



# FAST UNIVERSITY

## Assignment No. 2

**Summary of Case Study: “Turbulence at United Airlines”**

<b><u>Name:</u></b>	Zubair Ali
<b><u>Roll No:</u></b>	22I-2591
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<b><u>Instructor Name:</u></b>	Dr. Nadeem Ahmed Awan
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## 🔥 United Airlines' PR Crisis: Decoding the Organizational Chaos! 🔥

### 🌟 Deep Dive into United's 2017 Turbulence:

2017 wasn't smooth sailing for United Airlines. A string of public relations disasters rocked the airline, spotlighting glaring issues within its organizational framework and casting a shadow over its employee conduct. From puzzling dress code controversies to harrowing incidents involving passengers and pets, United's management of these crises garnered global attention and fueled public fury.

🔗 **References:** Stephen Robbins, "Organizational Behavior"

### 💣 Unpacking the Incident Hotspots:

#### ❖ Leggings Controversy (March):

Two teenage travelers were barred from boarding due to their leggings, a breach of United's strict dress code for pass riders. United's staunch defense ignited a fiery debate on the appropriateness of dress code policies and the extent of passenger rights, stirring the pot on social media and news outlets alike.

#### ❖ Dao's Flight Nightmare (April):

Dr. David Dao's violent removal from an overbooked flight to make room for United's staff sent shockwaves globally. Caught on camera, the disturbing scene of Dao being forcibly removed sparked public outrage, legal repercussions, and intense scrutiny of airline overbooking policies and passenger treatment.

#### ❖ Wedding Day Debacle (April):

A couple's pre-wedding flight turned sour when they were ejected from a United plane for seat-switching. The involvement of a U.S. marshal and the couple's removal escalated the situation, prompting questions about United's crew authority, passenger conduct protocols, and overall customer service approach.

#### ❖ Tragic Pet Incident (March 2018):

A devastating incident unfolded when a dog died in an overhead bin during a United flight. This heartbreaking event prompted an investigation into United's pet travel policies and safety measures, raising concerns about animal welfare and the role of flight attendants in ensuring the safety of passengers' pets.

### 🔍 Spotlight on Organizational Structure & Employee Conduct:

United's crisis-filled year exposed its rigid bureaucratic structure, characterized by unwavering adherence to rules and protocols. This strict environment likely contributed to employee rigidity

and questionable decision-making. The incidents illuminated a glaring gap between United's policies and its approach to customer service, casting doubts on the company's culture, values, and ability to address daily policy issues effectively.

### **In-Depth Discussion & Key Takeaways:**

#### **Crisis Response Evaluation:**

United's varied responses to each incident fueled debates on its crisis management strategies, policies, and employee training, revealing inconsistencies and gaps in its approach to public relations and customer relations.

#### **Formalization vs. Flexibility:**

United's strict rule enforcement and lack of adaptability showcased its high formalization level. This approach led to tarnished reputation, customer dissatisfaction, and concerns about its organizational culture and decision-making agility.

#### **Structural Strategy: Mechanistic or Organic?**

The incidents triggered discussions on United's organizational structure, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that prioritizes efficiency, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and employee empowerment to navigate through challenges successfully.

#### **Navigating United's Future Flight Path:**

To overcome future hurdles, United must overhaul its organizational structures, policies, and training programs, emphasizing flexibility, customer-centricity, responsibility, and ethical conduct to restore trust, enhance customer satisfaction, and cultivate a positive organizational culture.

#### **Ethical Integrity & Responsibility Center:**

United's ethical stance and responsible conduct came under scrutiny post-incidents. Adopting a supportive and ethical organizational culture, establishing clear guidelines, providing comprehensive training, and proactively addressing ethical dilemmas are vital steps to foster responsible and ethical behavior among employees.

### **Conclusion: Charting United's Course Ahead**

United Airlines' tumultuous journey through 2017 and 2018 exposed critical challenges tied to its organizational structure, employee behavior, customer service approach, and ethical integrity. Tackling these issues demands a comprehensive strategic revamp, emphasizing flexibility, customer-centricity, responsibility, ethics, and a nurturing organizational culture. Embracing these transformative changes is pivotal for United Airlines to regain trust, elevate customer satisfaction, and steer towards a brighter, turbulence-free future.

### **References:** Stephen Robbins, "Organizational Behavior"

