. The player can hire a maximum of 3 RUNNERS, so together with the player that's 4.

Unlike other personnel, the availability of RUNNERS will not be randomized.

6.4. FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

At the start of the game the player's RUNNER CORP'S facility only has one central **COMMAND** building. After gathering some natural resources the player will be able to build the other buildings that will house the **CORP WINGS**.

Placement of buildings is predetermined. The player cannot chose where to build.

6.4.1. BUILDING NEW FACILITIES

If the player has enough resources it can order the construction of a new facility to house a **WING**.

6.4.2. FACILITY LEVEL

	PERSONNEL CAPACITY			
	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Operations	3	5	8	12
Logistics	10	20	30	40
R&D				
Medical	1	2	3	5

If the player has enough resources it can order the upgrade of a facility. This will increase the personnel capacity of the corresponding **WING**.

6.5. LOGISTICS CAPACITY

LOGISTICS CAPACITY represents the ability of the RUNNER CORP to move resources. This limits the amount of **RESOURCE NODES** the player can exploit at once.

7. RUNNER

The player is a RUNNER. Furthermore the player can hire other RUNNERS. An AI RUNNER can be equipped the same way the player can and also has access to the same character development options.

7.1. ATTRIBUTES

A RUNNER's attributes are: STRENGTH, AGILITY, INTELLIGENCE and LUCK. Any RUNNER starts with 5 points in all attribute.

7.1.1. STRENGTH

Represents the physical strength of the RUNNER. Raises encumbrance threshold.

7.1.2. AGILITY

Represents how nimble the RUNNER is. Increases movement speed. Reduces battery power consumption during world map movement.

7.1.3. INTELLIGENCE

Represents the RUNNER's intelligence. Increases experience gain.

7.1.4. LUCK

Represents how lucky the RUNNER is. Increases critical chance.

Increases amount of loot rolls from lootable containers. It's the highest level of LUCK between the player and the companion that matters during looting.

7.2. LEVEL AND EXPERIENCE

Every RUNNER starts at level 1. To level up a RUNNER must gain experience points.

7.2.1. GAINING EXPERIENCE

RUNNERS gain experience by eliminating enemies and completing RUNS. Experience gained from RUNS is related to resources brought back to base.

When the player performs a RUN himself with a RUNNER companion the experience gained is split between the two equally.

When performing an AI RUN the experience gained is predetermined by the RUN.

7.2.2. LEVELING UP

When a RUNNER levels up they get 1 attribute point to spend.

7.2.3. MAX LEVEL

There is no hard coded maximum level, however experience needed to level up will increase significantly after level 15.

7.3. INJURY

When a AI RUNNER incurs injuries during a RUN it will be unavailable recovering for a certain amount of time, decreased by the MEDICAL WING.

7.4. EQUIPMENT

7.4.1. RUNNER SUIT

Every RUNNER needs one, since it's these that make RUNS possible. They provide protection against the harsh environment found on No Man's Land. Powered by a rechargeable battery.

Every RUNNER SUIT has 2 AUGMENTATION slots.

7.4.1.1. AUGMENTATIONS

AUGMENTATIONS are items that can be slotted into a RUNNER SUIT. They provide an active ability. They have an attribute requirement, meaning that the RUNNER can only use the ability if it meets the requirement.

7.4.1.2. SUIT BATTERY

A RUNNER SUIT has a rechargeable battery. Power is consumed when:

- Moving on world map;
- Passively when protecting user from environmental hazard;
- Ability is activated.

7.4.2. BACKPACK

A backpack increases the encumbrance threshold for a RUNNER.

7.4.3. WEAPON

A RUNNER can equip a weapon to attack enemies. Only ranged semi-automatic weapons are available.

Weapons have ammo carry capacity and the player current ammo is set to max automatically when starting a RUN.

See "9.2.4. Weapons" on page 30

8. RUN

A RUN is an incursion into No Man's Land. The amount of time the player can spend performing a RUN is limited by the available power in the batteries from the RUNNER SUITS and/or vehicle.

There are player controlled RUNS and AI RUNS.

8.1. PLAYER RUNS

A player RUN is a RUN where the player uses it's own player RUNNER to lead it. The player can bring another RUNNER as a AI controlled companion. Equipped gear cannot be changed during a RUN.

8.1.1. ENCUMBERED

If the inventory is over capacity the player cannot move. The player will have to drop something. Equipped gear does not count towards encumbrance.

8.1.2. POWER LEFT INDICATOR

There is always an indicator on screen of the amount of power available on each of the RUNNER SUITS. The player will also receive a warning when it's close to not having enough power for the trip back to base.

8.1.3. RECHARGE STATION

Only occasionally available on POCKETS OF CIVILIZATION maps, the RECHARGE STATION can be used by the RUNNERS to recharge their SUIT.

8.1.4. COMPANION

The player can chose a companion RUNNER from its CORP to bring to a RUN.

8.1.4.1. DEFAULT BEHAVIOR

By default the companion RUNNER will simply follow the player. During combat it will do its best to attack enemies and stay alive.

8.1.4.2. IN-GAME AI PROGRAMMING

The player has access to an interface to program the behavior of the companion. This is companion based, meaning each has its own profile.

Each profile is a ordered list of condition-action pairs, meaning the player can set the companion to perform a certain action based on a condition.



IMAGE CREDIT: DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS, BIOWARE / ELECTRONIC ARTS

8.1.5. OUT OF POWER STATE

If a RUNNER runs out of power in its RUNNER SUIT it will be unable to use abilities. RUNNER also starts taking damage if in a PURE WASTELAND map.

8.1.6. DEATH

The death of a companion RUNNER means the permanent loss of that RUNNER. The player still has access to his inventory but it will have to pickup anything it wants to take back to base.

The death of the player's RUNNER is game over. The player can reload the last save.

8.1.7. RETURNING TO BASE

The player can return to base by moving to one of the map's TRANSIT POINTS. This function is only available if the neither of the RUNNERS have been damaged by an enemy for 20 seconds.

If any of the RUNNERS is in OUT OF POWER STATE it will continue to take damage during the travel back to base. DEATH rules apply, only difference is that the companion's inventory would be completely lost.

8.1.8. RESCUE

If the player finds himself in a situation where it does not have enough power for the travel back to base it can call for a rescue. This will bring back both RUNNERS, at the cost of INFLUENCE and whatever was in their inventory.

8.1.9. VEHICLE

The player can chose to bring a vehicle on a RUN if one is available. A vehicle allows for much deeper RUNS into No Man's Land because of its large battery capacity.

While the player is on a map, the vehicle stays parked at the entry point. The player can return to it to recharge the RUNNER SUIT. This transfers power 1:1 from the car to the SUIT.

8.1.9.1. ACQUIRING A VEHICLE

Vehicles can be found on maps. The player just has to move close to it and interact with it. Claiming it costs NATURAL and SPECIALIZED RESOURCES. To be clear the player doesn't need to have the necessary resources on him, just have them at base.

8.1.10. CLAIMING RESOURCE NODES

To claim a RESOURCE NODE the player needs to clear the map of threats. It can only be claimed if the player has enough LOGISTICS CAPACITY.

8.2. AI RUNS

AI RUNS are performed completely by the AI however the player will be asked for input during.

8.2.1. GENERATION

Available AI RUNS are randomly generated.

Variation:

- Difficulty;
- Possible resource gain;
- RUN requirements (minimum RUNNER level, necessity of a vehicle, etc);
- Time.

8.2.2. STARTING AN AI RUN

AI RUNS are available in the OPERATIONS WING.

To order a RUN:

- Player goes to the WING'S FACILITY and interacts with the WING'S console;
- Player selects an available RUN;
- Player assigns the RUNNER(S) to perform the RUN;
- Player starts RUN.

8.2.3. MULTI-STEP / PLAYER INPUT

AI RUNS have between 2 and 3 steps (starting a RUN is step 1). After a step is completed the player will be prompted with 2 to 3 options on how the AI RUNNER(S) should proceed. These options have various possible outcomes. The player will have to weigh the relation risk/reward.

8.2.4. FAILURE

A failed RUN will result in injured or even dead RUNNERS.

9. ITEMIZATION

Every equippable item has a Mk (Mark) level ranging from Mk.1 to Mk.4.

9.1. R&D

The R&D WING is used to research and craft items. Every action takes time.

9.1.1. REVERSE ENGINEER

To gain the ability to produce an item the player must first REVERSE ENGINEER it. This destroys the item. The Mk level of the item matters, unlocking the level itself as well as previous ones.

REVERSE ENGINEERING the same item is possible, as long as the new item is of higher Mk level compared to what's already unlocked. This effectively is a way to skip RESEARCH on that item.

9.1.2. RESEARCH

The player can order the RESEARCH of the next Mk level of an item. Just to be clear, the player needs to have REVERSE ENGINEERED the item beforehand.

RESEARCH consumes NATURAL RESOURCES and SPECIALIZED RESOURCES.

9.1.3. CRAFTING

The player can order the RESEARCH of the next Mk level of an item. Just to be clear, the player needs to have REVERSE ENGINEERED the item beforehand.

CRAFTING consumes NATURAL RESOURCES and SPECIALIZED RESOURCES.

9.2. ITEM STATS

9.2.1. BACKPACK

Higher Mk level simply increases encumbrance threshold further. There is only one type of backpack.

9.2.2. RUNNER SUIT

A RUNNER SUIT has these stats:

- Power capacity - max amount of power the battery can be charged with;
- Power efficiency - a multiplier on power consumption;
- Damage reduction - defense.

The [Default Suit] is unspecialized, represents the baseline.

There are 3 types of specialized RUNNER SUITS:

	POWER CAPACITY	POWER EFFICIENCY	DAMAGE REDUCTION
[TYPE 1]	HIGHEST	SLIGHTLY LOWER	AVERAGE
[TYPE 2]	SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER	HIGHEST	SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER
[TYPE 3]	AVERAGE	SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER	HIGHEST

9.2.3. AUGMENTATIONS

Higher Mk level makes the corresponding ability better by increasing effectiveness and decreasing power consumption, but also increases the ATTRIBUTE requirement.

See “7.4.1.1. AUGMENTATIONS” on page 22

9.2.4. WEAPONS

Weapon stats:

- Base damage;
- Critical chance;
- Critical multiplier;
- Magazine size;
- Ammo carry capacity.

Higher Mk level increases all the weapon stats.

10. COMBAT

Fighting against wild animals on PURE WASTELAND maps will be faster and player will generally face larger hordes of enemies.

Fighting human enemies on POCKETS OF CIVILIZATION maps will be slower, more tactical, taking damage is punishing since healing is limited and injured RUNNERS are out of action for some time.

Design references for combat are **HOTLINE MIAMI** for the perspective and **THE ASCENT** for the mechanics and damage module.



IMAGE CREDIT: THE ASCENT, NEON GIANT / CURVE DIGITAL

11. ART

Pixel art. Post-apocalyptic vibe. Remains of civilization. Generally low light, foggy. Green-yellow tone.

11.1. VISUAL REFERENCES



BLADE RUNNER 2049, WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Broken climate. Unbreakable, constant fog.

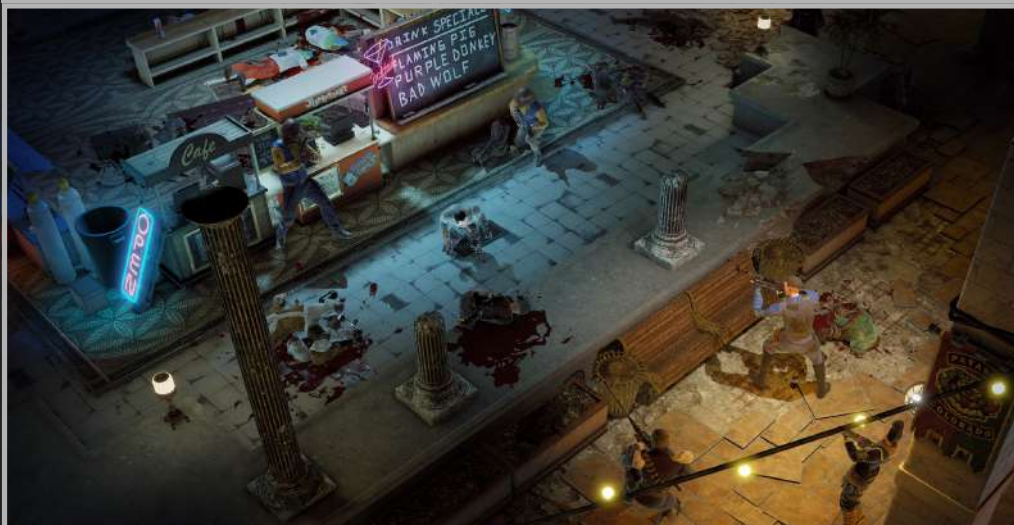


HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER, DENNATON GAMES / DEVOLVER DIGITAL

Viewpoint. More light around the player.



FALLOUT 2, BLACK ISLE STUDIOS / INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS



WASTELAND 3, INXILE ENTERTAINMENT / DEEP SILVER

Even though generally the architecture is too old, since their disaster happened much earlier that in Project RUNNER, tone wise these are still similar.

12. AUDIO

12.1. MUSIC

During normal play there is always some ambient, not overbearing, music. During combat it picks up and is far more domineering.

12.2. SOUND DESIGN

12.2.1. CORP BASE

Sound of computers/machinery and people conversing (unintelligible). Becomes more noticeable the bigger the base gets.

12.2.2. PURE WASTELAND MAPS

Generally low amount of sound effects. Wind gusts, muffled sound of animals.

12.2.3. POCKETS OF CIVILIZATION

On top of the sound from PURE WASTELAND maps, add muffled voices, machinery.

12.2.4. COMBAT

Weapon noises, getting hit noises (animals and humans).