GERMANWINGS
AIRLINE IN CRISIS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"**Any unanticipated event, incident, situation or development** that has the potential to damage or destroy an organization's reputation is known as — a crisis." (Roemer, 19)*

For Germanwings and its parent company, Lufthansa, the unanticipated actions of one man resulted in a crisis of epic proportions. As quickly as the unthinkable events unfolded, questions arose. How did this happen? Could it have been prevented? Were warning signs missed?

In retrospect, it is only natural to second-guess safety measures and assume that this tragedy could have been averted, perhaps even predicted. But the ability to forecast disasters, natural or man-made, is virtually impossible. What we can do is strive to minimize risk and the impact a crisis can have on our organization. We can also devise a plan so that we can respond *when* the unexpected happens.

Executive Summary. . . . . Page 2
Situation . . . . . .Page 4
Crisis Timeline .. . . . . .Page 7
Warning Signs . . . . . Page 12
Initial Response . . . . . Page 15
Centers of Gravity . . . . . Page 22
Primary Response . . . . . Page 25
Recovery . . . . . .Page 30
Ethical Issues . . . . . .Page 35
Analysis & Evaluation . . . Page 38
Key Takeaways . . . . . .Page 43
Bibliography . . . . . .Page 45

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Because we know, it is not a question of "*if*" the balloon goes up, but rather "*when*."

With a well thought out, and rehearsed, crisis communications plan in place, our organization will have a tool that helps guide it through the chaos of an emergency.

The plan will also be an integral part of the organization's Initial Response, Primary Response and Recovery stages.

In this analysis, we look at how well Germanwings and their parent company, Lufthansa planned for and responded to the news that Flight 4U9525 had been downed by one of its own pilots. We will also critique their communication to the various stakeholders involved and assess how well they protected the brand's reputation during the crisis.

According to Bob Roemer, "a crisis is a messy, unpredictable, fast-breaking event that defies management… when things go wrong, action is required."

What follows are the actions taken by Germanwings and Lufthansa during one of the worst crises in recent aviation history.

SITUATION

On a clear morning on March 23, 2015, a German plane en route from Barcelona, Spain, to Düsseldorf, Germany, plunged from the sky and slammed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board. The airline, Germanwings, a subsidiary of Lufthansa, was operating the flight which included passengers from 15 countries and six crew members.

According to flight data, the plane had taken off from Barcelona at 9:01 am (GMT) without incident and had ascended to a cruising altitude of 38,000 feet. Approximately 30 minutes later, the plane begins an automatic and horrific descent to 100 feet and crashes into the mountainside at 9:41 am (GMT).

Carsten Spohr | Lufthansa Group CEO

SITUATION

The first reports on the crash are posted on Twitter and circulated from real-time monitors of sites like FlightAware at 10:30 am (GMT). Approximately 22 minutes later (71 minutes after the actual impact), Germanwings issues its first public statement confirming an incident with the flight. The airline activates its full crisis communications plan shortly thereafter as new information begins to emerge about the cause of the fateful crash. Two days later, the cause of the crash takes a more sinister turn as investigators confirm one of the pilots had been deliberately locked out of the cockpit. New details about the crash are later confirmed by authorities and verified

Carsten Spohr | Lufthansa Group CEO

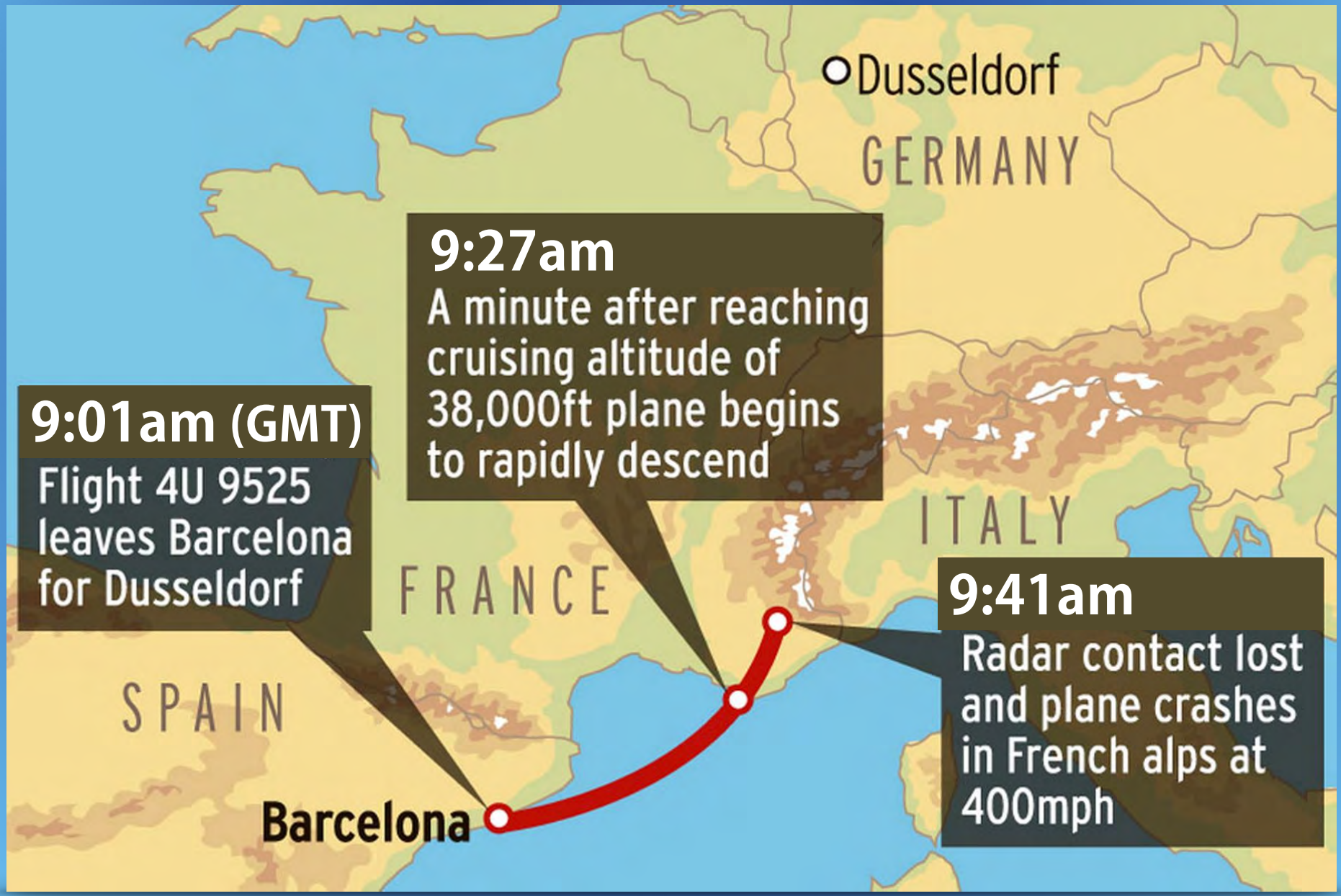
SITUATION

by the airline: There is mounting evidence the pilot deliberately crashed the plane and a profile emerges of a deeply troubled man with mental health issues who was seeking treatment before the fatal crash.

The airline's already onerous job of communicating information to family members, investigators, government and transportation officials, employees, investors, media and the general public is now compounded by ethical and legal issues regarding how much it knew and what it could have done to prevent the suicidal mission of one of its pilots.

Carsten Spohr | Lufthansa Group CEO

CRISIS TIMELINE



CRISIS TIMELINE

9:41 AM (GMT): Plane crashes into French Alps.

10:30 AM: Reports begin circulating on social media that a plane has disappeared from radar in the French Alps.

10:52 AM: Germanwings posts its first statement on Twitter, confirming there are reports of an "incident" but no additional information is provided.

11:00 AM: French Prime Minister Manuel Valls confirms the crash and President Hollande says there are 'no survivors' a few minutes later.

1:00 PM: Germanwings confirms the crash via Twitter and sets up a hotline for the families of the victims.

2:00 PM: Germanwings CEO Thomas Winkelmann holds the first of many press conferences.

Day 2, March 25, 2015:

- Germanwings continues to cooperate with investigators and provides support to families.
- Leaders of Spain, France and Germany visit crash site and express condolences to families.
- The plane's black box is recovered.

CRISIS TIMELINE

Day 3, March 26, 2015:

The *New York Times* publishes an article with details from the black box recordings and reveals that one of the pilots was locked out of the cockpit and a struggle ensued. Other news outlets also confirm the same information from sources.

11:30 AM: A French prosecutor confirms the details from the plane's black box which verifies that the pilot, Andreas Lubitz, deliberately crashed the plane. More details of the pilot emerge.

1:30 PM: Lufthansa's CEO holds a press conference and confirms that Lubitz's training was interrupted in 2009, but he was "fully fit to fly."

Investigators dig deep into Lubitz's medical history and search his apartment and parent's home for clues.

CRISIS TIMELINE

Day 4, March 27, 2015:

It's confirmed through detailed reports in the German media that Lubitz had been battling for some time with mental health problems and depression. According to sources, Lubitz had 18 months of psychiatric help during his Lufthansa training.

Evidence found by investigators confirms that Lubitz hid the extent of his medical problems from his employer.

The chief executive of Lufthansa, which owns Germanwings, said that European regulators do not require two people to be in the cockpit at all times. By contrast, two people are required to be in the cockpit on United States airlines, according to the Federal Aviation Administration and an industry association.

CRISIS TIMELINE

June 2015

June 11: France opens criminal inquiry into plane crash.

June 30: Lufthansa offers compensation to the victims' families.

July 2015

July 17: European agency proposes tougher medical and psychological oversight of pilots.

October 2015

- Several families of the victims publicly criticize the airline for not properly screening and monitoring its pilots and allowing a "monster" to fly a plane. They also explore filing a lawsuit in the U.S. where tort laws allow for bigger settlements against corporations that are deemed guilty or negligent.
- The re-branding of Germanwings continues with a transition to EuroWings happening in early 2016.

WARNING SIGNS

WARNING SIGNS

- Lubitz applied to join Lufthansa's flight academy straight out of high school. In 2008, he was among the roughly 5 percent of applicants accepted into the training program. But **he broke off his training** mid-way through the program to receive **psychiatric care**.

- Lubitz had to compete successfully in a **selection process** just to have the opportunity to train through Lufthansa's flight program, a requirement of Germanwings employment. The selection process is **highly competitive**, requiring above-average aptitude. Was the selection process flawed to the extent that a serious mental disorder would go unnoticed?

- According to media reports, Lubitz had **suffered from mental health issues and depression** for many years and took a month-long leave of absence in 2009. After his leave, he asked to be re-instated in Lufthansa's flight training program and was **granted** the request.

- As part of the intensive training program at Lufthansa, candidates are thoroughly screened and tested in both the U.S. and in Germany. Lubitz completed the program in 2012 and was offered a job with Germanwings.

WARNING SIGNS

Based on information provided by the airline and investigators, Germanwings/Lufthansa **did not monitor** the mental health treatment he was receiving after his return to work.

- Prior to the crash, Lubitz had received notes from specialists declaring him **unfit to work** that he never shared with his employer.
- According to the *New York Times*, "Lubitz's journey to the moment when he found himself alone at the controls of Germanwings Flight 9525 from Barcelona to Dusseldorf on March 24 **exposed a series of failures and weaknesses at Lufthansa, and throughout the industry and its regulators**, in dealing with mental illness among pilots."
- Following the crash, experts argued that the pervasive culture of privacy in Germany created a bias against delving into Lubitz's condition, and **effectively blinded** the country's airline regulator to the medical problems afflicting its pilots.
- In recent years, several commercial pilots appear to have crashed their aircraft intentionally or been stopped from doing so by fellow crew members. In most cases, those pilots had also been screened for psychological problems.

INITIAL RESPONSE

INITIAL RESPONSE

Germanwings and parent company Lufthansa deployed fast, timely responses to the crash of Flight 4U9525. The flight's last radar position was recorded at 9:40:47 AM GMT and it vanished into the French Alps just 19 seconds later at 9:41:06 AM GMT.

> The proliferation of flight radar tracking websites and amateur enthusiasts makes news of an airplane incident public nearly in concert with the notification of an airline through more official channels—perhaps even faster. @Flightradar tweeted about the plane's disappearance from radar, earning more than 2,000 retweets in the first 90 minutes while #Germanwings became the world's No. 1 trending topic in just 60 minutes.

INITIAL RESPONSE

The phenomenon of multiple sources accelerates the timeline needed for a timely official response. Germanwings had planned for this and was prepared to deploy an effective initial response, and though there was one significant setback (when its website crashed for nearly four hours), it was quite effective.

The company quickly moved to acknowledge the crash, address early centers of gravity and place an **emphasis on the families** of those on board during a time in the crisis when shock and anguish trump anger and outrage.

INITIAL RESPONSE

The first public reports of the plane disappearing from radar appeared at 10:30 AM (GMT), 49 minutes after the crash.

Just 22 minutes later, Germanwings publicly acknowledged the reports of the incident, but said it did not have confirmation.

Almost immediately, the Germanwings website goes down (parent company Lufthansa's site, however, suffered no such downtime, updating statements throughout the day).

Roughly two hours later, Germanwings released its full "initial response," confirming the accident and moving forward with its pre-planned activities.

INITIAL RESPONSE

Media/Direct Customer Response

- A multi-lingual hotline was set up and announced within 1.5 hours of the 1st media reports.
- Germanwings/Lufthansa CEOs make first public appearance at a news conference less than four hours after the first media reports of the accident. This showed direct ownership of the crisis and incredible speed on the company's part.
- In addition to speaking publicly, Germanwings took steps to offer flights so loved ones could get as near to the scene of the crash as possible while also making a one-time, immediate payment to families to help in the short term.

Official Website Response

- Almost immediately, Germanwings website crashes and stays down for four hours.
- Within 2.5 hours, Airbus activates its crisis site, first removing all marketing from its normal homepage before deploying a pop-up that leads to airbus.com/crisis.
- Lufthansa's website remains under normal operations for nearly four hours before updating the homepage with alerts and statements on the incident. No dedicated crisis site is deployed.
- Germanwings website returns to full operational five hours after the initial reports with its full crisis "dark site" in place. Updates are provided there.

Social Media Response:

- 22 minutes after initial reports surface, Germanwings confirms the reports in a Tweet.
- 2 hours after the initial reports, Germanwings and parent company Lufthansa darken their logos on social media.
- During the first 24 hours, Germanwings sends 24 tweets with updated information. Several of these tweets came while the Germanwings website had crashed, filling the information gap.
- During this same 24 hour timeframe, parent company Lufthansa (12) and plane manufacturer Airbus (5) also send updates, though less frequently and with operational web presences.

INITIAL RESPONSE

Germanwings
@germanwings
Follow

INFO: We have recently become aware of media reports speculating on an incident though we still do not have any own confirmed information...

5:52 AM - 24 Mar 2015

2,570 437

Germanwings
@germanwings
Follow

... As soon as definite information is available, we shall inform the media immediately ...

5:53 AM - 24 Mar 2015

1,164 268

Germanwings
@germanwings
Follow

... Please monitor our website bit.ly/1eVcii for periodic updates.

5:53 AM - 24 Mar 2015

915 204

SPIEGEL Eilmeldungen
@SPIEGEL_EIL
Follow

Flugzeugunglück in Südfrankreich: Hollande spricht von vielen deutschen Opfern... spon.de/aesSM

6:19 AM - 24 Mar 2015

SPIEGEL ONLINE

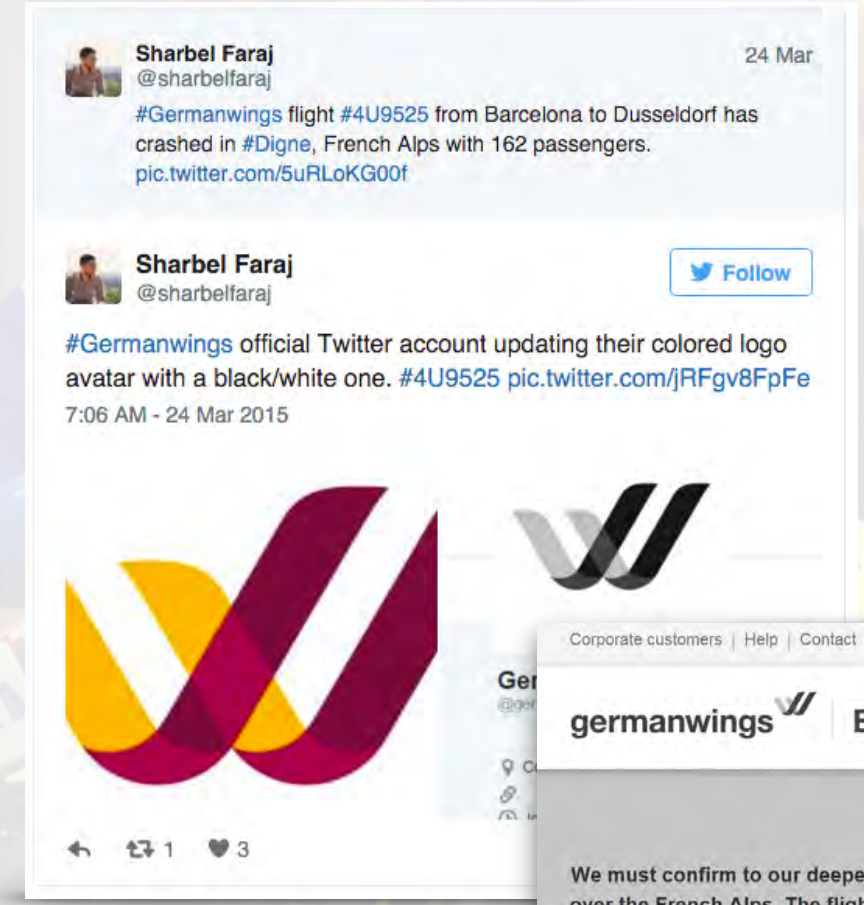
Flugzeugunglück in Südfrankreich: Keine Überlebenden, viele deutsche Opfer - SPIEGEL ONLINE

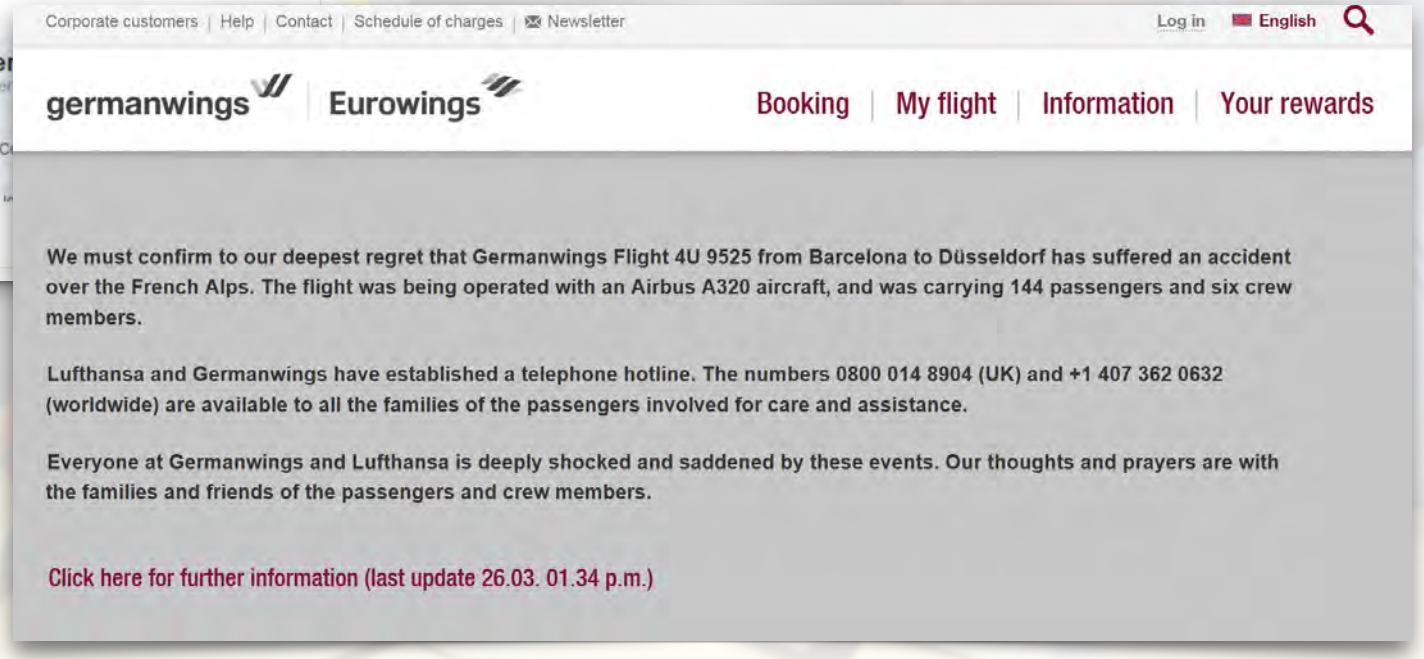
In Südfrankreich ist ein Airbus A320 der Lufthansa-Tochter Germanwings abgestürzt - mit 150 Menschen an Bord. Laut Frankreichs Präsident Hollande sind viele Deutsche unter den Opfern.

View on web

63 33

INITIAL RESPONSE





CENTERS OF GRAVITY

CENTERS OF GRAVITY

The families and loved ones of those on board (Day 1)

- Immediate hotline set up to provide information to loved ones.
- Families offered immediate flights to get as near to the crash site as possible.
- Immediate payment made to loved ones to help with short term expenses resulting from the crash.

The condition of the airplane (Day 1-2)

- Airbus activated its crisis site within the first 2.5 hours after the crash (airbus.com/crisis) to provide factual information about the involved aircraft.
- Germanwings CEO directly addressed this center of gravity at his initial news conference, stating “there is absolutely no issue” with the age of the plane and that it had been inspected by engineers just 24 hours prior to the fateful flight.

CENTERS OF GRAVITY

The co-pilot (Day 3-4)

- Flight recorder data indicate the co-pilot deliberately locked the captain out of the cockpit and crashed the plane, completely changing the center of gravity of the crisis.

- This center of gravity was not managed as well. Press conferences on the day of the shift declared the co-pilot Lubitz, was “100% fit to fly” despite contradictory evidence coming to light. The company went “fast” but was not correct on its facts.

- On Day 4, news breaks about Lubitz’s medical file. This news includes information about a sick note found in his home that says he should not have been flying on the day of the crash and a hospital visit just two weeks prior to the crash.

Private health information vs. public safety

- Another center of gravity was the right to private health information vs. the public’s right to safety via proper company oversight, and the role industry regulators play in establishing uniform safety standards across airlines and regions. This played out in both the discussion of what Germanwings should have known about Lubitz’s health and what regulatory changes – if any – could have prevented the tragedy.

PRIMARY RESPONSE

PRIMARY RESPONSE

On day two of the crisis, Germanwings CEO Spohr released a video statement to express sorrow and mourning on behalf of Germanwings and Lufthansa for the relatives of the passengers and crew members and emphasized that safety would continue to be the airline's primary focus. Spohr's statement effectively connects on a human level and follows best practice by using the opportunity to reinforce safety as one of the brand values.

Germanwings hired an outside firm to assist with handling the media response

> *Visiting the crash site yesterday, I was once again, in a **shocking moment**, made aware of a fact that all of us at Lufthansa know so well: safety in aviation is **not a given**. It is something we have to work hard for everyday and every night.*
>
> #InDeepSorrow
>
> *Carsten Spohr*
> *Germanwings CEO*

PRIMARY RESPONSE

- On Day Three, developing issues changed the situation. After the flight recorder was recovered and analyzed, the airline was suddenly dealing with a premeditated mass murder/suicide by one of its staff. The crisis moved from the acute stage to the chronic stage and both social and traditional media moved from reporting details and expressing the initial shock, to asking why the crash happened and reflected an emotional shift toward anger.
- This brought the crisis to the attention of a wider audience, including the international community, all airline travelers, aviation regulatory agencies, prosecutors, and stakeholders who all wanted to know why there were different regulations in different geographies (in the US, two crew members must be in the cockpit at all times). The focus was now on regulation and regulators, making this an industry-wide, externally driven issue.
- The European Aviation Safety Agency issued a temporary recommendation for airlines to ensure at least two crew members—including at least one pilot—remain in the cockpit during the entire duration of the flight.
- Long-term issues that resulted from this crisis included a push for a psychological screening process for pilots, a debate over privacy of health concerns vs. public safety and a need to change international cockpit occupancy laws.

PRIMARY RESPONSE

- When the center of gravity shifted unexpectedly on Day Three, the airline's actions and decisions from the past – its policies and performance – were suddenly in the spotlight, and the Germanwings crisis team appeared to stumble as they struggled to regain their bearings with the sudden shift of media attention.
- Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr admits Lubitz's training was 'interrupted' six years ago but insists he was '100% fit to fly,' which contributed to the airline looking like it was slowly releasing information it knew about the co-pilot long before the crash, instead of serving as a transparent, primary source of information.
- The Germanwings and Lufthansa CEOs refused to answer questions about safety protocols around leaving a pilot in the cockpit unattended and the question of Lubitz's mental health history – specifically an interruption to his initial pilot training - during the press conference. This made them look like they were trying to cover up the truth.
- Information was leaked by others to the media instead of coming directly from Germanwings, making them look they were out of touch with the facts, leading to a sense of gradually diminishing authority
- The bank of goodwill the airlines had built during their lauded initial response stage carried them through the much harder primary response stage, and the CEOs emotionally powerful video statement was well-received, also compensating for the primary response communication shortfall.

PRIMARY RESPONSE

Audience	Feelings	Needs	Actions	Delivery
Families of Crash Victims	Grief, Despair, Anger, Hurt	Comfort and Closure. Compensation from airline. Respectful attitude from airline.	Fly victims' families to crash site. Provide immediate financial relief. Offer counseling. Return victims' remains to family members.	Crisis victim support team members and counselors
Public Officials - Prosecutor, Air Travel Regulatory Agencies, Governments	Concerned, Protective	Justice and Safety	Launch investigation of the crash and communicate findings to public. Preserve and protect rights of citizens killed in crash, and their families. Cooperate with public officials in investigation.	Press conferences and Press releases
Employees	Shame, Insecurity, Sorrow	Reassurance, Support	Reassure them that jobs are safe and company will recover from crisis. Offer Employee Assistance Program counselor support	Internal company-wide communication to address the crisis and recovery efforts, and announce available EAP support, reiterated by direct supervisor
Customers	Fear of similar incident occurring on their flights	Understand exactly what happened and why, to try to prevent it on their airline	Look at the incident from an overall industry perspective. Create new rule that two people must be in cockpit at all times.	External communications including press releases and press conferences. Scheduling private meetings in conjunction with industry events with influential decision makers in aviation industry
Suppliers	Fear, Distrust, Anger	Confidence, Safety, Ability to make well-informed decision about whether or not to fly Germanwings again	Regularly update via social media and website. Leverage social media influencers. Increase phone staffing to handle media inquiries, customer service calls and questions.	Website updates and email communications. Press conferences and press releases. Social media--leverage influencers
Shareholders	Insecurity, Fear	Financial Security, Knowing that investments are safe	Keep open line of communication with shareholders. Hold regularly scheduled phone conferences. Keep them updated first, along with media	Investor phone conferences. Investor web page.
Board of Directors	Concern, Alarm	Protect Brand Reputation	Some Board members participate in crisis communication plan. CEO releases video statement. Hire outside media relations firm.Institute internal investigation and convey results to Board. Create new rules around pilot training, screening and mental health.	CEO statement, Press releases
Parent Company	Concern	Convey control, commitment and care	Show partnership with parent company. Take ownership of accident and become involved in how to prevent it from happening again.	Press conferences and Press releases

RECOVERY

RECOVERY[1]

What were the organization's recovery or business resumption actions?

- Lufthansa issued several statements regarding the crash including this one - http://www.lufthansagroup.com/en/press/news-releases/singleview/archive/2015/march/24/article/3474.html
- Germanwings provided regular updates which addressed speculation, empathized with family members and expressed the organization's shock as information unfolded.[2]
- The company worked with crash investigators to give more information about the co-pilot.[3]
- The company arranged for special flights for the families of the crash victims to the crash site.[4]
- Chief Executive Carsten Spohr said he would discuss upgrades to the airline's pilot training programs with regulators and labor groups.[5]

RECOVERY

Who were the key audiences?

- Families of the victims
- Lufthansa and Germanwings employees
- Shareholders
- Airbus employees
- The media reporting on the crisis
- Regulators
- Past and future Lufthansa/Germanwings customers
- The people of France (where the plane crashed)
- The people of Spain (where the flight originated)
- Other airlines

RECOVERY

What were the messages to support the strategy?

- Spohr exuded emotion and empathy for the victims of the crash, their families and friends, using such phrases as, '*This makes us speechless*,' '*We are shocked*,' and describing the crash as '*our worst nightmare*.'

- He also offered apologies to the victims' loved ones while at the crash site.

- Spohr speaks extensively about the stringent training and safety record of the airline and how they plan to get back to that high level.

- Lufthansa deployed several online tools such as: live-streaming, Twitter, videos, web updates and changing the look of its logo to black and white during the crisis

RECOVERY

Is the situation resolved?

- Operations are back to normal but the situation will never fully be resolved for the families of the victims. This is something they will live with every day.

- Germanwings and Lufthansa employees will feel lasting effects of policy changes related to the crash.

- The *New York Times* has published an article as recently as October 10, 2015, about the families in regard to a lawsuit they seek to file in the U.S. where Lubitz was training when he was granted a leave to recover from depression. The families believe that in addition to the compensation allowed under United States tort laws, a suit could help uncover more information about the extent of Lufthansa's knowledge of Lubitz's condition and how he could have been considered flight-worthy.[11]

- According to the *Times* article, the families say that Lufthansa's response immediately after the crash was "exemplary," but since then, they say they have experienced a sense of broken trust.

ETHICAL ISSUES

ETHICAL ISSUES

In many ways, the privacy issues surrounding the crash broadened the scope of the tragedy to similar events in the past, including a murder-suicide on an Egyptian-bound flight in 1997, as well as speculation surrounding the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight 370.

It shifted the focus of the crisis from being **one of terrible human tragedy to a policy issue**, which, though showing that the airline's hands were tied in the situation, highlighted a broad ethical conundrum airlines have been wrestling with for years, and acted as a catalyst for policy reform.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Medical privacy

- Notion of "doctor's orders" and who should be made aware of issue.
- Are the privacy laws themselves to blame?
- How to balance privacy and safety: should doctors report directly to employers?
- Need for confidentiality and for patients to trust their doctors.
- Lufthansa responded initially by stating that the pilot was "100 percent fit to fly." However, over the ensuing days, Lufthansa released details of the pilot's mental issues which called the initial response into question.
- This altered the nature of the crisis from human tragedy to a policy issue in which Germanwings could be an active participant for change.

"Efficient" airline to "people's" airline that cares

- Being price competitive vs. meeting customers' needs through healthy and able pilots.
- Labor unions—going on strike on several occasions.
- Lufthansa responded by implementing new safety procedures and working with investigators to determine the cause of the crash and the response.
- How to value lives.
- Mental health.[12]

ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

By most accounts, Germanwings and Lufthansa did a good job of communicating to the public about the crisis and followed a near textbook handling of the situation.

Within an hour of the crash, Germanwings had tweeted that there had been an incident and posted an update to their Facebook page. Within the first 1.5 hours, Lufthansa and Airbus had also gone to Twitter to report that something had happened with one of the planes. Within this timeframe, Germanwings and Lufthansa also both change the logos on their social media accounts to a somber black and white version.

In the days and weeks following the crisis and as the situation unfolded, the company continued to communicate the facts of the situation to the public and the media.

NOTE: Now eight months out, some families of the victims are unhappy with the settlement offerings, calling them “insulting” and are seen as an effort to make the matter go away quickly so the company doesn’t have to address why a suicidal pilot was in the cockpit. They also feel the airline isn’t taking responsibility for allowing someone with a mental illness to continue to work and want answers on how this happened.

ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

Reputation

Following the crisis, the reputation of Germanwings and Lufthansa has remained positive to most audiences due to the companies' handling of the situation. Germanwings is set to go through a re-branding at the beginning of 2016 and will become Eurowings to better encompass the company's flight routes, showing the company serves more than just Germany. Incidentally, the re-branding was in the works prior to the crash but may have been accelerated due to the crisis. This rebranding may give the airline a bit of a boost once it takes effect as the airline will no longer carry the stigma of the crash with this new name.

Market Share

With the tragedy being blamed on one of the company's own pilots, Spohr must push crew to accept measures he has said are vital in stemming the loss of market share.

Share Price

Almost immediately following the incident the share price of Lufthansa and Airbus dropped significantly however, prices stabilized within roughly 2 hours.[7] On 11/23/15 Lufthansa shares were trading at 13.45 euros. Their 52 week high is 15.53 and their low is 10.25.

ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

Relationships

A trust was broken with the families of the victims; these relationships appear to be severely damaged.

Legal liability, damages and settlements

Germanwings offered to pay $28,000 per victim for pain and suffering, on top of payments of $53,000 per family, made in the initial weeks after the crash to cover funeral and other immediate expenses. The airline also said it would pay $10,600 in emotional damages to each victim's immediate family members, limited to parents, children, and spouses or partners that lived together. Siblings, grandparents and grandchildren will not be compensated unless they are able to demonstrate specific hardship.

Germanwings and Lufthansa also established a €7.8 million trust to help cover education-related costs for children and young adults who lost one or both parents in the crash.

A separate fund, worth up to $8.3 million, would also be established to help finance aid projects proposed by the victims' relatives over a period of three years.[8]

ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

Recruiting and Retention

Prior to the crash, Germanwings pilots held a two-day strike on 2/12/15 and a three-day strike on 3/20/15. Since the crash, no new strikes have been reported. At an April 29, 2015, annual meeting, Lufthansa entered arbitration with the pilot union to guarantee no further strikes while the mediation was taking place.[9] The company remains on shaky financial ground due to the lost revenue during the strikes as well as heavy competition from low-cost airlines. Recruiting and retention will remain difficult due to the crash.

Employee Morale and Loyalty

Immediately following the crash, some flight crews were fearful about the cause of the crash and refused to fly, causing several flights to be canceled. Some crew members also believed the crash could have been caused by repairs made to the nose-wheel landing doors the day before the crash.[10]

We believe this points to low employee morale. The employees did not trust their Lufthansa when told that the repairs were minor and had no impact on the flight.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Germanwings did an excellent job of keeping the public informed by following the "*tell it all, tell it fast*" rule. During the initial response, the company got information out instantly on social media, knowing its audience would be looking there. Despite a terrible tragedy having occurred, Germanwings still managed to build its bank of goodwill, which would help support it in the coming weeks when the response was not as smooth.

2. The company did a good job of remaining focused on the tragedy at hand and expressing empathy during the situation, especially in the first hours and days of the crisis. They focused on the victims and their families, even while external discussion shifted to topics of mental health and privacy. This empathy, again, helped to build trust with the public.

3. Though initially presenting a unified response, Germanwings spokespeople began to delay responses to questions of safety protocols and the pilot's health, leading to a sense of mistrust. As information was leaked outside of official spokespeople, the company's authority began to degrade. Germanwings needed to do a better job of remaining as responsive as they were initially throughout the crisis as new information came to light.

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