

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic communications plan aims to help United Airlines assess its strengths and weaknesses to better achieve their company objectives and brand goals in 2021.

Through secondary research, this team has analyzed information to find valuable insight, which the company may benefit from.

This plan focuses on the effectiveness of company policy, inner-organization communication channels and public attitudes toward the brand.



An assessment of the findings are provided and explained in terms of value. This plan evaluates the airline market, United's competitors and their audiences.

In this booklet, you will find our goals and objectives for United based on our research of the company. We believe our findings and recommendations will improve the brand, reputation and image of United Airlines.

United Airlines was born from the Boeing Airplane Company. Started by William Boeing in 1916, this company was the first to achieve the international postal delivery in 1919. It wasn't until 1928 that the company became what we call it today (United).

United's mission is to, "define diversity as the range of differences that make individuals unique and to use inclusion to leverage these differences to form a genuine community and expand business opportunities" (United).

Their goal is for "leaders to create a culture where acceptance and appreciation of everyone is the norm and each employee is comfortable bringing their full selves to work" (United).

Overall, United aims to create an inclusive work environment, characterized by dignity and respect, that empowers every employee to serve the global marketplace and contribute to the company's success (United).



ABOUT UNITED AIRLINES

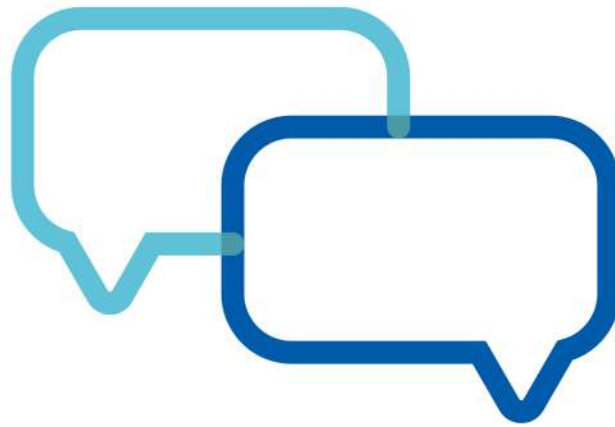


United uses their diversity and inclusion strategy to find "innovative and effective solutions to engage employees from diverse backgrounds and cultures in taking our flyer-friendly service around the globe" (United).

These values include: leaders embracing diversity and inclusion as a business advantage, employees feeling highly valued so they are actively engaged and are treated with dignity and respect, and for customers to value the inclusive approach to delivering flyer-friendly service (United).

THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of issues for United Airlines regarding the safety and trust of both passengers and employees. Unlike any time before in its history, United is facing monumental financial losses from a sharp decline in people flying. The company is also suffering from major distrust among its own employees, which has led to dismal morale throughout ranks.



THE OPPORTUNITY

Despite this problem, United Airlines has the opportunity to highlight its high safety standards and regain the trust of customers. In addition, the airline has the ability to energize its culture of inclusivity and engage staff members. Being a major airline with tens of thousands of employees, United also has the opportunity to leverage its media power and increase positive news coverage. This would help United reinforce positive brand sentiment among employees and customers.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Demographic Force:** United Airlines primarily serves a variety of air travelers, from families on vacation to people flying for business purposes, as well as leisure. The airline has been operating as a full-service airline since 1928.
- **Economic Forces:** United Airlines has several sources of revenue, including passengers, cargo and a robust loyalty program (“United Airlines,” 2020). The airline, however, has suffered historic losses in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit the airline industry especially hard. According to United’s third quarter earnings report, the company had a net loss of \$1.8 billion (“As Q3 ends,” 2020). Compared to 2019, total operating revenues are down 78 percent, with passenger revenue behind by 84 percent. The silver lining for United Airlines in 2020 is cargo revenue, which is expected to increase by up to 50 percent by the end of the year.
- **Technological Forces:** Before COVID-19 made its way to the United States, the airline industry was already shifting to make the flying process quicker and easier. American Airlines, Delta and Jet Blue are among the first U.S. airlines to begin using biometric boarding, which eliminates the need for a boarding pass or a passport (Genter, 2019). Adoption of biometric boarding is expected to become widespread throughout the industry, along with other technologies that speed the security process (Bogaitsky, 2020).

While an easier boarding process may be attractive to potential customers, a recent survey conducted by Honeywell shows passengers are concerned about the safety of flying in the COVID-19 era (Kress, 2020). The majority of respondents said they were more worried about the environment on the airplane than in an airport. Sixty percent also reported social distancing was their top priority while flying. United Airlines has taken steps to make the boarding process safer, such as installing touchless kiosks at 219 airports (“Touchless check-in,” 2020). The kiosks and the United Airlines app allow passengers to check in for flights while social distancing, but United Airlines needs to address passengers concerns about safety onboard airplanes if they want to win the trust and business of passengers.

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Political Forces:** Current political trends are the highest influence to United Airlines. Due to COVID-19, United has used a time of fear and the unknown to reassure their priority of safety to their passengers and become a leader in the industry. The major international political force affecting the airline industry is the trade war between China and the United States. This played a huge role in determining the demand for international commercial flights before COVID-19.

State political forces that affect the airline industry include partnerships, agreements and different acts, regulations, laws and bills. The most recent presidential debates and election were major influences nationally as United Airlines was selected to fly candidates to and from debates. This put them in a position of power to address their own political agenda and promote early voting. Overall, politics play a crucial role in the airline industry, especially in crises like 2020's COVID-19 pandemic. Impressively, United Airlines adapted to these forces and came out as the leader of the industry after the latest elections.

Key points:

- United Airlines and its pilots' union reached an agreement that would avert 2,850 job cuts that were scheduled to begin once federal restrictions on layoffs ended.
- The union's members agreed to a collective sacrifice to prevent any of United's 13,000 pilots from being furloughed until June 2021. Under the agreement, some older pilots will also be eligible for buyouts.
- As part of the CARES Act that Congress passed in Spring 2020, passenger airlines received \$25 billion to pay employees on the condition that they avoid any large cuts until Oct. 1. A union-led effort to renew that funding gained bipartisan support this summer, but remains in limbo because negotiations over a broader stimulus measure have stalled. Airline executives joined the effort, lobbying lawmakers in Washington in recent weeks.
- Meanwhile, the on-going trade war between China and the United States appears to be a power struggle between two countries for global leadership.
- These political tensions have gradually created a negative impact on the air transport industry of the region, which this paper aims to outline.
- The Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) selected United Airlines as the official airline for the 2020 Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates.

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Social Forces:** As widely known and already established, the mood of the nation is not good due to the widespread fear of COVID-19. Social distancing makes it hard for consumers to justify flying commercial or even going grocery shopping. The most recent public hope is news of several COVID-19 vaccines, two of which have at least a 90% efficacy rate. Until more is known about these vaccines, such as when they will be widely available, United and the rest of the commercial airlines will have to focus on enforcing their COVID-19 safety regulations.

Industry/social/cultural trends:

- Utilization of robots
- Passenger solutions (navigating airport experience all through the phone or app)
- Liquid rules to be eased due to better scanning technology
- Paperless and more trustworthy system
- Biometrics (face and palm identification systems)
- Designed security
- Cloudification
- Ease of concealed threats
- Air traffic control improvements
- Going green

These industry trends are pushed by social trends stemming from safety concerns, environmental concerns, popularity of technology preference and more. More specifically, social media and apps have become a huge social force driving the airline industry.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Management Objectives:** Each year, United releases a strategic growth plan. In October 2019, the growth plan was announced on Media Day in Chicago. Announced goals included a deeper investment in sustainability and improving the customer experience with upgraded planes and amenities. There was no confirmation of how this information was shared with staff (Christoff, 2019).

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Human Resources:** The United Aviate program offers a direct route to a job offer with United (United Aviate, 2020). Through the program, aspiring pilots can become a first officer, pilot, or captain. College students working towards an aviation major may take classes at a partner university. Soon, United will have their own aviation academy named the United Aviate Academy. Any person interested in becoming a flight attendant can fill out an online application and go through two rounds of interviews. Once they are chosen, they will attend a six-week program that covers operating and safety procedures (Team, 2020).
- **Financial Resources:** United Airlines lost \$1.63 billion during the second quarter of 2020, driven by a plunge in air travel demand because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the same quarter last year, the company posted a \$1.05 billion profit (Source: CNBC).
- **Physical Infrastructure:** United Airlines is headquartered at Willis Tower in Chicago, Ill., which serves as a central hub for employees who work worldwide.
- **Technology Infrastructure:** United Airlines has the Network Operations Center with ample infrastructure and technology.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strengths:** Flexibility seems to be the greatest overall strength of the company, which was noticeably present in 2020. United Airlines has great adaptability, which it uses to stay ahead of competitors. They possess one of the largest aircraft fleets with the highest flexibility in planning, a wide serviceability reach and enhanced customer experience through their loyalty program and member lounges. They also created a strong brand image through marketing the pandemic and presidential elections to their best interests. Furthermore, United Airlines has favorable investor metrics and improving operational performance.

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Weaknesses:**

- **Service** - *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* have both ranked United Airlines poorly in comparison to other low-cost airlines (Scipioni, 2020). Skytrax gave United a three-star rating. United ranked fair or average with a weakness in staff service and poor product standards like seating and catering.
- **Financial Loss** - The organization is suffering major financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In October, United laid off 36,000 people. The demand for travel has been low and United has reported over a 1.8 billion loss this year (Schaper, 2020). United must plan and prepare during these uncertain times.
- **Lawsuits**- There have been two class-action lawsuits relating to United. United was sued over alleged refusal to issue refunds (Shaak, 2020). United was also sued again by an employee over their unpaid days off policy (Rucinski, 2020). These lawsuits negatively impact the company during a time where there's major competition among airlines. It is important for United to address these lawsuits and build back the consumers' trust.

- **Opportunities:**

- **Create a Culture of Listening** - With a reputation for bad customer service and disgruntled employees, United Airlines' corporate culture is in serious need of an overhaul (Yohn, 2018). The airline has the opportunity to turn this around by making listening a priority at all levels. Engaging employees in a listening campaign, while company leaders take steps to consult employees before making big decisions can help create an environment where employees feel valued. If executed properly, the customer experience will also improve.
- **Invest in the Digital Experience** - United Airlines has the opportunity to make the flying experience faster, safer and more relaxing by investing in more digital technology, such as touchless check-in kiosks, its mobile app and biometric boarding.

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Threats:**

- **Travel Fear/Safety Concerns-** Consumers may feel hesitant to fly if public health is still a concern 18 months from now. United Airlines will need to stress that every measure is being taken to ensure a safe, comfortable experience for all passengers.

- **Opportunities for the next six months:**

- **Showcase Investment in Safety** - United Airlines is taking meaningful steps to protect passengers from COVID-19, such as providing free testing for the virus, disinfecting high-touch surfaces and utilizing hospital-grade HEPA filters on board its planes. United has the opportunity to showcase its investment in safety and reassure anxious passengers through an external communications campaign (United Airlines, n.d.).
- **Rebuild Employee Morale** - COVID-19 resulted in huge financial losses for United Airlines in 2020 and more than 13,400 layoffs (Sider, 2020). The airline needs to act quickly to boost employee morale by keeping the lines of communication open, recognizing successes and increasing praise and appreciation ("Anticipating layoffs," 2020).
- **Position itself as the Goodwill Airline** - Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, United Airlines has donated 2,900 flights for medical professionals, 500,000 pounds of food to catering kitchens and food banks, and more than 20,000 items such as pillows and self-care products to homeless shelters ("United Airlines," 2020).

SITUATION ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)

- **Challenges for the next six months:**
 - **Intense competition from other low-cost airlines** - Large publications like *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal* rank United Airlines as one of the worst airlines for passengers. The lack of demand for travel will put pressure on United to look more appealing to consumers as there are several choices in airlines (Scipioni, 2020).
 - **The continuous financial loss due to COVID-19** - Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, United Airlines has reported major financial losses. In October, 36,000 employees were laid off (Schaper, 2020). United must plan for the future to keep employees protected during these uncertain times.
 - **Lawsuits** - Since the start of the pandemic, United Airlines has been named in several lawsuits. In April, a class-action lawsuit was filed over alleged refusal to issue refunds to customers (Shaak, 2020). In May, a second class-action lawsuit alleged that a requirement that management and administration employees take 20 unpaid days off breached the terms of federal payroll aid. Other lawsuits have received national attention as well. This attention negatively affects the company, which can drive consumers away.

SWOT GRID

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Flexibility in times of crisis- Willingness to adapt to challenging situations	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inconsistent client service- A number of pending lawsuits against United Airlines
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create a “culture of listening”- Invest in the digital experience for passengers and crew members (i.e. touchless check in)	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Travel and health concerns- Looming health crisis

THE AUDIENCE

A. AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION

- a. Review the following list and rate each audience in terms of its importance for your work (somewhat important, critically important, or not applicable).
- b. Decide if the organization has been effective at communicating with them.
- c. Rank the three most critical audiences for the planning process. Check the appropriate boxes.

Staff- not good communication

Passengers- communication

National press- communication

Category	Step 1			Step 2		Step 3
	N/A/	Somewhat Important	Critical	Not Effective	Effective	Rank the Top 3
Colleagues at other organizations		X			X	

Organizations with a similar program interests or values with who they partner			X		X	
Organizations that oppose the work of the organization	X					<input type="checkbox"/>
Activists/advocates (against the organization)	X					
Clients			X		X	X
Activists/advocates (for the organization)	X					
Board Members		X		X		
Volunteers	X					
Staff			X	X		
Private Foundations	X					
Corporate Foundations						
Donors						

National Press					x	x
State and Local Reporters, Editors, Media Outlets, Specific Programs						
Other Audience(s) not on this list:						

B. AUDIENCE PROFILES

A. AUDIENCE #1

a. **Audience:** Staff (77,221 employees that are not considered upper management)

b. **Who are they?** The main concern of United Airlines staff is trust with management. In 2010, a bad merger destroyed this trust. This past year, financial losses due to COVID-19 threatened to eliminate 36,000 jobs. Staff have also taken great offense at the bonus lottery where upper management tried to pass everyone’s bonuses into one huge lottery bonus. This idea, along with cuts, have lowered overall morale and decreased trust within the company. To fix this, United has focused on domestic service, diversity and inclusion. This meant sending staff to compassion training, which focused on teaching employees how to be caring, safe, dependable and efficient. Staff also took on the 'Inclusion Revolution,' which helps customers with intellectual disabilities feel welcome.

c. **Why are they important?** They are the backbone of the organization and the face of the company to customers. Understanding who United Airlines staff members are can help us pinpoint the opportunities to bridge gap between employees and upper management, which can improve company culture, morale and service.

d. Why should they care about United? The success of the company directly affects the success of its employees. What the organization does and says affect the choices that staff members make everyday at work and at home. The past year's staff cuts have been an example of just how impactful the success of a company is on its employees.

e. What is the desired action? Create a more open company culture and a balanced relationship between all levels of the organization.

f. How do they receive information? The staff receives information about their jobs from upper management through company email and the company website that employees log into for scheduling information. The way staff members receive non-work related information varies from news channels and social media platforms (mostly Facebook and Twitter).

g. Who has credibility/power over them? The CEO and Board of Directors. They decide pay, hours, training, schedules and policy for all staff members.

h. Who can help reach this target audience? Love Fajota (flight attendant), Jaspreet Singh (aviation employee) and Joe Lammerman (baggage handler) all have influencers added on top of their job description. Influencers can help upper management better understand the staff's everyday frustrations and all employees can be more connected and learn about what all it takes for a huge company to stay afloat.

B. AUDIENCE #2

a. Audience: Clients

b. Who are they? United's passengers/cargo clients vary in age, ranging from unaccompanied minors to large companies looking to move their products from point A to point B, as quickly as possible. Passengers are concerned with the safety of United's aircraft, as well as the cost of air travel. A portion (12% according to Investopedia) of airline passengers are traveling for work and they are usually middle class.

c. Why are they important? United Airlines would not feasibly be able to survive without cargo partners and regular patronage from passengers.

d. Why should they care about United? United Airlines is considered essential as a travel-based business.

e. What is the desired action? Continued support as United adjusts to evolving situations worldwide regarding public health.

f. How do they receive information? Through email updates, the United website and newsletters.

C.AUDIENCE #3

a. Audience: National Press

b. Who are they? This audience is concerned with covering all newsworthy events, incidents and trends concerning United Airlines. They seek to tell stories about United Airlines, both good and bad. Their motive is to inform stakeholders, such as customers and employees, shareholders, as well as the public at large. It is important for United Airlines to have relationships with journalists from top tier news organizations, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. These outlets regularly cover news about major airlines, such as United.

c. Why are they important? Because national press outlets have the ability to inform and influence their audiences, it is critical for United Airlines to have a national press strategy that aims to counter negative coverage with positive news stories related to the company.

d. Why should they care about United? National press cares about United Airlines because it employs 88,000 people in the U.S. and around the world and carries more than 162 million passengers a year, according to 2019 data ("Corporate fact sheet," n.d.).

e. What is the desired action? We want national press journalists to provide fair and balanced coverage of United Airlines. We also want them to share as much positive news about United Airlines as possible.

f. How do they receive information? National press outlets receive information in a variety of ways, including press releases, investor reports, social media and blog posts, as well as news tips that may be sent directly to journalists.

g. Who has credibility/power over them? No one individual should have power over press outlets under the First Amendment.

h. Who can help reach this target audience? Trained public relations professionals in the airline industry can help United Airlines develop and implement an effective strategy.

COMMUNICATION GOALS & OBJECTIVES

OVERALL COMMUNICATION GOAL

Communication Objectives focus on changing specific knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors in the audience. Communication objectives have action verbs (e.g., educate, teach, inform, provide, conduct, enlist, mobilize, discuss, promote, build consensus) and they are measurable.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE #1: STAFF

Purpose (Inform, Engage, Motivate, Maintain): Promote trust, communication and transparency between staff and upper level management to improve staff attitudes, boost organization morale and enhance the practice of policy protocols to improve brand image to the public eye.

Desired Action: Implement an organizational communication channel via online portal for all employees, allowing open communication between all levels. Combine this with a weekend seminar on how to use the portal, when to use it and answer any questions regarding the objective going forward.

Target Date: Jan- May 2021

State the Communication Objective: Implement communication channel to promote a trusting, transparent relationship between all organizational levels and maintain high-staff morale by May 2021.

Is the communication objective specific? Yes

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE #2: CLIENTS

Purpose (Inform, Engage, Motivate, Maintain): Maintain clients as the ongoing health crisis continues.

Desired Action: For valued passengers to continue flying United.

Target Date: Jan- May 2021

State the Communication Objective: Reassure United passengers (especially card-holding United passengers) through digital marketing messages that it is safe to continue to fly United and that their health is a top priority.

Is the communication objective specific? Yes

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE #3: NATIONAL PRESS

Purpose (Inform, Engage, Motivate, Maintain): To reassure customers that it is safe to fly with United Airlines, despite COVID-19 concerns.

Desired Action: For five top tier news organizations, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, to publish and/or air positive stories about United Airlines' COVID-19 safety measures.

Target Date: Jan- Mar 2021

State the Communication Objective: To promote United Airlines' COVID-19 safety measures through national news media coverage, leading to a 15% increase passenger volumes by March 2021.

Is the communication objective specific? Yes



MESSAGE TAILORING



A. TARGET AUDIENCE: STAFF

Desired Change: Improve communication channels between staff and upper management to boost company morale.

Part I (Issue): Miscommunication leads to bad implementation of policy procedures causing crisis and brand image issues.

Part II (Why should your audience care?): Bad policy procedures reflect poorly on staff because they are the ones who have to implement policy procedures. As the face of the brand, flight attendants bear the brunt of the burden from customers who may have complaints regarding policies.

Part III (What do you want your audience to do, think, feel?): United Airlines staff members should ask upper-management more questions, stay focused on thinking about how to be proactive with policy and feel safe to open their concerns and trust who they are voicing their thoughts to in upper-management.

Message for this primary audience: Miscommunication between staff and upper-management lead to bad implementation of company policies, creating unwanted tensions between company levels, poor brand image and low staff morale. To boost morale, remove unwanted tension between staff and customers and establish trusting communication between all levels of management, staff members can take advantage of communication channels to actively voice concerns, questions and ideas to upper-management, taking less responsibility and pressure off them in order to do their jobs effectively.

B. TARGET AUDIENCE: CLIENTS

Desired Change: For the number of passengers on United flights to increase and for these customers express positive sentiment regarding updated safety measures and inflight experiences.

Part I (Issue): Staying safe while traveling in a health crisis.

Part II (Why should your audience care?): The audience would be the main party affected.

Part III (What do you want your audience to do, think, feel?): The audience should feel safe and secure while traveling with United Airlines.

Message for this primary audience: Clients with United should rest assured knowing that their safety is the top priority.

C. TARGET AUDIENCE: NATIONAL PRESS

Desired Change: For top tier national press outlets to publish positive news coverage about the safety of flying in United airplanes.

Part I (Issue): Due to COVID-19, many people are hesitant to fly because of the lack of social distancing, germs on surfaces and circulated air.

Part II (Why should your audience care?): National press cares about this issue because it affects people all over the U.S. and the world. Mass fear of flying impacts United employees, potential passengers as well as the economy at large.

Part III (What do you want your audience to do, think, feel?): We want the national press to feel overwhelmingly positive about the safety measures being taken by United Airlines, and we want them to share this through stories in their various news outlets.

Message for this primary audience: United Airlines is pulling back the curtain and inviting you to join us virtually for a rare look at our COVID-19 safety measures. Ask questions as independent virology expert Peter Pathogen inspects a Boeing 787 and evaluates protections set in place throughout United Airlines.

STRATEGIES & CHANNELS



A. EVALUATE STRATEGIC OPTIONS

TARGET AUDIENCE: STAFF, CLIENTS & NATIONAL PRESS

Step 1: Review the strategic options under consideration and assign a numeric value.

i. Responsiveness to Audience: 1 unresponsive, 5 highly responsive

ii. Appropriate Relationship: 1 inappropriate, 5 builds on our strengths

iii. Strategy Affects Perception: 1 emotional, 5 rational

iv. Strategy Affects Message: 1 no control over message, 5 organization controls the message

v. Effort to Implement: 1 draws on the strength of the organization, 5 will tax the capacity of the organization

vi. Cost to Implement: 1 least expensive, 5 most expensive

vii. Impact on Others: 1 no impact on others, 5 allows organization to reach other targeted audiences.

c. Step 2: Decide which strategies are most likely to give you the desired result with the target audience.

d. Step 3: Rank order the effective strategies for this target audience and this communications objective.

Strategy	Responsive-ness to Audience	Appropriate Relationship	Strategy Affects Perception	Strategy Affects Messaging	Efforts to Implement	Costs to Implement	Impact on Others	TOTAL	RANK
Launch an employee engagement app to help staff connect, post photos/videos, ask questions and receive internal updates.	5	5	4	5	2	3	5	29	2
Offer a refund program for passengers who test positive for COVID-19 linked to traveling with United.	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	33	1
Create a COVID-19 National Press PR team dedicated to engaging national media with positive pitches about United Airlines, as well as countering negative coverage.	5	5	5	1	1	1	4	22	3

e. Step 4: Are all of these strategies designed to work in concert with each other and to be mutually reinforcing?

- i. Each of these strategies can be executed at the same time or exclusively.

B. EVALUATE EXISTING CHANNELS & STRATEGIES

a. Step 1: List existing channels used by the organization.

b. Step 2: Identify priority audiences that could benefit from these channels.

c. Step 3: Verify that each channel carries the correct message.

d. Step 4: Verify that the channel is effective at reaching the audience.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Channels used by the organization (Owned Media)	Primary Audience	Conveys the message of the organization?	Effective at reaching the audience?
Face-to-face			
Flights	Passengers, Staff	Yes	Yes, More than 158 million customers a year ("United Airlines," 2019)
Print			
Hemispheres (Inflight Magazine)	Passengers	Yes	No data, but effective
Magazine Ads	Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, newspapers and magazines nationwide ("United Airlines," 2013)
Out-of-home ads (billboards, airport boards and digital displays)	Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, locations nationwide ("United Airlines," 2013)
Audio			
Radio ads	Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, news and sports radio stations ("United Airlines," 2013)
Video			
United Airlines YouTube channel	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	No, only 59k subscribers

TV Ads	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, major national television stations (Lazare, 2019)
Website/email			
United Airlines Website	Loyal customers, potential customers, employees	Yes	No data, but effective
United Airlines Blog	Loyal customers, potential customers, employees	Yes	No data, but effective
Social Media			
Twitter	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	No, 1 million followers but low engagement
Facebook	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, 1.3 million followers with high engagement
LinkedIn	Employees and potential employees	Yes	Yes, 482k followers with high engagement
Instagram	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, 781k followers with high engagement
Digital Ads	Younger demographics, Passengers, Potential customers	Yes	Yes, wide range of websites and social media ("United Airlines," 2013)

B. DEVELOP NEW STRATEGIES & VEHICLES

A. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE 1

Target Audience: Staff

Communication Objective: To launch an employee engagement app to help staff connect with one another, post photos and videos, as well as ask questions and receive internal updates on their personal phone or device.

Proposed Channel: A new paid-communication platform in the form of an app such as Social Chorus and Hub.

B. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE 2

Target Audience: Clients

Communication Objective: Offer a refund program for passengers who test positive for COVID-19 linked to traveling with United Airlines.

Proposed Channel: Utilize owned channels such as United's website and social media pages and use paid media such as advertising on TV, radio as well as digital ads to promote the program. Also, capture earned media coverage through pitches and interviews.

C. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE 3

Target Audience: National Press

Communication Objective: Create a COVID-19 National Press PR team dedicated to engaging national media with positive pitches about United Airlines, as well as countering negative coverage.

Proposed Channel: Utilize United Airlines, website, online blog and Twitter accounts to target journalists and provide information. Also, develop visual content on United's YouTube page that may be attractive for journalists.

EVALUATION

A. STRATEGY FOR EVALUATION

A. WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure current sentiment of the brand and see how effective the campaign messaging is. Our team will measure the impact of the communication efforts.

B. WHO WILL BE ON THE EVALUATION TEAM?

United communications team members.

B. DEVELOP OUTCOME MEASURES

A. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES: STAFF

II. Activities to measure

1. Activity 1: Internal communications app with a suggestions chat feature
2. Activity 2: Newsletters
3. Activity 3: Weekly/monthly meetings

ii. Impacts to Measure:

1. Impact : Sentiment/morale
2. Impact 2: transparency/overall awareness of policy
3. Impact 3: Overall sentiment and transparency of all levels of the organization.

B. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES: CLIENTS

II. Activities to measure

1. Activity 1: Social Media engagement
2. Activity 2: Email
3. Activity 3: App downloads

ii. Impacts to Measure:

1. Impact 1: Brand awareness
2. Impact 2: Attitude towards the brand
3. Impact 3: Loyalty towards the brand

C. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES: NATIONAL PRESS

II. Activities to measure

1. Activity 1: Survey
2. Activity 2: Focus groups
3. Activity 3: Advertising reach

ii. Impacts to Measure:

1. Impact : Advertising value equivalents
2. Impact 2: Sentiment of audience
3. Impact 3: Increase in popularity



TIMELINE

DATE:	TASK:	PERSON RESPONSIBLE:
01/31/21	- Launch employee engagement app for all staff members and organizational leaders	- Communications Team
01/31/21	- Launch national press PR team to engage with national media outlets	- National Press PR Team
02/01/21 - 06/01/21	- Send out emails and newsletters to inform consumers about COVID-19 new refund policy	- Marketing Team
02/01/21 - 06/01/21	- Bi-weekly Facebook and Instagram ads to showcase new refund policy and positive brand image	- Marketing Team

BUDGET

TASK:	TARGET DATE:	ESTIMATED COST:
- Create and launch employee engagement app	01/31/21	\$ 150,000
- Create and launch national press PR team	01/31/21	\$ 55,000
- Create refund content and gather mailing list	01/31/21	\$ 10,000
- Update company website on new policies and communication channels	01/30/21	\$ 2,000
- Create content for paid media ads	01/31/21	\$ 15,000

CONCLUSION

The goal of this report is to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of United Airlines and identify any threats and opportunities. The strategic communication plan tailors its messaging to reach the target audience (staff, clients, national press) in order to increase reach and impact for the organization. There are external and internal factors that impact United Airlines. 2020 has been a difficult year for the airline industry as a whole. COVID-19 has brought extreme economic hardship for United Airlines. While the current conditions are challenging, they also present opportunities for United Airlines to showcase their investment in safety and rebuild employee morale. United Airlines has also supported frontline workers during the pandemic, donating 2,900 flights to several medical professionals. United has also donated 20,000 items to different homeless shelters around the nation. The strategic communication plan will help United Airlines come back from this unprecedented year better and stronger.



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