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Project #2

The Walt Disney Company is a corporation with a global footprint. Founded in 1923, the company is based in Burbank, California and has operations in over 40 countries around the world. The company has many subsidiaries and affiliates including a wide portfolio of media networks, entertainment studios and consumer products and interactive media. However, the company is most known for their 14 theme parks and resorts across the globe. In 2016, 140,403,000 people visited Walt Disney theme parks around the world with 30 million visitors to Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo Disney Sea alone (“Global Attractions Attendance Report”).

With Disney having the most attended theme parks globally, employee (referred to as cast members) and visitor safety is a high priority for the company. Even with the strictest standards and attention to detail, there have been numerous safety incidents involving cast members and visitors. Since Tokyo Disneyland opened in 1983 and Tokyo Disney Sea opened in 2001, there have been four incidents involving attraction and parade malfunctions that have caused or nearly caused injury to visitors. For example, in 2003, a Space Mountain roller coaster train derailed as it was returning to the loading station. While no riders were injured, the ride closed for a prolonged period under a safety inspection. The investigation found that an axle on the train failed due to the diameter being smaller than the recommended specifications. As a result, the trains were fixed to meet the correct specifications and the ride opened two months

later (“Accident Report Released”). This technical failure and oversight not only could have caused serious injury or fatalities to park guests, but also to cast members who operate the ride especially if it had derailed while going full-speed in the middle of the ride. Since the Space Mountain attraction is featured in five of the Disney Parks globally, the Tokyo incident in 2003 may cause similar safety concerns for park visitors around the world.

These incidents, especially ones that cause serious injury or even death, can cause ramifications globally on the public opinion of safety in the Disney Parks. When a serious accident occurs on an attraction in a park in Tokyo, international audiences will respond and demand answers to assure them that visitor and employee safety is a top priority.

Despite where a cross-national crisis occurs for The Walt Disney Company, it will have an impact in not only the United States and host countries such as Japan but also around the globe where the company has a presence. In Molleda’s cross-national conflict shifting propositions, he states “transnational corporations headquartered in developed nations that produce or are part of a national conflict outside their home country will attract significant attention from global NGOs... and global media outlets” (Molleda, “Advancing the Theory”). A safety crisis in Tokyo where a visitor sustains a major injury due to an attraction equipment malfunction will quickly attract the attention of media in Japan and will continue to gain attention in the global media. Molleda also outlines various areas that a crisis can fall. The crisis scenario of a mechanical error for an attraction would fall under workplace safety and community well-being (Molleda, “Cross-National Conflict Shifting”).

Crisis Communication Plan:

Potential hypothetical crisis situation: On a busy day in the Tokyo Disneyland Park, guests were riding on the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad attraction in Westernland. Mid-way during the ride, the safety bar disengaged on the last two rows of the train, leaving the riders unsecured. The attraction cast members immediately were notified via computer software and the ride came to an abrupt stop. Cast members, along with safety engineers, immediately went to the ride vehicle involved and surveyed the situation. All the guests riding the attraction were evacuated and four injured guests were taken to a nearby hospital for evaluation. One guest required an overnight stay due to severe whiplash but otherwise, there were no serious injuries. The attraction was shut down for a proper investigation to be conducted to determine the cause of the faulty safety bar.

The Big Thunder Mountain Railroad attraction is featured in four Disney parks around the world and is one of the most popular attractions in all of the Disney parks. This situation immediately had guests and theme park enthusiasts questioning what happened and how the company would respond. The company's social media channels not only in Tokyo but also in the United States were inundated with concerns, questions and outrage over the safety of attractions. This is not the first time this attraction (although in a different park) has caused serious injury or death to guests. Major news outlets such as CNN and Fox News have started to report on the situation, creating questions and concerns among guests who frequent the parks.

Expected PR outcome/ goals: Our first goal is to regain the trust of our cast members and guests after this accident. In our communications strategy, we will show that we are working to improve safety standards with not only the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad but also all of our

attractions. We will be transparent in our investigation findings, explain how we are going to correct the malfunction, and our plans moving forward with attraction maintenance and surveys.

Our second goal is to calm and alleviate the concerns guests and cast members may have. We will regularly communicate with the media and post on our website and social media platforms any updates we have. We will also be open to answering questions from our guests, cast members, and members of the media in an effort to minimize any miscommunications or negative press coverage.

Positions of crisis management team:

Name:	Job Title:	Division:	Role:
Robert (Bob) A. Iger	Chairman and Chief Executive Officer	The Walt Disney Company	CEO of The Walt Disney Company
Andy Bird	Chairman	The Walt Disney Company, Walt Disney International	Global Media, Spokesperson
Bob Chapek	Chairman	Walt Disney Parks and Resorts	Crisis Communications Manager
Bill Ernest	President and Managing Director, Asia	Walt Disney Parks and Resorts	Assistant Crisis Communications Manager
Zenia Mucha	Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Communications Officer	The Walt Disney Company	Director of Public Relations
Kristin Wingard	Senior Vice President, Communication and Public Affairs	Walt Disney Parks and Resorts	Assistant Director of Public Relations, Media Contact
Jessica Samson	Communications and Social Media Director	The Walt Disney Company	Social Media Coordinator, Media Contact
Jayne Parker	Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer	The Walt Disney Company	Human Resources Director
Toshio Kagami	Chairman and Chief Executive Officer	Tokyo Disney Resort (The Oriental Land Company)	CEO, Asian Media Spokesperson
Kyoichiro Uenishi	President and Chief Operations Officer	Tokyo Disney Resort (The Oriental Land Company)	Operations Expert
Akio Fujii	Senior Attorney	The Walt Disney Company, Japan	Legal Advisor

Reference: "About" and "About- Leadership Team"

Potential external partners/ stakeholders: We have identified partners and stakeholders of The Walt Disney Company that will need to be notified immediately about any crisis. Our stakeholders are cast members (employees), stockholders, investors, consumers (park guests), and external partners such as The Make a Wish Foundation.

Pre-drafted key messages:

- The Walt Disney Company and the Tokyo Disneyland Resort puts the safety of our guests and cast members as our highest priority. We are conducting an investigation into the cause of the attraction malfunction. We will update our website with information regarding this crisis as it becomes available.
- Disney is committed to maintaining our reputation as a safe and friendly vacation destination for families around the world. We will look further into our safety and inspections schedule for all our domestic and international attractions to ensure that this will not happen again.
- The Tokyo Disneyland Resort extends our sincerest apologies to the guests, family and friends of those impacted by this incident. We will be transparent and forthright to the public in order to regain their trust. Safety is a high priority at any Disney park.

Communications channels distribution plan:

Communication channel:	Rationale:	Target Audience:
Phone tree, personal phone call/ Skype	Immediately after the crisis, but before we go to the media, we will activate our phone-tree system and initiate personal phone calls to inform our stockholders, investors, and partners about the situation. We will continue to provide updates when we have them. This ensures that our biggest partners hear about the crisis from us first and not through other channels.	Stockholders, investors, partners
Press conference	We will issue an immediate, short press release about the situation. Once we have more information (ideally within the first couple of hours after the crisis), we will hold a press conference with the media to provide them with the information we currently have. We will regularly hold press conferences until the crisis has resolved and we move into our post-crisis plan. This ensures that there is no misinformation circulating in the media.	Media outlets
Corporate and Tokyo Disneyland Resort websites, press releases	We will post updates to our website when they come available. We will have a separate page, linked to the main websites, to guide consumers to the latest updates and press releases. Media outlets will have immediate access to these press releases. This will minimize the number of direct inquiries our public relations and media departments receive.	Consumers, media outlets
Company Intranet	The use of the company-wide Intranet allows us to get up to date information to our cast members around the world. We will regularly update it when new findings and issues arise. We can also use this to help guide our cast members on ways proper ways to respond to guests if they are asked about the current crisis situation.	Cast members
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	This allows us to get our message out quickly to a large audience who can also share information with others. Allows two-way-communication between Disney and its consumers. It is also a way for the media to get quick information while waiting for a more detailed press release.	Consumers, media outlets
Dedicated hotline and online chat	This allows guests and other concerned parties to contact Disney directly to have their questions answered. Our staff members will be regularly updated on the crisis and will have the proper training to answer questions and alleviate the concerns of our guests.	Consumers

Post-crisis plan: Post-crisis, we will look back on what caused the crisis, how we responded, and what we could change for any future crisis that may arise (Coombs, “Crisis Management and Communications”).

- Follow-up with the media on promised information and continue to update our websites with press releases and investigation reports as we receive them.
- Continue to update the company Intranet system to keep our cast members aware of the situation. We will also continue to update our stakeholders and pass along any information as it becomes known.
- Continue to update our social media channels with information and keep our hotline and online chat available for guests until it is deemed no longer necessary.
- Follow-up with those personally impacted by the crisis.
- Evaluate our safety inspections procedures of The Big Thunder Mountain Railroad attraction at Tokyo Disneyland and at our other three parks that feature this attraction. Make any updates and changes that are necessary to keep this crisis from occurring again. Additionally, launch an internal investigation into the safety inspections procedures at all of our attractions globally.
- Analyze our crisis communications plan and find what worked well, what we can improve on, and if we were effective in our messaging.

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