Sofia Ruiz

The Lessons of ValuJet Synopsis and questions

In 1996, a plane loaded with passengers crashed into a canal in Florida leaving no survivors, everyone on the plane was dead. A man watched the plane crash and reported that there was no smoke and no strange engine noises and no apparent deformation to the plane. Here is what had happened: the plane had just taken off from Miami airport and was flying to Atlanta. The plane was from an airline called ValuJet that was really, really cheap to fly on and apparently their whole airline was kind of a mess. Everybody was underpaid and they hired a lot of outside companies to do their work for them so that they could keep their flying costs low. Apparently, as soon as the plane took off the pilot and co-pilot noticed that there were some electrical issues and the co-pilot told Miami’s control tower that they needed to return immediately to Miami. The radar controller answered immediately giving them instructions on how to return to Miami as soon as possible. When the airplane’s cockpit recorder was found after the crash you could hear the passengers screaming that there was a fire in the cabin and the flight attendant telling the pilot and co-pilot that they couldn’t get any oxygen in the cabin. The cabin and cockpit were filled with black smoke and eventually it was heard that the flight attendant stated that everything was completely on fire. The plane lost control and dove down, losing so much altitude in very little time, investigators later calculated that the plane dove 6,400 feet in thirty-two seconds. The airplane eventually pulled sharply out of its dive and no one knows why, but it was still traveling at a speed of almost 500 miles an hour. The control tower eventually lost contact with the airplane when it crashed. When the airplane crashed, it was basically completely destroyed.

One of the main things that is a very obvious main contributor to the crash of the airplane is the fact that security did not seem to be an important factor to this airline. They were such a mess and obviously did not have good communication. It is mentioned in the article that ValuJet had hired an outside company to be in charge of maintenance called SabreTech. SabreTch was licensed by the FAA to perform any critical work. SabreTech was also hiring mechanics from other companies, so it turns out that three fourth of the people on this project were temporary outsiders. Because of this some oxygen tanks that were not supposed to be on the plane were on it which may have caused it to set on fire. While there is absolutely no way that all accidents could very be avoided on planes, because they are just accidents sometimes, this airline should have been better organized and there should have been more safety inspections done. The FAA had some members that were already really concerned about ValuJet. They thought it was growing way too fast for all regulations to be met.

Last week, we had to turn in a detailed document f how we wanted to run and complete our senior project. Because we had to turning this paper, we were forced to organize exactly what we wanted to accomplish for the semester. A lot of software developers have to make documents like this so that everyone on the team is aware of exactly what is going on and what has to be done at every moment.

Maybe if the people at ValuJet had organized the whole team, the plane would not have crashed. Clearly the people who were temporary hires for ValuJet and SabreTech were not given clear information on what had to be done and clearly there was no one who was performing the correct inspections. Especially on projects this big and important, there should be a clear understanding by everyone on the team of what is going on. I feel that if there was more detailed information given to the people at SabreTech who were temporary hires maybe they would have better known what to do with the oxygen.

In big projects like this it is also very important that every single detail is checked so that no accidents that could be avoided happen. For some reason two mechanics that were working on this project signed off on the safety caps but they were non existent. Things like this should not be allowed to happen on projects of such a large scale. This just goes to show that if you are working on a huge project you have to make sure you are doing everything because you don’t want you mistakes to mess up someone else’s work. Everyone on this project should have paid more attention to their individual jobs so that the inspections would have actually been correct. This is also why organization within the entire team is also so important because if anything goes wrong there is one person who is responsible for that specific thing that knows how to fix it and or any risks involved with changing things, etc.

I think the biggest issue I can think of with this ValuJet incident is really just organization. Clearly, when working on any project, whether it be a software or a hardware project, organization is so important and you won’t be successful without it. There should be organization of people and time and everyone should be aware of their responsibilities and be aware of who works around them and there should be a clear schedule of when everyone is supposed to do what they have to do so that everything can run smoothly and according to plan and no one is “injured”.