Final Case Study:

BOEING’S 737 MAX 8 – A STALLED COMMUNICATION TAKE-OFF?

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1. What do you think were the gaps in communication (both direct and indirect) that caused the crashes?

According to the Case Study Article, the gaps in communication were between the Boeing company, aviation companies, and the crew of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 airplanes. In fact, the new version of Boeing was equipped with new flight stabilization system, called Maneuvering Characteristics Augmented System (MCAS). This new system was implemented, but many pilots of these new airplanes did not know how to use it. Moreover, these planes had new cockpit warning system. Training on using this new cockpit system was not provided as well. Furthermore, according to the investigation, there safety indicators of the cockpit did not working right, which was intentionally ignored by the Boeing Company. Despite these facts, CEO declared that the plane is completely safe. But finally, after the two crushes, the CEO Muilenberg admitted, that indeed there were problems with the planes’ cockpit system.1 According to the leaked messages of the crew inside of the company chat, BNN powered by FirstUp, the pilots did not have any training to use new MCAS and other systems.

1. As the CEO, what efforts would you take, and which communication channels would you choose to have open communications with all stakeholders?

As the CEO of the Boeing Company, in order to openly communicate with all stakeholders, I would use Social Media communication channels, since these applications are open and easily-achievable and can be effectively used inside and outside of the company. Here my point is in accord with the Boeing Company’s approach. However, the communication should be open and apparent. Moreover, there is a new problem arising, that some stakeholders cannot be informed on time, or they just do not have that social media. To solve this issue, using several social media channels can be a great solution. In conclusion, I would like to use social media to effectively communicate with the stakeholders of the company if I were the CEO.3

1. What should Boeing have considered before choosing to put out messages on its digital communication platforms?

As it is obvious form the case study article, the messages from the company were not very caring about the safety of the customers. In fact, despite the fact that the company’s planes were not functioning properly, the social media showed the messages that are saying the complete safety of the airplanes, and the new technology. Some keywords from the company’s social media page, like “closely monitoring the situation” [after the first plane crush], “confidence in the safety of the 737 MAX”, may seem to be relieving, but in fact, there was not an excellent safety controlling, and moreover, the pilots were not trained to use the new technology of the new Boeing 737 MAX 8.4

1. Did Boeing become complacent about the role that media would eventually play as an investigative agency?

No, Boeing Company was not satisfied with the media’s investigation. In fact, it is the drawback of the company’s ignorance and ‘striving for money first’, not the safety of the customers. But the social media did a very good teaching to the company, and to the other companies, which have same problems with ignoring training of the staff and ignoring the technical issues of the product. The social media revealed that the pilots and the crew were not trained to use the new MCAS and cockpit warning system, ignoring the mistake in the planes’ technical equipment and the leaked messages of the workforce, crew.3 Finally, after the intrinsic factors of the company’s flaws are know to the audience, the Boeing was never complacent with the investigation agency of the social media.2

1. Evaluate the performance of the pilots/crew of both flights.

The performance of the pilots was appropriate. During the emergency, they did everything to save the plane and the customers. However, before the flight they were interested in learning new technology of the cockpit warning system, and the functioning of the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmented System (MCAS). This was the flaw of the performance of the crew. Because of the failure in effective communication between the Boeing Company and the Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines, and the lack of training, pilots were not able to control the system correctly. Human Resource Management and Leadership were not applied.10 Thus, pilots and the crew are not guilty for the accident; however, the Boeing and the airlines companies are to take the responsibility.5

1. Evaluate the performance of the engineers at Boeing.

The engineers at Boeing have reported the problem with the cockpit controlling, but the company has decided to ignore this problem. As it was discussed in the 13th chapter of the Organizational Behavior Textbook, Organizational Power and Politics, this sort of expert power of the engineers was not taken into account by the Company.9 This is indeed irresponsible and not compliant with the statement of the CEO about the “confidence in safety” [of the Boeing 737 MAX 8]. In my opinion, the engineers should have really insisted on fixing this problem, even if it costed much time and money. Anyway, after the 2 airplane crushes, Boeing Company lost much greater amount of money, revenue and reputation.

1. If you recently took over from the CEO of a large organization that has taken a blow to its reputation and is dealing with negative attention from social media and mistrust from stakeholders, what should your response/reaction be to rebuild a positive public perception of the brand?

According to the 16th chapter of the Organizational Behavior Textbook, Stress and Well Being, moderate stress is essential for good progress of the company.11 However, as I see, this situation is of high level of stress, and is in fact hard to handle. It is good to start step-by-step with the organization stages: forming, storming, norming and performing.6 First, I would try to display the values of the company, rebuild the company’s brand identity, get help of the online brand experts, serve customers well, build customer loyalty, make the production better, more efficient, do not ignore the feedback, engage with the audience, honor the audience’s preferences, and finally be transparent and hones.12

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