

United Airlines Flight 3411: Lessons in Crisis Communications

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Abstract

In 2017, a passenger was bloodied and dragged off a United Airlines airplane after refusing to relinquish his seat to airline employees and be accommodated on another departure due to the airline overbooking the flight. Videos of the incident taken by the other passengers quickly went viral on Twitter, and a public relations crisis ensued, emphasized by the incident's graphic nature. Characterized by lackluster responses and mixed messaging, the company's crisis management remains a stark example of what not to do for Public Relations (PR) professionals who are learning to navigate an industry dominated by social media.

This website will explore an in-depth analysis of crisis management and communication theory, specifically image repair theory, in the context of examining where United's crisis response failed as well as propose recommended changes the organization should make in future crisis response opportunities. Further, this paper will explore the role of social media in crisis communication and analyze how digital engagement and the lack of a cohesive response to this incident escalated the situation.

Final Thesis Website

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