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Fourth Edition

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Gimli: Oh! That's it, right! We warned you! Prepare to be boarded! Corsair: Boarded! By you and whose army? Aragorn: This army. – The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

## About GURPS

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*Errata*. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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## INTRODUCTION

Not all heroes go it alone! Those in roleplaying games traditionally enjoy the support of fellow PCs – and in settings with even the thinnest veneer of civilization, they often belong to something bigger, be that a government agency, the military, a church, or the mob. *GURPS* offers several social traits that might correspond to such membership, the most important of which are a Patron representing the organization and Rank within that institution. However, these two advantages overlap, and neither completely answers the player's most pressing question: "What assistance can my character request?"

*GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank* solves this problem by merging Rank and Patron into a single concept. In effect, it turns Rank into a "leveled Patron" and then uses its level to determine the odds of receiving a particular form of aid. While not always the most *realistic* approach to organizations, it's a *straightforward* one – and that's often for the best when the heroes are better at smiting evil, arresting crooks, or hunting terrorists than they are at navigating social labyrinths. Still, the extensive advice on what Rank or an equivalent Patron can offer is useful even in campaigns starring thinkers, organizers, and manipulators instead of men and women of action. The rules for treating Rank as an effective Patron are also suitable for such a game or indeed almost any other; while they simplify real-world social complexity, they aren't actively cinematic.

**Pulling Rank** is an optional expansion for the **GURPS Basic Set**, and doesn't rely on **GURPS Social Engineering**. However, as **Social Engineering** offers pricing guidelines for new kinds of Rank and describes many social feats that high Rank might facilitate, it would be a valuable companion to this supplement.

### **PUBLICATION HISTORY**

This is the first edition of *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank*. It expands on the *Pulling Rank* rules on pp. 24-25 of *GURPS Action 1: Heroes*, the related *Assistance Rolls in Action* notes on pp. 44-45 of *GURPS Action 2: Exploits*, and the generalization of those things under *The Benefits of Rank* on pp. 51-52 of *GURPS Social Engineering*.

### **About the Author**

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), *GURPS Zombies*, and the *GURPS Action*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, and *GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie.



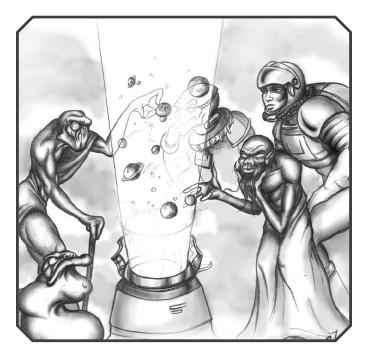
### INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER ONE SETTING THE PRICE

When a PC holds down a job, there's usually no need to cast this in terms of traits on the character sheet. *GURPS* assumes that all but the wealthiest or most errant of heroes work for a living. That's why there are pages and pages dedicated to rules such as *Jobs* (pp. B516-517) and *Cost of Living* (pp. B265-266).

However, some adventurers have many, most, or even all of their adventures in service to an organization that's willing and able to support them. Sometimes this takes the form of a Patron (p. B72) or a Contact Group (p. B44), and when the player requests help, the GM rolls 3d against frequency of appearance, with success bringing assistance. In other cases, Rank (pp. B29-30 and *GURPS Social Engineering*, pp. 12-15) fits better, and the GM uses this as a guide to who and what the PC can order around to meet organizational goals. Where things get tricky is when the GM wants a quick-and-easy mechanic like an appearance roll for someone with Rank, seeks to link the degree of aid a Patron provides to the seniority of the person requesting it, or cannot decide which trait better fits a given arrangement.

One possible solution is not to choose, but instead to merge the concepts of Rank and Associated NPCs (p. B31) into a single game mechanic that handles appearance rolls and seniority all at once. In the rules that follow, Rank alone determines



where the PC stands and what he can request, providing him with an *effective* Patron. Readers familiar with *GURPS Action* and/or *GURPS Social Engineering* will recognize this approach, which is functionally identical to (and thus compatible with) similar systems described there – although *Pulling Rank* adds many details, special cases, and examples that merit player-GM discussion in campaigns using those supplements. As with anything that empowers PCs, it's the GM who decides which options are "switched on."

### **THE ORGANIZATION**

First, find the *base* point cost of a Patron that matches the PC's organization, thinking only in terms of the scope of the aid it could provide:

- *Fairly powerful organization* (e.g., obscure organized religion, private charitable foundation, local guild, university, or small-town police department): 10 points
- *Powerful organization* (e.g., mainstream organized religion, national nonprofit foundation, regional guild, big-city police department, small national agency, or task force or operational subunit within a large agency or an armed service): 15 points
- *Very powerful organization* (e.g., world-class organized religion, international nonprofit organization, international guild, large national agency, or one entire armed service of a small polity): 20 points
- *Extremely powerful organization* (e.g., one entire armed service of a large polity) or a *small polity* (barony, principality, poorer modern nation, etc.): 25 points
- *Large polity* (historical empire or typical modern nation): 30 points

When using **Pulling Rank**, the character doesn't pay this *cost!* Instead, it determines how much Rank he needs to make something happen and how impressive the response is when a request is granted, both of which increase with hypothetical Patron value. For instance, everybody in a local sheriff's department has a voice, while only senior officers have much say in a national army – but where the sheriff's department would send a lone deputy to search for someone, the army might deploy truckloads of troops equipped with night-vision gear and drones. These considerations don't always affect the price per level of Rank; Rank pricing often has more to do with the social benefits that accrue when not asking for assistance (notably respect, imputed Status, and higher pay).

#### Preauthorized Assistance

When a powerful NPC preauthorizes aid – the PCs are acting on direct orders from the general, the Emperor ordered his staff to give them "whatever they need," etc. – use the NPC's (usually higher) Rank for the AR, typically at +1 to +5 for an "appropriate" request. This is most often an ultra-specific oneoff; e.g., an airstrike on a well-defined target or an arrest warrant for one particular criminal. Rarely, though, it's a promise to intervene as needed, in which case penalties for repeated ARs accumulate as the NPC wears out *his* superiors' or peers' patience, but accrue separately from penalties to ARs the PCs make without name-dropping.

Of course, when the PCs haven't paid for the Rank they're using, the GM is under no obligation to provide assistance. If the plot hinges on a double-crossing NPC promising to use his Rank and then hanging the heroes out to dry, the AR is guaranteed to fail. In that case, the GM might fake the roll for effect, but the conclusion is foregone.

#### **Guaranteed** Assistance

There are also situations where the GM might have an AR *succeed* automatically. If the PCs work for an NPC who's outranked by no one, then it often makes sense simply to waive the AR. All requests by the person at the top are effectively "appropriate," for +5. This amounts to an AR against 15 to 20 for the top dog in most hierarchies, which is a nuisance roll.

Only PCs who are doing what their organization expects of them get guarantees.

Only roll if the request is so unorthodox, unconstitutional, unethical, etc. that there's a real chance of failure because of resistance from below.

If assistance is part of the plot – the merchants are *supposed* to receive the money to close the deal they were sent to negotiate, the commandos are *supposed* to exfiltrate by chopper at the end of their raid, and so on – the GM can likewise dispense with an AR. However, he should do this only if the PCs are doing what their organization expects of them. If they're bent on embezzling the money or stealing the helicopter, make an AR to see whether somebody gets wise to their scheme!

In either case, there's never any penalty for repeated ARs after a guaranteed bit of assistance. Only apply the -1 per roll after the first when there was actually a roll.

## **Outside the Box**

While *Pulling Rank* concerns itself chiefly with PCs who hold Rank, its rules and concepts aren't limited to that context.

#### The Organization NPC

Nothing in the *GURPS Basic Set* prohibits NPCs from possessing Patrons or Rank, and this is unchanged when using *Pulling Rank*. While couched in terms of PCs requesting aid, these rules apply equally to NPCs provided that the GM is fair about assessing the modifiers under *Situation* (p. 10). In general, if previous requests penalize PCs on a peradventure, -assignment, or -session basis, then NPCs who interact with PCs accumulate penalties on the same schedule – such NPCs get *their* tallies reset when the PCs begin a new adventure or assignment, or at the start of each session, as applicable. As for appropriateness modifiers, the GM should avoid assigning these by fiat and stick to the ones called out in Chapter 3. If NPCs need to receive aid as part of the plot, invoke *Preauthorized Assistance* (above) or *Guaranteed Assistance* (above).

#### Patron, Hold the Rank

The GM can use *Pulling Rank* to make Patrons more interesting even when Rank isn't involved. Like Rank, a Patron often requires a Duty; otherwise, where a rule or a guideline makes no sense without Rank, it's safe to assume that the associated topic is inappropriate. The GM decides what forms of aid are suitable. Where some detail depends

on the effective Patron's base value, use the *actual* base value. The AR starts out equal to the Patron's appearance roll, is subject to all rules and modifiers for ARs (e.g., successive requests are allowed, but at a cumulative -1), and has its usual outcomes on success or failure.

#### **Getting Pulled**

As *Prerequisites for Rank* (pp. 7-8) discusses, Rank usually requires a Duty and may demand a Claim to Hospitality which is reciprocal by nature. When such an obligation arises, the GM may want to consult the examples of assistance in Chapter 3 for adventure ideas: An NPC in the PC's organization "made his AR," and now the PC is tasked with arranging aid! If the player handles this especially well or poorly, the GM might give his character a bonus or a penalty on the *next* AR for help that NPC could render.

#### **Dutiful Associates**

Someone may owe a Duty to an organization that isn't potent enough to rate as a Patron or grant Rank (at least, not Rank worth more than 0 points per level by the math in *GURPS Social Engineering*), but that should plausibly provide *some* aid. Good examples of such groups are pirate crews and private building security. In cases like this, the GM may opt to permit an AR based on *effective* Rank, found by consulting *The Arithmetic of Rank* (*Social Engineering*, p. 14) and looking up how many people the petitioner "commands."

### **Supernatural Aid**

People with Magical Rank – or Religious Rank, if priests draw on real divine power – can sometimes obtain assistance that's more than natural. This takes the form of the mundane AR that best suits the desired aid, though possibly with a couple of twists. First, the supplicant might be able to request help through extraordinary channels, such as by praying silently or casting a Communication and Empathy spell. Second, the mechanism of fulfillment may be extraordinary, perhaps even resembling Serendipity (p. B83) when prayers are answered. Either kind of thing should increase the cost of Rank if what's possible outstrips other supernatural abilities in the setting; see *Enhancements* (p. 5).

Examples of supernatural aid include:

• *Consultation* (p. 15) for insight into matters of supernatural significance.

• *Entry Clearance* (p. 13) to *safely* enter a place off-limits to others, such as a cursed temple or tomb.

• *Facilities* (pp. 18-19) for access to sites of superior mana or sanctity.

• *Files* (p. 15) to receive a book of spells, holy writings, etc. – or, with theurgy, to be granted knowledge directly.

• *Safe House* (p. 15) for an area warded against opposing occult forces.

• *Technical Means* (p. 15) to represent magical scrying or divine insight.

#### Rescue

A benefit of Rank in some organizations is help in times of personal difficulty. Such aid can be requested like any other kind, but the GM may opt to make an AR for it when a member in good standing *doesn't* report in, leading his backer to believe he's missing or overdue.

#### Bailout

When legitimate authorities or "honorable" enemies detain someone with Rank while he's following orders, he can "get out of jail free" on a successful AR, provided that his organization could reasonably retrieve him by paying a fee (bail, ransom, etc.) or simply overruling his detention. Payments *aren't* limited as described in *Bribe or Hush Money* (p. 14) or *Cash* (p. 16), as the whole point is that success frees the PC, whatever it takes: negotiation, prisoner exchange, threats . . . Time required is as little as 10 minutes after a phone call on home turf, but possibly several days otherwise. No AR is needed if the organization accidentally arrests its *own* member!

*Modifiers:* +5 to accelerate a holding period or other fleeting detention. If the act that led to arrest was particularly heinous, treat the request as "inappropriate" (-1 to -10). Some organizations prefer to wait until trial or another denouement to throw their weight around (e.g., using Organized Crime Rank to buy a judge), while others bargain directly with captors (e.g., using Police Rank to spring someone), and an AR made at the wrong step is at -1 to -5. • *Treatment* (below) to be cured of afflictions that demand Healing spells.

The GM probably shouldn't permit things like requests for teleportation out of danger (*Evacuation*, below), divine smiting (*Fire Support*, p. 19), and summoned demons (*Muscle*, p. 19), as these would invade the territory of Magery or Power Investiture. For *godlike* Patrons purchased in levels – with "petition rolls" for aid affected by level, the specific assistance requested, and Religious Rank – use **GURPS Powers: Divine Favor.** Rank is for situations where being a priest or a wizard means access to *places* or *knowledge* that others lack.

Not all Magical or Religious Rank works this way. Realistic Religious Rank is Administrative, Feudal, or Political Rank within a hierarchical church, named differently to distinguish it from temporal versions of such Rank. Even in fantasy, Magical Rank often amounts to Rank in the Wizards' Guild, and functions like any other kind of Guild Rank.

Conversely, in some fantasy worlds, legitimate members of the ruling class – who wield Feudal Rank – enjoy "divine right" despite belonging to an otherwise secular institution (the state). This could manifest in any number of ways, up to and including an AR for *Gear* (p. 16) to pull a sword from a stone!

#### Evacuation

Physically plucking people from danger is a hallmark of organizations that bestow Military Rank and expansive varieties of Police Rank. It also fits the apparatus behind Administrative, Feudal, Political, and Religious Rank, if they regard Rank-holders as VIPs. Evacuation is *overt* and available only in friendly or openly contested territory (contrast *Insertion/Extraction*, pp. 14-15). High-tech help like a helicopter or an ambulance arrives in 1d+10 minutes, but 1d hours or worse is typical at lower TLs or in remote areas.

*Modifiers:* The +1 to +5 for an "appropriate" request always applies if the PC got into trouble on a legitimate mission. If evacuation is because he's injured (medevac), add an *extra* +5, giving up to +10 in total.

#### Treatment

If the organization has medical facilities – like most armed services (Military Rank), many governments (Administrative, Feudal, or Political Rank), and numerous organized religions throughout history (Religious Rank) – then a PC who presents himself there or succeeds at an AR for *Evacuation* (above) can make an AR to get treatment for injury, illness, etc. In fantasy worlds, Magical or Religious Rank often gives access to curative magic.

*Modifiers:* +5 for something life-threatening. Apply the +1 to +5 for an "appropriate" request if the condition that requires treatment occurred while serving the organization. These modifiers are cumulative.

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The trouble is, when you say to a general "You and whose army?", he just has to point out of the window. – Major Clogston, in **Monstrous Regiment** 

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