



BOEING 737 MAX 8 – A STALLED COMMUNICATION TAKE-OFF?

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The aviation industry is the lifeline for trade and commerce, due to its ability to rapidly connect cargo and passenger traffic across continents in a matter of few hours. The rise of the globe-trotter has resulted in a huge demand for passenger air travel (PwC, 2021).

The expenditure for business travel was around US\$ 234.16 billion in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). In 2018, the contribution of travel and tourism to the GDP was approximately US\$ 247.30 billion. This is projected to increase to US\$ 492.21 billion by 2028 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). Some of the leading companies in the global aviation sector include Southwest Airlines, Delta, Ryanair Holdings, United Airlines Holdings, International Airlines, American Airlines Group, Singapore Airlines, China Southern Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Deutsche Lufthansa, Air France-KLM, etc. (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2020).¹

In the light of this supersonic boom high above the clouds, the only two dominant players in the aircraft manufacturing industry, Airbus and Boeing, were heading full throttle into a duopoly. The way the two players sought to stabilize the situation ironically emerged through the design of a flight stabilization program that Boeing chose to forge ahead with – the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) – a fully automated flight controller. Designed by Boeing to ensure the pitch stability of the airplane significantly improved, it functioned by adjusting the horizontal stabilizer unit of the aircraft's tail to push the nose down when the airplane was in manual flight mode with flaps at a heightened angle of attack (AoA).

AoA is referred to the angle between the wing and the air flow, and this angle changes with air speed. These sensors signaled the MCAS to point the nose of the aircraft down if the airplane experienced a sudden loss of lift or was about to go into a stall.

The MCAS was fitted into 737 MAX 8 – Boeing's best-selling, showstopper aircraft. A wave of sweeping changes in the aviation sector drove the leaders of Boeing to launch the long haul, narrow-bodied, fuel-efficient 737 Max 8 – a transformational effort, which they considered would set the trend to drive the growth of the industry. The Airbus A320 neo series, which was among the fastest selling commercial aircraft, was the 737 MAX 8's competitor. Boeing had been the single largest player for 54 years until 1970 when Airbus received its first order from Air France. A need to dominate and consolidate their market position, pressure from their rival who was receiving more consignments led Boeing to accelerate the production and delivery of the 737 Max 8 jets to its clients.

The 737 MAX 8 was delivered to Ethiopian Airlines and Lion Air.

Lion Air or the PT Lion Mentari Airlines, a low-cost airline from Indonesia, was founded on November 15, 1999, with its headquarters in Jakarta. On October 29, 2018, the largest airline of Indonesia, Flight 610 took off – it was a Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft.

Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) was founded on December 21, 1945, and owned by the Ethiopian government. EAL had its headquarters in Bole International Airport at Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 took off on March 10, 2019. The Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, delivered to EAL on November 15, 2018, was on its way from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in Ethiopia to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya.

Both these aircraft crashed, leaving no survivors. The two 737 MAX 8 crashes led to the death of 346 passengers including the crew.

Boeing Commercial Airplanes (BCA) manufactured the 737 MAX 8 based on its previous 737 design of narrow-body airliners. This design looked like the original 737, which took its maiden flight in 1967. In the late 60s, environmental pollution was not a cause for concern and the airplanes did not have jet gates and luggage loading machinery; most airports were catering to domestic passengers and were much smaller in size and capacity. Boeing 737 MAX 8 as its

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/250577/domestic-market-share-of-leading-us-airlines/> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

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name suggests, had large engines, the main body of the aircraft was bigger than the original 737 and it had additional winglets at the tip of the aircraft wings to save fuel.

This new fleet of airplanes claimed to have efficient aerodynamic changes, LEAP-1B engines produced by CFM International.² The launch of the 737 MAX 8 was announced publicly on August 30, 2011. See **Exhibit 1** to know about the steady increase in its production spanning 4 years.

On January 29, 2016, Boeing 737 MAX 8 took off for the first time. It was given the go-ahead and certified in March 2017 by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The first crash took place on October 29, 2018. Lion Air Flight 610 crashed 13 minutes after take-off. There were 189 people on board, none of whom survived. The second crash took place on March 10, 2019. Onboard the Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 that crashed, were 157 people. 346 people had been killed within a span of five months, on a newly released aircraft from the hangars of a renowned aviation giant that forayed into commercial aviation in 1916. This was a catastrophe that Boeing nose-dived into – one that they would have never anticipated.³

According to Lion Air, the pilots flying the 737 MAX 8 were unaware of the MCAS software. There was no information about the software in the manuals or the training materials shared by Boeing.⁴ The Indonesian investigators said that “the plane was not airworthy and should have been grounded”.⁵ The 737 MAX 8 had crashed into the Java Sea minutes after its departure. The pilot had sought permission to return to Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta airport, according to officials. Though the preliminary report mentioned that the pilots were struggling to figure out how the MCAS worked, the definite cause of the accident was never discovered. See **Exhibit 2**.

The investigation for the actual cause of the EAL's disaster is still not known. In this instance too, the pilot of Flight 302 had reported difficulties minutes after departure and requested to return to Addis Ababa airport from where it took off, according to the airline. The flight radar had reported that the airplane's "vertical speed was unstable after take-off". See **Exhibit 3**.

Helplessness of Pilots Mid-Air

A search and rescue operations team, for Lion Air 610 which crashed into the Java Sea, 13 minutes after take-off, witnessed dozens of ships tirelessly scouting the area for several days, unable to trace the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft or any survivors from the crash.⁶

Bhavye Suneja, a 31-year-old native of India who had logged 6,000 flight hours was the pilot. A minute after take-off, the pilot had notified the airport about a flight control problem. Within a minute, the pilot and the co-pilot had to manually correct the lowering nose of the aircraft. The crew reported several problems they were facing shortly after departure. They were unable to measure the air speed correctly and altitude recorded on the radar was fluctuating showing different readings at the same time. There were serious issues with the anti-stall system that the pilots were dealing with, according to the Indonesian National Transport Safety Committee. The pilots tried to manually correct the nose of the aircraft pointing downward for the duration they were in the air. They had tried correcting this furiously 20 times. A problem with the stick shaker was also mentioned by the pilots.⁷

² CFM International was a joint venture between GE Aviation, a division of General Electric of the United States, and Safran Aircraft Engines, a division of Safran of France.

³ Praveen Duddu, [Airbus vs Boeing: a tale of two rivals](#) – last accessed on October 1, 2021

⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/18/771451904/boeing-pilots-detected-737-max-flight-control-glitch-two-years-before-deadly-cra> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46121127> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46015899> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46373125> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

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The plane's cockpit voice recorder could not be traced, but the helplessness of the crew was apparent. As the captain of his ship, a pilot holds himself responsible for the lives of those onboard. Having clocked considerable flying hours, it must have been a harrowing experience to be at the mercy of a computerized system which was creating distress mid-air, rendering the pilot and co-pilot rudderless. The aircraft failed to gain height and stayed around 5,000 feet up in the air before disappearing into the Java Sea. Those tormenting 13 minutes must have been the longest 13 minutes in the lives of the crew members onboard, who were unable to figure out this newly fitted anti-stall system.

It was reported that a day before Lion Air 610 crashed into the sea, another pilot commanding a Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft had encountered a similar situation. The crew, in this instance, managed to save the airplane from nosediving, but failed to register the issue as a serious problem in the flight maintenance logs.⁸

Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 was in the air for a short time compared to Lion Air 610. Six minutes after its departure, the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft crashed and was reduced to ashes. The pilot, Yared Getachew had been flying with EAL for about 9 years before the crash and was 29 years old at the time. Getachew had logged a total of 8,122 flight hours, of which 4,120 flight hours were spent flying the Boeing 737. The problems encountered on this EAL flight were like that of the Lion Air 610. The speed and altitude readings were erroneous and confusing. The anti-stall feature on the airplane was malfunctioning and in turn causing the nose of the plane to dive downwards.⁹

This aircraft had 157 people on board, and at that moment the main goal of the pilot and co-pilot was to have a safe landing to save everyone's lives. Since Lion Air's accident had occurred five months before the EAL 302 took off, the pilots tried to follow a few measures that Boeing and the FAA had recommended after Lion Air 610's crash. They struggled to control the aircraft until the last second. To add to their woes of a malfunctioning MCAS, the plane had also exceeded the safe flying speed, which made it rather difficult for the pilots to adjust the pitch of the plane manually. Until the plane could be tracked by FlightRadar24, it was flying at an altitude of 7,700 to 8,600 feet. The impact with which the plane hit the ground was immense - causing a blast that engulfed the plane in flames within seconds, as reported by witnesses.

SERIES OF DIS-CONNECTED MESSAGES

The initial communication emerged from Boeing's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dennis Muilenburg after the Lion Air crash. It was perceived to be process-based and unsympathetic. He said, "the 737 MAX is a very safe airplane". The message was devoid of any form of compassion for the lives lost on Flight 610. After this incident, the 737 MAX 8 continued to be operational. The official statement coming from Boeing clearly showed they were more interested in 'business as usual', rather than halting the airplane's services to do a thorough investigation on what could have gone wrong.¹⁰

"What is MCAS?" - these were the words revealed by an FAA official, soon after the Lion Air 610 crash, when the possibility of the regulator's misgivings started being discussed. Was a "rigorous checks and balances" undertaken by FAA before giving the green signal to Boeing? After the first crash, Boeing discreetly sent out teams all over the world to educate airline pilots about the MCAS. Boeing said the "function performed by MCAS is referenced" in the flight manual, and that "existing procedures" on how to handle were clearly mentioned.

After the second crash, Muilenberg said, "Boeing is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the passengers and crew on Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, a 737 MAX 8 airplane. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families and loved ones of the passengers and crew on board and stand ready to support the Ethiopian Airlines team."¹¹ Boeing

⁸ <https://digitalstrategies.org/2019/08/17/the-boeing-crisis-anatomy-of-a-decision-failure-cascade-in-communications/> - last accessed on March 10, 2021

⁹ https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/six-minutes-to-disaster-how-ethiopian-air-s-pilots-battled-boeing-737-max-119040500160_1.html - last accessed on March 10, 2021

¹⁰ <https://www.prnewsonline.com/boeing-737-congress-report/> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

¹¹ <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-statements?item=130401> - last accessed on March 10, 2021

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also released a public statement that said, “We have been hard at work strengthening our safety culture and rebuilding trust with our customers, regulators, and the flying public.” This time, the message had compassion and concern for the safety of passengers and crew members. The FAA assured that it was implementing changes in its regulatory frameworks.

There were more messages from Boeing soon after. On March 11, 2019, Boeing said:

The Boeing Company is deeply saddened by the loss of Lion Air Flight 610, which has weighed heavily on the entire Boeing team, and we extend our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the families and loved ones of those onboard. Safety is a core value for everyone at Boeing and the safety of our airplanes, our customers’ passengers and their crews is always our top priority. The 737 MAX 8 is a safe airplane that was designed, built and supported by our skilled employees who approach their work with the utmost integrity.¹²

Boeing continued to stress on safety and on March 12, 2019, announced:

Safety is Boeing’s number one priority, and we have full confidence in the safety of the 737 MAX 8. We understand that regulatory agencies and customers have made decisions that they believe are most appropriate for their home markets. We’ll continue to engage with them to ensure they have the information needed to have confidence in operating their fleets.¹³

Further, investigations revealed that a safety indicator in the cockpit of the 737 MAX 8 airplanes was not functioning as it was supposed to. Boeing chose to ignore this factor. The United States FAA blamed Boeing for this. However, in their defense, Boeing said that the alarm light was not a significant feature for flight safety and that the company had provided all important flight information related to speed, altitude and engine performance to the pilots flying the MAX 8.

Three days after the second crash, the US government barred all Boeing 737 MAX 8 airplanes from flying anywhere in the world between March 2019 and November 2020. On March 13, 2019, Boeing communicated about this decision of the US government:

Boeing continues to have full confidence in the safety of the 737 MAX 8. However, after consultation with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and aviation authorities and its customers around the world, Boeing has determined -- out of an abundance of caution and in order to reassure the flying public of the aircraft’s safety -- to recommend to the FAA the temporary suspension of operations of the entire global fleet of 371 737 MAX 8 aircraft.¹⁴

On June 17, 2019, Muilenberg finally admitted that Boeing made a mistake in its installation and subsequent execution of the 737 MAX 8 airplanes’ cockpit warning system. He further added that all communication from Boeing with its customers, regulators, and the public were not consistent, and therefore it was not acceptable.¹⁵ See **Exhibit 4**.

Furious Pilots and Leaked Internal Messages

The pilots had gone on record by noting that Boeing had not informed them about the MCAS upgrade, and they were not sufficiently trained to handle the new software. They were angry and believed that this had led to the Lion

¹² <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-statements?item=130402> – last accessed on March 12, 2021

¹³ <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-statements?item=130403> – last accessed on March 12, 2021

¹⁴ <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-statements?item=130404> – last accessed on March 12, 2021

¹⁵ <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2019/06/17/boeing-737-max-warning-system-mistake-dennis-muilenberg/> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

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Air and EAL crashes. In response to pilots' concerns, Muilenberg said that Boeing would ensure that the airplanes were safe before they returned to the skies with the approval of the regulators.

Boeing's employees too raised concerns of pilots not being trained to fly the MAX 8, which is clear in this leaked message from the company's platform, "I would think that the non-normal checklists (NNCs) should provide some guidance to the pilots. Many will need to be told to enter rudder or aileron input to correct the condition of which they have been informed." This can also be connected to a similar leaked internal communication from the 737 Chief Technical Pilot to other Boeing employees: "I want to stress the importance of holding firm that there will not be any type of simulator training required to transition from NG to MAX... If a particular customer wants to add additional training due to concerns with their particular experience level of their pilot group, then that is an internal issue to that airline." Apparently, Boeing's Chief Technical Pilot had told the regulators to remove simulator training as one of the requirements for pilots, to expedite the FAA approval.¹⁶

Most of the leaked messages from Boeing's employees contained profanities. What became apparent from those messages was the fact that the engineers who designed the systems were assuming that the pilots who would be flying the 737 MAX 8 airplanes, would upgrade their flying skills seamlessly to integrate this with the system. The senior engineers misguided other employees by hushing this up and bullied or forced them into unethical practices. To address complaints about low-speed operations, Boeing's engineers had made changes to the pressure that the MCAS could apply to the controls. This small yet significant tweak was not documented, since they had decided to be silent about these changes and did not mention them to the regulators.¹⁷

Boeing's new, CEO David Calhoun, who replaced Muilenberg after the two ill-fated crashes, had to encounter new challenges. He had to deal with Boeing's employees boasting about the company using tactics to pressurize regulators into accepting minimum training for the pilots flying 737 Max 8. He exclaimed that these leaked internal messages were totally 'unacceptable'.¹⁸ Calhoun had to apologize to all stakeholders, confirming that disciplinary action would be taken against the employees who had shown such misconduct. See **Exhibit 5** for examples of such leaked messages.

Tightening the seat belt within the company

"I agree with you entirely and agree with the whole failure to plan this program properly from Boeing's side. I am just sick and tired of being put in the middle of this..." – this is an excerpt from a frustrated Boeing employee chatting with another employee. Several such messages were leaked from the internal communication platform of the company.¹⁹

A message from an employee that was leaked from Boeing's platform read: "I still haven't been forgiven by God for the covering up I did last year". This pointed to the fact that employees were barred from talking about the software changes and related training that might have prevented the tragedies occurring from the crashes.

Boeing's workforce communications platform, known as Boeing News Now (BNN), was powered by FirstUp.²⁰ The company used the workforce communications platform, SocialChorus, to reach its frontline employees, such as the people building planes and people working in the plant. BNN and SocialChorus were channels through which employees were updated on targeted news and information relevant to them. See **Exhibit 6**.

¹⁶ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/09/boeing-releases-communications-on-737-max-simulators-it-calls-completely-unacceptable.html> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

¹⁷ <https://digitalstrategies.org/2019/08/17/the-boeing-crisis-anatomy-of-a-decision-failure-cascade-in-communications/> - last accessed on March 10, 2021

¹⁸ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/29/boeing-ceo-david-calhoun-my-stomach-turned-over-737-max-messages.html> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

¹⁹ <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6653-internal-boeing-communications/606e3fda752a935bc0df/optimized/full.pdf#page=84> – last accessed on April 5, 2021

²⁰ <https://socialchorus.com/blog/how-boeing-elevated-their-digital-employee-experience-2/> - last accessed on April 5, 2021

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According to Randy Liss from Boeing Communications:

The engagement wasn't where we wanted it...we needed to be able to communicate with folks in their own language, and our intranet was running the course of its life. We knew we needed to transform. SocialChorus calls this concept mission control, but I like to call it uber efficiency. It's all in one place, where you can plan your content, publish your content, analyze your content. This is helping change the conversation around performance of content, helping people set goals, and really focusing on what we want to accomplish with our strategy.²¹

THE FASTEST SELLING MACHINE GROUNDED

Boeing faced considerable losses while the brand's reputation was tarnished after the mishaps. According to the House Transportation Committee's report, neither Boeing nor the FAA "has fully incorporated essential safety lessons, despite a global grounding of the MAX fleet since March 2019."²² The report pulled up the FAA for its oversight in the Boeing crashes. Apparently, the FAA was one of the last of all the global bodies to call for grounding the 737 MAX 8.

Boeing's CEO Muilenberg was asked to step down around December 2019. He left the organization reeling with a dwindling future and reduced trust. He was replaced by David Calhoun, the Board Chair, as the new CEO.

To ease the pain of the bruise that was growing uglier in the belly of Boeing's century-old reputation, Boeing's communication plans were revamped and rehailed. As of 2020,²³ they wanted to be considered "as the ones who are running the organization and making Boeing what it is employees need to feel valued and heard by the administration. Further to feeling valued, they also need to feel connected, so it is important to break down the barriers that exist within silos and create a hub of communication that creates a strong team morale". Their revised communications plan was more aligned to "understanding the value of strong channels of communications with their shareholders, staff, and partners ensuring that everyone is informed and aware of what is happening within the organization."

Boeing announced on January 7, 2020, that it would recommend simulator training for the pilots as preparations began for the 737 MAX 8 to soar into the skies again.

READY TO TAKE-OFF

The year 2016 witnessed a steady rise in the 737 MAX 8's production. Boeing was producing 42 MAX 8s per month, in 2019, the production saw a surge to 57 MAX 8s per month. See **Exhibit 1**. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing worldwide lockdown in April 2020 occurred soon after the aircraft was grounded. This led to a dip in production of 42 aircraft per month.²⁴

After the second crash, Boeing experienced a steep 10% drop in its shares²⁵ – Boeing had not faced a loss as huge as this in about two decades. See **Exhibit 7**. This can also be viewed as a dip in the 'trust in the brand'. This plunge was a direct fall-out of the decision by airline companies in China, Indonesia and Ethiopia to ensure their airlines were not buying the 737 MAX 8 aircraft. Prior to the crashes, Boeing had recorded a high of \$446 per share; its market value had tripled over three years to reach this record high.

²² <https://www.prnewsonline.com/boeing-737-congress-report/> - last accessed on March 10, 2021

²³ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d77c97bc07a8c6820e22456/t/5ef91591b23df673eab314ef/1593382289894/Boeing+Corporate+Com+unications+Plan.pdf> – last accessed on March 10, 2021

²⁴ <https://www.barrons.com/articles/boeing-build-737-max-jets-2020-51580483928> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

²⁵ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/boeing-shares-dive-after-second-deadly-737-max-8-crash/articleshow/68356316.cms> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

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On June 16, 2019, Muilenberg finally accepted that the company had made a mistake in dealing with the cockpit warning system in the 737 MAX 8 airplanes.²⁶ He accepted the fact that when the engineers had pointed out in 2017, that the warning light on the MAX was not functioning efficiently, this was not communicated clearly with all stakeholders. He regretted that the company had not stepped in promptly and taken corrective measures as and when they were highlighted by the clients through the pilots. This failure to understand that keeping the lines of communication open during a crisis plays a determining role in the way all stakeholders respond to further communications from the company, was Boeing's letdown. This is evident in the series of communication efforts designed feverishly throughout this period and the manner in which it was handled and displayed by Boeing. See **Exhibit 8**.

After Muilenberg was fired, Boeing had its hopes pinned on its new CEO, to rebuild cordial relationships with its customers, the public and the regulators and earn their trust again. Calhoun understood the need to fix relationships and communicated to the employees that, "many of our stakeholders are rightly disappointed in us, and it's our job to repair these vital relationships." He further explained that "we'll do so through a recommitment to transparency and by meeting and exceeding their expectations. We will listen, seek feedback, and respond — appropriately, urgently and respectfully."²⁷

Several aspects surrounding communication, trust and openness could have far-reaching consequences for Boeing, post this experience. Experienced pilots who had previously flown the 737s could be skeptical about revised hardware, software and technical changes made to the aircraft. Reference training documents from Boeing are likely to be minutely scrutinized.

As on February 2021, after the 737 MAX 8 was back in service and its deliveries had resumed, the losses it suffered were still huge.²⁸ In 2021, Boeing 777 and 747 received negative attention. On February 20, 2021, the United Airlines Boeing 777's engine failed shortly after departure. Parts of the Pratt & Whitney engine were showered over a suburb area of Denver; however, no one was injured.²⁹ In another incident on the same day, metal parts from the engine of a Boeing 747 cargo airplane were scattered in Netherlands soon after take-off.³⁰ In this instance, several cars and houses were damaged, and a woman was injured.

What does the future hold for Boeing, with the airline industry experiencing a massive slowdown through this once-in-a-century pandemic that hit the world in 2020? The good times that Boeing experienced when the airline industry was booming seems bleak on the horizon.³¹

Boeing's case is a classic example of failure to communicate shifting cultures. The decision taken on that eventful day in the boardroom to focus on short-term profits was perhaps with the intention to make it a turning point in the company's fortunes.

The most decisive role in this drama that unfolded in Seattle was brought to the notice of the world by a local newspaper – *The Seattle Times*. If not for this team of reporters, who were awarded the highest honor in Journalism – The Pulitzer – this story would have been relegated to a one-off incident, swept under the carpet and the misdoings of a global conglomerate would never have been investigated so thoroughly. As quoted in the *LA Times*, "in the case of the Boeing crashes, strong, locally based reporting has not only informed the public but has helped prompt congressional hearings, corporate housecleaning and demands for greater federal oversight of air safety."³² A

²⁶ <https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2019/06/17/boeing-737-max-warning-system-mistake-dennis-muilenberg/> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

²⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2020/01/14/boeings-new-ceo-pledges-greater-transparency-message-employees/> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

²⁸ <https://www.investors.com/research/boeing-stock-buy-now/> - last accessed on March 10, 2021

²⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-boeing-777-ntsb-idUSKBN2AX291> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

³⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/22/dutch-investigate-boeing-747-after-engine-parts-drop-after-takeoff-netherlands> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

³¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-47824683> - last accessed on October 1, 2021

³² <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-05-10/journalism-seattle-times-pulitzer-newspapers> - last accessed on October 26, 2021

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diligent effort to painstakingly dig for facts and information by a local newspaper turned the fortunes of Boeing into an unending stream of allegations and botched-up efforts.

At Boeing, the need to race ahead of its competitor had resulted in a probable evasion of regulatory norms.

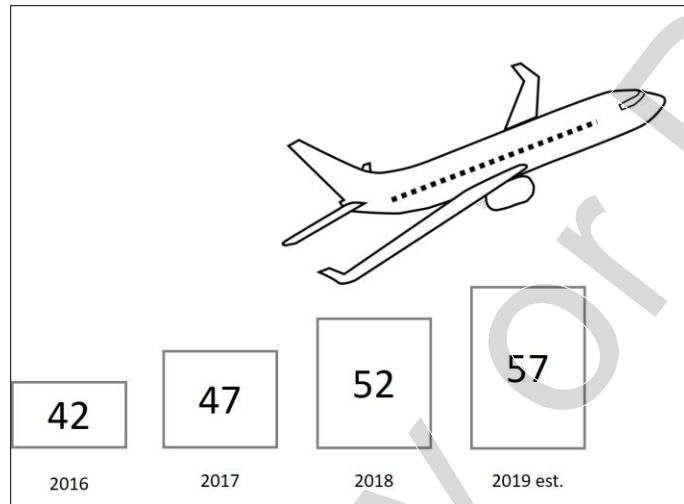
By signaling to its engineers that it was ready to take a risk that came with evading some of the regulatory norms, the communication networks within the organization sent out the wrong message. Should leaders within The Boeing Company, have utilized the existing communication networks to engage the workforce to truly believe that putting out an advanced aircraft came with tight deadlines and high risks? In doing so, could they have misinterpreted what 'communication fatigue' or 'communication oversight' truly meant? – resulting in confusion, cynicism, and skepticism?

Boeing after all was a leading player in the aviation sector and the focus of its workforce was to produce and market a wide range of aircraft in an increasingly competitive global market. By limiting its employees to understand its coping mechanisms, growth strategy and operational culture, was it constrained in its utilization of existing communication channels?

Can it be said that for their top management, however, allowing Boeing to lose control up in the air was sheer impudence on their part?

Exhibit 1

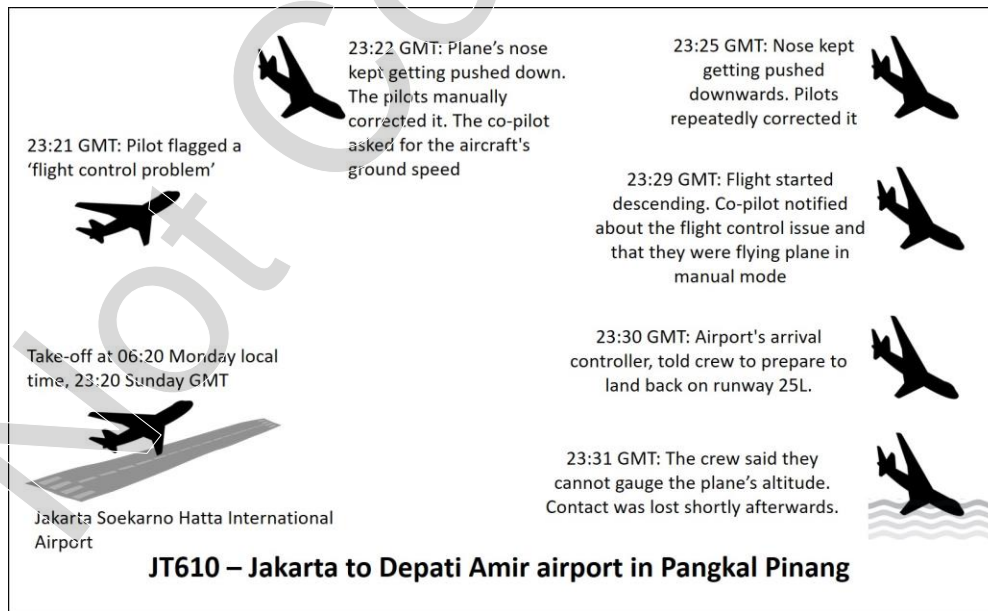
Boeing's Aircraft Production Increase 2016-19 (numbers per month)



Source: Case Writer's compilation from news covered in CNBC in 2019

Exhibit 2

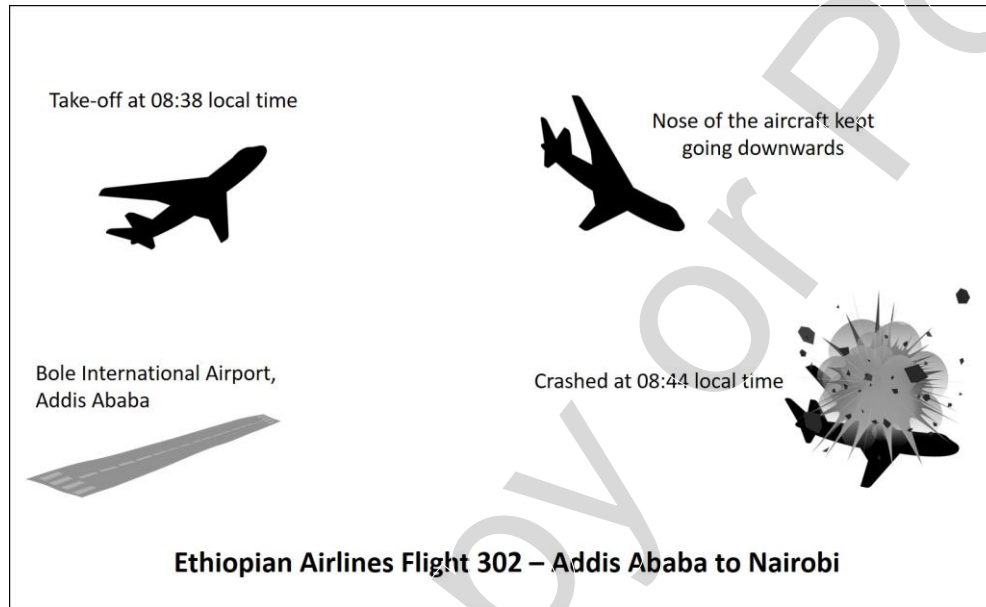
Lion Air Flight 610 Crash



Source: Created by Case Writer referring to news covered in BBC

Exhibit 3

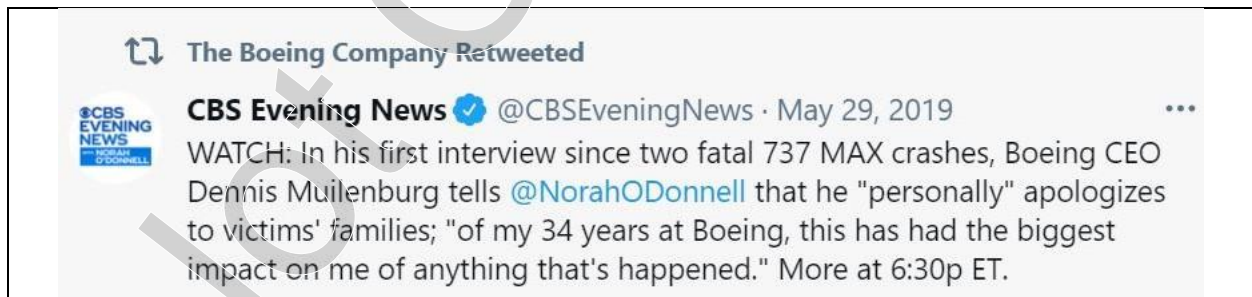
Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 Crash



Source: Created by Case Writer referring to <https://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-africa-47513534>

Exhibit 4

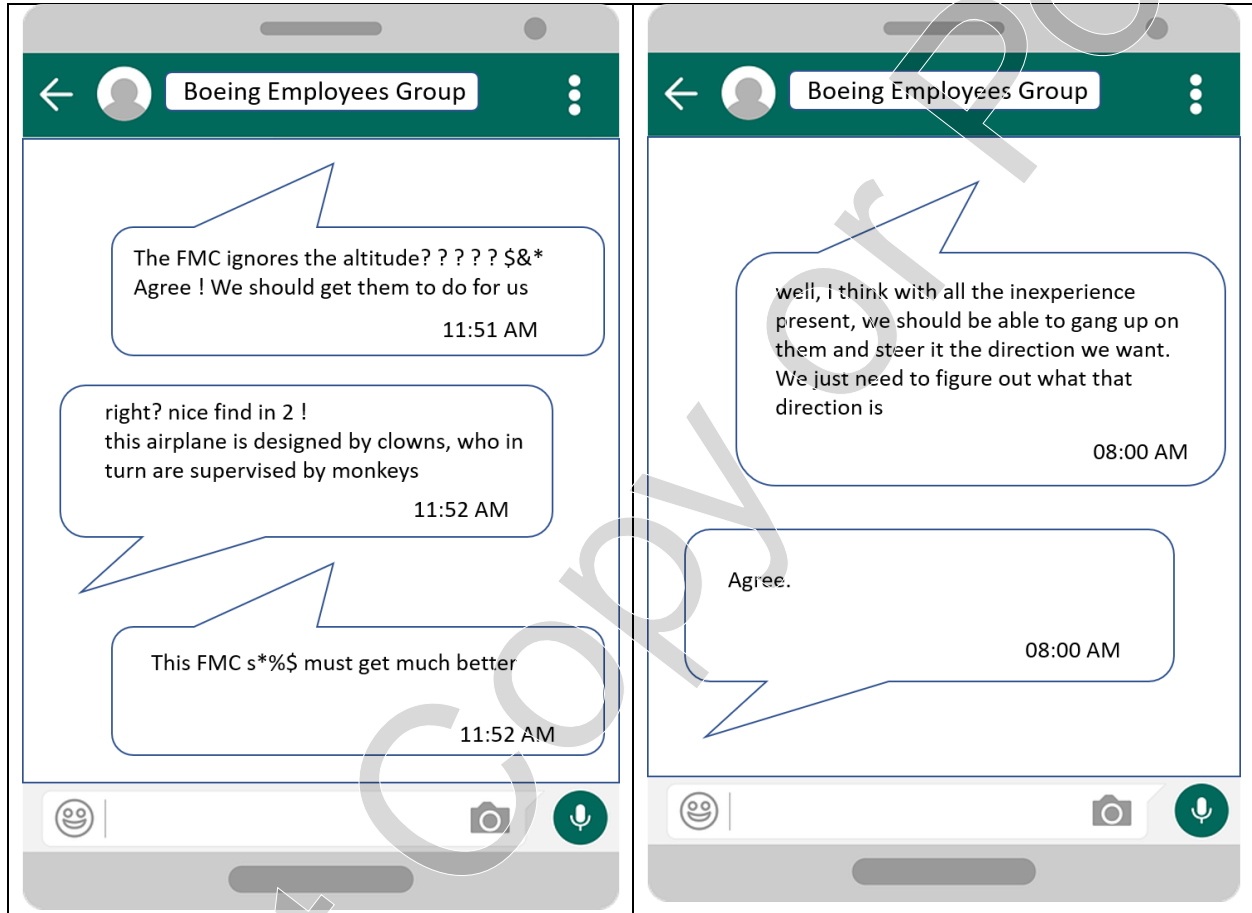
Dennis Muilenberg's Apology



Source: Twitter

Exhibit 5

Internal Leaked Chats from Boeing



Source: [Internal Leaked Chats](#)

Exhibit 6

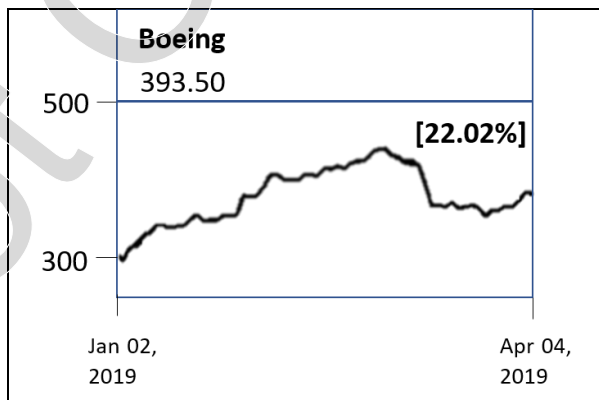
Communication Channels Used by Boeing

Communication Channels	Description
Boeing Media Room	Boeing makes statements on issues related to its aircraft, and provides software update information
Boeing News Now (BNN), powered by FirstUp	Boeing's workforce communications platform
SocialChorus	Boeing's workforce communications platform for frontline employees
Boeing Frontiers	Boeing's annual magazine; was a monthly magazine previously
External Communication Channels	Description
Media (television networks/newspapers), such as FOX Business Network, Twitter, Paris Air Show, Washington Post, NY Times, The Guardian, Seattle Times	Interviewed the CEO and BCA stakeholders, led communication updates on the situation, etc.

Source: Case Writer's compilation based on publicly available data

Exhibit 7

BCA's Stocks under Pressure



Source: Case writer's compilation from news covered in CNBC

Exhibit 8

Series of Tweets from Boeing since the First Crash

The Boeing Company Retweeted

 **Boeing Airplanes** ✓
@BoeingAirplanes

Boeing is aware of reports of an airplane accident and is closely monitoring the situation.

8:36 AM · Oct 29, 2018 · Twitter Web Client

The Boeing Company Retweeted

 **Boeing Airplanes** ✓ @BoeingAirplanes · Mar 10, 2019

Updated Statement on Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302: boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-...



"Boeing is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the passengers and crew on Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, a 737 MAX 8 airplane. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families and loved ones of the passengers and crew on board and stand ready to support the Ethiopian Airlines team. A Boeing technical team will be travelling to the crash site to provide technical assistance under the direction of the Ethiopia Accident Investigation Bureau and U.S. National Transportation Safety Board."

834 1.2K 1.9K

 **The Boeing Company** ✓ @Boeing · Mar 12, 2019

Boeing Statement on 737 MAX Operation: boeing.mediaroom.com/news-releases-...



"Safety is Boeing's number one priority and we have full confidence in the safety of the 737 MAX. We understand that regulatory agencies and customers have made decisions that they believe are most appropriate for their home markets. We'll continue to engage with them to ensure they have the information needed to have confidence in operating their fleets. The United States Federal Aviation Administration is not mandating any further action at this time, and based on the information currently available, we do not have any basis to issue new guidance to operators."

500 652 781

Boeing's 737 Max 8 – A Stalled Communication Take-Off?



Exhibit 8 (Contd.)



Source: Twitter