Public Relations Situation

Today, an America Airline captain collapsed just before the aircraft could land. The co-pilot took over and safely landed the plane. The pilot was rushed to the hospital where after diagnosis, it was learned that he had suffered from a fatal heart attack. All passengers arrived safely, but we are unsure whether the public is aware of the situation (Gaines-Ross, 2008).

Definition of the Problem

If not handled appropriately, the situation would impact negatively to the airline once it becomes known to the public (Sen, 2008). The airline could lose a significant number of customers and even scare away new ones. Losing customers would lower the profit earned by the company hence this should be prevented at all cost.

Information Available

 The station manager believes that all the passengers left the terminal without discussing matters about the incident with the press. We are however not certain whether the passengers already talked to the press or if they will do so soon (James, 2006).

Separating Certainties from Uncertainties

 The organization is uncertain about the public reactions after the incident comes to light. Some individuals may say they don’t feel safe traveling with American Airlines based on the reason that we have an aging workforce who can easily fall ill anytime during a flight (Anthonissen, 2008). Others may claim that our pilots do not undergo physical exams often. The customers would doubt our abilities to maintain our planes and the whole workforce. We are however sure that we could be able to avert the situation if we handled it accordingly (Griffin, 2008).

 Different approaches may be used to address the situation. The organization could assume the situation never got known and act like it never happened. A press conference could also be organized immediately to reveal to the public about the incident and to comfort them by telling them all is well because all passengers arrived safely (Anthony & Anthony, 2000). I could also create some time for the situation to calm down by sending thee CEO on an impromptu business trip and claiming that no comments can be made till the CEO is back. I could also organize a press conference and give statements focusing on the heroic activities of the co-pilot who landed the plane safely.

Plausibility and Consistency of the Approaches

 Assuming that the public never got information about the incident is quite dangerous. If the opposite of the assumption were true, the public would be irked. The company would face significant criticism for withholding such vital information from the public (James, 2006). The customers would doubt the accountability and transparency of the company and lose their trust in it. American Airline’s reputation would be tarnished. Customers would feel unsafe, and the company would lose their loyalty (Austin & Pinkleton, 2000). The company would, therefore, lose clients and hence end up making losses. In addition, false rumors and accusations would grow around the company’s name which the company would never be able to clear off.

 Organizing an impromptu business trip for the CEO would be of give a chance for things to calm down but it would not solve the problem at hand (Anthonissen, 2008). After the CEO is gone and back, a press conference would still be essential to make things clear to the public.

Organizing a press conference either to discuss the heroic activity of the copilot or to assure the public of the safety of all the passengers would do the company great advantage (Anthony & Anthony, 2000). First, the information would reach numerous people through the newspaper blogs, magazines, TV news broadcasts hence American Airline would never be accused of withholding information from the public. Secondly, a press conference would also give the company a platform to address any doubts that the public has about the competency of the company (Griffin, 2008).

Some elements have to be considered when addressing the situation.

Goals and Objectives

The primary purpose of taking action in this situation is to maintain the company’s reputation. The company wants to own up for its mistakes and assure the public that it will correct them.

A Clear Execution Plan

The company has to come up with a clear and practical tactics and strategies that will help the company manage the situation effectively. American Airlines has to organize how the actual information from the company will reach the public either through newspapers, articles or blogs. The company should ensure that the information from the company reaches the majority of the public before false rumors start to spread (Gregoire, 1966).

The Public

The public reactions should be the most important aspect that should be considered. Every word that is said during the press conference or by any employee of American Airways should be analyzed first for it could arouse different reactions, both positive and negative, from the public. The information should be aimed at reaching all people since the company is not confident about how any member of the public views it (Caponigro, 2000).

Data Driven

Information should be collected through research and surveys to determine what really happened during the flight. Evidence from the hospital showing that the pilot suffered a heart attack should be collected (Chouinard & Stanley, 2012). The information gathered is meant to ensure that when addressing the public, the views and arguments proposed are based on factual data and not instincts.

Consistency and Coherence

There needs to be uniformity and coherence of information if the company has to make the public believe in it. The workforce, therefore, has to hold meetings to discuss the issue and make decisions made; this is to ensure that the words of one member of the company do not contradict those of another. Regulations should be set to ensure that only information agreed upon is disclosed to the press and the public (Aula & Mantere, 2008).

There needs to be a perfect interrelationship between the internal forces and the external forces. The internal forces are controlled by the strengths and the weaknesses, while the external factors are made up of the opportunities and the threats. The strengths and weaknesses, internal factors of the company, may be made up of elements such as financial capability, managerial skills, the skills of the members of staff, the equipment at hand and the fixed assets in general. On the other hand, the external factors, opportunities and threats may be made up of elements such as government policies, competition in the market, legal requirements, political stability, natural calamities and environmental obligations. A firm needs to be able to take advantage of its strengths and opportunities to keep its weaknesses and threats at bay.

Course of Action

I have decided to hold a press conference to reveal to the public about the incident and to express to the public about the heroic activity of the copilot and all the passengers in it. I will also communicate to the public that all the passengers arrived safely and that the company is doing all it can to ensure that a repeat of such an incident does not happen (Gregoire, 1966). I will also explain to the public about all the necessary measures that American Airline takes to make sure that the passengers depart and arrive safely during every flight. I will emphasize on the competency and excellent capability of our workforce. I hope that this will make the public view the company as an accountable and transparent company. Withholding such valuable information from the public can have significant consequences for the company (Fischhoff, 2012). The company would lose the trust of its customers and would eventually end up making losses. If my plan is successful, the company will be able to retain the loyalty of our customers and earn that of new ones; hence, the profits earned by the company will increase.

Press release

“Today, a co-pilot of an American Airlines flight landed the plane after the Captain, Michael Browns, suffered a heart attack. Flight 540 had 146 passengers and five crew members including the pilot and the copilot, Stephen Rodgers (Sen, 2008). The plane left Boston at 0000hr last night for Phoenix. The Captain got the attack just when the plane was about to land. All the passengers landed safely, and the Captain is currently undergoing treatment. We as the American Airlines community would like to wish the Captain quick recovery. We assure that we will care for the Captain’s family.

I would like to assure all travelers that they can still feel safe when traveling on our planes. All our pilots and co-pilots are competent. They all undergo a physical examination after every twelve months and for every six months for the pilots who are more than 40 years of age. The heart attack incident is an unfortunate medical condition. We have laid out strategies for coping with such situations. There are usually two personnel in a plane during every flight: a pilot and a co-pilot (Bernays, 2012). A copilot helps the pilot especially during situations such as the one that just happened.

 I would like to commend the copilot, Stephen Rodgers for his heroic actions. Stephen Rodgers’s brave activity saved all the 146 passengers and four crew members. The 35-year-old copilot has displayed himself as highly skilled personnel who can be trusted with the highly valued lives of our passengers (Capezio, 2000). I commend the whole crew. I am proud of the teamwork that they displayed during that difficult time.

Please feel safe and trust American Airlines. We will always offer the best services.”

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