

# Teambuilder: “PUSH THE BUTTON?”

**Target Audience: All Teams**

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## **Purpose**

“Teambuilder” PACEsetters are designed to put a select group of people into a simulated scenario in order to help the individuals grow closer together and identify as a team. The scenarios include stressors (i.e. complicated problems, time limits, resource constraints, etc.) that are used to help make the scenario challenging, fun, and educational. Each Teambuilder is designed in such a way that allows for flexibility and creativity in its execution. Feel free to experiment with them and please share the results with us at the contact information located at the bottom of this page.

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## **Description**

This Teambuilder is a table top scenario designed to:

1. Help individuals identify sources of conflict and stress
2. To demonstrate the effect individual perceptions of situations have on behavior and decision making under conflict and stress
3. To experience the effects of various types of role power on persons in a decision-making situation

The scenario involves the decision to pre-emptively launch nuclear weapons on an enemy that has already “nuked” a city of another country who did not meet their demands.

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## **Employ**

**Group Size:** 12 people

**Time:** 1.0 hour

**Materials:** a) A copy of the Missiles Situation Sheet; b) A copy of one of the Missiles Role Sheets for each participant (there are only 12 roles for the flight, any over 12 will act as observers); c) A copy of the Missiles Crisis sheet; d) Optional: A place card identifying each participant’s role

The Scenario Controller explains the objectives of the activity and creates a climate for the role-playing situation. A copy of the Missiles Situation sheet is given to the group. The group is instructed to read the situation sheet thoroughly.

The SCENARIO CONTROLLER randomly distributes the Missiles Role sheets to the participants (The SCENARIO CONTROLLER may choose to observe specific participants in specific roles if desired). The SCENARIO CONTROLLER instructs the participants to read their assigned role sheet but not to show it to other students. Each participant puts a place card or writes on a piece of paper in front of them their role so that all members can see which roles have been assigned to the other group members. The SCENARIO CONTROLLER should emphasize the significance of assuming the role assigned and acting to the behavior described for that role.

Participants are directed to assume their assigned roles, and told they have 30 minutes to decide on the best solution to the missile crisis situation.

After 20 minutes of role playing, the SCENARIO CONTROLLER announces the President has suffered a heart attack and removes the President role-player from each group. The SCENARIO CONTROLLER then gives a copy of the Missiles Crisis sheet to them and tells them to continue role-playing. (The 20-minute time hack for

the President to suffer a heart attack is approximate, if the participants appear to be reaching a decision point earlier than desired, the SCENARIO CONTROLLER can announce the heart attack and remove the President at that time).

For the time remaining, the SCENARIO CONTROLLER allows the students, as a whole flight to discuss the experience, including their answers to the questions on the Missiles Debriefing sheet. The SCENARIO CONTROLLER instructs the students to identify three major sources of conflict and/or stress and an effective way to mitigate/cope with each. Generalized learning from the experience should be elicited from the participants, and each should be, encouraged to formulate their own ideas for personal application of their learning. The SCENARIO CONTROLLER may lead the discussion, but it might be best to allow one of the students to lead.

**Debriefing questions:**

1. What was your group's solution to the crisis?
  2. Did all of you agree with this solution? Did any of you state your disagreement?
  3. Which of the following stressors did your group experience? What contributed to the presence of these stressors?
    - a. Interpersonal conflict?
    - b. Intra-group competition?
    - c. Role conflict?
    - d. Role ambiguity?
    - e. Overload?
    - f. Conflicting demands?
    - g. Responsibility for others?
  4. What other sources of conflict/stress were experienced within your group?
  5. How did individuals respond to the conflict/stress they experienced?
  6. How did role power affect the decision-making?
  7. What would you do differently if you had to do this all over again?
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## EXERCISE MISSILES

(Each participant gets a copy of this)

### *Situation Sheet*

1. You are one of the foremost military or political leaders in the United States and have just been rushed to a bunker hidden deep in the hills near the capital. There are enough supplies in the bunker for the people present to remain here for three years.
2. The leaders of the second most powerful nation in the world, Country X, have just announced they're going to launch a nuclear attack on the United States unless we immediately turn over all of our military bases and equipment outside the CONUS to them. To demonstrate their sincerity in making this threat, they've designated five target cities, each with a population of over one million people, and have stated that they'll launch nuclear missiles against these cities if their demands are not immediately answered.
3. In the past 3 months, Country X has made similar threats to three smaller countries. On each of these occasions, an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council has been called, but Country X holds a permanent seat on the Council and has vetoed all attempts for action against it. Two of the threatened countries relented to the demands of Country X; the third did not, and a city of 750,000 people was destroyed by an attack with nuclear weapons.
4. The threat against our country was delivered to the major television networks, and the entire nation knows about it. However, only the people in this bunker know the identities of the five target cities.
5. Country X has also stated that if one of our missiles is launched against it, it will unleash its entire arsenal against us, thereby ensuring total annihilation of both countries. For us to give in means that Country X will have enough military power, strategic bases, and arms to effectively control the world. We do not know if Country X is bluffing.
6. It takes 22 minutes for a missile with a nuclear warhead to travel from Country X to the closest strategic location within our country. The initial threat was issued at 12:39 P.M.; it is now 1:45 p.m. Country X is waiting for our response.
7. Be sure that your group considers all the alternatives available to it and takes advantage of the time allocated to seek the best possible solution to the situation.

### ***MISSILES ROLE PLAYING SHEET***

(Cut at each dotted line and distribute each role individually and stress to not share with other participants)

#### ***President Role Sheet***

You came from a poor family in Ohio and had to work your way through law school. Two years ago, when you were the junior senator from your state, your party asked you to run for the presidency. You agreed, but didn't expect to win. At 37, you're the youngest President in American history and are determined to do the best possible job while in office. You took office 3 months ago, and you know that all the people in this room feel that they are better qualified to deal with this crisis than you are. The Vice President is especially difficult to deal with because he feels that he should have been the party's choice for the presidency. All the military officers know you had a draft deferment and are considered a "dove," so it is likely that they consider you unqualified to serve as commander of the armed forces. But you are the President, and the responsibility for what happens today rests on your shoulders.

Your family has been moved to a safe area.

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#### ***Vice President Role Sheet***

You should be the President. You served 20 years in Congress, 8 years as Secretary of State during the previous administration, and expected your party to ask you to run for President in the last election. Instead, they asked a young, unknown senator from Ohio, and you end up serving as the vice president. The new President is inexperienced and naive. He has never served in the armed forces and has been labeled a "dove." He took office just 3 months ago and is the youngest President in the history of the country. Now that the country is faced with a crisis the President is not capable of handling, it may be your opportunity to assert yourself and prove that you are the best man for the job. You know that the Chief of the JCS and the Army Chief of Staff are on your side and that the Secretary of Defense is on the President's side. You are not sure about the other people present. On your way to this meeting the President asked you to sit quietly and just nod your head to indicate "yes" when he says something to you.

Your entire family is in one of the target cities.

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#### ***Secretary of Defense Role Sheet***

You really wonder why you are here. You were recently nominated by the President, but have not yet been confirmed by the Congress. You have not been briefed by the military and are meeting the generals here for the first time. The President, an old friend of yours, is 37 years old and assumed office just 3 months ago. His Vice President is bitter because he expected to be asked to run for the presidency. All the military people present feel that you and the President are naive, and maybe they're right.

You don't feel comfortable here and would like to check on your family since they're in one of the target cities.

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***Chief, Joint Chiefs of Staff Role Sheet***

You are the most experienced military officer in the world. All the generals at this meeting look up to you and know that you are the most important person in this room. The Secretary of Defense was just appointed and has not yet been approved by Congress. The Vice President is a power-hungry has been who served 8 years as the Secretary of State under the last President and was not any better then. The new President is inexperienced and naive. He has never served in the military, has been labeled a "dove," and assumed office just 3 months ago. He is only 37 years old. The only way to survive this crisis is to call Country X's bluff. You have no family and believe that, if necessary, both countries should fire all their missiles, totally destroying the outside world. In 3 years the people in this bunker could emerge and begin a new and much better world.

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***Army Chief of Staff Role Sheet***

There are a lot of stupid people at this table, especially the Chief of Naval Operations. For years he has been cutting into your budget and now when you really need all the strategic weapons you've been asking for, they are not there. Let the Navy save the world if it is so damned important! The President is young, naive, and just took office 3 months ago. The Chief of the JCS is becoming senile. Only the Vice President may still have the capacity to assume leadership and resolve the crisis. The Vice President is experienced, knowledgeable, and has been against the attacks on the Army's budget.

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***Chief of Naval Operations Role Sheet***

For years you've claimed the Navy would be the first line of defense in this type of crisis because of its mobility at sea. Now that the crisis is here, it's up to you to solve it. The President is inexperienced and naive. He took office just 3 months ago. The Vice President and Chief of the JCS are ambitious and vengeful, sometimes even psychotic. The Army Chief of Staff hates you for cutting into his budgets. He is waiting to prove that you were wrong and he was right. The pressure is on you to resolve this crisis.

Your family lives in one of the target cities.

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***Air Force Chief of Staff Role Sheet***

Although you've been in the Air Force for 27 years, your life recently underwent a dramatic change when you survived a serious airplane crash. Your family was killed in the crash. You now believe that all things are planned somehow and will work out for the best. You wish you could transfer this faith to the new President, who is still naive, and the Vice President and Chief of the JCS, who are so hard and callous. If this crisis is meant to be, it must be for a reason. After all, history has shown that all events perform some function--even the great plagues reduced overpopulation and encouraged medical science. The way you see it, this situation is meant to teach mankind a great lesson.

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### ***Guest 1 Role Sheet***

All the other people at this table are maniacs! The President and the Secretary of Defense are young, naive, and inexperienced. Everyone else is a power monger. You may be the only rational person in this room, but none of these people know you. You're a military and political science professor at a major university and are considered one of the world's greatest authorities on the potential threat of nuclear warfare. You believe Country X is bluffing; there's no way they'd risk total destruction by using nuclear weapons against the United States. You had a briefing scheduled with the President for today, and when the crisis started you were asked to accompany his staff to this bunker. Actually, you feel out of place because no one really wants you here.

You would rather be comforting your family, even though you believe there is no danger.

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### ***Guest 2 Role Sheet***

You are the world's foremost authority on Country X and have been rushed here by the President's staff. You have never met any of the people at this table, and none of them know who you are or why you are here. The President was recently elected and is not ready for this type of crisis. You do not know if the other people here are capable of dealing with it either, but you are certain that Country X is not bluffing.

You are worried because your family lives in one of the target cities and you have three small children.

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### ***Surgeon General Role Sheet***

You are the Surgeon General on the President's staff. You inform the President that casualties will be in the millions and the fallout will result in even further casualties. You do not want to see this occur. You do not know if the other people here are capable of dealing with it either, but you believe strongly that Country X is not bluffing.

You are worried because your family lives in one of the target cities.

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### ***JAG Role Sheet***

You are the President's chief legal advisor on military affairs. The President's staff has rushed you here. You have spoken from time to time with the people at this table, and assisted them on other legal issues. The President appointed you for this position. You have had several arguments with the Vice President and have never seen things his way. You feel certain the other people here are capable of dealing with this issue, but you are also certain that Country X is bluffing. In your legal career, you have often bluffed the other side all the way right up to the trial starting. You believe this is what is occurring here. You will do your best to convince the others of this.

You are single and recently divorced.

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***Chaplain Role Sheet***

You have served in the military for 25 years and are appointed as the Chaplain to the President. You have met most people at this table, and think highly of their abilities. The President was recently elected and has spoken to you from time to time. You believe deeply in your religious faith and want to assist those who are upset by this situation. You are deeply concerned with the ethical issue of using nuclear weapons and killing innocent victims.

You have no immediate family but your parents live in one of the target cities.

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**\*\* This is what the SCENARIO CONTROLLER should hand to the participants after 20 minutes into the exercise\*\***

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***Crisis Sheet***

Country X has just launched five missiles. We do not know if they are armed with nuclear warheads.