United Airlines Case Study

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

United Airlines Case Study

# Introduction

In this day and age, it is very important for the business stakeholders at all the levels to make sure that how the project of the company image tends to turn out. Special care and consideration have to be made to make sure that how the organization is treating its customers. For United Airlines, it all wants horribly wrong for them when an incident happened in the flight 3411 that witnessed the forced evacuation of the Vietnamese American passenger David Dao. The incident happened when the management of the flight requested him to remove from his seat and when he refused to do so, the Aviation Security Officers were involved. During his removal, he had physically assaulted him as his face was stuck against an armchair and was subject to abuse. The subject incident lead to lot of criticism for the way organization handled the incident due to the fact that there was a sense of appreciation of the staff in the aftermath of the incident. In this paper, this incident is going to be discussed from the perspective of the management.

# Principles of teamwork within an organization

At the broader level within an organization, it is quite important to make sure that they take into account how the principles of the team management are going to be managed at the given point of time. The idea for any organization is to ensure that the swift and coordinated action is needed to be taken when any such incident is faced and there has to be pro activeness at the level of the organization at the particular point of time. Not only that, the effort is also needed to be made to make sure that the situation is diffused. This is where the biggest failure of the United Airlines lied, they were not able to make sure that all the stakeholders and the communicational touchpoints were being used to condemn the incident. Instead, the first communication in this regard came from the Chief Executive Officer also came forward and it seems that at least at the initial level, he was accepting some of the claims that were made during the course of the incident. Not only that, the management was far from taking any action in terms of how the whole situation was managed. The lack of synergy among all the different stakeholders in the organization was visible quite easily. At the same time, there was lack of planning and coordination among all the end users due to which the communication broke down. In some ways, the integrated communication at the teamwork level was missing in this situation.

# Best practices for leaders

One of the key thing that the leaders have to do in the wake of the crisis is to make sure that they are following and adopting all the practices that the leader need to follow at the given point of time and based on that action, they should be making sure that how the respective action is being taken at the appropriate point of time. Whenever there is any crisis, rather than denying the whole situation, effort is needed to be made to make sure that the acceptance of the mistake is needed to be made. Now this is where the management needs to be careful. They need to make sure that the team members and the own people of the organization are not thrown under the bus and instead the idea must be to make sure that the admission of the mistake is needed to be made at the collective level. Most enterprises these days will use a social listening platform like Brandwatch Analytics for crisis detection. It’s one of the most commonly employed social listening use cases. Enterprises can monitor real-time conversations about their brand and set up alerts to inform them when there are changes of note. Thus social media strategy needed to be more pro active.

# How the composition of leadership influences outcomes

It has to be noted that whenever there is a crisis, the composition of the management plays an important role as far as making sure that all the underlying communications are being made in a timely manner. In the aftermath of the incident, there was not much effort being carried out by the CEO to bring on board other team members and he became the only face of the organization. What it gave an impression that the decision making that is carried out in the organization is such that is highly antistatic in nature as there is only one person who is standing in the front. Not only that, in this day and age where due to the influence of the social media and internet the word of mouth spreads very rapidly, there was not an attempt made by the stakeholders to make sure that they are taking into account some of the other mediums of communication to ensure that the situation can be mitigated in some manner. This was one of the major issues that was faced as far as the whole problem was concerned at the given point of time. Not only that, the other thing that could have been done by them at that point of time was that they could have made sure that some sort of media release, or usage of the social media communication could have been carried out. The other lesson that one gets from the whole situation is that at times it is not advised to make sure that the management or the CEO of the organization should come forward and take the blame. Instead there is a need for the other stakeholders to make sure that how in terms of the other effort among the stakeholders is needed to be carried out. So, the process management is something that could have been improved. In any such situation, the CEO instead of taking the responsibility, initially seems to have applauded the staff who had carried out this act. On the other hand, in the next 24 hours, there was a rebuttal from the same CEO, so the messages that came from the management in the wake of the scandal were rather confusing to say the least and leaves a question mark about how the broader decision making is carried out at the level of the organization.

# Judging the success of project teams, immediate and longer term

Most of the times, the tendency on the part of the management is that they tend to look at these incidents in isolation and there is not enough planning that is carried out at the level of the organization. What it means is that the effort has to be made to make sure that the council needs to act in a more independent manner and the long-term reasons for such an incident are needed to be kept in mind. Now, one of the key things that can be seen from the given incident is that there was lack of planning and foresight. The staff at the United Airlines were not really happy in terms of the compensation they were provided. There were logistical mistakes in terms of how the line haul planning was being done at the end of the organization during the course of the whole process that seems to have aggravated the situation. The incident raises question mark about the operational performance of the entity and how the resource management is needed to be done by them at the particular point of time. So, all these reasons are needed to kept in mind when analysing the overall situation. This aspect of the flight is also a nice example of Bastiat’s “the seen and the unseen.” Suppose United had decided to leave four passengers on the flight, preventing the crew members from getting seats. We might well applaud United’s surface humanity because we’d see how it valued those customers and wanted to get them to Louisville on time. What we might not see is the canceled flight the next morning, which was the direct, if unseen, result of that decision.

# Conclusion

In the hindsight, the whole incident had left a question mark about the management and the way organizational efficiency of the United Airlines is supposed to be evaluated. There are some key issues that one can see here, and effort would have been made to make sure that the more controlled approach towards the crisis was carried out. The first thing was that there was lack of acceptance on the part of the management that escalated the whole situation. The ideal thing that could have been done in this instance was to make sure that the resource allocation could have been improved at the broader level. Furthermore, there was a need to make sure that the realization was there among the stakeholders that the whole communication was carried out in the more organized manner. Other than that, there are long term issues as well that are needed to be looked at such as how the line haul operational management was being done.

**References**

Anitsal, M. M., Anitsal, I., & Anitsal, S. (2019). Is your business sustainable? A sentiment analysis of air passengers of top 10 US-based airlines. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, *29*(1), 25-41.

Anitsal, M., Anitsal, I., & Anitsal, S. (2017). A sentiment analysis of air passengers of top ten us based airlines.

Crowther, K. (2017). United Airlines' Public Relations Crisis.

Cullen, T. R. (2018). *(Don’t) Come Fly With Me: A Qualitative Examination of United Airlines’ Public Relations Crisis Following United Express Flight 3411* (Doctoral dissertation, uga).

Su, L., Stepchenkova, S., & Kirilenko, A. P. (2019). Online public response to a service failure incident: Implications for crisis communications. *Tourism Management*, *73*, 1-12.

Teo, T. S., & Lim, V. K. (2019). Overbooking Debacle at United Airlines, Inc.