

2022

The Shift Towards Social Media and Complimenting Crisis Communication Strategies for Business

Isabella Granara
Assumption University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorstheses>



Part of the [Business Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Granara, Isabella, "The Shift Towards Social Media and Complimenting Crisis Communication Strategies for Business" (2022). *Honors Theses*. 104.

<https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/honorstheses/104>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Digital Commons @ Assumption University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Assumption University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@assumption.edu.

The Shift Towards Social Media and Complimenting
Crisis Communication Strategies for Businesses
Isabella Granara

Faculty Supervisor: Professor Megan Hill, M.S.

Department of Business: Organizational Communication

A Thesis Submitted to Fulfill the Requirements of the
Honors Program at Assumption University

Spring 2022

Abstract

The following thesis will surround social media and its impact on crisis communication. It will also aim to compile the most useful strategies businesses can implement when they are struggling with a social media crisis. To do so, the shift towards social media will be discussed, specifically why it poses an issue on businesses when involved in online crises. The topic of social media's impact on crisis communication, as well as updated social media crisis communication research, will also be a topic in this paper. An incident from 2017 surrounding a United Airlines social media crisis (Chapter 4) will be used to exemplify how businesses should *not* respond to a social media crisis. The strategies listed in Chapter 5 are backed by multiple sources and were compiled in hopes of helping businesses deal with online crises in the future. There is a current need for social media crisis communication findings, as technology quickly advances faster than research available to the business world.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Recent Shift Towards Web and Social Media: How It's a Pressing Issue.....	4
Chapter 2: How Social Media has Changed Crisis Communication	7
Crisis Formation and Development.....	9
Crisis Preparedness.....	10
Ch. 3: Up to Date Social Mediated Crisis Communication Research	10
Situational Crisis Communication Theory	10
Table 3.1	12
Table 3.2.....	13
Social Mediated Crisis Communication.....	14
Ch. 4: An Analysis of Crisis Communication Strategies on Social Media	16
United Airlines Flight 3411, April 2017	16
The Aftermath	17
Figure 4.1	18
Figure 4.2.....	18
Figure 4.3.....	19
Figure 4.4.....	19
Figure 4.5.....	20
Figure 4.6.....	20
Figure 4.7.....	21
Figure 4.8.....	22
Figure 4.9.....	22
Figure 4.10.....	23
Figure 4.11.....	24
Preventing the Incident.....	24
Ch. 5: Social Media Crisis Communication Strategies to Implement	25
Address the Crisis in a Timely Manner.....	27
Tailor Your Messages Accordingly	28
Figure 5.1	30
Monitor Social Media Platforms	30
Do Not Post Anything That Could Bring Organization Back into Disrepute	31
Figure 5.1	32
Be Prepared for a Crisis Before it Begins	33
Establish a Crisis Communications/Public Relations Team	34
Conclusion	35
Acknowledgements	35
Bibliography	37

Chapter 1: Recent Shift Towards Web and Social Media: How It's a Pressing Issue

In recent years, the shift towards technological-based communication has become more prevalent in the business world. The time period between 2000 and 2010, also known as Web 2.0, was the beginning of the internet's collaboration with its users. Web 2.0 applications, such as blogs and wikis, were among the first user-generated sites on the internet (Cornelissen, 2020, p. 37). Along with the new technologies of Web 2.0 came social networking sites, or rather social media. Social media can be defined as "various digital tools and applications that facilitate perceptions of interactions and content exchange among and between publics and organizations" (Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D., 2009, p. 1). In simpler terms, social media is made up of networking sites that facilitate the distribution of information within a community (Bratu, S., 2016, p. 233). Social media is the new wave of digital communication and its influence on consumer behavior can be both an opportunity and a challenge for businesses. Today, consumers are not only more knowledgeable and conscious, but also more demanding of businesses (Civelek, M. E., et.al., 2016, p. 114). While consumer behavior is rapidly changing and evolving, businesses need to adapt to the environment.

Although organizations should approach addressing a crisis on social media with caution, it creates an opportunity for them, as well. It is extremely essential for organizations to have a basis to their crisis communication practices when facing *any* type of crisis, but given the unpredictability of a social media crisis, a plan is a necessity. The following excerpt was pulled from "The Use of Social Media in Risk and Crisis Communication" by Cecile Wendling, Jack Radisch, and Stephane Jacobzone:

Internet can nowadays speed up communication and awareness, beyond that of the traditional risk and crisis communication strategy because it allows real time communication. The number of calls coming from traditional media, the number of press

conferences can hence be reduced during disaster and become more manageable by the staff in charge, through the use of internet and other new media. (Cecile, W., et. al., 2013)

Social media should be used in a crisis because it is a tool where organizations can reach stakeholders faster than ever before. Nijkrake, Gosselt, Gutteling (2015) found that although the reasons and types of crises vary, “the main reason of crises is failure of integration between institution and its external environment.” It would only be wise for organizations to adapt to the changing media environment and integrate social media in their crisis communication plans.

Along with the opportunities social media provides comes threats, specifically its impact on a business’ crisis communication tactics. Crisis communication is simply the way an organization communicates or deals with a crisis. Civelek, Cemberci, and Eralp (2016) define crises as “unexpected entities with a potential to create negative results”. Crisis communication is affected by social media in many ways because it alters the traditional landscape of media. Where traditional forms of media force recipients into a submissive role, social media allows them to interact, participate, and comment on content posted (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., 2022, p. 9). This new way of online interaction poses a threat to organizations in more ways than one.

To begin, the idea that users can post their own content can be threatening to businesses. It not only could potentially lead to the spread of false news, but also the reproduction of that content. This gives a significant number of individuals the ability to communicate simultaneously and the power to potentially hurt an organization’s brand or reputation (Wendling, C., 2013, p. 8). Studies within the field of social media have determined that the more a piece of information spreads, the more accredited it becomes. After that message is shared a certain amount of times, likened to a threshold, it is perceived as the truth (Civelek, M. E., et.al., 2016, p. 116). So, if users were to post false news, it would simply not matter if the news was accurate or not – the more the information spreads, the more people would be inclined

to believe it. The increasing number of users posting online makes it almost impossible for businesses to keep track of the content shared, as well (Civelek, M. E., et. al., 115).

It is extremely hard to confirm the accuracy of the content shared in Web 2.0 applications. [...] Mixture of trustworthy content and untrustworthy professional content brings terrible information pollution along with it. As a result, valuable contents become hard to distinguish by getting mixed with invaluable ones. This situation brings the risk of making the whole content an uncontrolled and invaluable pile. (Civelek, M. E., et. al., 115)

Although there are times online rumors may not be accurate, they still have the power to represent accusations that hurt a business' reputation (Valentini, C., et. al., 59).

The overall power of social media is also a threat to consider. The following passage is from a scholarly article that speaks to the acceleration of information through social media:

[The] internet speeds all the processes in a scale unknown in recent history, which represents both an opportunity, as it can speed the appropriate emergency responses, but presents with challenges in terms of spreading inappropriate rumors. (Cecile, W., et. al., 2013)

The internet rapidly changes and evolves constantly. This is a big area of concern for organizations, as it leaves them reacting instead of being proactive. To truly understand the magnitude of social media, refer to the 2014 Gezi Park Protests in Turkey. When events began, 1.8 million Twitter users were on social media. After only 13 days, the protests went viral and Twitter reached 10 million users (Civelek, M. E., et.al., 2016, p. 116). That would mean there was over a 450 percent increase of Twitter users in a matter of days. In this regard, social media was used as a communication tool for protestors and activists across the world, but this also translates to organizations in crises. Social media has the power to accelerate the sharing of information on "a hugely unimaginable scale in real time" (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 58). Once again, this leaves businesses on the reactive side of crisis communications, which is not an appropriate strategy. Now that the power of social media has been addressed, as well as the

uncontrolled spread of information above, we can focus on what businesses can do to address the new media landscape.

Later throughout the text, key strategies surrounding how businesses can alter their social media crisis communication plans will be discussed. For now, the only important piece of information that should be taken away from this chapter is that businesses *need* to adapt to the changing media environment. As said earlier, businesses can benefit from social media because it allows them to address and respond to stakeholders quickly and efficiently. On the other hand, users can spread false news that is difficult for businesses to track. To combat this, businesses must be willing to adapt to these new communication channels. “Organizations no longer have a choice about whether to integrate social media into crisis management, the only choice is to do so” (Jin, Y., et. al., 2014, p. 76). Studies have shown that there is a low survival rate for businesses who do not react and find solutions to threats in a timely manner (Civelek, M. E., et.al., 2016, p. 112). So, how can organizations strategize to address online crises? Currently, there is limited research surrounding social media and crisis communication, but scholars all over the world have begun to focus on the field of social-mediated communication, or SMCC. Over the past 13 years there has been an increasing attention to SMCC. SMCC, as well as information regarding situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) which is being revised to include social media, will be discussed further in the Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: How Social Media has Changed Crisis Communication

As stated previously, a crisis can be described as “unexpected entities with potential to create negative results” (Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 112). It is difficult for organizations to be prepared and respond to crises effectively due to their unforeseen nature, but crises can cause harm to a company’s overall structure, such as reputation, financial state, employees, etc.,

(Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 112). Corporations can utilize crisis communication in order to contain crises among stakeholders involved. Communication is ultimately about the *construction* of meaning that is meant to lead to some understanding between a sender/receiver, audiences, publics, stakeholders, or overall communities (Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W., p. 11, 2013a). Timothy Sellnow and Matthew Seeger (2013a) define the term “crisis communication” in their book *Theorizing Crisis Communication*:

Crisis communication could simply be understood as the ongoing process of creating shared meaning among and between groups, communities, individuals and agencies, within the ecological context of a crisis, for the purpose of preparing for and reducing, limiting and responding to threats and harm. This definition points to the diversity of communicators involved, both senders and receivers, and the instrumental and functional elements of communication during a crisis.” (Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W., 2013a, p. 13)

Consumer culture is continuously evolving and because of this, there is little information surrounding modern day social movements’ impact on corporations and what corporation characteristics make them more susceptible to the negative impacts of them. Even more so the introduction and explosion of the new media landscape has changed crisis communication, as Web 2.0 technologies foster more interactive conversations between communities than traditional means of communication (Cornelissen, J., 2020a, p. 38). It can be argued that it is too early to predict how digital communication and new media developments will change crisis communication practices, but this shift is already impacting how conversations occur, how news is spread, and how stakeholders view a company (Cornelissen, J., 2020a, p. 39). Social media has become an outlet for stakeholders to discuss crises and, in some cases, form them (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 57).

As the new media landscape develops, crisis communication is more often occurring online (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 58). Along with this development, the public’s attitude

surrounding the internet has changed. Research has also shown that users have a tendency to give more credibility to social media coverage than former ways to media coverage (newspapers, television, etc.) (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Organizations have begun to use traditional forms of media coverage coupled with the Internet to carry out their crisis response actions in order to ensure the maximum amount of exposure (Perry, Taylor, & Doerfel 2003). As we determined in the previous chapter of this thesis, an organization's achievement mostly depends on their adaptation to the environment (Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 113). But before organizations begin to adapt, they must first understand *how* the new media landscape is changing the formation and development of a crisis.

Crisis Formation and Development

Social media has affected the way crises not only form but develop overtime. Today, online conversations are not necessarily confined to the social networking site they take place on – they are able to move from one site to another, and even to offline arenas.

When publics become aware of this content, online conversations serve as a mechanism to discursively shape and construct public opinions on the critical situation by sharing and discussing such content, giving meaning to critical experiences that publics directly or indirectly face. Thus, a process of sense making occurs, in which online sources can shape the opinions of others who do not directly experience a crisis. (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 59).

It is through this process that many issues form and develop into crises, given that social media plays a big role in shaping crisis awareness and perceptions of the public (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 60). Social media has changed the formation/development of a crises and the role of communication from a “tool” into a “fundamental activity for ‘pre, during, and post crisis management” (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 60). Organizations now must be able to prevent and/or monitor a crisis at all stages, as well as potentially engage with online publics in order to ensure

false information does not spread. Crisis preparedness is key, especially in today's new media landscape that shares information at an unprecedented rate.

Crisis Preparedness

As said previously, the ability of organizations to adapt to their external environment is extremely important. In modern times, this means being able to adapt to social media and how to manage crisis communications on different platforms. Businesses should prepare for a crisis before they occur; good crisis management is being prepared. The idea of crisis preparedness and how to implement it will be expanded upon further in Chapter 5, along with the most effective social media crisis management strategies. Chapter 3 will share up to date research on social media crisis communication.

Ch. 3: Up to Date Social Media Crisis Communication Research

The previously discussed topics are extremely vital to the formation of the most effective social media crisis management strategies, but so is the existing knowledge regarding the topic. The current chapter will focus on the up to date research regarding social media crisis communication research, specifically two main terms referred to often in relevant literature: situational crisis communication theory and social mediated crisis communication. It is important to acknowledge up to date findings because it not only shows us where the research currently stands, but where it is headed as well.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

One of the most dominant theories in crisis communication is the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). SCCT draws upon the attribution theory, a commonly used theory that attempts to not only describe but *explain* the processes of a person's everyday explanations (Manusov, V., & Spitzberg, B., p. 37). The theory assumes that people attempt to

make sense of events by attributing a certain cause or intention to them. SCCT is similar in the way that it argues that crises are “negative events that lead people to make attributions” regarding the organization’s crisis responsibility (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 22). The attributions that people make have a strong impact on the way they react and feel towards a crisis (Weiner, 1995). Crisis responsibility is the most crucial variable in SCCT and refers to the amount of responsibility stakeholders hold an organization in a crisis accountable for (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 22). According to SCCT, crisis communicators should evaluate the degree to which stakeholders attribute responsibility to the organization and use that information to determine a response.

SCCT recommends that crisis communicators examine the crisis type and the intensifying factors to assess the probable crisis responsibility stakeholders will attribute to the organization in a crisis. Obviously, the crisis responsibility attributions will not be uniform across stakeholders, but a general statement of crisis responsibility can be established. (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 22)

Table 3.1, shown on the following page, is a detailed table that depicts different crisis types and the crisis responsibility attributed to each. Although the table includes helpful information for crisis managers, the initial development of SCCT predates Web 2.0 and the introduction of social media, beginning in 1995 (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 22). SCCT is currently being revised to include a reconceptualization of the crisis types listed in Table 3.1.

<i>Minimal crisis responsibility</i>
• Workplace violence: an attack on coworkers by current or former employees
• Malevolence: an outside attack on the organization such as product tampering or terrorism
• Natural disasters: operational disruptions from acts of nature
• Misinformation: harmful but inaccurate information about the organization in circulation among stakeholders
<i>Low crisis responsibility</i>
• Technical-error accidents: an accident created by a failure in technology
• Technical-error product harm: a defect and potentially dangerous product created due to a failure in technology
<i>High crisis responsibility</i>
• Human-error accidents: an accident created by the human error of employees
• Human-error product harm: a defect and potentially dangerous product created due to the human error of employees
• Organizational misdeed or management misconduct: stakeholders knowingly placed at risk or laws or regulations knowingly violated by managers

Table 3.1 (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 23)

Since the basis SCCT was formed on has changed dramatically, there are two primary points of intersection that need to be modified: the visibility of the pre-crisis phase and the selection of social media channels for crisis communication.

The pre-crisis phase refers to the time prior to when a crisis begins. This phase includes preparation/prevention tactics and/or mitigation efforts made by organizations before a crisis begins (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 25). The pre-crisis phase was initially private, but when social media began growing in popularity, stakeholders were given and still have a front row seat to organizations acting irresponsibly (Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S., 2012).

Crisis management plans typically are considered confidential documents, and external stakeholders know little about crisis team training or even most mitigation efforts. However, social media have made certain types of prevention and mitigation efforts visible to external stakeholders due to the increase number of *paracrises*. (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 25).

Paracrises essentially appear to be crises themselves but are instead when companies manage risks in public. When risks become known to external stakeholders, a paracrisis begins (Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S., 2012). A paracrisis could begin when an organization faces a challenge, an angry customer, etc. In addition to making these risks visible, social media also speeds up the

communication and awareness of these risks beyond the capabilities of traditional forms of media. Due to this risk, SCCT is being extended to include the pre-crisis phase. Along with crisis responses (as listed in Table 3.1), the nature of a paracrisis will now be used to determine a paracrisis response to lessen the crisis risk. Table 3.2 below represents SCCT's advice for both paracrisis responses and crisis responses.

<p><i>For paracrisis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service: corrective action and apology • Customer revenge: recognition or reception by acknowledging the concern • Faux pas: corrective action and apology • Challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal: for use when stakeholders have no salience • Refutation: for use when there is a need to protect the current practices • Repression: for use only when there is a need to stop the flow of inaccurate information • Reform: for use when it is cost effective, consistent with organizational strategy, and feasible • Recognition or reception: for use when an organization wants to acknowledge a problem but cannot take action on the problem due to constraints, especially feasibility • Revision: for use when it is cost effective, fits strategy, and feasible <p><i>For crisis response</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ethical base response is used any time there are victims. • Diminish strategies <i>can</i> be added when the attributions of crisis responsibility are minimal. • Apology or compensation <i>should be</i> added to the ethical base response when attributions of crisis responsibility are likely to be strong. • Denial is used <i>only</i> when there is a misinformation crisis. • Bolstering can be used in combination with any other strategy. • Victimage should only be used when the crisis is caused by some external factor.
--

Table 3.2 (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 33)

The second revision of SCCT involves the selection of social media channels for crisis communication. Despite the fact that channel selection is important to different industries involving corporate communication, SCCT does not explicitly analyze channel selection (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 33).

It was assumed that crisis managers would utilize traditional media coverage (the focus on media relations) and controlled channels, such as websites, during a crisis (Taylor & Kent, 2007). Given the variety of channels that are emerging in the digital world, SCCT

should provide a more direct discussion of channel selections. (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 33)

When choosing which channel to utilize, the organization must consider public safety, welfare, and reputation repair in crisis communication. Public safety and welfare go hand in hand and the overall goal is to help stakeholders encounter organizational messages. When attempting to repair a reputation, crisis managers can be more selective and choose to utilize channels that target stakeholders would most likely view their message (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 34). Also in this instance, a hub and spoke design should be utilized, where the organization's website is the hub (controlled medium with loads of information) and the social media channels are the spokes (direct stakeholders towards the hub) (Coombs, W. T., 2022, p. 24). To summarize, per Timothy Coombs (2022), SCCT is reconceptualized to include channel selections and now offers the following channel recommendations:

1. When communication objective involves public safety/welfare, utilize all channels.
2. When the communication objective is reputation repair, use the channels that will reach target stakeholders.
3. A hub and spoke design is the most effective, where the organization's website is the hub and social media channels are the spokes.

Social Mediated Crisis Communication

In the above section it was determined that SCCT was revised to include the paracrisis phase and channel selections. Extended from this theory was another topic entirely: social mediated crisis communication (SMCC). SMCC refers to the social mediated dialogue between the organization and its publics (Fearn-Banks, 2002, p. 2) and within the past 13 years, there has been an increasing attention to this topic (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., p. 11). Yang Chen and Glen Cameron (2022) conducted a study that reviewed the global scholarship of SMCC and then

provided insights. The most frequently mentioned terms and findings regarding social media research in crisis communication will be discussed in this section of the text.

Several clear topics are mentioned frequently within SMCC literature. The most frequently mentioned crisis communication strategy components discussed are image-repair strategies (Benoit, 1997), crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2007), and the corporate communication response model (Bradford & Garrett, 1995). Since scholars are focusing on these areas, it can be inferred that there is a need for information regarding these topics. These topics are essentially what most crisis managers are in need of; they want to know how to repair their organization's image and determine crisis response strategies when faced with a social media crisis. This is essentially why this thesis is so heavily focused on social media crisis communication response strategies – because corporate communication professionals *need* the information. Coombs (2008) also concluded that since social media evolves so quickly, the practice of social media crisis communication is ahead of scholarship. In this regard, it is important to analyze all relevant SMCC literature so different findings can be concluded.

How organizations should respond to crises is also heavily discussed in the SMCC research. Three traditional forms of responses were emphasized: timely, consistent, and active response forms. This means that organizations should be immediate and proactive in their responses to a crisis in order to improve crisis communication effectiveness (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., p. 14). Among the measurements for crisis communication effectiveness, it was found that reputation was most frequently used (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., p. 14). Since image-repair theory and reputation are repeatedly referred to in SMCC research, both will be touched upon later in the text. Reputation and image are two of the many factors that determine whether a business will be able to withstand a social media crisis.

Although SMCC is growing in popularity, gaps within this topic still remain. Cheng and Cameron (2022) explain that weaknesses in SMCC research include “a narrow content of research perspectives, a lack of emphasis on crisis phases, and biased measurements of crisis communication effectiveness.” In terms of extending models and theories, they offer the following advice:

Future research should advance the theoretical framework of SMCC within real case studies and help explore interesting research themes such as the interaction of traditional and social media for diffusion of information, the impact of word-of-mouth communication on public opinion, and the exact influence of dialogic (positive or negative messages transmitted) communication on the crisis communication practice. (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., p. 17)

Ch. 4: An Analysis of Crisis Communication Strategies on Social Media

A recent crisis occurred on United Airlines Flight 3411 in April of 2017. To be clear, the crisis was handled poorly and will be used as an example of how businesses should *not* to handle social media crises in the future. In the next chapter, the case will be referred back to in order to make suggestions on how businesses should make their social media crises decisions in the future. Although this is the case, the circumstances of each crisis is different and there is no one size fits all approach.

United Airlines Flight 3411, April 2017

On April 9, 2017, Dr. David Dao boarded United Airlines Flight 3411 at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport. Headed home to Kentucky, Dao was planning to open a free clinic for United States veterans (Jacobo, J., Harrison, C., 2019). Unfortunately, Dao was unable to take off that day due to an overbooked flight. Travelers were informed that since the flight was overbooked, four passengers should volunteer to leave the plane in return for vouchers to rebook,

as United Airlines needed to make room for four employees. When passengers did not volunteer, the airline began selecting passengers at random and asking them to leave.

When Dr. David Dao was selected to leave the flight, he responded that he could not because he had patients to see the following day. United Airlines security quickly descended the plane, asking Dao to leave. At this point, passenger Tyler Bridges and another unnamed passenger on the plane began recording the interaction. In a quick moment, the security officers began to forcibly remove Dao from the seat that he had paid for by dragging him into the aisle. Dao hit the floor and went limp. “It looked like it knocked him out,” Bridges said. ‘His nose was bloody” (Bever, L., 2019). With protests from other passengers, the officers escorted Dao and three other passengers off the plane and United Airlines employees took to their seats. The altercation left Dao with a concussion, a broken nose, and two missing teeth (Jacobo, J., & Harrison, C., 2019).

The Aftermath

The video of the incident was immediately posted on social media and went viral. The term viral is defined as “networked news stories that spread online mostly through social media in a much faster and wider manner than other news stories” (Al-Rawi, A., 2017). One post online was shared over 87,000 times and viewed by approximately 6.8 million people in just one day (Edwards, K., 2021). The video was recognized by many notable sources, specifically politicians. “Donald Trump criticized United Airlines, saying the airline’s treatment of the passenger was ‘horrible” (Edwards, K., 2021). Leaders of the senate’s commerce committee, including John Thune, Bill Nelson, Roy Blunt, and Maria Cantwell, pressured the Chicago Department of Aviation to provide a full account of the incident (Creswell, J., & Maheshwari, S., 2017). Overall, the video provoked feelings of outrage and users on social media began

criticizing United Airlines' policy and actions. Figures 4.1 – 4.5 feature backlash from users on Twitter, whereas Figure 4.6 was taken from Facebook.



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4

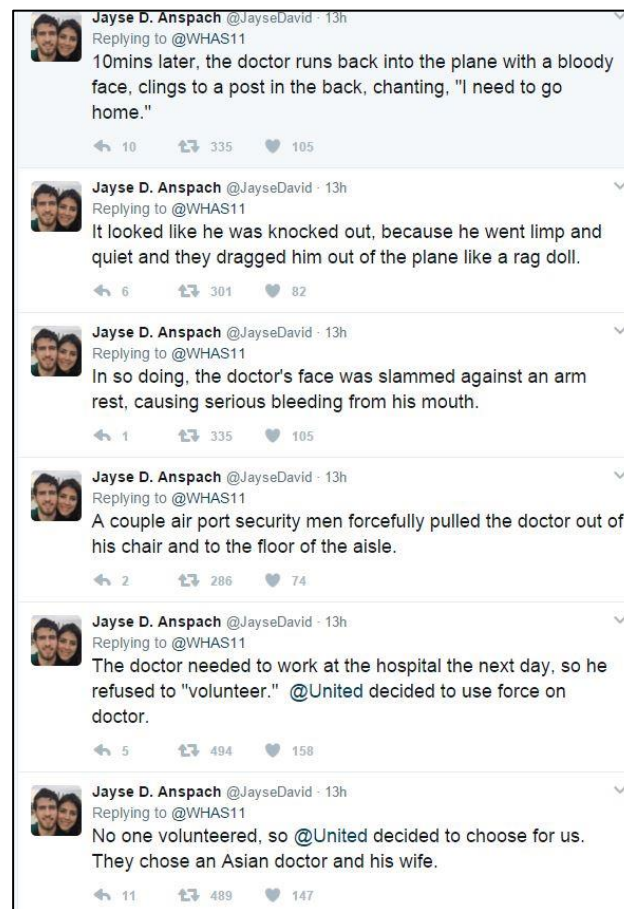


Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6

The following day of the incident, United Airlines Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Oscar Munoz, released the following statement via Twitter, a social media site (Figure 4.7):

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United," Munoz said in a statement. "I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation. (Wattles, J., 2017)

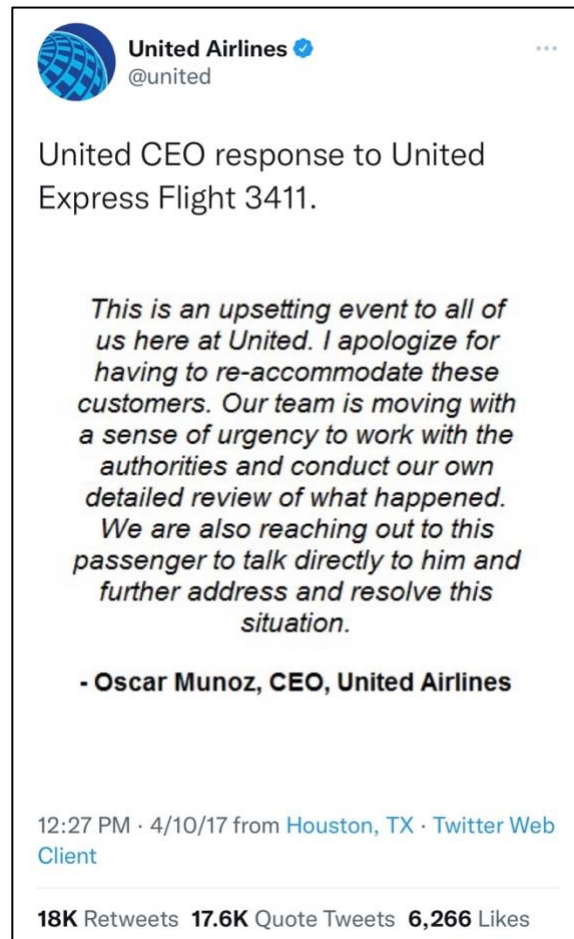


Figure 4.7

The statement appeared insincere to many, as Munoz failed to mention the trauma inflicted on Dao and other passengers. His phrasing of “re-accommodating” passengers enraged customers and social media posts continued to either criticize United Airlines or make a mockery of them (Domonoske, C., 2017). See online posts below (Figures 4.8 – 4.10). The situation unfortunately

became worse for Munoz and United Airlines, as media sources, including the Associated Press and CNBC, obtained a private email that was sent from Munoz to United Airlines' employees. In the email, Munoz explained that he stood by the United Airlines' employees, commending them for "following established procedures." He also described Dao as "disruptive and belligerent" and said crew members "were left with no choice but to call Chicago Aviation Security Officers to assist in removing the customer from the flight" (Mattrossoff, M., 2017).



Figure 4.8

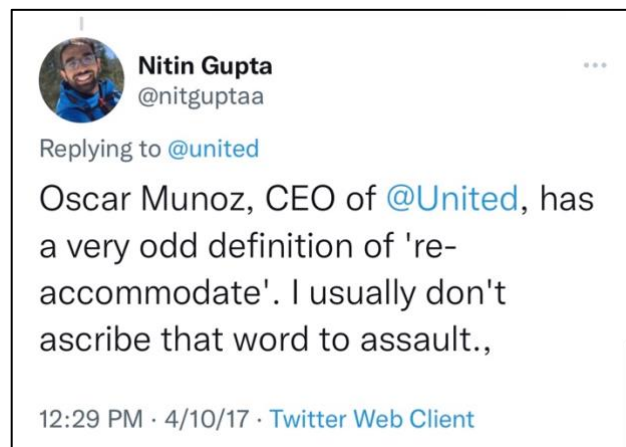


Figure 4.9

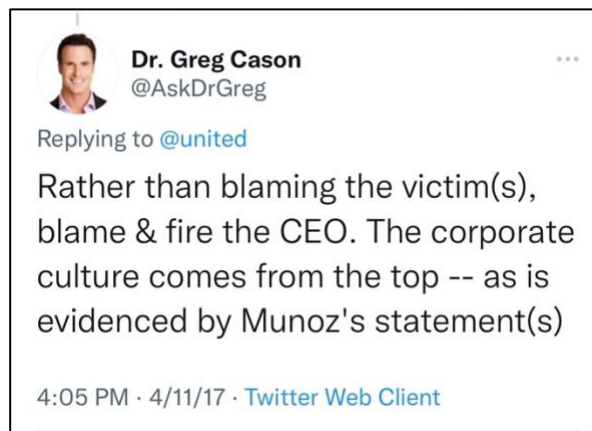


Figure 4.10

These responses made by Munoz spurred more online criticism. United Airlines' shares dropped from \$21 billion to \$1.4 billion (Shen, L., 2017). The entire incident even led to an investigation by the Department of Transportation (Shen, L., 2017). Stock market price reflects how stakeholders view the company before and after an incident. Media coverage, or rather this social media crisis, had a direct impact on United Airlines' investors, as it caused them to lose confidence in the airline. Changes in shares is an indicator that investors fear a "lack of public support for a corporation [facing] a decline in reputation and legitimacy" (King & Soule, 2007, p. 418). Research has shown that social media plays a role in not only the attenuation but also the amplification of an incident (Austin, L., 2017). In this regard, it can be assumed that the public's perception of United's reputation was declining. The declining stock market price indicates that the social media crises was gaining traction and those targeting United were succeeding. A survey indicated that 42% of millennials said they would no longer fly United after the incident (Passy, J., 2017). Media Consult (2017) also discovered that 40% of travelers would prefer a longer, more expensive flight after hearing of the PR disaster (see Figure 4.11 below).

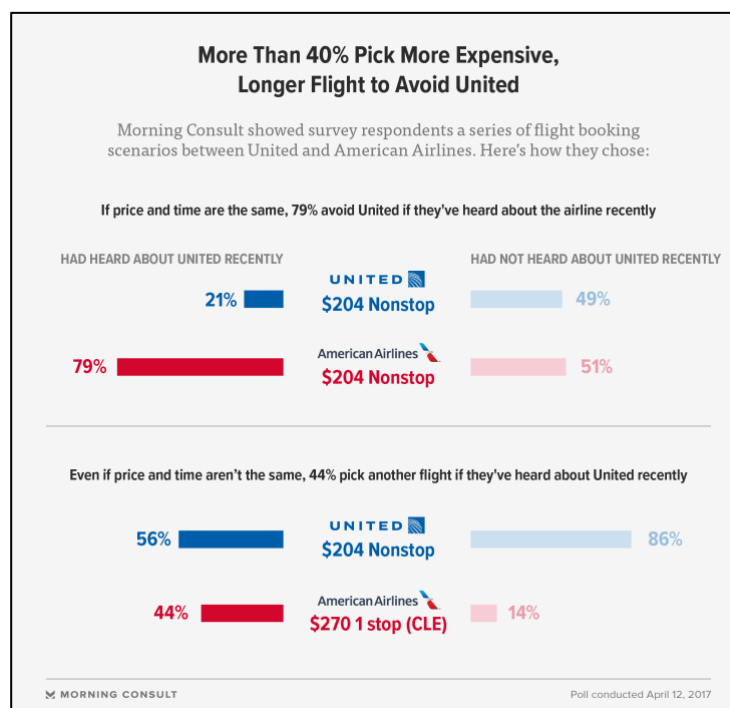


Figure 4.11

Preventing the Incident

So, what could United Airlines' leadership have done differently in order to contain this social media crisis, or rather prevent it? It's difficult to say. Social media has been rapidly integrated into society and our everyday practices. It is also constantly evolving – crisis communication practices are expanding to include social media practices as we determined in the previous chapter of the text. The different circumstances of each social media crisis are also something to consider; not all of social mediated crisis communication can be translated and apply to all crises. Although that may be the case, it is extremely essential for organizations to have a basis to their crisis communication practices when facing *any* type of crisis. In terms of social media crisis, organizations may have an opportunity. The following excerpt was pulled from “The Use of Social Media in Risk and Crisis Communication” by Cecile Wendling, Jack Radisch, and Stephane Jacobzone:

Internet can nowadays speed up communication and awareness, beyond that of the traditional risk and crisis communication strategy because it allows real time communication. The number of calls coming from traditional media, the number of press

conferences can hence be reduced during disaster and become more manageable by the staff in charge, through the use of internet and other new media. (Cecile, W., et. al., 2013)

In the present age where the new digital landscape can be a threat to organizations in many ways, there are also opportunities. Research regarding how to maximize this opportunity was compiled and from that research, the best social media crisis communication practices were assembled. How to deal with social media crises will be discussed in the next chapter, “Social Media Crisis Communication Strategies to Implement.”

Ch. 5: Social Media Crisis Communication Strategies to Implement

Within the world of crisis communications, reputation is extremely important. As said before, it is a main indicator of a crisis’ success in weakening a company. There are two important variables used in research to measure a movement's success – stock market price and cumulative abnormal return to stock price (CAR). Both stock market price and CAR simply explain how stakeholders view the company before and after a boycott or strike. In the last section, we analyzed United Airlines’ stock price decline following the social media posts that went viral after UA dragged a passenger off a plane. The way stakeholders view the company is extremely important, and because of this, the way the company upholds their reputation during a crisis is important.

One such high priority goal is to maintain a favorable reputation through which an organization sustains its social legitimacy in the eyes of consumers and other stakeholders. Boyd (2009) explains that legitimacy is the ‘foundation of all effective communication with publics – without it, any organizational messages or actions will be looked upon with skepticism. Consequently, establishing and maintaining legitimacy is a necessary component of any kind of public relations. (Spence, P. R., et. al., p. 202)

The passage above emphasizes how important corporate reputation is for corporate communication and public relations practitioners. The previously mentioned image repair theory explains how companies can restore their public image. Benoit (2005), founder of the image

repair theory, theorizes that organizations can utilize specific communication strategies to appear more favorable during a crisis (Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W., 2013b, p. 168). Overall the theory includes five general strategies for organizations to use (denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification). The topics of reputation and image repair theory are mentioned so frequently in social-mediated crisis communication because they ultimately hold a lot of weight when it comes to a crises' success.

The reason these terms are mentioned is due to the fact that preparing for a crisis begins in the pre-crisis phase. Most strategies listed in this chapter will apply for when a crisis has occurred, but even though this is the case, it is worth mentioning that a good reputation can take an organization a long way.

Whilst crisis communication affects the impact of the crisis on the company's overall reputation with stakeholders, any previously accumulated reputation capital may also buffer or shield the company from a crisis having a lasting negative impact. Reputation capital is an organization's 'stock of perceptual and social assets – the quality of the relationship it has established with stakeholders and the regard in which the company and brand is held. (Cornelissen, J., (2020b), p. 218)

It was determined in my proposal that a prior favorable reputation is able to deflect the potential reputational damage from a crisis, or social movement (Coombs & Holladay, 2006, p. 123).

Effective crisis communication takes place when organizations go beyond merely interacting with the media. Establishing relationships with specific stakeholders (government executives, employees, etc.) is completely necessary (Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 114).

The following strategies were compiled after SMCC research was conducted. Research shows that all strategies, if implemented correctly, will benefit an organization when faced with a social media crisis. An organization's use of social media during a crisis has the potential to improve transparency and trust among the public, so it is important for them to engage online (Cecile, W., Radisch, J., & Jacobzone, S., p. 25).

Address the Crisis in a Timely Manner

Addressing the crisis in a timely manner from the organization's perspective has proven to please stakeholders. In this case, "timely" refers to when the time is *right*. This can sound ambiguous, but the trick is for organizations to speak on the crisis quickly while also appearing sincere to stakeholders. Social media outlets are platforms that not only allow organizations to reach more stakeholders, but also expedite organizational messages. In past history prior to the rise of social media, organizations used to address a crisis at a certain point in time. In today's society, time expectations to address a crisis are shorter due (Damayanti, R., Rodrigues, et. al., p. 107). Although this can be a threat, it is also an opportunity.

A long history of research indicates that swiftness is essential for organizations facing crisis, particularly when an organization's reputation is threatened. Reynolds (2006) offers that a crisis response must be delivered 'speedily' enough to satisfy a population savvy in gathering information but apt to respond emotionally in crisis decision making. (Spence, P. R., et. al., p. 200)

Coombs (2009) argues that a crisis response should be addressed by an organization within the first hour (p. 241). Overall, the two most important factors for an organization when addressing a crisis are speed and adaptation, especially in the case of reputational crises. In terms of appearing sincere to stakeholders, avoid "corporate speak, legal jargon, and other formal discourses" (Veil, S., et. al., 2011) and apologize if you have committed any wrongdoings. CEO of UA, Oscar Munoz, did address stakeholders about the crisis regarding Dr. Dao. The issue in that case was that Munoz appeared insincere and many users believed him to be blaming Dao for fighting back company policy.

Research also shows that an organization that breaks the news of a crisis first will achieve higher credibility ratings (Arpan and Pompper, 2003). This concept is coined "stealing thunder", commonly used in law when a defendant raises its own weakness in court before the prosecution

(Coombs, W. T., 2014, p. 3). This idea seems counterintuitive to most managers despite a number of research studies that conclude otherwise. Companies who have used this approach have been able to obtain strong reputations amidst a crisis as opposed to organizations who allowed stakeholders to learn about the crisis from an outside source (Coombs, W. T., 2014, p. 3).

The stealing thunder studies have used experimental designs to document a cause and effect relationship between stealing thunder and organizational benefits such as reduced reputational damage and decreases in purchase intentions created by a crisis. The research findings are consistent and strong. The evidence firmly suggests that disclosing the crisis is an effective crisis response because it helps to decrease the damage an organization can suffer from the crisis. (Coombs, W. T., 2014, p. 3)

To conclude, addressing the crisis quickly and sincerely will ultimately play a role in how an organization is perceived by stakeholders.

Tailor Your Messages Accordingly

Tailoring your messages accordingly is extremely important in the new digital age where there are multiple platforms stakeholders can view organizational messages. This strategy is completely dependent on the chosen social media channel organizations decide to communicate on. Although consistency is key when communicating online, communication practitioners should be aware that messages posted on one platform may not translate well on another. For the purpose of demonstrating how different platforms are, Facebook and Twitter will be compared. Facebook is a social media website where users can add friends and share content (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 381). It is “particularly suitable for mass monitoring as [it provides] a feed that displays discussions of a myriad of users at any particular moment” (Landeau, 2011, p. 11). Twitter, on the other hand, is a microblog social media platform where users can post “tweets”, or rather messages under 140 characters. These messages reach a larger audience based on who follows/subscribes to a user’s tweets (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 381). Although they are

both social networking platforms, messages on each platform should be tailored to please their respected users.

The Norfolk Fire Rescue Services (NFRS) in the United Kingdom has utilized social media platforms since 2009. Over the course of seven years, NFRS learned many lessons, one being that the audiences for different social media platforms require different types of communication.

Therefore the social media strategy must be adapted to tailor your messages depending on the chosen channel. For example, Twitter is chatty, fun and to the point. A tweet can be ‘North Walsham get shiny new red fire engine’. Facebook have more in depth descriptions and is often for technical. A Facebook post would be ‘North Walsham receives the delivery of their new Scania 9 fire seat engine allowing more firefighters to respond to an incident, this is to replace the current fire engine which will be kept as a spare. (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 384)

In the last chapter, the difference between both Facebook and Twitter is shown through the way users utilize the platforms different. Figures 4.1 – 4.6 are short and concise, and in some cases, has a humorous take on the United Airlines Crisis. Figure 4.6 is a screenshot from Facebook, where users take on a more serious tone as they post as well as reveal more information. Twitter is mentioned on a regular basis in the media and used frequently by reporters (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 381). It is a very influential piece of social media (Landeau, 2011, p. 11; Cision and GWU, 2009) *and* can be used by organizations to determine their stakeholder’s perceptions of them (Goolsby, 2009). If an organization is to utilize any social media outlet during a crisis, Twitter is recommended.

It is also worth mentioning that cultural groups can interpret organizational messages differently as well. Sociocultural awareness is something to be mindful of when communicating on any platform. Increasing sociocultural awareness can be done by “working on the internal culture in the organization” (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 388). Overall, be careful about

the way tweets are worded. Using humor is fine, *if* it is not at the expense of others (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 388).

Cecile Wendling, Jack Radisch, and Stephane Jacobzone (2013) provide an overview of social media outlets utilized the most during both risk and crisis communication. See Figure 5.1 below.

Social media type	Short description
Facebook	It is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study or live around them. People use it to keep up with friends and colleagues. 901 million monthly active users were reported at the end of March 2012.
Myspace	It is an online community that allow users to connect to interact and exchange information with those having the same interests. It is used to discover new artists, watch videos online, among others. Myspace has over 262 million users in 2012.
Friendster	It is a social gaming site launched in 2002. The service allows users to communicate with each other, share online content, etc. The site, at its peak, reached tens of millions of registered users; however, it has since lost its popularity.
YouTube	It is a user generated site that allows people to share videos and the view and comment on the uploaded videos of others.
Flickr	It is a user generated site that allows people to share pictures and to view pictures of others.
Vimeo	It is a user generated site that allows people to share videos and the view and comment on the uploaded videos of others.
Wikis	Wikis are website that everyone can update from his computer to share common content with others.
Forums and Message boards	Forums and message boards are online internet site where people can held a conversation through the form of posted messages.
Chats	Chats are online internet application to held conversation through real time instant text messages.
Podcasts	Web based audio and video content made available on the internet to download to a personal audio or video player.
Blogs on Blogger, WordPress, Tumblr	It is a type of website which is updated frequently. It contains regular entries of commentary, pictures, and other materials.
Microblogs on Twitter	With 140 milion users, twitter is a platform for people who register to post and receive short messages to a network of followers. Top 5 countries in terms of Twitter accounts are the US, Brazil, Japan, UK, Indonesia (according to a study conducted by SemioCast in 2012)
-MAPPING COLLABORATION Crisis mappers OpenStreetMap Google map maker	Crisis mapping collaborative social media exist under various forms. Crisis Mappers leverage mobile & web-based applications, participatory maps & crowd sourced event data, aerial & satellite imagery, geospatial platforms, advanced visualization, live simulation, and computational & statistical models to power effective early warning for rapid response to complex humanitarian emergencies. OpenStreetMap provides free geographical data and mapping. Google map makers can be used to access and improve maps according to various needs.
-ONLINE AND ONSITE CRISIS CONTRIBUTION SOCIAL MEDIA Ushahidi Crisis commons Sahana foundation tools Geeks without bounds	Ushahidi is an open crowd-sourcing crisis information platform easily deployable to meet local needs. Crisis commons is an international network of professional which aggregate during crisis camps and work collaboratively online to enhance crisis management. Sahana foundation software is dedicated to saving lives by providing information management solution often relying on social media. Geeks without bounds are developing application to enhance the provision of humanitarian aid in disasters.
-PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PEOPLE PARTNERSHIP FOR SOCIAL MEDIA CRISIS COMMUNICATION Random Hacks of Kindness (with Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, NASA, World Bank)	RHoK organizes and hosts biannual two-day events where volunteer technology experts develop software solutions for risk and crisis management. They are developing new social media products for the risk and crisis communication of the future.

Figure 5.1

Monitor Social Media Platforms

Monitoring social media platforms is something an organization should implement in their everyday activities, but even more so during a crisis. “Monitoring” essentially means that organizations should “closely observe what is being said” (Damayanti, R., Rodrigues, et. al., p. 107) about them; it is an ongoing process and can indicate how an organization should address

the crisis at that point in time. For instance, if users are focusing on an organization's wrongdoing, that information will lead the organization to craft an appropriate response to social media users.

As if it has not been mentioned multiple times throughout this text, social media speeds the discussion of what is happening and therefore makes it more difficult to keep up. This also could lead to the spreading of misinformation and rumors among users. Monitoring social media accounts allows organizations to not only be aware of the information that is being spread, but also respond to users and correct them if need be.

It is important not to overcome the illusion that social media can be controlled. Social media allows for responding to criticism and attacks as quickly as possible. Respectful correction of inaccurate information can stop the spreading of rumors. (Cecile, W., Radisch, J., & Jacobzone, S., p. 28)

This strategy is tedious and may require an entire social media team, but doing so can mitigate reputational damage during a crisis. Organizations should look for individuals who have the ability to assess sentiments of discussions/posts, identify issues being discussed, and assess the gravity of discussions/posts (Damayanti, R., Rodrigues, et. al., p. 109).

Do Not Post Anything That Could Bring Organization Back into Disrepute

There are numerous actions that an organization may do to put itself back into disrepute, or rather being low esteem in the eyes of the public. To protect their reputation, an organization must *not* post the following:

- Inappropriate pictures
- Rude/offensive/bullying texts
- Personal opinions on the crisis
- Messages with spelling or grammatical errors

Posting any of the above content will leave your organization looking inauthentic and stakeholders will believe the organization does not take the crisis seriously (Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M., p. 388). When deciding to post, the main idea is to remember that the post is representative of the entire organization, including its values *and* strategic vision. If you are unsure of how a message will be received or interpreted, do not post the message. Instead, consult with corporate communication professionals or public relations leaders within your organization.

Oscar Munoz of United Airlines did address the crisis via twitter (Figure 4.7), but he decided to put UA's reputation at risk when he sent a private email to his employees. Of course he did not intend for news sources to get ahold of his email, but when they did, his original statement was put into question and further damaged the business' reputation. See one response from a stakeholder below (Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1

Be Prepared for a Crisis Before it Begins

As was previously determined, the speed of social media is extremely difficult to keep up with. This is why building a favorable reputation in the public was emphasized at the beginning of the chapter, because it is able to deflect potential damage to the organization. Another way to prepare for a crisis is by implementing a range of activities within your organization in the pre-crisis phase.

Crisis preparedness obviously cannot eliminate any risks and uncertainties surrounding organizations, but such preparation represents a vital part of the management tool kit, because it makes organizations less vulnerable to crises and preserves their vitality, as well as their stability, during a crisis (Coombs, 2012). (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 60).

Crisis preparedness includes developing risk assessments, preparation/continual reviewing of the crisis manual, having a communication and training plan, selecting leadership on a crisis communication team, and supporting social media management. Supporting social media management entails supporting the education of a social media team, as the topic is constantly being evolved (Valentini, C., et. al., p. 60). All of these activities should be integrated with the social media environment of a company in order to ensure they are prepared if a social media crisis were to occur.

Some may argue that all this preparation is unnecessary, especially if an organization's reputation can shield potential damage to the organization and preparedness cannot eliminate uncertainties in a crisis. Although this is the case, research shows that organization's with contingency plans respond to crises better and they remain more stable in a crisis.

Whilst organizations may not oversee every possible crisis that may affect them, they can develop crisis contingency plans in advance and in anticipation of major possible crises. (Cornelissen, J., 2020b, p. 216)

This strategy transitions well into the next, as the importance of establishing a public relations team is emphasized.

Establish a Crisis Communications/Public Relations Team

A crisis communications (CC) or public relations (PR) team ultimately have the responsibility of creating communication plans, providing information, and preventing negative opinions in the eyes of the public. These types of employees also communicate to all appropriate internal/external environments, doing so in hopes of creating consistency between what the public expects of them and what they organization actual does (Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 114). Establishing PR leadership was mentioned in the last strategy as a part of crisis preparedness. Organization's should establish a team designated to crises prevention/mitigation in the pre-crisis phase, but it's never too late to create one.

In the analysis of United Airlines in the last chapter, the company responded poorly and thus had one of the worst public relation experiences in recent history. After dealing with the crisis, UA began looking to hire three new PR specialists in hopes of responding better to future crisis and issues (INC.com). CC/PR employees' skills often go undervalued, but the reward of these specialists pays off enormously in the end.

An interviewee mentioned that for CMT teams, 'you can be as prepared as you like but the minute [crisis] breaks, everybody's forgotten all their training.' [...] To be able to orchestrate everything very quickly, it's a significant skill; and [is the] responsibility of the [corporate communications] department. (Damayanti, R., Rodrigues, et. al., p. 110)

The value of having a team that is able to mitigate a crisis and also maintain an organization's reputation is hard to find. Most marketing teams are unable to do so effectively, which is why it is almost necessary for organizations to have a dedicated CC/PR team ready.

[...] businesses must review and plan their public relations programs carefully. [...] Crisis communication process and public relations programs are observed to be the most important factors in crisis management efforts. Organizations, when they face with a crisis, are in the position of responding to the crisis quickly, being honest and inform their institutions regularly. (Civelek, M. E., et. al., p. 114)

Conclusion

Social media crisis communication research is still being researched, given the fact that this field of research is fairly new and constantly changing. The above text aimed to compile the best social media crisis communication strategies companies can implement when facing a social media crisis. The social media crisis surrounding United Airlines was analyzed in order to demonstrate how a company can inadequately respond to a social media crisis, as well as the implications it has on the company (specifically in terms of its reputation). United Airlines did a poor job responding to their crisis in 2017, as Munoz appeared insincere in his response and put UA back into disrepute. He did, however, establish a PR team in order to respond to crises better in the future. Although there is much research on social media crisis communications, per Chapter 3, but there are also several weaknesses. These weaknesses include a narrow content of research perspectives/sampling frames, a lack of emphasis on crisis phases or extending models and theories, and a biased measure of crisis communication effectiveness. Future research should advance on the theoretical framework of SMCC to discover themes and/or patterns within the technological world (Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G., 2022, p. 15). As the new media landscape continuously evolves, more research will be done to expand upon this area of research. The above passage indicates where the need for research lies, so it is recommended that theorists focus on expanding their findings pertaining to the topics listed above.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Hill for mentoring me throughout my entire writing process, which first began back in 2020. Her constructive feedback and meetings not only helped perfect this body of research, but also motivated me to complete the Honors Program requirements at Assumption. Completing this work has been extremely rewarding and it could

not have been done without her. I would also like to thank Professor Loustaunau, my Honors Proposal professor, who helped me narrow down ideas for a proposal topic which led me to writing this thesis. I would also like to extend a thank you to both Professor Szivos and Professor Daniels, both professors of business of Assumption University, for being members of my faculty committee.

I'd also like to thank my family for their support with my completion of my Honors Thesis at Assumption. They always encouraged me to complete my thesis despite my hesitations and for that I am extremely grateful. Without you all, I would not have attempted to complete this project. Thank you Dad, Mom, Jordyn, Alyssa, and Oscar!

To Rose, Adrienne, and Allison, thanks for helping me focus to complete this project and listening to my ideas and thoughts throughout the writing process. Thank you, Jon, for proofreading my drafts and motivating me to keep researching and writing.

Bibliography

- Airlines, U. (2017, April 10). *United CEO response to United Express flight 3411*. [pic.twitter.com/rf5gnivvd0](https://twitter.com/rf5gnivvd0). Twitter. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/united/status/851471781827420160>
- Arpan, L. M., & Pompper, D. (2003). Stormy weather: Testing “stealing thunder” as a crisis communication strategy to improve communication flow between organizations and journalists. *Public Relations Review*, 29(3), 291-308.
- Austin, L. (2017). Social Media and Crisis Communication: Explicating the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model. In Y. Jin (Ed.), *Strategic Communication: New Agendas in Communication* (pp. 163–186). essay, Routledge.
- Benoit, W. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177-186.
- Benoit, W. (2005). Image restoration theory. In R. L. Heath (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* (Vol. 2, pp. 407-410. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bever, L. (2019, April 9). *Doctor who was dragged, screaming, from United Airlines flight finally breaks silence*. The Washington Post. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2019/04/09/doctor-who-was-dragged-screaming-united-airlines-flight-finally-breaks-silence/>
- Boyd, J. (2009). The legitimacy of a baseball number. In R. L. Heath, E. L. Toth, & D. Waymer (Eds.), *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations II* (pp. 155-169). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bradford, J. L. & Garrett, D. E. (1995). The effectiveness of corporate communicative responses to accusation of unethical behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 14, 875-892.
- Bratu, S. (2016). The Critical Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication. *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations*, 15, 232–238.
- Cecile, W., Radisch, J., & Jacobzone, S. (2013). The use of social media in risk and crisis communication. *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5k3v01fskp9s-en>
- Cheng, Y., & Cameron, G. (2022). Ch. 1: The Status of Social Mediated Crisis Communication Research. In *Social Media and Crisis Communication* (pp. 9–20). essay, Routledge.
- Cision and GWU (2009). “2009 Social media and online usage study”, Top lining finding report from an Online survey

- Civelek, M. E., Cemberci, M., & Eralp, N. E. (2016). The role of social media in Crisis Communication and Crisis Management. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478), 5(3), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v5i3.279>
- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163-176.
- Coombs, W. T. (2008). Crisis communication and social media. Essential knowledge project. http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential_knowledge/detail/crisis_communication_and_social_media.
- Coombs, W. T. (2009). Crisis, crisis communication, reputation, and rhetoric. In R. L. Heath, E. L. Toth, & D. Waymer (Eds.), *Rhetorical and critical approaches to public relations II* (pp. 237-252). New York, NY: Routledge
- Coombs, W. T. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. London, UK: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Coombs, W. T. (2014). State of Crisis Communication: Evidence and the Bleeding Edge. *Research Journal of the Institute for Public Relations*, 1, 1–12.
- Coombs, W. T. (2022). Revising Situational Crisis Communication Theory: The Influences of Social Media on Crisis Communication Theory and Practice. In *Social Media and Crisis Communication* (pp. 21–38). essay, Routledge.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2006). Unpacking the halo effect: reputation and crisis management. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(2), 123-137. 10.1108/13632540610664698
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S. (2012). The paracrisis: The challenges created by publicly managing crisis prevention. *Public Relations Review* 38(3), 408-415.
- Cornelissen, J. (2020a). Ch. 3: Corporate Communication in a Changing Media Environment. In *Corporate communication: A guide to theory & practice* (6th ed., pp. 37–59). essay, SAGE.
- Cornelissen, J. (2020b). Ch. 11: Crisis Communication, In *Corporate communication: A guide to theory & practice* (6th ed., pp. 214–231). essay, SAGE.
- Damayanti, R., Rodrigues, S., Chua, S., & Pang, A. (2022). Ch. 7: The Corporate Social Media Spokesperson. In L. L. Austin & Y. Jin (Eds.), *Social Media and Crisis Communication* (pp. 99–113). essay, Routledge.
- Domonoske, C. (2017, April 11). *After unsatisfying answers, United offers 'deepest apology' for violent confrontation*. NPR. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://www.npr.org/>

- Edwards, K. (2021, June 24). *4 examples of social media crises that could have been prevented*. Mediatoolkit. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://www.mediatoolkit.com/blog/social-media-crisis-examples/>
- Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). *Crisis Communication: A casebook approach*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Goolsby, R. (2009). "Lifting elephants: Twitter and blogging in global perspective", in Liu, H., Salerno, J.J. and Young, M.J. (Eds), *Social Computing*, Springer, Boston MA.
- Jacobo, J., & Harrison, C. (2019, April 9). *Doctor dragged off United Airlines flight after watching viral video of himself: 'I just cried'*. ABC News. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/doctor-dragged-off-united-airlines-flight-watching-viral/story?id=62250271>
- Jin, Y., Liu, B. F., & Austin, L. L. (2014). Examining the role of social media in effective crisis management. *Communication Research*, 41(1), 74–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650211423918>
- Jr., B. M. (2017, April 14). *United Airlines is now looking for new PR people, and their want ads are utterly fascinating*. Inc.com. Retrieved March 25, 2022, from <https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/united-airlines-is-now-looking-for-new-pr-people-and-their-job-ads-are-utterly-f.html>
- King, B. G., & Soule, S. A. (2007). Social Movements as Extra-institutional Entrepreneurs: The Effect of Protests on Stock Price Returns. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52 (3), 413–442. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.52.3.413>
- Landeau, D. (2011). "How social media is changing crisis communication: a historical analysis", Master of Arts thesis in Corporate and Organizational Communication at Fairleigh Dickinson University
- Maal, M., & Wilson-North, M. (2019). Social media in crisis communication - the "do's" and "don'ts". *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment*, 10(5), 379–391. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJDRBE-06-2014-0044>
- Manusov, V., & Spitzberg, B. (2008). Attribution theory: Finding good cause in the search for theory. *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives*, 37–50. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329529.n3>
- Mattrossoff, M. (2017, April 11). *United CEO doubles down in email to employees, says passenger was 'disruptive and belligerent'*. CNBC. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/04/10/united-ceo-passenger-disruptive-belligerent.html>
- Morning Consult. (2017). *United vs. American*. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://morningconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/united-v-american-desktop-2.png>

- Nijkraake, J., Gosselt, J., & Gutteling, J. (2015). Competing frames and tone in corporate communication versus media coverage during the crisis. *Public Relations Review*, 41(1), 80-88.
- Passy, J. (2017, April 22). *Survey: Nearly half of young Americans say they won't Fly United Anymore*. MarketWatch. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/nearly-half-of-young-americans-wont-fly-united-anymore-2017-04-21>
- Perry, D. C., Taylor, M., & Doerfel, M. (2003). Internet based communication in crisis management. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(2), 206-233
- Reynolds, B. (2006). Response to best practices. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(3), 249-252. DOI.10.1080=00909880600771593
- Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2013a). Ch. 1: Introduction to Crisis Communication Theory. In *Theorizing crisis communication* (pp. 1–22). essay, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2013b). Ch. 7: Theories of Influence and Crisis Communication. In *Theorizing crisis communication* (pp. 163-184). Essay, Wiley-Blackwell
- Spence, P. R., Sellnow-Richmond, D. D., Sellnow, T. L., & Lachlan, K. A. (2016). Social media and corporate reputation during crises: The viability of video-sharing websites for providing counter-messages to traditional broadcast news. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 44(3), 199–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2016.1192289>
- Shen, L. (2017, April 11). *United Airlines stock drops \$1.4 billion after passenger-removal controversy*. Fortune. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from <https://fortune.com/2017/04/11/united-airlines-stock-drop/>
- Taylor, M. & Kent, M. L. (2007). Taxonomy of mediated crisis responses. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 140-146.
- Valentini, C., Romenti, S., & Kruckeberg, D. (2022). Ch. 4: Handling Crises in Social Media: From Stakeholder Crisis Awareness and Sense Making to Organizational Crisis Preparedness. In L. L. Austin & Y. Jin (Eds.), *Social Media and Crisis Communication* (pp. 57–68). essay, Routledge.
- Veil, S., Buehner, T. and Palenchar, M.J. (2011). “A work-in-process literature review: incorporating social media in risk and crisis communication”, *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 19 No. 2.
- Wattles, J. (2017, April 13). *Digging itself out of a hole: How united's PR response evolved*. CNNMoney. Retrieved February 22, 2022, from

<https://money.cnn.com/2017/04/13/news/companies/united-airlines-statement-david-dao-flight/>

Weiner, B. (1995). *Judgements of responsibility: A foundation for a theory of social conduct*. New York: Guilford Press.

Wendling, C., Jacobzone, S., & Radisch, J. (2013). The use of social media in risk and crisis communication. *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/5k3v01fskp9s-en>

Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D. (2009). Examining How Public Relations Practitioners Actually Are Using Social Media. *Public Relations Journal*, 3(3), 1–33.

Xu, J. (2020). Does the medium matter? A meta-analysis on using social media vs. Traditional Media in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 46(4), 101947.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101947>