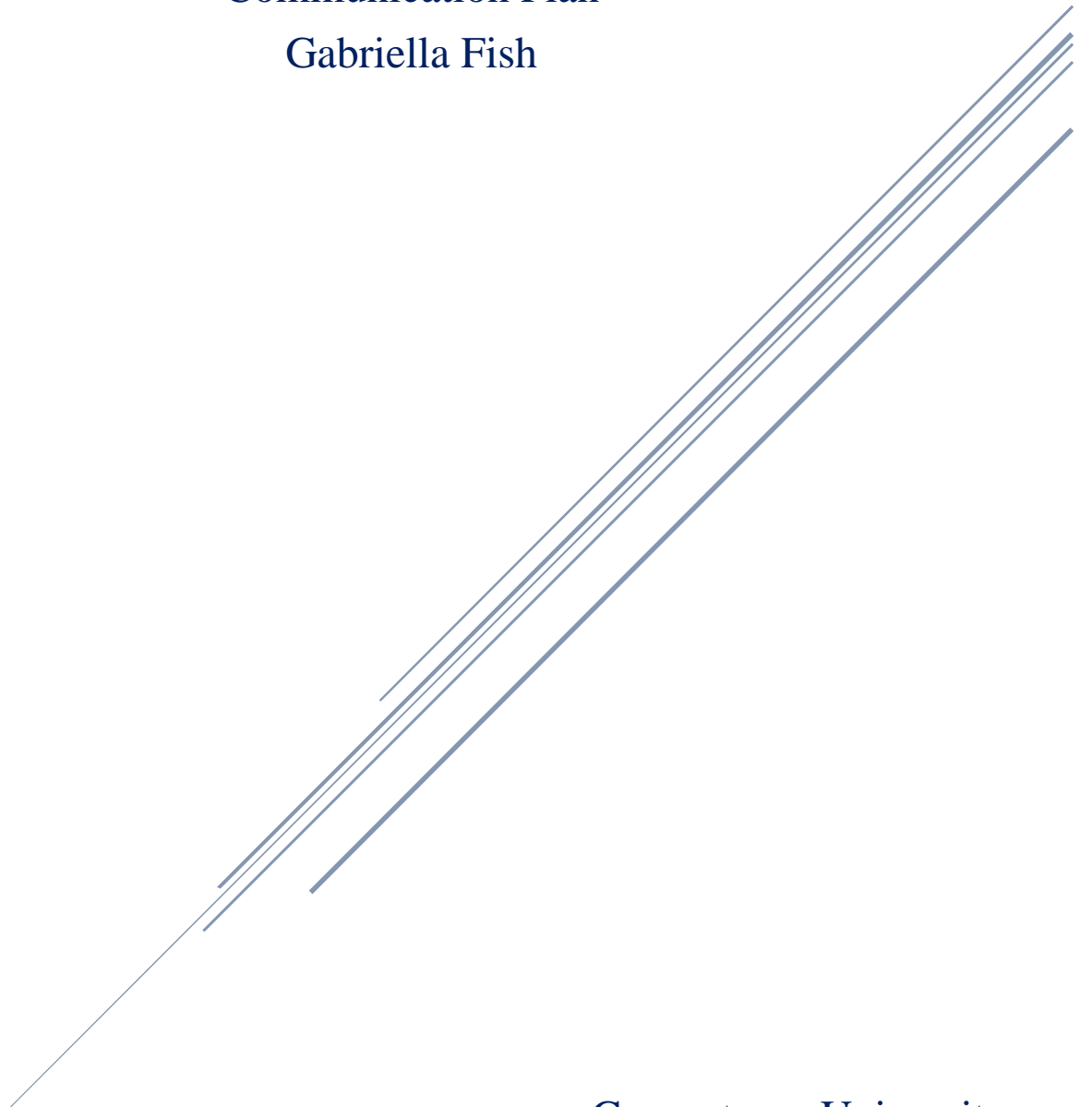




Communication Plan  
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MPR 505: Elements of Communication Planning

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# Executive Summary

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United Airlines was founded in the 1920s and holds the name of the third leading airline in the world. The company's headquarters is in Chicago and has nine hubs around the world: Chicago O'Hare, Denver, Guam, Houston George Bush Intercontinental, Los Angeles, Newark Liberty, San Francisco, Tokyo Narita and Washington Dulles. United is also one of the 28 airline partners in the Star Alliance network, some including, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Lufthansa, Singapore, Turkey, Brazil and Egypt airlines.

United currently ranks fourth place, 14.9%, in market share against its competitors: American Airlines, Delta Airlines and Southwest Airlines. Comparing these companies in brand value, United ranks third with a total of \$8,460.

As the newer generations place companies on a high pedestal with the use of social media and recordings, United's reputation has plummeted from previous incidences. The airline is focusing on three key publics to influence a mend in the loyal relationship between the airline and passengers. To own the position of being the first-choice air carrier for Global Executives, who are on a strict time frame, and frugal and family travelers who need access to quick domestic and international flights, United will occupy the minds of these key publics by reshaping their image. The airline strives to portray a positive experience, friendly environment and dignity and respect for the customers.

The way to tap into the minds of these certain key publics, United will use a combination of print and digital advertising tactics and utilizing social media platforms to get its message across as being the friendliest airline providing authentic customer service and quality performance.

Some of these tactics include releasing a stream of press releases, creating IGTV mini-series, Facebook and Instagram ad posts, shorts videos, personal written letter from the CEO, discounts and giveaways, promoting its Mileage Plus program and a year-long, themed-campaign which would be Buzz Lightyear.

This executed communications plan will begin June 1, 2020, and end December 31, 2020, and will cost an estimated amount of \$1,510,224 to implement. The plan will provide the



needs and wants of the three key publics and ultimately increase the airline's overall reputation and customer satisfaction.

## Background

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### External Environment

Social issues arise with the congestion of the skies. The increase of flyers results in crowded airports and delays (Zhang, 2018). According to Statista, “In 2019, global air traffic passenger demand is estimated to increase by 4.2 percent on the year before” (Mazareanu, 2019). By 2020, traffic is projected to grow with another 4.1 percent (Mazareanu, 2019). Terrorism is also a big issue the airline faces. Since 9/11, airport security became more intense (Zhang, 2018). “Over the past 15 years, security screening procedures have become increasingly stringent,” Zhang states, “this has resulted in longer checkpoint wait times and complaints from the traveling public.” Political issues, especially with the Trump administration, can highly impact United. Trump’s ban on Muslim majority nations and laptops in the cabins can lead to more angry customers and less booked flights (Zhang, 2018). According to Zhang, “strife between nations usually results in a hit to the operations and profitability of airlines (Zhang, 2018). The rise of technology and social media also results in financially and operational strain. Smart phones have made “the actions of airline employees under the microscope” (Zhang, 2018). Environmental issues due to climate change are also a major problem. Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in 2017, and impacted one of United Airline’s major hubs, Houston, which averages 10,000 employees (Zhang, 2018). The number of extreme weathers caused by climate change is increasing at a dramatic pace. With the unpredictable weather, going from hot to cold, it causes viruses to transfer more easily due to people getting the common cold. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is costing airlines more than \$29 billion in revenue (Josephs, 2020). Airlines are prepared for any type of external factor—environmental, social, political, etc., issues are out of their control, but there are ways, such as informing the public and having a crisis communication plan, to decrease the customer impact.



## Industry

United is part of the airline industry. According to the Airlines of America, “the airline industry today helps drive \$1.7 trillion in U.S. economic activity and more than 10 million U.S. jobs” (Airlines of America, n.d.). The industry is more than just flying— it connects communities, runs a green operation for the environment, is critical to the global economy and operates as the safest mode of transportation. All companies in the airline industry must follow TSA regulations. Regulations include no liquids, gels and aerosols over 3.4 oz. in their carry-on bag, carry-on bag must be between 40 to 50 pounds and if not, it must be checked-in, and no weapons are permitted on carry-on unless it is checked-in, tightly sealed and not easily unloaded (Luggage Online, 2019).

These facts indicate that the airline industry is focused on continuing its high status and name as the safest mode of transportation.

## Market Share and Competition

United Airlines comes in fourth place in market share, 14.9%, when compared to their competitors (Transtats, n.d.). American Airlines, Delta Airlines, and Southwest Airlines are United’s top competitors. United is also competing with low-cost airlines, such as JetBlue and Spirit Airlines (Cavato, 2016). Research indicates that “65% of adults who have flown in the past year state a ‘lower price’ as the top reason for choosing one airline over another” (Cavato, 2016). Ranking in brand value, United also stands in third. United’s total revenue is \$8,460 (Transtats, n.d.). Delta holds first with \$10,105 and American Airlines with \$9,553 (Transtats, n.d.). However, its full-year net income totaled \$2.1 billion, diluted earnings of \$7.70 which is 9.1 percent higher year-over-year, pre-tax earnings of \$2.7 billion and pre-tax margin of 6.4 percent (United Newsroom, 2019a). In 2018, total employees earned \$334 million in profit sharing (United Newsroom, 2019a). United has the second highest number of employees compared to its competitors. United has a total of 92,249 employees, while American has 107,905 employees, Delta has 91,416 employees and Southwest has 62,436 employees (Transtats, n.d.). When it comes to airline fuel cost and consumption, United is the cheapest cost per gallon at \$1.97, and the second least consumption amount at 2,667,966 gallons when compared to its competitors American has the highest cost per gallon, which is \$2.10 and consumes the highest amount, which is 3,364,880 gallons. Delta’s cost is \$2.02 per gallon and Southwest is \$1.99 per gallon.



Looking at the consumption between those two, Delta is higher as the number is 2,761,579 gallons while Southwest's consumption is 1,549,908 gallons, which is the least amount compared to the three competitors (Transtats, n.d.). These statistics indicate that even though United is fourth in market share, it still has a chance to move back to the top by focusing on increasing customers perception on the airline which will increase the number of purchased flights.

## Stakeholder Research

United is one of the 28 airline partners in the Star Alliance network (United, n.d.d.). Passengers are also a big stakeholder of airline travel. A big portion of passengers are flying out of major cities. The demographics on these passengers include Atlanta, Chicago O'Hare, Los Angeles, Denver, Dallas/Fort Worth, Las Vegas, Seattle, San Francisco, Charlotte and Phoenix (Airline Traffic Data, 2019). The segmentation of airline travelers can be divided up into nine sections. The groups include: global executives (frequent business travelers that crave high quality service), schedule optimizers (who have a fixed time frame to reach their destination), corporate troopers (use airline based on their employer), mile accumulators (flyers that aim to build up their air miles entitlement), reluctant travelers (who do not enjoy travelling and seek additional services to make their journey bearable), tour takers, quality vacationers (thrive for superior service), travel seekers (want to travel comfortably) and frugal flyers (who want to travel as cheap as possible, but still get good service) (Jurskyte, 2016).

According to a survey of U.S. adults, "14 percent of respondents aged between 18 to 29 years old reported more than five flights for private reasons in the past two years, compared to nine percent for people aged between 30 and 49" (Kunst, 2019).

Leisure travel compared to business travel, leisure has a larger portion of the American travel market in terms of percentage of total trips and overall contribution to the U.S. economy. (Kunst, 2019). However, in 2018, U.S. passengers took 463.6 million domestic business trips (Lock, 2019). It is estimated to rise to 493.7 million by 2022 (Lock, 2019). Frugal flyers are passengers who "seek out the lowest cost carriers, but still expect their flight experience to be a good one" (United Airlines, 2016). This group pays attention to online travel bookings because they know it provides cheap travel deals. According to the surveys, "nearly 60 percent of the consumers using online travel agencies made hotel reservations and about 50 percent used them to book flights"



(Lock, 2019). This concludes that United Airlines provides multiple ways to book trips to accumulate with customers' needs and expectations per group and location.

## **Internal Environment- Organization**

United Airlines was founded in the 1920s (Mazareanu, 2020) and is one of the major American airlines that provides domestic and international flights. It was initially created as a service carrier airline, named Varney Airlines, in 1926 (Mazareanu, 2020). In 2010, the airline merged with Continental Airlines (Mazareanu, 2020). Since then, United holds the name of the third leading airline in the world (Mazareanu, 2020). The airline is still the main domestic hub for O'Hare, Houston Intercontinental, Guam International, Los Angeles, Newark, San Francisco and Washington-Dulles airport (United, n.d.e.). With the rise of social media, it has shown that the most affected are the customers themselves. The incident that stroked rage was in April 2017, when a passenger, David Dao, was dragged off the flight due to overbooking (Zdanowicz & Grinberg, 2018). According to Newdesk, United Airline's poor reputation increased 500 percent due to the flight 3411, David Dao incident. In April 2017, "Forty-two percent of U.S. consumers said United has a 'bad' or 'very bad' reputation" (Newdesk, 2017). Recorded in 2017, "United and United Express operated more than 1.7 million flights carrying more than 162 million customers" (United, n.d.c.). United is declining in ratings due to customer service and overall organization of the airline. Percent of the U.S. flights on time ranges from 65-85% (Transtats, n.d.). United has 77.65% of on time flights, which has decreased within the past three years (Transtats, n.d.).

This shows that United needs to focus on customer service, as the world is continuously watching, to increase customers' satisfaction to regain a positive reputation.

## **Product or Service**

A multitude of changes to the company have been implemented such as how it flies, serves and respects its customers. According to journalist Lewis Lazare, the first change implemented was to not involve law enforcement unless it was a matter of safety (Lazare, 2018). He goes on to explain another new guideline which indicated that any passenger already seated on a plane was not required to give up their seat. Getting the idea from its competitors, United increased its efforts in rolling out a new automated check-in system that offered customers compensation of 10 thousand dollars in travel vouchers in exchange for giving up their seat on an overbooked



flight (Lazare, 2018). Due to flight 3411, the airline also took another look at its lost baggage policies, which included a no-questions-no-asked policy on permanent lost baggage. In result, United would compensate the passenger 15 hundred dollars (Lazare, 2018). Another incident that sparked outrage was in March 2018, when the flight attendant insisted a woman to place her lapdog in the overhead bin for the duration of the flight, and when the flight landed, the dog suffocated to death (Lazare, 2018). United immediately took blame for the incident and re-examined the airline's animal policy. However, United has many distinguishing qualities from its competitors. According to an article written by Eric Sigurdson, "United is notorious for heavy-handed treatment of passengers" (Sigurdson, 2017). It also prioritizes how it wants to communicate the message—embedding a strong culture and cultivating good conduct (Sigurdson, 2017). Adding to the needs of passengers, in order to compete with the low-cost airlines, United created a new low-fare class in Nov. 2016, named 'Basic Economy' (Cavato, 2016). This indicates that United is committed to providing a new level of service to its customers.

## Promotions

United is beginning to take more video content creation into its marketing strategy. With video, "United has been able to increase in speed and efficiency" (Liffreing, 2018). The content has been used within commercials, safety videos, advertisements—for the purpose of quickly, bringing the message to life. The airline has also been utilizing social media to run campaigns on all platforms. United has 1.1 million followers on Facebook and 513,000 followers on Instagram (Liffreing, 2018). United also promotes its brand through television commercials, print ads and online ads (Zigu, n.d.). United has a history of memorable advertising campaigns. The original and most popular commercial was, and still is, "Come Fly the Friendly skies" (United, n.d.a.). With the 2010 merge with Continental Airlines, the airline focused on "speaking about the new airline, highlighting the look and feel of the new United and delivering important information about the integration of the airline's operations" (United, n.d.a.). The popular tagline, "Fly the Friendly Skies" was tweaked in 2013 "to reflect what's more important to our customers" and how today's technology-driven world interprets the word "friendly" (United, n.d.a.). A big promotional and advertising strategy is the airlines loyalty program, Mileage Plus, which includes partnership with Marriott Bonvoy Hotel and Resorts, access to benefits through elite





status, reward tickets and eGift cards from number of miles and upgrade opportunities (Zigu, n.d.). Comparing against its competing programs such as American Airlines AAdvantage, Delta SkyMiles and Southwest Airlines Rapid Rewards, United is “one of the most powerful on the market” due to having so “many Star Alliance partners (Kunesh, 2020). The biggest campaign that United is currently launching is “Fly the Friendly Galaxy” (United Newsroom, 2019b). This is a twist of the original slogan. “United Airlines and the *Star Wars* franchise share a common goal: connect people and unite the world,” said Mark Krolick, United's vice president of marketing (United Newsroom, 2019b). United officially unveiled in November 2019, an all-new *Star Wars*-themed paint design on one of its Boeing 737-800 aircraft (United Newsroom, 2019b). There was also re-designing onboard as well. The airline is also offering *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*-themed amenity kits and promotes its latest inflight safety demonstration video featuring characters from the new film (United Newsroom, 2019b). This indicates that the airline uses more than customary advertising connect with its customers.

## Resources

Opinion leaders such as local media and human resources are viable resources. Human resources are involved to implement more training for its employees, better organization and limit the involvement of law enforcement. United has a total of 92,249 employees (Transtats, n.d.). Respectful employees, customer satisfaction and overall reputation of the airline can also be considered a resource. Economic stability can also be considered a high resource for United. According to Eno Center for Transportation, “naturally, both business and leisure travelers fly less during recessions and economic slowdowns” (Eno Center for Transportation, 2017). Airlines depend solely on fuel costs. According to Andriy Blokhin (2020), “fuel costs represent one of the most important expenses for the aerospace and airline industries”. He goes on by stating the average fuel costs “account for approximately 25% of all airline expenses, which translates to approximately 20% of operating revenues” (Blokhin, 2020). United relies on many resources strengthen their reputation and brand image.



# Situation Analysis

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## **Where is United Airlines now?**

United Airlines is currently the fourth largest airlines in the world. It maintains 14.9% of the market share (Transtats, n.d.) while receiving \$2.1 billion of net-income (United Newsroom, 2019a). United currently employs more than 90 thousand individuals in all parts of the world (Transtats, n.d.). With the recent incidents concerning the airlines lack of customer service and courtesy, the reputation of the airline has substantially increased in a negative way. United must put the customers' needs first. The competitors such as American Airlines, Delta and Southwest benefit due to United customers' dissatisfaction.

## **What could get in the way of success?**

Customers have demanded change, respect and service from United. With the rise of social media, employees are under constant watch, resulting in their attitude to remain positive and courteous. If not, the reputation is in jeopardy. In order to regain customer's loyalty, trust and business, the airline must raise awareness to the fact of the changing of policies to fit the need of the customer.

# Opportunity Statement

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By researching and analyzing the problems and concerns the customers have with United, the airline can rebuild its reputation by tweaking the policies to benefit the customers. If United continues with poor service such as canceled flights, lost baggage, employees' disrespect to customers and putting the customers self and animals in danger, it will have no chance in living up to its slogan, "Flying the Friendly Skies" (United, n.d.a.).

# Goal

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United Airline's goal is to improve its reputation through providing quality customer service and performance with improved training for our employees while also building our name to the top airline in the competitive industry.



# Objectives

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1. Increase the public's awareness of the changes implemented on the airlines technology systems by 10% by Dec. 31, 2020
2. Increase customer engagement of the Mileage Plus program by 15% by Dec. 31, 2020
3. Increase United Airline's website visits by 25% by Dec. 31, 2020

## Key Publics

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### Global Executives

#### *Demographics*

The typical business traveler is likely to be male. Men account for 77% of the trips while woman account for 54%. This group works in a professional, managerial, or technical position; and range between 30 to 49 years old. Their income is well above the population average, and about two-thirds of business travelers have a bachelor's degree or above (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, n.d.).

#### *Psychographics*

This population is focused on traveling strictly for business and returning home quickly. They are not interested in the culture or exploring since they are most likely sitting in an office all day for meetings.

#### *Motivating Self Interests*

They are more likely to travel first class, premier access and wait in private clubs. This group is frequent flyers that crave high quality service. They expect to be treated professionally and with respect. They do not have the patience for having a delayed or missed flight, overbooked flight or rude customer service.

#### *Relationship to the product/service/or issue*

They are brand loyal to the airline because of the services that are provided to the customers. This group is segmented into longtime and frequent flyers to United and don't optate to build an incipient relationship with another airline. They can be influenced by both, a company's airline preference or their own airline preference.



### *Influencers/Interveners*

Having the opportunity to book a direct flight is the number one factor that influences which flight a corporate business traveler will book. When surveyed, 26% would choose a direct connection as the top influencing factor, 19% choose price, 23% choose schedule convenience and the other 20% choose airport location (Travel Perk, 2020).

### *Communications channels for reaching them*

Global Executives are mainly reached via email. Subscribing to the email list provides them with flight information, deals, promotions and weekly newsletters. More ways to get the message across to this group is through SEO and SEM strategy. According to Google, “55% of business travelers use search engines to plan their trips” (Proceviat, 2017).

### *Objectives*

**This key public will achieve objectives 1, 2 and 3.**

## **Frugal & Leisure Flyers**

### *Demographics*

This group would be considered Generation Z and is between the age of 15 and 23 years of age. It results in 13.9% of traveling adult Americans (Kunst, 2019). According to a 2019 Statista survey of U.S. adults, “14 percent of respondents aged between 18 to 29 years old reported more than five flights for private reasons in the past two years, compared to nine percent for people aged between 30 and 49” (Kunst, 2019). They are also ethnically diverse, and their income is more on the lower side.

### *Psychographics*

This population is eager for exploration, culture and price sensitivity when traveling. As the world continues to evolve, each generation brings more diversity than the next leaving Gen Z as the most unique, diverse, self-reliant, innovated and goal-oriented yet (Green Buzz Agency, 2020).



### *Motivating Self Interests*

Frugal flyers are passengers who “seek out the lowest cost carriers, but still expect their flight experience to be a good one” (United Airlines, 2016). This group would most likely travel when they know they can get cheap travel deals.

### *Relationship to the product/service/or issue*

They have a close relationship to United for their deals and promotions. They know that there will be some sort of discount for trips, especially with the promo codes listed online.

### *Influencers/Interveners*

Social media influencers and celebrities are a big influencer for this group. Since they are Gen Z, technology is a big social norm for them. About three in five Gen Z follow online celebrities on social media (YPulse, 2019b). Some examples of these celebrities include Taylor Swift, Tom Holland, Ariana Grande – this is due to them being in a similar age range (YPulse, 2019a).

### *Communication channels for reaching them*

You would be able to reach them through the online travel bookings. Since these flyers are so interested in discounts, they would be able to find flights and deals for cheap. According to J.D. Power’s Online Travel Agency Satisfaction Report in April 2014, “nearly 60 percent of the consumers using online travel agencies made hotel reservations and about 50 percent used them to book flights” (Lock, 2019). Reaching them via social media would also be a good tactic such as: YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook.

### *Objectives (this key public will achieve)*

This key public will achieve objectives 2 and 3.

## **Family Travelers**

### *Demographics*

Family travelers average from the age of 41. Generation X or Younger take the highest percentage of family travelers.

### *Psychographics*

Their key focus when traveling is for the authentic cuisine, connectivity with family and the culture it teaches them. They have a thirst of adventure and introducing their kids to new places while building a special bond with them.



### *Motivating Self Interests*

This population is eager to share photos and influence their network to travel. They are likely to go somewhere when their children are out of school. This would include Thanksgiving, Christmas, summer break and spring break.

### *Relationship to the product/service/or issue*

Family travelers have a direct relationship with United for the access to travel with their kids. Since United is an international airline, it gives customers an endless amount of locations to choose from, near or far.

### *Influencers/Interveners*

Children are one of the biggest influencers when choosing a travel location. According to a recent survey conducted by vacation rental site HomeAway.com in partnership with market research firm YouGov via FoxNews.com, nearly nine in 10 parents (87%) across the U.S., Spain, France, the U.K. and Germany consider their kids' wishes when planning a getaway (Clarke, 2015). Children from the age of 6-12 prefer a theme park destination. Teenagers are more likely to want to venture father away from home because of places they see on social media (Clarke, 2015). Families living all across the states are also a big influence on flying.

### *Communication channels for reaching them*

They are heavy social media consumers, especially when they travel. Also, they are more likely to be impressed by a place when they see a commercial for it on television, which is a big reason why children are a major influence in travel locations.

### *Objectives*

**This key public will achieve objectives 1, 2, 3.**

## **Brand Positioning and Framing**

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To increase awareness of United Airlines, **United will position itself as the friendliest airline providing authentic customer service and quality performance** to its key publics. To own the position of being the first-choice air carrier for Global Executives, who are on a strict time frame, and frugal and family travelers who need access to quick domestic and international flights, United will occupy the minds of these key publics by reshaping their image. United is positioning themselves more than just an airline. This positioning differentiates from its



competitors, by not focusing on cutting costs like American, but by focusing not only on the friendliness, but the respect toward the passengers, more than what Southwest and Delta pride themselves for. The airline strives to portray a positive experience, friendly environment, dignity and respect for the customers.

**Situations Frame:** Focus on the ability to communicate with the customers via campaigns and advertising by showing the changes implemented to improve the airline.

**Actions Frame:** Focus on convincing the key publics on how they won't find an airline that is more beneficial, friendlier or more respecting than United.

## Messaging

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### Global Executives

Primary Message 1: United Airlines treats our customers, especially our loyal ones, as family, giving them the respect and loyalty, they deserve!

Secondary Message 1: Roughly 30,000 customer-facing employees such as flight attendants will be required to take a compassion course, Core4course, which draws its name from the four characteristics: caring, safe, dependable and efficient (Josephs, 2018).

Secondary Message 2: Passengers on US domestic flights experiencing a one to two-hour delay in their arrival times can receive compensation equal to double the one-way price of their bumped flight—domestic passengers experiencing more than a two-hour delay on flights will receive payments of four times the one-way value of their flight (Hetter, 2020).

Primary Message 2: Enjoy our United Club while you wait for your flight!

Secondary Message 1: United operates over 45 United Clubs and five United Polaris Lounges (Lucky, 2020).



Secondary Message 2: United offers amenities such as complimentary Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, free drinks and snacks, and some premium drinks available for purchase (Lucky, 2020).

## **Frugal & Leisure Flyers (Generation Z)**

Primary Message 1: We offer affordable, direct and flexible flights that ensures ease for the customers travel experience!

Secondary Message 1: United CEO, Oscar Munoz, said, “Last year alone we introduced service to Frankfurt, added direct flights to London and surpassed 500 daily departures – a record for United in Denver” (Jaquith, 2020).

Secondary Message 2: More than 210 destinations in the U.S. and more than 120 destinations internationally flights are offered, direct or connecting, totaling an estimation of 4,500 flights every day across all continents (United, n.d.e.).

Primary Message 2: Customers searching for low-cost flights have the option of our new implemented Basic Economy!

Secondary Message 1: Similar to other major airlines, United basic economy provides the same in-flight amenities as regular economy class with a few restrictions such as advanced seat selection, upgrade eligibility and checked bags— Basic Economy is still the cheapest and latest trend in the airline industry (Arghandewal, 2019).

Secondary Message 2: United Airlines is offering passengers 18 to 22 years old a 10 percent discount off flights booked in economy or basic economy (Puckett, 2019).

## **Family Travelers**

Primary Message 1: Our bundles and discounts offer something for everyone, inflight and onshore.

Secondary Message 1: United’s loyalty program, Mileage Plus, which includes partnership with Marriott Bonvoy Hotel and Resorts, access to benefits through elite status, reward tickets and eGift cards from number of miles and upgrade opportunities (Zigu, n.d.).





Secondary Message 2: Traveling the Sunday or Monday before Thanksgiving is often 20% cheaper than other dates— when it comes to Christmas time, Dec. 24 and Dec. 25 are the cheapest days to fly (Breen, 2019).

Primary Message 2: Feel safe when you fly with United Airlines.

Secondary Message 1: United is rated 7/7 for safety rating (Airline Ratings, 2017).

Secondary Message 2: “Fly the Friendly Galaxy” campaign has been incorporated into the safety video inflight to gain the passengers attention (Gaynor, 2019).

## Strategies and Tactics

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### Global Executives

Strategy 1: Increase traffic toward United Airline’s highly functional, fast and user-friendly website for online information, reservations, deals, promotions, rewards and e-ticketing.

Tactic 1a: Run a two-week campaign, *every three months starting in June 2020*, via social media (Instagram and Facebook), and email, which drives customers to United Airline’s website, advertising upcoming promotions, deals and rewards when booking reservations online.

Tactic 1b: Send out *monthly emails (June to December)* highlighting the opportunity to promote to Premier 1K member by saving up miles.

i.e.: Emails are automatically in the system when a passenger purchases a ticket, which is how to know who to send the emails to.

Tactic 1c: Provide customers with an opportunity to share their testimonies with United by submitting them to a link they would get through their email, which will be shared via Instagram and Facebook as article and blog posts and also visual and graphic posts to promote customer service.

Strategy 2: Emphasize on the latest information and electronic technology and its changes on comfort, convenience, safety and customer service.

Tactic 2a: Develop a stream of press releases on United’s website for the new policies being implemented *every month until the end of the year (Dec. 2020)*.



i.e.: Press release on the no-questions-asked policy/lost baggage policy, new policy not involving law enforcement unless it's extreme measures or one about the new automated check-in system that offers customers compensation for giving up their seat. This can ultimately direct customers to their website for more information.

**Tactic 2b:** Produce a short, eight-minute video on all the new ways the airline is changing to improve customer service and satisfaction.

i.e.: United's PR specialist will be responsible for creating the video. The video will then be placed on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram and also be posted on their website and monthly newsletter via email.

**Tactic 2c:** Create and stream a short series on Instagram (IGTV) on the given topics about changes around the airline—*release a new episode once a month when the press releases are released.*

## Frugal Flyers

**Strategy 3:** Offer customers good service to places they want, or need, to go to at a fair and predictable price.

**Tactic 3a:** Provide stay-over weekend fares *during the summer months (June-August)* which is aimed at the personal or leisure traveler whose priority is low-pricing.

i.e.: The discount of 10%, will be implemented automatically through the United booking system for **all** flights from June-August.

**Tactic 3b:** Set publicized discounts for early reservations and purchasing tickets in advance and discounts for reserving and ticketing online.

i.e.: First come first serve— for the first 500 passengers who book/reserve online.

**Tactic 3c:** Promote a giveaway for customers via Instagram for the first 75 people who book a flight with United Airlines *starting in October.*

i.e.: The giveaway would include a free weekend at any Marriott Bonvoy Hotel & Resort.

**Strategy 4:** Create trusting and reliable content that highlights why United offers a Basic Economy and how that fits into the leisure and frugal travelers' daily lives.



**Tactic 4a:** Amplify United’s current Facebook and Instagram presence by posting *every five weeks* about the benefits of flying Basic Economy.

**Tactic 4b:** Partner with known celebrities— Leonardo DiCaprio, Tyra Banks, Jennifer Lawrence and Paul McCartney— known for their frugal way of life and have them promote cheap traveling via social media. Each celebrity will have their own month (*September-December*) to promote.

i.e.: Instagram or Facebook live or posts (up to the individual).

**Tactic 4c:** Create a *month-long* snapchat campaign by creating filters when passengers are in the airport to encourage interaction with the airline.

i.e.: One filter, for example, would be designed with the slogan, “Going Basic with United” *during the months of August and September*.

## **Family Travelers**

**Strategy 5:** Highlight the important changes the airline is making to deliver to the passengers to create a safe and friendly environment and overall travel experience.

**Tactic 5a:** Mail out a personal letter to all loyal customers, one in *June and one in December*, from the CEO of United Airlines, thanking them for their loyalty and to remind them that the customers are the top priority.

**Tactic 5b:** Create a themed, spin-off of the slogan “Fly the Friendly Skies” and implement that theme into a design on one of the aircrafts, amenity kits given to the passengers, kitchen supplies (such as napkins), promoting it in the inflight safety demonstration and promoting on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram with ads *for the rest of 2020*.

i.e.: United using Buzz Lightyear to share a goal of connecting people and uniting the world, changing the slogan to, “We’ll Take You To Infinity and Beyond”.

**Tactic 5c:** Create a short Instagram video ad promoting the customer service and friendliness which will be *shown throughout the time of the whole plan*.

**Strategy 6:** Reinforce the partnerships United has with Marriott Bonvoy to leverage itself into gaining more engagement from family travelers.



Tactic 6a: Design social media hashtags, *specific for each travel season*, that allows passengers to share their trip with the world, which encourages positive feedback on the family vacation.

i.e.: June-August— #SummerLovinUnitedSoFast; November—

#Thankful4United; December— AllIWantForChristmasIsUnited

Tactic 6b: Broadcast an advertisement that shows a family's adventure starting from arriving to the airport, in-flight, arriving at a specific Marriot Bonvoy Hotel and Resort and capture the quality time the family is having, all thanks to United.

i.e.: Hire a camera crew and family—offer family a free flight, and with the partnership with Marriott Bonvoy, the stay-fare would be complimentary. ***The commercial will be shot in May and broadcasted in June-August.***

Tactic 6c: Create a story on Instagram introducing a story shout out on the United and Marriott Bonvoy account which showcases customers vacation through the United and Marriott partnership.

i.e.: The customers would tag @united and @marriottbonvoy in their story. It will also be shared on Facebook stories as well through the linked accounts feature on Instagram account settings. There would-be three-story shout outs— ***one in the Summer (August), one for Thanksgiving (November) and one for Christmas (December).***



# Calendar

	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>Global Executives</b>							
Strategy 1: Increase traffic toward United Airline's highly functional, fast and user-friendly website for online information, reservations, deals, promotions, rewards and e-ticketing.							
Tactic 1a: Run a two-week campaign, every three months starting in June 2020, via social media (Instagram and Facebook).							
June 8-22							
September 7-21							
December 7-21							
Tactic 1b: Send out monthly emails (June to December) highlighting the opportunity to promote to Premier 1K member by saving up miles.							
Tactic 1c: Provide customers with an opportunity to share their testimonies by submitting them to a link they would get through their email, which will be shared via Instagram.							
Strategy 2: Emphasize on the latest information and electronic technology and its changes on comfort, convenience, safety and customer service							
Tactic 2a: Develop a stream of press releases for the new policies being implicated every month until the end of the year.							
Tactic 2b: Produce a short video on all the new ways the airline is changing to improve customer service and satisfaction.							
Tactic 2c: Create and stream a short series on Instagram (IGTV) on the given topics about changes around the airline—release a new episode once a month when the press releases are released.							
<b>Frugal Flyers</b>							
Strategy 3: Offer customers good service to places they want, or need, to go to at a fair and predictable price.							
Tactic 3a: Provide stay-over weekend fares during the summer months (June-August) in both value and premium.							
Tactic 3b: Set publicized discounts for early reservations and purchasing tickets in advance and discounts for reserving and ticketing online.							
Tactic 3c: Promote a giveaway for customers via Instagram for the first 75 people who book a flight with United Airlines in October.							
Strategy 4: Create trusting and reliable content that highlights why United offers a Basic Economy and how that fits into the leisure and frugal travelers' daily lives.							



	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>Tactic 4a: Amplify Instagram &amp; Facebook content every 5 weeks.</b>							
1-Jun							
6-Jul							
10-Aug							
14-Sep							
19-Oct							
23-Nov							
28-Dec							
<b>Tactic 4b: Partner with celebrities whom will promote cheap traveling via social media.</b>							
Leonardo DiCaprio							
Tyra Banks							
Jennifer Lawrence							
Paul McCartney							
<b>Tactic 4c: Create a month-long snapchat campaign by creating filters.</b>							
<b>Family Travelers</b>							
<b>Strategy 5: Highlight the important changes the airline is making to deliver to the passengers to create a safe and friendly environment and overall travel experience.</b>							
<b>Tactic 5a: Mail out a personal letter to all loyal customers, one in June and one in December, from the CEO of United Airlines.</b>							
<b>Tactic 5b: Create a themed, spin-off of the slogan "Fly the Friendly Skies" to Buzz Lightyear, "We'll take you to Infinity and Beyond".</b>							
<b>Tactic 5c: Create a short Instagram video ad promoting the customer service and friendliness which will be shown throughout the time of the whole plan.</b>							
<b>Strategy 6: Reinforce partnership with Marriott Bonvoy and leverage itself into gaining more engagement from family travelers.</b>							
<b>Tactic 6a: Design social media hashtags, specific for each travel season.</b>							
#SummerLovinUnitedSoFast							
#Thankful4United							
#AllIWantForChristmasIsUnited							
<b>Tactic 6b: Broadcast an advertisement that shows a family's adventure.</b>							
<b>Tactic 6c: Create a story on Instagram introducing a story shout out on the United and Marriott Bonvoy account which showcases customers vacation through the United and Marriott partnership.</b>							

<b>Legend</b>
Creation
Execution



# Budget

		Details	Quantity	Item/Cost	Sponsored	Projected Cost	Notes
GLOBAL EXECUTIVES							
Strategy 1: Increase traffic toward United Airline's website							
Tactic 1a:	Run a two-week campaign	Create promos, deals & rewards	3	\$6,500		\$19,500	Campaign via social media-- every three months, starting in June
Tactic 1b:	Send out monthly emails	Have emails from any previous ticket purchase	900,000	\$0		\$0	United Airline's has an estimate of 7,500 Global Executive members -- 7 months
Tactic 1c:	Customers testimonies published on Instagram posts	Link sent to customer's email to submit their testimony	3	\$0		\$0	Testimonies will be posted 3 times-- once in July, once in September, once in November
				\$6,500		\$19,500	
Strategy 2: Emphazize on latest information and electronic technology							
Tactic 2a:	Develop stream of press releases	Publish & get approval through corporate	7	\$1,500		\$10,500	Create press releases once a month of new changes being implicated for the public
Tactic 2b:	Produce a short video	Created by company PR specialist	1	\$0		\$0	Posting video on website wouldn't cost anything
Tactic 2c:	Stream short series on Instagram (IGTV)	Once a month about the topic of montly press release	7	\$0		\$0	IGTV is readily available for those with IOS and Android devices-- no cost
				\$1,500		\$19,500	
FRUGAL FLYERS							
Strategy 3: Offer customers good service at affordable price							
Tactic 3a:	Provide stay-over weekend fares	10% off flights during summer months	1	\$25,750		\$25,750	There is an estimate of 257 million people to travel with United this summer
Tactic 3b:	Set publicized discounts	Send via email with confirmation email	500	\$150		\$7,500	From June-August, there are 10 weekends-- for first 500 passengers who book online early
Tactic 3c:	Promote a giveaway to customers	Promoted on Instagram posts and stories	75	\$381		\$28,575	Giveaway is a free stay (weekend) at any Marriott Bonvoy Hotel & Resort -- first 75 customers
				\$26,281		\$61,825	
Strategy 4: Create trusting and reliable content							
Tactic 4a:	Amplify United's Facebook & Instagram	Every five weeks	7	\$35,000		\$245,000	Post every five weeks-- total of 7 posts
Tactic 4b:	Partner with known celebrities	Promote on Instagram & Facebook live	20	\$5,000	X	\$100,000	Sponsored by Leonardo DiCaprio, Tyra Banks, Jennifer Lawrence and Paul McCartney
Tactic 4c:	Month-long Snapchat campaign	Create filters to encourage interaction with the airline	900	\$15		\$13,500	One filter would be, "Going Basic with United"-- during months of August and September (\$15/day)
				\$40,015		\$358,500	
FAMILY TRAVELERS							
Strategy 5: Highlight important changes the airline is making to for passengers							
Tactic 5a:	Mail out personal letter	Highlighting that customers are priority	1,000	\$0.55		\$550,000	Mail one out in January and December
Tactic 5b:	Create a themed slogan	Implicate theme into marketing/communications	1	\$500,000	X	\$500,000	Sponsored with Walt Disney-- Buzz Lightyear-- "We'll Take You to Infinity and Beyond"
Tactic 5c:	Create and promote short Instagram video	Promoting customer service and friendliness	1	\$900	X	\$900	Video will be promoted throughout the time of the whole plan -- \$30/week -- 30 weeks in 7 months
				\$500,901		\$1,050,900	
Strategy 6: Reinforce partnerships							
Tactic 6a:	Design social media hashtags	Create unique hashtags for seasons	3	\$0		\$0	#SummerLovinUnitedSoFast; #Thankful4United; #AllIWantForChristmasIsUnited
Tactic 6b:	Broadcast an advertisement	Camera crew, ad cost (\$3,000), hire family	1	\$3,000	X	\$8,500	Partner Marriott Bonvoy (free stay); camera crew: \$2,000; family: free flight: \$3,500
Tactic 6c:	Create story shout out on Instagram	Story S/O on the United & Marriott Bonvoy account	3	\$0	X	\$0	The customers would tag @united and @marriottbonvoy in their story -- sponsored by Marriott
				\$3,000		\$8,500	

	Tool	Cost
<b>MEASUREMENTS</b>		
Objective 1	YouGov BrandIndex	\$0
Objective 2	United Airline's computer system	\$0
Objective 3	SimilarWeb	\$499

<b>TOTAL</b>	
	\$1,509,725
	\$0
	\$0
	\$499
	<b>\$1,510,224</b>

This budget shows an overview on what each strategy and tactic would cost and what the tools to measure each one would cost. On top of that, in 2018, United's labor costs were at \$5.3 per available seat mile (Mazareanu, 2019). The cost streams include mainline operations only. The sponsors, Walt Disney, Marriot and the four celebrities, will donate 10 thousand dollars each for their given content. That would take 60 thousand dollars off the total projected cost of \$1,510,224 and make the new total projected cost **\$1,450,224.**



# Evaluation

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The goals and objectives in this plan will be accomplished by implementing the previously explained strategies and tactics. To ensure that each of the objectives are achieved, the following evaluation measures will monitor the activities throughout the whole communication plan.

## Objective 1

**Increase the public's awareness of the changes implemented on the airlines technology systems by 10% by Dec. 31, 2020**

This objective will use a technique of personal interviews to gain insight of public's awareness and perception on the airline. United will use YouGov BrandIndex to conduct the interviews and at the end accumulate a report of all the feedback. According to a report by BrandIndex, June 2017, "United was already returning, passing the 24% industry average, and eventually regaining its earlier 36% mark on Feb. 2, 2018" (Gazdik, 2018). It then goes on by explaining that the score "dropped down to 25%" after the computer outage delay followed by the dog incident".

This information above is what the baseline would be when looking at before and after this objective is completed.

This technique would measure awareness and impression score and will interview 5,000 people each day of the week and more than 2 million interviews per year.

If the scores and report indicate that the public's awareness on the changes the airline is implicating into its technology systems increases by 10% by Dec. 31, 2020, then the strategies and tactics used will have been effective.

## Objective 2

**Increase customer engagement of the MileagePlus program by 15% by Dec. 31, 2020**

United Airlines has their own system that collects and maintains information about passengers including personal information about you directly from you whether it is online or offline. Every





time a passenger books a flight, contacts the airline, completes a survey, register for the MileagePlus program, participate in a promotion or interact with the airline in anyway.

Through the specific program analytics, United will monitor the numbers and if the engagement of the MileagePlus program increases by 15% by Dec. 31, 2020, then the strategies and tactics were successful.

### **Objective 3**

**Increase United Airline's website visits by 25% by Dec. 31, 2020**

In order to determine whether or not website visits have increased, the data will be monitored and measured through SimilarWeb. Through these analyst websites, a company can receive monthly overviews. It includes, total visits, average visit duration, pages per visit, traffic by countries, traffic sources and top referring sites.

According to a March 2020 overview of United Airline's website traffic, total visits reached 24.64 million which was a 1.06% decrease from February 2020. However, the percentage of traffic in the United States now sits at 88.21% which is a 0.85% from the previous month (SimilarWeb, 2020). The same overview revealed that the top social media platform that brings traffic to the airline's website is Facebook with 36.31% (SimilarWeb, 2020).

If the current baseline data increases by a total of 25% by Dec. 31, 2020, the strategies and tactics were successful.



## APPENDIX A

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## APPENDIX B

# SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ United is one of the leading airlines in the world</li><li>▪ Strong international network</li><li>▪ Partnership with Star Alliance</li><li>▪ Large number of employees</li><li>▪ Partnership with Marriott's Bonvoy Hotel and Resorts</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Poor reputation</li><li>▪ Weak company management</li><li>▪ Decreasing financial performance</li><li>▪ Heavy dependence on third-party providers</li><li>▪ Seasonal fluctuation</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Growing airline industry in the United States</li><li>▪ Increase of global and tourism travel</li><li>▪ Growing global population</li><li>▪ Loyal customers to rebuild reputation</li><li>▪ Technology innovation</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Government regulations (i.e. infectious epidemics)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Coronavirus outbreak is costing airlines more than \$29 billion in revenue (Josephs, 2020).</li></ul></li><li>▪ Rise in oil prices</li><li>▪ Social media<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The use of Twitter, blogs, Facebook groups and online reviews gives customers a place to share their concerns and experiences to the public.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Low-cost airlines</li><li>▪ Terrorism</li></ul>



## APPENDIX C

# Creative Materials

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These ads would be created to accomplish tactic 5b.

Tactic 5b is to create a themed, spin-off of the current company slogan and implement it into social media platforms such as Facebook (landscape) and Instagram (horizontal) ads.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**United Airlines offers passengers compensation for volunteering seat on overbooked flight**

CHICAGO, June 1, 2020— United implicates better training and fewer oversold flights to help the airline avoid a repeat of the controversy and public relations disaster that erupted after a passenger was dragged off one of its flights in 2017.

Occasionally, even if a passenger holds a ticket, have checked in, are present to board on time and comply with other requirements, they may not be able to board. United calls this an over sale and occurs when restrictions apply to operating a particular flight safely (such as aircraft weight limits); when it has to substitute a smaller aircraft in place of a larger aircraft that was originally scheduled; or if more customers have checked in and are prepared to board than available seats.

CEO Oscar Munoz has promised that if a passenger's flight is an over sale situation, they will not be denied a seat until an employee first asks for volunteers willing to give up their confirmed seats. If there are not enough volunteers, boarding to passengers will be denied in accordance with the written policy on boarding priority. If a passenger is involuntarily denied boarding and have complied with the check-in and other applicable rules, an employee will give you a written statement that describes passenger rights and explains how boarding priority is determined for an oversold flight.

Passengers will generally be entitled to compensation and transportation on an alternate flight. United will offer up to \$10,000 to customers who volunteer to give up their seat on an overbooked flight.

"We, as an airline, hold specific service commitments," Munoz said, "so that we can continue a high level of performance and improve wherever possible."

United hopes this new policy will improve overall customer service and satisfaction, providing its promise of flying the friendly skies.

**About United**

United's shared purpose is "Connecting People. Uniting the World." We are more focused than ever on our commitment to customers through a series of innovations and improvements designed to help build a great experience. Together, United and United Express operate approximately 4,900 flights a day to 362 airports across six continents. In 2019, United and United Express operated more than 1.7 million flights carrying more than 162 million customers. United is proud to have the world's most comprehensive route network, including U.S. mainland hubs in Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York/Newark, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. United operates 791 mainline aircraft and the airline's United Express partners operate 581 regional aircraft. United is a founding member of Star Alliance, which provides service to 195 countries via 26 member airlines. For more information, visit [united.com](https://www.united.com), follow @United on Twitter and Instagram or connect on Facebook.

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Shown is an example of one of the press releases of a new policy being implemented would look like. This creative material would accomplish tactic 2a.

