

Customer service and social media

- 1 **Read the headline of this article. What do you think it's about? Then read the article. Find out if you're right and see if you can suggest a better headline.**

Flying guitars

Social media like Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter provide companies with great new ways to connect with customers and market their products. But along with new opportunities, there are also dangers. A good example is the case of _____ Airlines and dissatisfied passenger, musician Dave Carroll.

While travelling to _____ with his band, Dave's plane stopped in Chicago. A passenger in the seat _____ him looked out of the window and commented that she could see baggage handlers throwing _____ around on the tarmac. Dave's band looked at one another with _____. It was their instruments that they were treating like *projectiles. Dave immediately _____ three of the airline's employees and complained, but they showed complete _____. One said, 'That's why we make you sign the *waiver'. Dave had signed no waiver.

When he got to his destination, Dave found his \$3,500 _____ was broken. He complained to the airline saying 'You _____ it, you should _____.' He spent a frustrating year trying to get compensation. He felt the airline was _____ for the damage, but they refused to _____ it. So then he took a different approach. He told United Airlines that he would write three _____ about his experience and post them on Youtube.

*tarmac: the hard surface of an airport runway or road

*projectiles: things that are thrown at someone or fired from a gun or weapon

* waiver: an official written statement saying that a right or rule can be ignored

- 2 **Suggest different words and phrases to complete the spaces. Then watch the first part of the video and complete the missing words. <http://www.davecarrollmusic.com/ubg/song1/>**

- 3 **How do you think the story ended?**

- 1 Do you think the video was popular?
- 2 How do you think United Airlines reacted?
- 3 What effect do you think it had on United's share prices?
- 4 What effect do you think it had on Dave's career?

- 4 **Read what happened and find out if you're right. Do you think United did the right thing? What should they have done differently?**

Dave's first song went viral. It received 15,000 hits on the first day he posted it on Youtube and 5m more over the next six weeks. Dave followed it with two more songs that were also hits.

United Airlines responded promptly and Dave received a personal call from the Managing Director of Customer Solutions. He apologized and asked if the company could use Dave's video internally for customer training purposes. The company didn't criticize Dave or his video. In fact one company executive said it was "excellent". United Airlines offered Dave \$1200 in flight vouchers but he refused to accept it and has since donated \$3,000 to a music charity as a gesture of good will.

After Dave posted the video, United Airline's share prices fell. One newspaper reported that it lost 10% of its share value (\$180m) as a result of the song, though it's hard to know what really caused the fall. But one thing is clear. The real winner here is Dave Carroll. The worldwide publicity meant sales of his music jumped dramatically for both online downloads and physical CD sales. He has since received recording and publishing contract offers.

5 Discuss these questions:

- 1 Do you think the video might have caused the large fall in share price? Why/Why not?
- 2 What should and shouldn't United Airlines have done before Dave posted his first song on Youtube?
- 3 What different alternatives did United Airlines have once he'd posted it? Do you think they did the right things? Why/Why not? What should they have done differently?
- 4 What can organizations do to protect their brand from bad publicity on the web?
- 5 In what ways can organizations use social media to enhance their brand? Give examples.

And these:

- 1 When you're booking a flight, do you care which airline you fly with or are you more interested in other factors such as price or convenience? Why?
- 2 Many airlines ask passengers to sign a waiver saying they won't make a claim if their bags are damaged. Do you think this is fair? Why/Why not?
- 3 Who do you think should be responsible for hotel and meal costs when flights are delayed because of unusual weather conditions: airlines, passengers, or someone else? Why?
- 4 Have you ever had something go missing or get damaged while travelling? Whose fault was it? Describe what happened?