
Social Media Role During Emergency Response In Aviation

The term 'crisis management' is very much related to the aviation industry. Any accident that involves a specific organization may cause the cancellation of reservations or the migration of travelers to its competitors. Adapting effective crisis management policies will bolster the financial conditions of airline companies.

Some years back, majority of the crisis communication was handled through conventional mainstream media. The tools for emergency response were press releases, news conferences and regular updates. Today social media has changed the way how crises are managed as everybody who has a smartphone can turn into a citizen journalist with the assistance of Twitter or other micro blogging applications. Facebook users can share the news or stories, making the local event worldwide news. Then the audience freely switches among news platforms, picking the source that is most interesting. As the media communication specialists say, the world has moved from the power-of-one to the power-of-many.

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The utilization of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, and so on) to communicate with people can be a very efficient and effective type of communication amid an incident in aviation. With the release of one small statement the organization can potentially notify a substantial segment of the populace.

The advantage of social media is as follows:

- Social media provides a type of two-way communication with the general population amid a crisis circumstance.
- Social media provides the ability to directly see how a situation is affecting people and gives the chance to respond to them, keeping them informed, preventing panic and keeping rumors at bay.
- By following keywords and hashtags, the Company can easily monitor what the community is saying about the incident and respond accordingly.

Twitter

Twitter is the most widely utilized "micro blogging" service, with a huge number of users posting short messages (tweets) every day. Twitter is accessible in around 30 languages and hence

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has a wide reach. Any Twitter user can become a “follower” of anyone who tweets and anybody receiving a tweet can reply to everybody copied on the message or “retweet” it to their own followers. This can create an exponential surge in the number of users discussing a compelling story.

Twitter has turned into a primary source of breaking news, especially in fast developing situations like an aircraft accident. A tweet from a survivor or eyewitness can reach thousands of users around the globe in minutes, including “mainstream” journalists who monitor Twitter.

The 140-character limit does not allow for detailed explanation or context but Twitter enables organizations to post instant updates to a potentially global audience and to connect to more detailed statements or to videos posted somewhere else. Organizations which utilize twitter as an “instant messaging” service after an accident or major incident are typically perceived to be demonstrating a more prominent level of straightforwardness and a willingness to engage with the online audience.

Facebook

With in excess of one billion users, Facebook is arguably the best social media channel for connecting with customers and fans of the organization. In “peacetime” the organization’s Facebook page can be used to promote new products and services and to take part in discussions with customers. In a crisis, it becomes an important addition to the organization’s overall communication response.

YouTube

Hundreds of hours of video material are uploaded onto YouTube every day, and the site attracts more than one billion unique visitors per month. The YouTube search engine is the second most commonly used after Google, with some three billion searches per month. TV coverage of aviation accidents is commonly uploaded to YouTube, including amateur video taken by eyewitnesses.

Many companies, including airlines, have created their own dedicated “TV channel” on YouTube, through which they regularly post videos to be viewed by customers and other followers. A dedicated YouTube channel can be customized with the company’s corporate branding and include images, links and relevant information.

Google+

Google+ is a social networking service created by Google, which allows companies to create an

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online profile which links to all Google services, including Google Search and YouTube. With more than 540 million users, it is the second largest social networking site after Facebook. Companies can use their Google+ page to share photos, videos, promotions and other information with customers and online followers.

After an accident or major incident, statements or images published on any other online platforms should also be posted to the company's Google+ page.

Photo-sharing sites

Some airlines use photo-sharing sites like Instagram and Flickr to publish photographs of their product or for special promotions. In a crisis, photo-sharing sites have limited usefulness, but any material previously posted to these sites should be reviewed, and any inappropriate images removed. For example, photographs of the aircraft involved in the accident, or promotions involving the destination of the flight which crashed. These sites may also be used as part of the airline's online memorial activities after an accident, posting photographs of flowers or other commemorative materials.

If external parties – for example, family groups - set up photo-sharing websites to commemorate those lost, the company should monitor the content and determine whether to post its own comments or photos to the site. This should be done with extreme sensitivity and will largely depend on the relationship which has been established with the families concerned.

Third-party websites

There are numerous examples of third parties (for example, law firms or family groups) setting up websites which are positioned as "official" sources of information about an accident. The purpose of these websites is usually to solicit business from people considering legal claims for compensation, or to offer advice and information about the status of the investigation and any associated litigation. Family associations may also form after an accident and may create websites as online "memorials" to the victims.

In each case, the airline should be careful not to allow the name or URL of these websites to be associated or confused with the airline's own website. While you cannot prevent third parties from creating websites dedicated to a particular accident, you can minimize the potential for confusion by immediately registering any domain names which they might try to use. These could include:

- xxxx Airlines accident.com
- xxx Airlines Flight xxx accident.com

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- Flight xxx.com
 - Flight xxx accident.com
 - Flight xxx information.com

Online forums

There are numerous online forums dedicated to the aviation industry. Some are “members-only” and intended to be used exclusively by people working within a specific community (for example, members of a cabin crew union). Others can be accessed by anyone with an interest in the subject, such as the Professional Pilots’ Rumour Network (www.PPRUNE.org).

Social Media Crisis Lessons taken from Southwest Airlines

Lesson 1: Say You’re Sorry and Mean It

This may appear to be apparent and insignificant, however it’s definitely not. Social media customer care teams in numerous organizations are precluded from apologizing for anything in a public forum, assuming it opens the organization to legal liability. There is no factual basis for this. However, it’s not in any manner unusual for organizations to move around the issue, though they are obviously wrong and do not apologize.

Lesson 2: Live Video is a Terrific Social Media Crisis Tool

In any customer service situation, humanity is key. It is much harder to be angry at a man than to be angry at an organization or brand.

Southwest adopted a creative and successful strategy to humanization by using Facebook live video to keep customers informed and to underscore apologies.

Southwest Airlines has shown that this approach is not adequate anymore. Customer attention is excessively fragmented and online channel proliferation is too real.

Southwest posted its written apology to its own discussion forum yet in addition posted the same content directly to Facebook as a note and furthermore on LinkedIn.

This sort of multi-channel crisis communications will likewise turn into the standard.

Regardless of whether it was a vital choice or probably a circumstance where the volume and speed of complaints was just huge, Southwest did not answer them all. They addressed many on Facebook and Twitter specifically, yet numerous customer complaints and requests for

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information were not tended to.

The irregularity of reaction aggravated hurt emotions at times and furthermore resulted in some channel shifting among customers looking for a place where they could receive a reply.

Therefore, answer each channel in each channel unfailingly.

Twitter complaints that got an answer were generally taken care of in 3 to 12 minutes and Facebook responses by 45 minutes.

This is also on trend, as many studies and research found that 40% of the social media complainers expect a reaction from brands inside an hour.

It would have been exceptional to answer them all except answering fast at least helps calm the customers they could react to amid the crisis.

Maybe in light of the fact that they trust Instagram is a stage for feel good, behind-the-scenes storytelling (as per Brooks in his podcast interview), the airline decided not to apologize or make any reference at all on Instagram.

With messaging apps and Snapchat coming online as potential customer service outlets as well, the channel expansion issue will get much more intense for companies.

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