



Zombie Game

The most interactive gaming simulation on Crisis Management and Crisis Communications

Information brochure



About the Zombie Game

Imagine the following scenario. *Multiple zombie outbreaks unleash havoc across the world. Our planet's largest cities have been immobilised and large groups of dangerous zombie creatures pose unforeseen threats to everything we all hold dear. Our future and legacy are at stake. Luckily, NATO member states have been preparing to battle a scenario like this: armies dispatch highly specialised troops to pin down zombie groups, communications specialists do their best to inform citizens and crisis managers in the war room have to make sure their values and strategic goals are aligned with everyone involved.*

The Zombie Game is the most interactive serious game on crisis management, and it is the only serious game to integrate core principles of operational crisis response, strategic crisis management and crisis communications. It offers all organisations, teams and individuals a unique way of exploring elements of crisis management, no matter the level of experience. With minor changes to the game setting, a Zombie Game session can be held as an awareness session, a part of a crisis training or even an executive session exploring themes like strategic intent and tactical planning. One thing is certain: a Zombie Game session has a lasting impression on whomever who gets to play, forever changing the way they view crisis.

What are the objectives of the game?

This simulation offers a unique perspective on crisis management and communications. Participants take on a list of challenging tasks in order to save the world. To achieve this objective, they have to work closely together, get their priorities straight and use their resources wisely in order to mitigate the zombie threat on an operational, strategic and communicative level. Players have the opportunity to test their knowledge and experience in highly bizarre, extreme and, above all, unimaginable circumstances.

Like all gaming simulations, the Zombie Game has the purpose of training leadership competences and expose flaws or shortcomings regarding strategic thinking, tactical planning and more. It is designed to bring out the key issues when managing crises or working together. The zombie setting offers participants an understanding of complex situations and makes them discussable, improving innovative thinking in regard to crisis preparedness.



The Alert Network (communications team) at work.

We at PM believe that the Zombie Game goes to the essence of crisis management during the first hours of a crisis. This is the moment when chaos reigns and where everyone involved is busy finding a rhythm and trying to create some kind of order while responding to the crisis.

The game is played by three groups of people, each having their own purpose and goals:

- **The Battlefield** is in charge of crisis operations. They have to create and execute a battle plan. Their main challenge is to create a shared appreciation of the situation at hand, processing large amounts of information and reducing threats. Their tasks focus on decision-making under stress.
- **The Alert Network** takes on crisis communication. They have to communicate about the attacks. Their main focus is to apply crisis communication techniques in order to generate output under time pressure and retrieving information from others.
- **The War Room** is in charge of governance. Being the team with control over assets and the best overall view on the situation, their objective is developing an overall crisis strategy and align this strategy with the efforts by the Battlefield and the Alert Network.



Some of the materials used during the game.

Is experience with crisis management or crisis communications necessary?

Participants do not need to have experience with crisis management or crisis communications to enjoy and learn from the Zombie Game, as a big part of its key takeaways are also applicable on collaborating as a team and decision-making. Organisations can play the game on different levels:

1. During an **awareness session**, the main purpose of the Zombie Game is to change the mindsets of participants towards crisis. Even though fun is one of the major elements here, the trainers will spend a considerable amount of time on the lessons learned to conclude the session. Participants will take away valuable lessons on crisis management and communications, to be implemented in their own organisations. This session typically takes 3-4 hours.
2. During a **training session**, we teach teams the basic principles and work processes of both crisis management and crisis communications. We then use the Zombie Game as a crisis exercise to test the participants. Depending on the schedule of the day, teams sometimes play the Zombie Game two times in order to see their progress after the training. This session takes a full day.

3. During an **executive session**, we use the Zombie Game to get executives thinking about their own organisation and the way it might react to unwanted and uncertain events. We typically start the session by playing the game, after which a series of keynotes dive deeper into what the simulation means, how the game elements are symbolising organisation's processes and what organisations can learn from the game. With assistance of PM advisors, participants then explore each gaming element separately in a vacuum, while working on a strategy for their own organisations on how to deal with crisis. This session typically takes 1-2 days.

What are the practical requirements?

A Zombie Game session is quite different than a regular workshop or training session. Below you'll find the most important practical requirements to get as much value as possible out of the experience:

- The game is either played in three separate rooms close to each other, or one big room for the three teams to play in. Playing in separate rooms makes the experience a bit more challenging. This is preferably discussed with the PM advisors in advance.
- It is recommended to have a whiteboard (or flip chart) and projector for each of the teams. Only one projector is necessary when playing in one room. Audio speakers are optional.
- The total amount of players for one gaming session is ± 24 , which is 8 players per team. The minimum is 16 players. Small deviations from these numbers are not a problem. It is also possible to split larger groups into different sessions or have one group observe the others. For executive sessions the different game setting allows much smaller groups, starting at six people.
- The game setting for an executive session is different. The main differences are that the groups can be much smaller and all participants play in one room by default.

Note: all requirements are discussable. There is a possible solution for every challenge.

What is the origin of the simulation?

Early 2018, PM was tasked with creating a new training day concept for a client. The organisation asked us to combine the proposed learning objectives with fun and creative elements. After long discussions at the office, our team decided to pitch an innovative serious game: the Zombie Game. Our team is very creative and had been using elements of gamification during our trainings for years after all. After the client greenlit our idea, we started developing a prototype, which we tested thoroughly with friends and colleagues. Praising feedback motivated us to further develop the game. Since then, we have finished the gameplay and kept playing with our clients, top researchers and practitioners within our field.

What are some references?

Several organisations have had the opportunity to experience a Zombie Game session, including:

- Web communication teams from the European Parliament (Brussels, Belgium)
- Business Unit Executive Education at Antwerp Management School (Antwerp, Belgium)
- Bachelor's students at Howest University College (Kortrijk, Belgium)
- Executive MBA students from Lingnan (University) College (China)

- EMBA alumni from Antwerp Management School (Antwerp, Belgium)

PM has several more Zombie Game simulation sessions planned in the near future, including for:

- an organisation of prevention advisors for schools (Antwerp, Belgium)
- a local psychosocial support organisation (Sint-Niklaas, Belgium)
- the federal crisis communication support team 'Team D5' (Brussels, Belgium)
- the regional department of Red Cross (West-Flanders, Belgium)



PM advisors moderate each gaming session to optimise the learning experience.

How much does the Zombie Game cost?

Prices are available upon request. Please contact us at info@pm.be or via your contact at PM.

Where can I find more information?

Read more about the Zombie Game on www.pm.be. Do not hesitate to reach out via info@pm.be or via your contact person at PM • Risk Crisis Change.



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About PM – Risk Crisis Change

PM makes organisations more resilient by preparing them to manage crisis situations. We provide consultancy, training, advice and support in all stages of the crisis timeline: before, during and after.

Our PM team is on a mission to improve crisis preparedness on four levels: individual, team, organisation and society. Every day our team members are involved in numerous activities related to crisis management that range from training, teaching, researching and writing to applying our practical expertise and scientific insights in acute real-life situations. We are specialised in the coordination and execution of crisis management strategies that integrate policy making processes, strategic crisis communication and coordination of operational response actions. Our goal is to prepare organisations for crisis management, and above all help them face crises with our support!

PM was founded by Stijn Pieters and Dr. Hugo Marynissen in 1999 as a full-service communication agency specialised in crisis communications. Together with Tim Van Achte they decided to focus entirely on integrated crisis management services after being involved in the crisis management and crisis communication of a major gas explosion in Belgium in 2004. Robbert Meulemeester joined in 2016, Wim Uyttenhove in 2017, Julien Draillard Losada & Dr. Mike Lauder in 2018 and Kim De Raedt in 2019.

We invest a lot of time, energy, and means in executive and specialised education. We highly believe the best way to serve our clients is turning peer reviewed, state-of-the-art scientific research into practical frameworks and applicable methodologies. PM brings together high level competent steering teams that group experienced members of our team with experts in the client's organisation, complemented with preferred partners and freelancers for each project. We hold our team members, partners and freelancers in high regard and value them for their management skills, expertise, scientific background, network, teaching qualities and their motivation and belief in making the world a better and more resilient place.

Stijn Pieters is a crisis strategist specialising in risk and crisis management and communications for companies and governments. He is co-founder and Managing Partner of PM.

Stijn has a background in digital communication, strategic communication, public relations, social media strategies, crisis communication, crisis management and disaster management. He holds a Postgraduate in disaster management, Campus Vesta (University of Antwerp). In his dissertation Stijn covered the pre-crisis conditions for effective learning during crisis communication simulations in organisations.

Stijn is co-founder of the CIP Institute, a collaboration platform that advocates research and development in the field of risk and crisis. He is an active member of the Federal Belgian Crisis Communications Response Team. Stijn is also an author and frequent lecturer in crisis management and communications.

Dr. Hugo Marynissen is a crisis strategist who specialises in risk and crisis management for companies and governments. He is co-founder and Senior Partner of PM.

Hugo is Professor and Academic Director of the Executive PhD programme at Antwerp Management School. He is a visiting professor at various universities such as University of Antwerp (Belgium), Campus Vesta (Belgium), Cranfield University (UK), Saïd Business School – University of Oxford (UK), University of Maryland College Park (MD, USA) and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki (Finland).

Hugo is the president of the CIP Institute, a non-profit organisation that brings together scientists and practitioners in an inspiring and innovative platform to exchange and develop knowledge about the Complex and Interactive Processes in the field of crisis.

Hugo holds a Doctoral degree from Cranfield University – School of Management (UK), and a Master's degree in Change Management from HEC Business School (France). The focus of his research is on team dynamics in crisis teams, safety leadership within so-called “High-Reliability Organisations”, and the role of crisis communication during extreme events.

Robbert Meulemeester is a crisis advisor and strategist at PM who has specialised in crisis intelligence, perception and sentiment analysis, scenario building and the editorial work process during a crisis. Starting his professional career at a young age, he has already built an extensive background as an entrepreneur, financial advisor and event manager. At PM he is a consultant on training and simulations for crisis management and communication teams, digital communication, marketing strategies and media handling. He also provides acute crisis support for organisations in need.

Being an avid believer in learning through serious gaming, Robbert developed the Zombie Crisis Game, an interactive serious game on crisis management and crisis communication. Robbert is also an author and frequent lecturer in crisis communications, digital marketing, social media and entrepreneurship. In the past he lectured at organisations and academic institutions such as Antwerp Management School (AMS), the Business Continuity Institute, University of Leuven, University of Hasselt (UHasselt), Campus Vesta, Thomas More, Howest University College and others.

Robbert has a background in finance, event management, corporate communications, digital and social media marketing and public relations. He is a certified digital marketer and is active member of the CIP Institute and the European Roller Coaster Club.

Kim De Raedt is a crisis advisor and strategist at PM. With a history of working in press, media relations and government, at PM she is in touch with every process and is keeping a keen eye on marketing and the CIP Simulator.

In 2011, after short stops at Ghent University and the regional television broadcast AVS, Kim began working for the Belgian newspaper Het Nieuwsblad. She started as an online journalist, but quickly evolved to coordinator of the website. After 5 years she left the company for a job at the City of Ghent. There, Kim coordinated both press services and crisis communications. Since 2017, Kim is an active member of TeamD5, the Federal Belgian Crisis Communications Response Team.

Being a certified diver, you'll probably find Kim under water when she's not working. She has a passion for traveling, but loves the marine life of the Oosterschelde as well.

Julien Drailard Losada is a crisis advisor and strategist with a background in law and EU politics. After his graduation, Julien worked within European institutions as a parliamentary assistant of the French MEP Françoise Grossetête at the European Parliament. He then turned to the private sector and worked for AnimalhealthEurope, an organisation based in Brussels promoting the European veterinary industry. Meanwhile, Julien was able to pursue his interest in crisis management by preparing simulations for LyonMUN (Model United Nation). This is an NGO organizing international simulations for the UN.

Steven van den Oord is researcher and lecturer at Antwerp Management School (AMS). At University of Antwerp he is a project member and currently concluding his doctoral dissertation. Steven is a graduate from Tilburg University where he developed his professional- and research interests. Steven contributes to PM's research activities and consulting activities.

Among other topics, his research focuses on the design and governance of purpose-oriented networks, its effectiveness, and how they develop over time. Recently his research interest has broadened towards organizational learning, digital safety, and organizational innovation of police force and fire brigades. Over the years Steven has given various keynotes and talks at (inter-)national conferences and consulted practitioners and public policy planners. Recently he started to be become published in (inter-)national scientific and practitioners journals.

Steven is experienced in teaching Executive Master students as well supervising both Executive Master and Executive Ph.D. students at Antwerp Management School. In addition, Steven has instructed and supervised Master and Bachelor students at University of Antwerp and supervised Bachelor students at Avans University of Applied Sciences.

