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THESIS

**IMPROVING TSA'S PUBLIC IMAGE:
CUSTOMER-FOCUSED INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE
PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE**

by

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December 2013

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The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) can improve its public image by looking at the problem from the customer's perspective. This thesis explores TSA's public-image challenges and identifies customer-focused solutions. Research methods include a case study analysis on Southwest Airlines and Disney and an extensive literature review to identify smart practices that are applicable to TSA. TSA needs to implement customer-focused strategies that are more effective in dealing with the agency's public-image challenges. A TSA strategy designed to build a more positive work environment, improve messaging and information sharing, increase the focus on customer service, and utilize customer feedback to improve operations, will begin to improve public opinion.

There is a disconnect between TSA's intentions and the public's perceptions, and it is time to seek new opportunities to improve the public's trust and confidence. It is easy for some to be critical about an agency that screens over 1.7 million passengers each day and often has to get into the passenger's personal space in order to do so. TSA's first priority is and should be security, but public opinion is also important. Increasing public confidence in TSA may also result in more acceptance and cooperation with security processes, resulting in increased security effectiveness.

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**IMPROVING TSA'S PUBLIC IMAGE: CUSTOMER-FOCUSED INITIATIVES
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIT	advanced imaging technology
AFSD	assistant federal security director
ASAC	Aviation Security Advisory Committee
AWT	automated wait time
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CCTV	closed circuit television
CEO	chief executive officer
CFO	chief financial officer
CHDS	Center for Homeland Defense and Security
CSQIM	customer support and quality improvement manager
DfT	Department for Transport (United Kingdom)
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOT	Department of Transportation
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAQ	frequently asked questions
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSD	federal security director
FIO	field intelligence officer
FLETC	Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
GAO	Government Accountability Office
IG	inspector general
LAX	Los Angeles International Airport
MWP	model workplace
OSO	Office of Security Operations
PCS	Proactive Customer Service (Southwest Airlines)
PSS	passenger support specialist

RBS   risk-based security

SHM   stakeholder manager

SSI   sensitive security information

TCC   TSA Contact Center

TDC   travel document checker

TSA   Transportation Security Administration

TSIF   Transportation Systems Integration Facility

TSO   Transportation Security officer

UK   United Kingdom

WTMD   walk through metal detector

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is easy for some to be critical about an agency that screens over 1.7 million passengers each day and often has to invade the passenger's personal space or property in order to do so. Despite the agency's efforts, criticism has increased to the point that it is common to have negative media coverage. Arguably, many of those media reports are incomplete or distorted, but the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) needs to address the fact that there is a public image problem.

There is a disconnect between TSA's intentions and the public's perceptions, and it is time to seek new opportunities to improve the public's trust and confidence in TSA. Everything TSA does is focused on combating the threats to transportation—without question the agency's number one concern is effectively addressing those threats. However, taking into consideration the traveling public's point of view about the screening experience is also important.

All government agencies should be concerned about their public image and reputation. A positive public image is particularly imperative for TSA because it works directly with the public. Seeking to improve an agency's public image is important for several reasons. First, the millions of passengers that are screened each week, as well as the TSA officers that interact with them, will benefit from policy adjustments made to improve customer service and, ultimately, TSA's public image. Second, a positive public image allows TSA to focus on the security mission without distractions, thereby increasing overall security effectiveness. If the public has confidence in TSA, it is more likely to accept and cooperate with security processes, resulting in increased security effectiveness. Finally, negative public opinion can cause decisions to be made in an environment of "walking on eggshells."

This thesis examines the public-image challenges faced by TSA and identifies potential customer focused solutions. This smart practice research looks at how private organizations maintain a positive public image and provide good customer service. Disney and Southwest Airlines were selected for the case studies for very specific

relevant reasons; both companies are known for their successful public image, and private-industry customer-focused initiatives that improve the customers' experience can be translated to government use.

TSA needs to implement new customer-focused strategies that are effective in dealing with the agency's public-image challenges head on. Based on the literature review and analysis of smart practices in private industry, this thesis proposes that TSA needs to build a more positive work environment, improve messaging and information sharing with the public, increase the focus on customer service, and use customer feedback to improve operations. This strategy requires high-level support within TSA, but it will rely on field-level expertise to refine and effectively implement this thesis's recommended policy changes at all U.S. airports.

TSA has had successes, and there are many dedicated employees that work hard to ensure they continue to be effective. However, the agency has failed to place enough emphasis on customer service. The bottom line is that the public deserves better customer service from TSA. In addition, TSA should make improvements that will improve the passengers' experience and any resulting improvements in public opinion will in turn make it easier for the uniformed officers who interact with well over a million passengers each day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt explains: "Happiness comes from between. It comes from getting the right relationships between yourself and others, yourself and your work, and yourself and something larger than yourself." Working with the incredibly talented instructors, staff, and homeland security leaders in Cohorts 1103 and 1104 was an enlightening experience and I am happy to have been on this amazing journey.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

What smart practices can be derived from outside of government to help solve TSA's most significant public-image challenges?

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has a significant public-image problem that needs to be addressed. Since TSA is responsible for protecting the nation's transportation systems, they interact with over 1.7 million passengers each day (over 600 million annually) and are one of the most visible federal government agencies.[1] Because the TSA mission impacts so many, the same public that they are there to protect are also frequently inconvenienced by TSA's continually evolving security practices. A *Wall Street Journal* reporter recognized the difficult challenge faced by the agency when "agents are charged with the objective of finding underwear bombs on the bad guys without being offensive to the good ones."[2]

1. Background and Significance

Created only 11 years ago, TSA is a relatively new agency that now has almost 50,000 Transportation Security officers (TSOs) located at more than 450 airports.[3] The agency's phenomenal rate of growth and work environment that is sometimes described as "permanent whitewater" has resulted in public-image challenges. Without a doubt, TSA receives a lot of negative scrutiny from the public and political leaders. Former TSA Administrator Kip Hawley noted, "the agency was so accustomed to being criticized, the normal alarms failed to go off when Congress, the media, or the public dismissed the

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[1] TSA's nearly 50,000 Transportation Security Officers screen more than 1.7 million passengers each day at more than 450 airports nationwide. Transportation Security Admiration [TSA], "Who We Are," accessed February 5, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/who_we_are/what_is_tsa.shtm.

[2] Scott McCartney, "TSA, Under Fire, Wants to Upgrade Its Service," *Wall Street Journal* [Online], May 23, 2012, accessed May 24, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304065704577422442131848340.html.

[3] TSA, "Who We Are."

agency's circular talking points as bureaucratic double-talk. It was simply business as usual."[4] TSA needs to implement new customer focused strategies that are more effective in dealing with the agency's public-image challenges head on.

In the past, TSA did focus on the customer. Eight years ago TSA pledged to provide "world class security with world class customer service" and stated an "ongoing commitment to customer service in the fulfillment of its security mandate."[5] Federal Security Directors (FSDs) that manage TSA field operations at airports were encouraged to "build a foundation of 'Trust and Confidence' with the American people and their representatives in Congress through respecting <u>individual privacy</u> and performing TSA's mission with a high level of <u>customer service</u>."[6] However, there is now a disconnection between TSA's intentions and the public's perceptions, and it is time to seek new opportunities to improve the public's trust and confidence in TSA.

Some of the most significant customer service challenges TSA faces are a negative public opinion about TSA screening procedures and a perception of providing poor customer service. TSA has also continued to struggle with the challenges of implementing security procedures designed to combat terrorist threats and the resulting negative feedback from the intrusiveness of those screening procedures. Kip Hawley has gone on record stating that something needs to be done to improve the relationship between TSA and the public it serves: "Airport security has to change. The relationship between the public and the TSA has become too poisonous to be sustained."[7]

The purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate customer focused initiatives or methods that can be used to improve TSA's public image. Seeking to improve an

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[4] Kip Hawley and Nathan Means, Permanent Emergency: Inside the TSA and the Fight for the Future of Security (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 71–72.

[5] Transportation Security Admiration [TSA], "TSA's New 'Pledge to Travelers' Emphasizes Security, Customer Service," news release, February 9, 2005, accessed March 18, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/press/releases/2005/press_release_0563.shtm.

[6] TSA, "Executive FSD Guide: A Tool for Development," August 2004, accessed June 18, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/efsd_adfsd_career_guide.pdf, 1.

[7] Kip Hawley, "Why Airport Security is Broken—And How to Fix it," *Wall Street Journal* [online], April 15, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303815404577335783535660546.html, 4–5.

agency's public image is important for several reasons. First, the millions of passengers that are screened every week, as well as the 50,000 TSA officers that interact with the public will benefit from policy adjustments made to improve customer service and, ultimately, TSA's public image. Second, a positive public image allows TSA to focus on the security mission without distractions thereby increasing overall security effectiveness. Finally, negative public opinion can cause decisions to be made in an environment of "walking on eggshells." When Hawley came on board he found his staff avoided controversy; he brutally summed it up as "even in the dimness of the room, I could see plenty of competent and smart faces, many from the old TSA, but the confidence node in their brains appeared to have been bypassed and hardwired directly to the pain center."[8] Hawley's statement is overly harsh, but if his senior leaders found controversy difficult, imagine the impact that negative public opinion has on TSA's frontline officers dealing with it face-to-face.

2.   Assumptions and Limitations of Research

The first assumption made is that TSA does have a negative public image. This research will not attempt to measure TSA's public reputation in relation to other agencies because prior research has already identified that TSA has an unfavorable reputation and that reputation (whether deserved or not) has a strong impact on public trust.[9] The second assumption is that federal agencies and specifically TSA should seek to have a positive public image, and TSA could do more to manage its reputation and improve customer service.

There also needs to be the recognition that the public's perception of TSA is influenced by personal experiences of having luggage searched or going through security checkpoint screening. That requires going into the passenger's personal space, which at best is tolerated but it is never liked——even if the officer is courteous and professional while performing the task. In addition, inconsistency in security procedures is frustrating

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[8] Hawley and Means, *Permanent Emergency,* 72.

[9] Bobbie L. Johnson, "Managing the Reputation of DHS and Its Components" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009), Homeland Security Digital Library, https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=35544, abstract.

to passengers—sometimes that is by design in order to have unpredictable or random screening procedures, but other times that is due to lack of training or oversight. As a result, TSA's reputation can only be improved to a certain level. Members of the public may accept screening because they recognize the security risks, but they will never enjoy going through the screening process. However, there are advantages to improving the passenger's experience as much as possible.

The range of potential issues regarding TSA's reputation is broad, and not all of those can be accomplished in the scope of this research. As a result, the limitation of this research is that it will not examine whether TSA's security procedures or methods are effective or whether improvements need to be made in the manner with which TSA officers are conducting screening. This research will not look at the overall TSA mission, technology, or anything operational. TSA's website indicates that "TSA is committed to evolving its systems to enhance the safety of the traveling public as well as individual passenger experiences whenever possible."[10] For the purpose of this research, it is assumed that TSA will continue to look for process improvements and security advancements through new technology and procedures to meet the latest threats. Instead, this research will focus on improving customer service.

TSA Administrator John Pistole defended the agency in front a House subcommittee. He stated, "It's a part of just the sheer numbers that we deal with 630 million people a year. We are not going to have 100 percent customer service for everyone. It is our goal to provide the most professional security in the most effective way."[11] It could be argued that providing good customer service is effective, and any movement towards creating a more customer friendly organization is better than the status quo.

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[10] Transportation Security Admiration [TSA], "What is TSA?," accessed February 5, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/who_we_are/what_is_tsa.shtm.

[11] Jessica Meyers and Burgess Everett, "Lawmakers Lining up for A Shot at TSA," Politico, June 7, 2012, http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0612/77167.html.

3. Bias and Theoretical Sensitivity

> In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing.
>
> –President Theodore Roosevelt

It is important to identify potential theoretical sensitivity or bias. As a Customer Support and Quality Improvement Manager for seven out of nine years working for TSA, the researcher has a professional and personal interest in methods that will improve the passenger's experience so that they will have trust and confidence in the agency. The goal was to look at the issues impartially, but as Jonathan Haidt points out, there is a risk of confirmation bias: "the tendency to seek out and interpret new evidence in ways that confirm what you already think."[12]

Daily interactions with the traveling public has provided the researcher with an appreciation of the issues that are important to passengers, and a belief that TSA needs to increase the focus on providing better customer service. Most importantly, passengers deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect and should be an active participant in aviation security by preparing for the security process. This in turn will also improve the work environment at TSA security checkpoints.

Since 2003, the author has had the honor of working with many dedicated Transportation Security officers who have shown their commitment to providing professional and courteous customer service to passengers, the author hopes to offer suggestions to turn the tide of negative public opinion that will ultimately also improve working conditions for TSA's dedicated front line employees.

4. Consumer of this Information

The immediate consumer of this information is Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and TSA senior leadership and public affairs managers. This research will seek opportunities to have a more positive impact on the public through smart practices in customer service and reputation management. Policy makers will also be able to

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[12] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 79–80.

understand the importance of providing information to the public prior to implementing new security procedures in order to minimize the negative impact. This thesis will also add to the available literature on managing a government agency's public image through effective customer service.

5. Hypothesis

A positive public image is important for all government agencies because it promotes the effectiveness of the organization and builds public trust and confidence. If members of the public have confidence in TSA, they are more likely to accept and cooperate with security processes resulting in increased security effectiveness. A supportive public that understands security requirements, prepares for the security process, and cooperates with security officers, saves the agency time and resources and minimizes distractions allowing the frontline officers to focus on identifying those persons and items that are a threat to security.

The purpose of this study is to investigate ways to improve the agency's reputation by focusing on customer service. Smart practices or successful polices being used by others will be analyzed to see if they can be replicated at TSA. The assumption is there will be some correlations between smart practices in customer service elsewhere that could make a positive difference if implemented at TSA. The goal is to seek "win-wins" where TSA can make improvements that will improve the public experience and any resulting improvements in public opinion will make it easier for the uniformed officers who screen 1.7 million passengers each day.

First, more information needs to be provided to the traveling public so that they have a better understanding of the security threat. Passengers need to be reminded of why specific security measures were put into place, need to be better informed on how they can prepare for the security checkpoint, and most importantly, when security procedures change, they need to know how that will impact them. The counter argument is that TSA is reluctant to share some information because it has been deemed sensitive security information (SSI) that could benefit those planning terrorist attacks. In addition,

public affairs personnel are guarded about what information is made public because the media may respond negatively—especially regarding TSA because it is a common occurrence for the agency to be bashed in the media.

Second, TSA needs to consider the passenger's perspective before implementing new security procedures. TSA's priority is and should be security, but how screening is conducted is important. Third, TSA needs to put more emphasis within the organization on improving customer service. TSA needs to improve the passenger's experience at security checkpoints by raising the bar on providing professional and courteous customer service and by efficiently managing passenger flows and queues to keep passenger wait times low.

Finally, smart practices in public relations need to be implemented to improve TSA's reputation. Public trust and confidence can be improved by generating more positive messages about the successes occurring in the field. A TSA national strategy designed to improve information sharing, increase the focus on customer service, and implement smart practices in public relations will begin to improve public opinion. This strategy requires high-level headquarter support but should be refined and implemented at airport field level offices.

C.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will seek to identify positive steps to improve TSA's public-image challenges by first identifying smart practices and successful policies, and then analyzing them to determine how they can be applied at TSA. This smart practice research looks at how other organizations maintain a positive public image and provide good customer service. It is proposed that the reputation issues/challenges that TSA has not been able to fix can be improved by utilizing those proven methods that have worked well elsewhere.

Research methods include an extensive review of available literature and case study analysis of smart practices. These methods were chosen partly because of the lack of prior academic research directly applicable to this topic, but also because they provide an opportunity to identify new solutions for TSA's challenges by looking at private organizations that are widely known for their expertise in those areas.

It is important to consider that TSA's mission to provide security requires performing certain screening procedures that are unpopular; thus, TSA's goals are different than a company than can focus only on customer satisfaction. However, how those security procedures are conducted, and how TSA responds to passengers is important. It is the execution of the screening procedures that lets the agency down—being human and connecting with the passenger more will make a difference.

Walt Disney World and Southwest Airlines were selected for the case studies for very specific relevant reasons. Both companies are known for their successful public image and may offer the best chance for a solution. The selected cases are relevant to resolving TSA challenges because these private organizations are known for providing outstanding customer service; they have a high volume of customers 365 days a year; they efficiently manage the flow of customers in queues; and they provide customer service both in person and through contact centers. Although it can be argued that Disney's and Southwest's customers have a choice whether to select their company or the competition and TSA customers do not have that same choice—ultimately, they all seek to have and maintain a positive public image. Additionally, many of the same customer satisfaction goals apply to both government and private industry, such as: safety, security, responsiveness, and efficiency. Most importantly, private industry customer focused initiatives that improve the customers' experience can be translated to government use.

Conversely, there were no government agencies included in the case studies primarily because there was a lack of information available about government agencies that were considered highly effective at either promoting a positive public image or providing good customer service. As a result, it was decided to look outside of government for a fresh perspective.

Each case study will be examined to answer the research question and to look for patterns and relationships in how organizations encourage positive public opinion through customer focused initiatives. A comparative analysis will be conducted to look for common themes throughout both cases and the literature review in order to draw conclusions from them. The outcome of this research will be a set of recommendations

based on what is working well in other organizations. This thesis seeks to apply those findings to solve the specific challenges that TSA faces.

Research question: What smart practices can be derived from outside of government to help solve TSA's most significant public-image challenges?

1. Case Study Focus Questions

- What smart practices have been used to promote a positive public image (e.g., public relations, promoting good deeds, promotions to build trust with the public, etc.)?

- What effective strategies have been used to provide good customer service (e.g., improving operations or how they interact with customers, quick response times, personalized service)?

- How has key information been effectively shared with customers (e.g., websites, sharing information about new procedures or requirements, keeping the public informed about changes that impact them)?

- How has customer feedback been used to improve operations (e.g., tracking and analyzing customer feedback in order to understand and manage the public's expectations and improve operations, understanding customer expectations)?

- What efficiencies were used to manage the flow of customers in queues?

- How did they encourage public participation to improve operations (e.g., self-management of queues, arriving early for the best time slot or service)?

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

A systematic literature review was conducted to assess the available information on the topic of building public trust and confidence in the federal government, specifically for TSA. The goal of this literature review was to increase overall knowledge and obtain a better understanding of the main issues related to the research topic. Specifically, whether there are smart practices in customer service available in the private sector or other agencies that could help TSA improve its public image. The research questions examine the topic of public image and the impact that has on the agency from different angles. By answering what contributes to the public's negative perception about the agency, TSA can work towards earning the public's trust and confidence.

The literature review was used to identify existing knowledge and to look for gaps requiring future research. Information primarily from January 2000 to present was sought from government and non-government sources, journals, completed thesis studies, books, media, and online articles. Both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed literature were considered. This review has identified resources that would aid in understanding how to manage a positive public image and the public affairs practices that promote the public's trust and confidence. The body of literature on public affairs is very broad and provides a good foundation for understanding the methods used to manage public relations. There were numerous relevant sources, including peer reviewed journal articles, books written by experts, and articles from those studying public relations inside and outside of government. A few sources were particularly relevant.

1. Understanding the Issues

One researcher looked at how DHS and its component organizations, including TSA, have managed their reputations; that thesis focused on a survey of public affairs managers and their self-analysis of their effectiveness and reviewed literature in order to identify the value of a reputation.[13] Reputation is important, but there is not much written specifically about how a federal government agency can improve their public image or reputation when it is poor. Edward Bernays pointed out in his book Propaganda, "Business must express itself and its entire corporate existence so that the public will understand and accept it. It must dramatize its personality and interpret its objectives in every particular in which it comes into contact with the community (or the nation) of which it is a part."[14]

2. Government Focus on Customer Service

Over a dozen government sources, including the White House, Government Accountability Office (GAO), and DHS had information about the government's increased focus on improving customer service to the public. The March 2010 *White*

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[13] Johnson, "Managing the Reputation of DHS and Its Components," abstract.

[14] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 1928), 85.

House Forum on Modernizing Government supports creating a culture of customer service by Federal agencies. Specifically, agency leaders are encouraged to "communicate the importance of customer service and ensure that even employees without direct customer-facing activities understand how their work services customers."[15] Government agencies are now required to submit a "customer service plan" to address how they will provide services to improve the customer's experience.[16] Other than these annual reports that cover a broad range of activities, there is limited information that specifically addresses how government agencies have either maintained a high level of customer service or are working on improving in that area. The DHS "Customer Service Plan" does highlight a TSA initiative to use technology to pre-screen individuals as part of risk-based security (RBS), but more needs to be done develop other customer service focused initiatives that will improve the service provided to the public.[17]

Perhaps another indicator of the TSA public image problem, a GAO report noted that low job satisfaction scored by DHS could pose challenges in "recruiting, motivating, and retaining talented employees."[18] TSA's job satisfaction scores were the lowest within DHS sub agencies, and diving deeper, it was identified that TSA's security officers had the lowest satisfaction scores within TSA.[19] The report noted that a variety of issues led to employee morale problems. However, the GAO report indicates that there is internal dissatisfaction within TSA, and that information along with the external dissatisfaction the agency faces needs to be considered when looking for solutions to

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[15] White House, "White House Forum on Modernizing Government: Overview and Next Steps," March 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/03/30/modernizing-government-next-steps, 8.

[16] Office of the Press Secretary, White House, "Executive Order 13571—Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service," April 27, 2011, accessed October 10, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/27/executive-order-streamlining-service-delivery-and-improving-customer-ser, Sec. 2.

[17] U. S. Department of Homeland Security, "Customer Service Plan," October 24, 2011 (revised November 15, 2011), accessed March 17, 2012, http://www.dhs.gov/latest-progres, 2.

[18] U.S. Government Accountability Office, U. S. Department of Homeland Security: Preliminary Observations on DHS's Efforts to Improve Employee Morale, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives (GAO-12-509T), 2012, http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-509T, 7.

[19] Ibid., 6 and 9.

public image problems. Tom Connellan, *Inside the Magic Kingdom*, explains, "People treat customers the same way they get treated. There are definite correlations between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction."[20] On a more positive note, *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that TSA's workforce attrition fell to 7.2 percent (down from 18 percent in 2005) and that over half of the workforce has been with the agency more than five years.[21]

Former TSA Administrator Kip Hawley provided important insights into some of the challenges faced by TSA in his book *Permanent Emergency*. Hawley made several references to the significance of TSA's public image problem and some of the solutions that he was driving for during his tenure with the agency. Specifically, Hawley experienced inertia in TSA's management team and stated they had lost the confidence of Congress and the American public.[22] Just prior to Hawley's tenure, TSA published a Federal Security Director "Tool for Development" guide that recommended directors work to instill public trust and confidence with the public by "performing TSA's mission with a high level of <u>customer service</u>."[23] The "major responsibilities" section of the guide also included the statement that directors should ensure "TSA is recognized as a trusted friend of the traveling public" and work to apply "best practices from government and private sector organizations to TSA operations."[24] Although the goal of becoming a "trusted friend" does not even seem appropriate for a government agency especially due to TSA's often controversial mission, there was nothing found in the research that would indicate these goals were ever achieved.

Instead, the research showed a definite trend of negative press regarding TSA. Hawley recognized that TSA was being "regularly thrashed in the media" as early as 2005. According to Hawley and Means, "Just two years after the agency assumed full responsibility for transportation security, the wave of negative publicity and the resultant

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[20] Tom Connellan, *Inside the Magic Kingdom: Seven Keys to Disney's Success* (Austin, TX: Bard Press, 1997), 94.

[21] McCartney, "TSA, Under Fire, Wants to Upgrade Its Service."

[22] Hawley and Means, *Permanent Emergency,* 82.

[23] TSA, "Executive FSD Guide," 1.

[24] Ibid., 7.

institutional inertia at the TSA was so damaging that large and formerly supportive sectors of government were ready to scrap it and start over."[25] This negative media attention continues and is regularly depicted in the types of stories covered on media sources, blogs, and YouTube, etc. Although there is some value in understanding more about the controversial nature of TSA's public image, this research will focus on looking for opportunities to implement positive changes.

Another challenge that TSA faces is lack of support from political leaders. The research shows that public opinion is influenced by political leaders who "sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issue so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions."[26] The political leaders choose which issues that they want to take a stand on, and when they publically criticize TSA, it undermines the agency's efforts. To combat that challenge, TSA has a Legislative Affairs Office that actively works to promote TSA's programs. As described in a TSA press release, they "work with our nation's leaders to educate them on the ever-evolving security measures needed to protect our country against terrorists."[27] Even so, political leaders, such as Senator Rand Paul, have been frequently vocal about their objection to TSA security procedures. [28] Government leaders' statements impact public opinion, as Edward Bernays points out:

> The voice of the people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up for it by the group leaders in whom it believes and by those persons who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed of inherited prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas supplied to them by the leaders.[29]

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[25] Hawley and Means, *Permanent Emergency,* 67.

[26] Bernays, *Propaganda,* 38.

[27] Transportation Security Administration [TSA], "TSA Names Peter Iovino Director of Legislative Affairs," June 30, 2004, accessed June 27, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/press/releases/2004/06/30/tsa-names-peter-iovino-director-legislative-affairs.

[28] Stephanie Condon, "Rand Paul in TSA Showdown after Refusing Pat-down," CBS News, January 23, 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-57363889-503544/rand-paul-in-tsa-showdown-after-refusing-pat-down/.

[29] Bernays, *Propaganda,* 109.

3.   Strategic Communications

On the topic of information sharing, literature was reviewed to determine whether TSA should implement a more effective strategic communication strategy that provides more information to the public. The author's theory is that providing information to the public is important because it builds the public's trust and confidence in the agency. The goal should be to inform the public about threats to transportation security so that they are more prepared for and resilient to attacks or attempted attacks that may occur. Even if some passengers continue to disagree with the TSA's approach to providing transportation security, at least they will be working from a higher level of understanding that allows an informed discourse to occur. However, the research shows that there also needs to be a balance of the amount and type of information provided to the public in order to prevent hysteria or overreaction. The public also has to be able to keep threat information in perspective and accept that intelligence information is not absolute. William Rosenau cautions that "overreactions can heighten public anxiety and fear and thus contribute to terrorism's psychological effect—a key element in most terrorist strategies."[30]

4.   Case Study Literature

Most of the available literature is related to how private organizations promote a positive public image and manage their reputation. As a result, there was a good selection of literature available for the case studies outside of government—especially about corporations that have built a strong reputation for excellence in customer service. Perhaps those outside of government will provide the best opportunity to solve TSA's challenges because smart practices in customer service used by Southwest Airlines and Disney will be applicable to use in the federal government also. Highlights include Southwest's focus on "accentuating the positive and celebrating People's successes"

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[30] William Rosenau, "US Counterterrorism Policy," in How States Fight Terrorism: Policy Dynamics in the West, ed. Doron Zimmerman and Andreas Wenger (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers; 2007), 149.

whenever possible.[31] Disney focuses on the treating customer well and optimizing the queue experience—"clearly explain wait times at the start… do your best to stay under the maximum time quoted… during waits, use the opportunity to educate, inform, and entertain them."[32] There is a wealth of smart practices that will be considered for application within TSA to solve some of the challenges.

5. Conclusion

A good reputation is important to TSA's success or perceived success by the public. Although there is not much literature specifically related to how federal government agencies have maintained or improved their public image, there are lessons to be learned from the private industry or other governments that may be applicable within TSA. A careful review of the literature selected for the case studies will help identify methods that can be used to improve TSA's public image. This research can also be used to generate ideas for other agencies seeking to build public confidence and trust specifically by looking at how they provide customer service to the public and how they promote a positive public image through information sharing.

Enhancements in the type of information provided and clear messaging will help the traveling public understand TSA's often complicated security rules. The United Kingdom (UK) found that sharing security threat information with the public was beneficial in building trust and confidence and provides an example of an approach that has worked elsewhere for TSA.[33] Specifically within the transportation sector, the UK's Department for Transport (DfT) assumes that the public has the right to know about terrorists' threats in aviation and how increased security measures to address those threats will impact them. The House of Commons Transport Committee stated, "high awareness amongst the travelling public is one of the greatest potential assets in the common

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[31] Kenneth H. Blanchard and Colleen Barrett, *Lead with LUV: A Different Way to Create Real Success* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press, 2011), 7.

[32] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest: Perfecting the Art of Customer Service* (New York: Disney Enterprises, Inc., 2001), 148.

[33] Nadav Morag, *Comparative Homeland Security: Global Lessons* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 315–316.

defense against terrorist outrages on the UK transport network."[34] Improvements in TSA's strategic communications will result in the public being better informed about aviation security threats and better prepared for the security screening process.

This thesis will help fill gaps in the literature by adding to the baseline of research on how federal agencies can manage their public image by looking at the problem from the perspective of the customer. The literature supports the importance of understanding customer expectations in order to build a successful customer service focused organization. In *Reputation Management*, it states, "An organizations' culture, values and strategy have a significant impact on perceptions held outside of the agency."[35] By listening to customers and incorporating their feedback into process improvements, TSA has the opportunity to have a more positive impact on the public's perceptions.

E.   ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The purpose of the next chapter in this thesis is to provide more information about the public-image challenges TSA faces. It is important for the reader to understand how TSA manages public opinion now—the status quo—and what the significant challenges are before moving forward into the case studies and recommendations for potential solutions. Chapter III is a case study and analysis of Southwest Airlines and lessons learned from a leader in providing customer service and in putting their employees first. Chapter IV is a case study and analysis of Walt Disney World, a company that has successfully built a reputation of providing outstanding customer service and for efficiently managing queues. Chapter V follows with the recommendations and application of the lessons learned from the case studies to the challenges faced by TSA. Finally, the conclusion in Chapter VI wraps everything back together and explains why improvements are needed and why they matter.

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[34] House of Commons Transport Committee, UK Transport Security—Preliminary Report: First Report of Session 2005–06, November 23, 2005, accessed July 7, 2012, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmtran/637/63702.htm, 16.

[35] Sabrina Helm, Kerstin Liehr-Gobbers, and Christopher Storck, eds., *Reputation Management* (London: Springer, 2011), 56.

II. TSA'S PUBLIC-IMAGE CHALLENGES

It is important to have a more thorough understanding of the challenges faced by TSA before diving into the case studies and solutions they may offer. A better awareness of the issues will lay the groundwork for the need to implement changes that will increase the public's trust and confidence in TSA.

Certainly, all government agencies should be concerned about their public image and reputation. A positive public image is particularly important for TSA because it works directly with the public. Edward Bernays, author of *Propaganda*, wrote: "governments… depend upon acquiescent public opinion for the success of their efforts and, in fact, government is government only by virtue of public acquiescence… Public opinion is the unacknowledged partner in all broad efforts."[36]

The terms public image and reputation are closely related and both have an impact on public opinion. Sabrina Helm, Kerstin Liehr-Gobbers, and Christopher Storck, *Reputation Management*, explain that public image is the way the agency is perceived by those outside of the agency.[37] Public image can be shaped by an organization's strategic communication efforts since it is affected by external factors such as media stories, blogs, and YouTube. Reputation on the other hand, is based on an organization's trustworthiness and reliability over time and "results from the interaction between internal and external stakeholders, especially between front-line employees and customers."[38] According to the editors of *Measure What Matters*, a person's reputation is "what people think of when they hear your brand mentioned," and it "influences the likelihood your opponents will protest at your doorstop, or write letters complaining about you."[39]

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[36] Bernays*, Propaganda,* 64.

[37] Helm, Liehr-Gobbers, and Storck, *Reputation Management*, 49.

[38] Ibid., 53.

[39] Katie Delahaye Paine and William T. Paarlberg, eds., *Measure What Matters: Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011), 163.

TSA needs to take a more proactive approach to deal with threats to the agency's reputation, which can damage the public's trust and confidence. Ronald J. Alsop, author of *The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation,* points out that a reputation is a significant asset and although it "takes years to form, it can be ruined in an instant."[40]

It is important to consider how TSA is perceived in order to plan internal and external communication strategies that will impact public opinion. Derek Atkins, Ian Bates, and Lynn Drennan, authors of *Reputational Risk*, emphasize the importance of understanding public opinion. They state, "Reputation does not depend on what we think of ourselves. What really matters is what the outside world perceives and believes."[41] Furthermore, the editors of *The Expressive Organization* agree perceptions impact reputations as much as reality. They explain:

> It is important to recognize that corporate reputations are based on perceptions, and it is those perceptions that drive reputational assessments, regardless of the reality of the situation. Thus, in terms of understanding how to manage reputations, it is less important whether the organization is in fact at fault when stakeholders send negative reputation signals than whether the stakeholders perceive the organization to be at fault.[42]

TSA should protect its reputation and improve its public image by identifying the top challenges that impact the agency and then taking steps to address them. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus is on improving customer service in order to have a positive impact on both TSA's reputation and public image.

A.   TOP CHALLENGES

Everything TSA does is focused on combating the threats to transportation—without question, the agency's number one concern is effectively addressing those threats. However, taking into consideration the traveling public's point of view about the

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[40] Ronald J. Alsop, *The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation: Creating, Protecting, and Repairing Your Most Valuable Asset* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 10.

[41] Derek Atkins, Ian Bates, and Lynn Drennan, *Reputational Risk: A Question of Trust* (London: LES50NS Professional Publishing, 2006), 46.

[42] Majken Schultz, Mary Jo Hatch, and Mogens Holten Larsen, eds., *The Expressive Organization—Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98–99.

screening experience is also important. In that context, the top challenges that impact *public opinion* include providing the public with information about aviation security threats and the security procedures designed to mitigate them, passenger concerns about the intrusiveness of screening procedures, customer service standards, and negative media and the lack of political support. TSA needs to consider the customers' perspective and address those challenges that are important to them in order to improve the agency's public image.

1. **Lack of Information Provided to the Public About Security Threats or Security Procedures**

The degree of one's emotion varies inversely with one's knowledge of the facts: the less you know the hotter you get.
                                        –Bertrand Russell, Nobel Laureate in Literature

In order to improve TSA's public image, the traveling public needs to have a better understanding of TSA's policies and procedures. Passengers should be reminded of why specific security measures were put into place, need to be better informed on how they can prepare for the security checkpoint, and most importantly, when security procedures change they need to know how that will impact them. TSA misses opportunities to build a more resilient and involved public by providing them with information about security threats and how those threats are being addressed.

a. *Challenges in Messaging*

TSA has faced challenges in messaging the mission because it is difficult to explain and understand some of TSA security requirements and procedures. The message also has to be nuanced to the audience, which can range from a frequent flyer to a parent traveling with an infant for the first time. As a result, many passengers still do not understand what to expect at the security checkpoint or how they can prepare for security and reduce the chance of additional screening (such as a pat-down or bag search). Some passengers are unaware independent tests have confirmed that Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) is safe, why they need to take their shoes off, or whether belts needs to

come off or not.[43] Finally, passengers do not understand why they cannot choose what type of security screening they receive (walk through metal detector versus the more controversial AIT), or how long the wait times will be. By providing more complete information, passenger expectations will be more realistic about the security screening process.

For example, six years after the liquid restrictions were put into place in August 2006, many passengers still do not understand why liquids are restricted (explosives threat), what constitutes a liquid (any liquid, aerosol, lotion, or gel in carry-ons), what liquid items are allowed (3.4 ounce or less containers and all liquids for infants or medical reasons that are exempt from the size limitation), and how permitted liquids need to be presented at the security checkpoint. Permitted liquids in 3.4 ounce containers are required to be placed in a one quart size, clear, zip top baggie (limits the quantity per passenger), and the baggie must be pulled out of carry-on luggage when submitted for screening. Exempt liquids for infants or medical reasons do not need to be placed in a baggie, but they do need to be removed from carryon luggage and are still subject to liquid testing. As a result, passengers become frustrated with TSA when they have non-compliant liquids that are not allowed, and TSA officers spend too much time searching for liquids that were not removed from carry-on luggage.

b.   *Aviation Security Messages Provided Elsewhere*

Looking at aviation security information provided to the public elsewhere, it was found the UK uses an "open communication" approach to provide information to

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[43] Transportation Security Administration [TSA], "Safety—Advanced Imaging Technology," accessed August 27, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/approach/tech/ait/safety.shtm.

TSA reports advanced imaging technology (AIT) is safe and meets national health and safety standards.

Backscatter technology was evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, the National Institute for Standards and Technology, and the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. All results confirmed the radiation doses were well below the limits specified by the American National Standards Institute.

Millimeter wave imaging technology meets all known national and international health and safety standards. The energy emitted by millimeter wave technology is 1,000 times less than the international limits and guidelines.

the public in order to build their resiliency.[44] For example, UK citizens have easy access to information about threats to aviation transportation on the UK's "Directgov" website. The UK's aviation security information is provided in plain English, is well organized, and sets the tone that passengers are responsible for being prepared for airport security to avoid unnecessary delays. Even controversial topics are addressed (rather than avoided as they would be in the U.S.), such as "the adult carrying the baby food or milk may be asked to verify it by tasting" and "the rules for what you're allowed to carry on board your flight are strict."[45]

The UK government operates under the principle that the risks have become more complex and uncertain due to increased exposure to terrorist attacks, and the government cannot guarantee protection against all risks—thus the public needs to be prepared. As a result, the UK:

> …has changed its strategic communications approach to incorporate more openness about the nature of risks and the uncertainties of some situations, more transparency regarding decision-making processes in government, and more engagement with stakeholders and the broader public at an earlier stage in order to make the decision-making process more participatory.[46]

The UK emphasizes maintaining the public's trust is critical and that it is earned by informing its public about the security challenges.

Breckenridge and Zimbardo report that the "media has a crucial role in profoundly shaping the public's understanding of terrorism. In fact, almost all areas of political interests are influenced by the media's powerful ability to set agendas and frame our understanding of events."[47] The UK Transport Committee recognizes the media's role in providing information to the public about the threats and also the government's

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[44] Morag, *Comparative Homeland Security*, 315.

[45] "Travel and Transport: Aviation," accessed April 12, 2012, http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Foreigntravel/AirTravel/index.htm.

[46] Morag, *Comparative Homeland Security*, 315–316.

[47] James N. Breckenridge and Philip G. Zimbardo, "Terrorism and Fear: The Strategy of Terrorism and the Psychology of Mass-mediated Fear," lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, April 2012, 22.

response to those threats. "Comprehensive, balanced and accurate media reporting about terrorist organizations, threats to transport networks, and the Government's response, is an important aspect of the effort to combat what is a largely hidden threat. Such reporting can expose the irresponsibility and inhumanity of terrorism."[48]

c.   *Engaged Public Can Participate in Security*

If passengers understand current security threats, they are more likely to cooperate with security, and that significantly increases TSA's chances of success. Robert Bach, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, recognizes that TSA needs to "eliminate the predilection to not tell people why we do security methods."[49] This was also found to be true in the UK. The UK Transport Committee found that:

> public vigilance is one of the greatest assets in countering the dangers of terrorism on the transport network. The Department for Transport's policy of protective security needs to be vigorously proactive in order to engage each member of the traveling public as a partner in helping, where possible, to prevent future terrorist attacks on the transport network.[50]

DHS's "see something, say something" campaign relies on the public to be engaged in security. According to West:

> Through this and other outreach activities, the intent is for the public to adjust to a 'new normal' where terrorism risks become part of the national consciousness, and the general population forms a first line of defense against terrorism activities.[51]

Public participation is welcomed by DHS and TSA because it increases overall security. Passengers routinely notify TSA, police, or airport employees of security concerns such as unattended bags or suspicious activity. This type of public

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[48] House of Commons Transport Committee, UK Transport Security—Preliminary Report, 13.

[49] Robert Bach, "Inter-Disciplinary Approaches to Homeland Security," lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, April 2012.

[50] House of Commons Transport Committee, UK Transport Security—Preliminary Report, 13–14.

[51] Darrell M. West, "A Vision for Homeland Security in the Year 2025," June 26, 2012, Brookings Institute, http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/06/26-security-homeland-west.

awareness and engagement is critically important because, as the authors of *Psychology of Terrorism* noted, "successful terrorist attacks depend on normal citizens not noticing things."[52]

Providing professional customer service is more likely to encourage the passenger to become an active participant in the security process. Jamie Gumbrecht of CNN reported "a difficult relationship with travelers might mean the TSA misses out on useful observations that could be shared by roughly 50 million passengers who pass through airport checkpoints every month."[53]

2. Unpopular Screening Procedures

The reality is that we judge ourselves by our intentions, but others judge us by our actions.

–Stephen Covey, *Smart Trust*

Although outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to note one of the challenges to TSA's public image is overcoming the public's negative opinion about intrusive screening procedures designed to provide safety and security for all passengers. Since TSA was founded in 2002, security procedures have evolved significantly as a result of intelligence threat information and advances in security technology. Many of those changes were the result of specific terrorist incidents, including the 2001 "shoe bomber," 2006 foiled United Kingdom (UK) liquid explosives plot, and the 2009 Christmas Day "underwear bomber." Regardless of the agency's intent to increase security, some of TSA's national security procedures put in place to counter threats to transportation safety are unpopular. This creates a significant challenge for TSA because many of the security procedures are intrusive in order to thoroughly screen passengers and their personal belongings for the threats identified through intelligence of terrorists' actual or planned tactics.

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[52] Bruce Bongar, Lisa M. Brown, Larry E. Beutler, James N. Breckenridge, and Philip G. Zimbardo, eds., *Psychology of Terrorism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 170.

[53] Jamie Gumbrecht, "How Much Do We Really Hate the TSA?," CNN Travel, June 1, 2012, accessed June 4, 2012, http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/01/travel/tsa-complaints/index.html?iref=allsearch.

a. *Risk-Based Security*

TSA has already addressed some of the public's concerns about intrusive screening procedures. The latest risk-based security methods focus TSA resources and seek to "improve the passenger experience at security checkpoints by applying intelligence-driven, risk-based screening procedures" and by enhancing the use of sophisticated security technology.[54] Streamlined security procedures are now being used at select airports for passengers in low risk groups (e.g., children, elderly, military, known frequent travelers). Passengers deemed to be low risk will be allowed to keep their shoes on and do not have to remove their laptops and 3–1-1 compliant liquids from their carry-ons.[55] The number of participating airports and also the number of trusted travelers identified to be in those low risk groups are continually expanding. Although improvements have been made in screening procedures for some passengers, there are still opportunities to improve the passenger's experience at security checkpoints by focusing on customer service.

b. *Public Opinion Polls*

TSA's efforts to continually strengthen security and improve the passenger's experience have not gone unnoticed. Several independent public opinion surveys from 2011 and 2012 show the majority of the public views TSA at least somewhat positively.

- An August 2011 Reason-Rupe survey "reveals 69% of the traveling public believes TSA has made air travel safer."[56]

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54 Transportation Security Administration [TSA], "Risk-Based Security Initiative," accessed May 5, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/rbs.shtm.

55 Ibid.

56 According to Ekins, "The Reason-Rupe Q3 2011 poll collected a nationally representative sample of 1200 respondents, aged 18 and older from all 50 states and the District of Columbia using live telephone interviews from August 9–18, 2011." Emily Ekins, "Americans Have Mixed Feelings about the TSA," September 1, 2011, Reason-Rupe, accessed August 19, 2012, http://reason.com/poll/2011/09/01/americans-have-mix-feelings-ab.

- An April through May 2012 Traveler Leaders Group survey reported 66 percent of U.S. travelers were satisfied with airport security.[57]

- A July 2012 Gallup public opinion poll indicates:

  a majority of Americans, 54%, think the U.S. Transportation Security Administration is doing either an excellent or a good job of handling security screening at airports. At the same time, 41% think TSA screening procedures are extremely or very effective at preventing acts of terrorism on U.S. airplanes, with most of the rest saying they are somewhat effective.[58]

- In contrast, an August 2012 Frequent Business Traveler survey was less positive. When asked how satisfied they were with their last TSA security experience, only 43.5 percent were satisfied at some level (somewhat satisfied, satisfied, very satisfied, and extremely satisfied combined).[59]

In comparison, the UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) conducted a survey of 20,000 passengers in 2011 and found over 90 percent of passengers were satisfied with their experience at Department for Transport security screening.[60] UK citizens' acceptance of government security measures may have been impacted by the amount of exposure they face to terrorist attacks (more exposure likely translates as more public awareness of the risks), but it does indicate TSA could reach a higher mark in public opinion.

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[57] According to Shillinglaw, "Two-thirds (66.2 percent) of U.S. travelers say they are 'satisfied' with the level of security at airports, which is up 6 percent from last year, and only 17 percent say they are 'unsatisfied.'…This survey was conducted by Travel Leaders from April 4 to May 16, 2012, and includes responses from 855 consumers throughout the U.S." James Shillinglaw, "Travel Leaders Survey Finds Higher Satisfaction with Airport Security," June 11, 2012, Travel Pulse, accessed August 19, 2012, http://www.travelpulse.com/travel-leaders-survey-finds-higher-satisfaction-with-airport-security.html.

[58] Newport and Ander state, "Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted July 9-12, 2012, with a random sample of 1,014 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia." Frank Newport and Steve Ander, "Americans' Views of TSA More Positive than Negative," August 8, 2012, Gallup, http://www.gallup.com/poll/156491/Americans-Views-TSA-Positive-Negative.aspx.

[59] A survey of 1,852 frequent travelers was conducted from August 10–31, 2012. Dan Collins, "Poll: 90% of Frequent Flyers Give TSA Fair or Poor Rating," September 10, 2012, Frequent Business Traveler, http://www.frequentbusinesstraveler.com/2012/09/tsa-poll/.

[60] The UK's high satisfaction rate was consistent with earlier surveys conducted from 2008 through 2010 when satisfied responses ranged from 86 percent to 96 percent. Civil Aviation Authority Passenger Survey, "Air Passenger Experience of Security Screening: Results from CAA Survey Module (2011)," accessed July 13, 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-passenger-experience-of-security-screening-results-from-caa-survey-module-2011, 1 and 3.

3. Customer Service Perceptions

Another challenge to TSA's public image is the necessity to consistently provide good customer service to millions of passengers each day. The challenge to TSA is building and maintaining strong customer service skills in officers who provide the same advisements and perform the same procedures over and over, hundreds of times each shift. Although what they do is critically important, most of the work is repetitive and can be monotonous.

a. *Passengers Should Expect Good Customer Service*

Ideally, passengers arrive at TSA checkpoints prepared for the security process and are treated with a high level of customer service by TSA Transportation Security officers. Passengers should expect to be treated with courtesy and respect while they go through screening, and they should be advised on what to expect if any additional screening of their person or belongings is needed and they have the right to request private screening. It is also important that passengers are able to see and safeguard their belongings (as much as possible) as they go through security. Finally, passengers should be able to speak with a supervisor if they have any questions or concerns. As measured by the number of complaints reportedly received by the agency, passengers are not dissatisfied with the screening experience. TSA reports the number of complaints is relatively small: "Of the 600 million passengers screened on an annual basis, the TSA Contact Center receives approximately 750,000 contacts from the traveling public, of which less than eight percent constitute complaints."[61] Although the reported number of complaints does not include the customer feedback received in TSA field offices, the number of complaints is surprising low considering the amount of negative press TSA receives (more on both topics later).

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[61] Statement of John W. Halinski, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/testimony/080112_halinski_testimony.pdf, 2.

b. *Passengers Have an Impact on Their Own Experience*

Passengers themselves can have an impact on their experience by preparing for security. The vast majority of frequent travelers quickly process through TSA security checkpoints without requiring additional screening because they:

- leave prohibited items such as knives and oversize liquids behind,

- have their boarding pass and identification ready when they arrive at the checkpoint,

- have organized and pulled their 3–1-1 compliant liquids and laptops from their carry-on bags and placed them in a bin to be X-rayed separately,

- have removed their coats, belt, shoes, and everything from their pockets, and

- have organized their carry-on bags (organized bags are easier to review on the X-ray and result in less bag checks).

These preparations reduce the passenger's likelihood of requiring additional screening, lessens the amount of time spent at the security checkpoint, and minimizes frustration for busy passengers.[62]

Although most passengers do arrive prepared, the reality is a large number are not prepared for security because they either do not understand or do not comply (by choice or because they forgot) with TSA security requirements. As a result, passengers and their belongings may require additional screening.

- *Additional screening of a passenger* means a pat-down is conducted to resolve alarms from either the AIT or walk through metal detectors

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[62] Former TSA Administrator Chertoff advised passengers to prepare for security before they arrive at the checkpoint:

First, put liquids in a quart-size bag, put the baggie on top of everything in your carry-on. Second, put your laptop in an accessible pocket outside of your carry-on. Third, wear a sports jacket with pockets—take your ID out of your wallet and put it with your boarding pass into your breast pocket, and put all of your change, keys, and your wallet in your jacket pockets. Wear loafers so you can remove them quickly. When divesting, sequence your items so you can reverse the unpacking process at the other end—shoes first directly on the x-ray belt, next a bin with your jacket and your baggie of liquids on top of that, followed by a bin with your laptop, and your carry-on bag last. At the other side of the X-ray, you put your shoes and jacket on, pick up your laptop and liquids and put them in the carry-on and you are on your way.

Michael Chertoff, "How to Speed through Airport Security: Michael Chertoff," Bloomberg Businessweek, April 12, 2012, http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-04-12/how-to-speed-through-airport-security-michael-chertoff.

(WTMD). Pat-downs are also performed when passengers "opt out" of either screening method.

- *Additional screening of carry-on items* means the officer conducts a physical search by going through the passenger's personal belongings in order to resolve an alarm from the X-ray.

Additional screening requires the security officer to get into the passenger's personal space, which can be unnerving.

In some cases when passengers do not want to comply with a security requirement, they blame the officer involved for some fault, regardless of how professional the officer may have been. For example, when prohibited oversize liquids are discovered the passenger may claim they were allowed to take them through every other airport they traveled through and the officers (correctly following standard operating procedures) does not know what they are doing. Occasionally, passengers will get more assertive in their efforts to influence the officer, hoping they will be allowed to take the prohibited item through. Although passengers have several options, they do not have the option of taking a prohibited item past the security checkpoint.[63] In the worst situations, passengers verbally abuse officers if they do not act in the manner the passengers consider appropriate or if the passenger has a strong opinion about TSA national procedures.[64]

c. *Professionalism During Difficult Situations*

Regardless of how they are treated, TSA officers are expected to remain professional and to complete the security process, which is more difficult without the cooperation of the passenger. Those situations require good communication and conflict resolution skills. TSA helps build those skills through specialized training that helps

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[63] Passengers have the option to leave the security checkpoint with their prohibited items or non-compliant liquids so they can put them in checked luggage, mail them (some airport gift shops offer mailing supplies), leave the items with someone not traveling, or put them in their vehicle. However, passengers may not have allowed enough time to use these options, may not want to pay the airline checked bag fee, or may not want to go through security screening a second time. If they do not choose to leave with their prohibited items, they can voluntarily abandon them. At that point they become property of the federal government and cannot be returned to the passenger at a later date (another point of frustration for passengers trying to claim abandoned property later).

[64] Passengers should voice their opinion to those who can implement changes to policy (TSA management or political channels) rather than to the checkpoint officer.

officers communicate more effectively with passengers. TSA's Tactical Communications course was "designed to prepare TSOs for all types of human interactions by giving them tools and techniques to de-escalate difficult situations."[65]

Public opinion about TSA is also influenced by factors outside of the passenger's actual experience at checkpoints. The 2012 Gallup public opinion poll reported "Americans who fly have a slightly more positive opinion of the agency than those who haven't flown recently suggests that experience with the TSA at airports does not detract from this image and may enhance it."[66] Since those that have **not** flown recently had a higher negative rating about TSA, the media and political leaders may have influenced their opinion.

4.   **Negative Media, Lack of Political Support, and Aviation Stakeholders Influence Public Opinion**

Negative media coverage has significantly contributed to TSA's public opinion problem and has forced TSA to operate in a reactive mode to try to counter inaccurate messages. Controversial screening procedures, including liquid restrictions, more thorough pat-downs, and AITs, have fueled a small but vocal group of dissatisfied passengers that project their displeasure about the agency's procedures through the media. As a result, TSA receives a large amount of negative publicity on national media outlets, YouTube, and blogs, which is often exaggerated, incomplete, or inaccurate. Rob Margetta, reporter for the *Congressional Quarterly*, points out: "The organization is big enough that problems are bound to arise. It also gets little credit for any successes, while its failures garner national attention."[67]

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[65] Statement of John W. Halinski, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/testimony/080112_halinski_testimony.pdf, 4.

[66] Newport and Ander, "Americans' Views of TSA More Positive than Negative."

[67] Rob Margetta, "Screening the TSA," Congressional Quarterly, September 29, 2012, http://public.cq.com/docs/weeklyreport/weeklyreport-000004160826.html.

a. *TSA Needs to Take Control of the Debate*

TSA needs to control the message and that requires establishing strong networks with the media. The editors of *Measure What Matters* emphasize the importance of working with those in the media;

> In public relations, if you establish good relationships with reporters, bloggers, editors, and other key influencers, they'll trust your word, cut you slack in a crisis, and turn to you for your thoughts and opinions. A lack of good relationships with the media leads to crises escalating, omission from key stories, and less inclusion of your point of view in stories.[68]

Atkins, Bates, and Drennan, authors of *Reputational Risk,* agree.

> The media are key opinion leaders, locally and nationally. Businesses should identify the issues that might affect their reputation and try to influence these opinion formers. Many companies are hesitant about dealing with the media, and only begin to have a proper dialogue with them when a problem has arisen. By then it may be too late. Negative sentiment is usually the reward for a neglected relationship.[69]

A strong rapport with the media is more likely to result in the opportunity to correct inaccurate information or provide more details for incomplete stories.

b. *Public Relies on Distorted or Inaccurate Media Coverage*

Inaccurate media messages leave the public misinformed about TSA security procedures and contribute to the public's negative opinion about TSA. TSA has even been blamed when its employees were not involved; this type of cross contamination between agencies is known as "reputation spillover."[70] For example, on January 30, 2012 there was extensive media attention about a young couple traveling from the UK to the United States on vacation. The pair had reportedly "tweeted" the message "free this week for a quick gossip/prep before I go and destroy America."[71]

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[68] Paine and Paarlberg, ed., *Measure What Matters*, 6.

[69] Atkins, Bates, and Drennan, *Reputational Risk*, 41.

[70] Johnson, "Managing the Reputation of DHS and Its Components," 72.

[71] "Tourists Sent Packing Over 'Threatening' Tweets," January 30, 2012, CBS Los Angeles, http://Losangeles.Cbslocal.Com/2012/01/30/Tourists-Sent-Packing-Over-Threatening-Tweets/.

They claimed to have been detained for 12 hours as a result of their message before eventually being denied access to the U.S. and returned to the UK. Initially, some media reports blamed TSA for detaining this "innocent" couple, but the interaction actually occurred with another DHS component, the Customs and Border Protection (CBP).[72] Regardless of the fact TSA was not involved, CBP should give extra scrutiny to passengers that use terms referring to explosives or threats, or other information of concern may have been discovered during secondary screening by CBP, the media accounts and bloggers blasted TSA primarily because there is a lack of public trust and confidence in the agency.

c.   Negative Media Coverage is Common

Steven Frischling, travel blogger and frequent traveler, noted travelers in the U.S. blame everything on TSA: "It seems no matter what the issue, the TSA is blamed, be it parking enforcement, gate agents, police, passport control… it all seems to land squarely on the TSA's shoulders."[73] Not everyone understands the roles of the various stakeholders involved in airport security and border control. As a result, TSA's authority and responsibility does not cover all of the areas for which it is blamed. Frischling added:

> Does the TSA deserve to be blamed? At times, yes they do, however blaming the TSA seems to roll off people's tongues as easily as asking for a Kleenex or a Coke, and muddies the waters when discussing the real issues of the agency.[74]

Another widely reported situation on March 19, 2012 did involve TSA screening. National media markets reported TSA had gone too far when a pat-down was conducted on a 3-year-old child in a wheelchair. The negative news stories received

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[72] CBP is responsible for screening passengers coming into the U.S. to verify their passports are in order and that they do not pose a terrorist risk. They have the "priority mission of keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S." U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Protecting Our Borders—This is CBP," accessed May 1, 2012, http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/.

[73] Steven Frischling, "Know Who to Blame at the Airport, It's Not Always TSA," Flying with Fish Blog, September 12, 2012, http://boardingarea.com/blogs/flyingwithfish/2012/09/12/know-who-to-blame-at-the-airport-its-not-always-tsa/.

[74] Ibid.

widespread interest throughout the United States. In addition, a YouTube video of the screening went "viral" resulting in over 1.6 million views.[75] Although well over a million passengers had been successfully screened the day this story broke in the news, the media attention focused on one isolated event based only on the personal account of the child's father. It was later reported the video was almost two years old when it was posted on YouTube—however, the damage was already done.[76]

May 2012 headlines, such as "TSA Gropes Another Senior Citizen," and "Henry Kissinger gets TSA Pat-down," continued the negative trend.[77] The articles were critical of the pat-down screening Dr. Kissinger received at a La Guardia's TSA security checkpoint and were based on a freelance reporter's personal account of the screening. However, Dr. Kissinger issued a public statement supporting TSA and explained it is not unusual for him to receive a pat-down when he travels: "It is routine because he wears a brace on his foot and therefore cannot remove his shoes at the screening checkpoint. He would like to commend the professionalism and courtesy of the TSA agents in performing an important job."[78]

These are just a few of the examples of the types of negative media coverage common for TSA, but they represent a problem that has progressively worsened over time. Since there has been so much negative media coverage, TSA's reputation has become tarnished, and it is now commonplace to "bash" the agency for any alleged wrongdoing without checking the facts. In today's Internet environment of instant information, it is easy for those with a complaint or concern to take it public by posting

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[75] "TSA Nabs Suspected Al Qaeda Terrorist at Chicago Airport, A Toddler in a Wheelchair," YouTube video, posted by Mattonaire, March 17, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNO-AzPxS4U&feature=player_embedded. There were 1,637,321 views as of May 2, 2012.

[76] Ibid. The video was taken in the spring of 2010 but was not posted until two years later on March 17, 2012.

[77] Emily Heil, "Henry Kissinger gets TSA Pat-down," Washington Post, May 14, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/in-the-loop/post/henry-kissinger-gets-tsa-pat-down/2012/05/14/gIQAHDgBPU_blog.html?tid=sm_twitter_washingtonpost; Kevin Underhill, "TSA Gropes Another Senior Citizen (Specifically, Henry Kissinger)," *Forbes*, May 15, 2012, http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinunderhill/2012/05/15/tsa-gropes-another-senior-citizen-specifically-henry-kissinger/.

[78] Henry Kissinger, "Statement from Dr. Kissinger Regarding Security Pat-down at LaGuardia Airport on May 11, 2012," May 15, 2012, http://www.henryakissinger.com/speeches/051512.html.

their video on YouTube. When enough people "click" on the YouTube video, it also draws media attention. John Doorley, author of *Reputation Management*, explained "a challenge facing nearly every organization is the circulation of rumors that, unaddressed, can cause significant reputational harm."[79] The story does not have to be true or even current because there is often no validation of the complaint. The primary motive for the posting may have been other than resolution of the problem (since TSA customer support is not always contacted). Often by the time the facts have been investigated, it is too late to repair the additional damage to TSA's reputation.

d.   *Employee Scandals Do Not Help*

TSA has had employee scandals that have also undermined their efforts to promote a more positive public image. Responding to critics, TSA's Deputy Administrator John Halinski reportedly stated the agency is committed to "eliminating bad employees from the organization," although he also called media reports on security issues overblown.[80] Although TSA employees have been charged with taking bribes, not properly screening luggage, and stealing, the problem is much worse at other DHS agencies. A DHS Inspector General (IG) statement before the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform shows TSA had the least amount of criminal convictions among DHS agencies. Of the 2,527 convictions between 2004 and 2012, only five percent (133) were TSA employees versus the Federal Emergency Management agency (FEMA), which had 65 percent (1,644) of the convictions and CBP had 14 percent (358).[81]

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[79] John Doorley and Helio Fred Garcia, *Reputation Management: The Key to Successful Public Relations and Corporate Communications* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 337.

[80] Theresa Seiger, "TSA Official: Issues Overblown in the Media," August 1, 2012, Raycom News Network, http://www.wtvm.com/story/19169807/tsa-official-criticism-is-good.

[81] Statement of Charles K. Edwards, Acting Inspector General, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Before the Subcommittee on Government Organizations, Efficiency, and Financial Management, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives: Unresolved Internal Investigations at DHS: Oversight of Investigation Management in the Office of the DHS IG, 112th Cong. (2012), http://oversight.house.gov/hearing/unresolved-internal-investigations-at-dhs-oversight-of-investigation-management-in-the-office-of-the-dhs-ig/, 10.

Any allegation of theft has to be taken seriously because TSA employees have access to the personal property of 1.7 million passengers each day.[82] That access was tested in September 2012 when *ABC News* conducted a covert test at 10 airports that reportedly had a history of theft by TSA officers. ABC reporters packed iPads and money in baggage or left them behind at checkpoints and waited to see what happened. According to the report:

> TSA officers at nine of the ten airport checkpoints followed Agency guidelines and immediately contacted the owner, whose name and phone number were displayed prominently on the iPad case. But when one iPad wasn't returned from an Orlando airport… ABC News tracked the iPad to TSA officer Ramirez's home.[83]

TSA promptly fired the officer involved, but once again the widespread national media coverage was damaging. It is easy to critique TSA's weak response to the incident that generated negative national TV coverage:

> We are well too aware of how the actions of a few can influence the perception the public has of our agency. It's truly a shame, because the majority of our workforce meets the expectations set forth to them— integrity, professionalism and hard work. The reputation of TSA is adversely affected by instances like this one, where employees do not display integrity.

> To put theft at TSA in perspective, between May 1, 2003 through September 2012, a total of 381 TSOs have been terminated for theft, which represents less than ½ of one percent (0.4%) of officers that have been employed by the agency. This extremely small percentage does not reflect the dedication and professionalism of our workforce as a whole.[84]

TSA's response was not from a senior leader but instead was from "Blogger Bob" and gave the message that it was a shame TSA's reputation took another hit rather than strongly condemning that theft had occurred under its watch.

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[82] Note, the majority of personal property is screened by technology; officers conduct physical searches only on the items requiring additional screening.

[83] Megan Chuchmach, Randy Kreider, and Brian Ross, "US Airline Passengers Claim TSA Ignoring their Theft Reports," ABC News, September 28, 2012, http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/us-airline-passengers-claim-tsa-ignoring-theft-reports/story?id=17351373.

[84] Transportation Security Administration [TSA], "TSA Has Zero Tolerance on Theft—iPad Theft," The TSA Blog, September 28, 2012, http://blog.tsa.gov/2012/09/tsa-has-zero-tolerance-on-theft-ipad.html.

Unfortunately, incidents of serious employee misconduct occur in many agencies and may be unavoidable. However, Doorley cautions that rumors spread quickly and "if the rumor is about inappropriate activity, it commands a high level of credibility."[85] If TSA applied Warren Buffet's commitment to trustworthiness, it could be rephrased as:

> Somebody is doing something today… that you and I would be unhappy about if we knew of it. That's inevitable. We now employ over… [TSA has over 50,000] people and the chances of that number getting through the day without any bad behavior occurring is nil. But we can have a huge effect in minimizing such activities by jumping on anything immediately when there is the slightest odor of impropriety.[86]

In those instances when there is impropriety, TSA should send a strong message that appropriate disciplinary action was taken, and when there was no impropriety but instead misinformation was fed to the public, TSA should quickly counter that message. Doorley points out:

> rumors arise and are believed when official information is lacking or is not believed. Rumors can be avoided—along with their attendant negative consequences—if companies recognize the need to provide sufficient clarifying detail and information as early as possible in the life of a disruptive event.[87]

That is a challenge for TSA, like most agencies, because it takes time to gather information and witness statements, and review video to determine what really happened. It is critical to have a quick response because as Ronald Alsop explains, "companies that acknowledge their failures and promise to try harder will repair their reputations much more quickly than those that play down their faults."[88]

e. *Government Leaders Impact Public Opinion*

Government leaders also have a strong impact on public opinion. Reporter Rob Margetta discussed the current atmosphere in Congress. According to Margetta:

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[85] Doorley and Garcia, *Reputation Management,* 338.

[86] Covey, Link and Merrill, *Smart Trust*, 69.

[87] Doorley and Garcia, *Reputation Management,* 342.

[88] Alsop, The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation, 121.

In an era of serious debate about its mission, its methods and its future, the agency faces a Congress full of incensed lawmakers, many upset over reports about travelers' difficulties with airport screeners… Fueled by a steady drip of stories, particularly on conservative news outlets, alleging passenger screening follies, the TSA has become the go-to punching bag for Republicans trying to harness Americans' frustration with Washington. The TSA is an easy target, with its ballooning budget and its large, far-flung workforce that literally touches many Americans on a daily basis.[89]

Ideally, political leaders who disagree with TSA would use the political process to seek improvements, but the court of public opinion is often an easier target. It has become a common occurrence for some politicians to strongly criticize TSA's security methods to a national audience. Lack of political and public support can jeopardize the future of the agency through funding and legislation, and when political leaders publically criticize TSA, it undermines the agency's efforts. For example, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called TSA pat-downs an "offensive" security measure she would not want to experience personally. Asked if she would be willing to submit to an airport frisk, Clinton laughed and admitted, "Not if I could avoid it. No, I mean who would?"[90] The President of the United States also took a jab at TSA during the 2011 State of the Union address. President Obama was referring to high-speed rail when he said, "For some trips, it will be faster than flying—without the pat-down."[91]

Other political leaders, such as Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn and Senator Rand Paul, have frequently been vocal about their objection to TSA security procedures.[92] Congresswoman Blackburn was listed as a Co-Chair on the 2012 Republican Party Platform document, which takes a hard stand against the agency. In

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[89] Margetta, "Screening the TSA."

[90] "Clinton: I'd Avoid Airport Pat-Down if Possible," CBS News, November 28, 2010, accessed September 9, 2012, http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-3460_162-7075949.html.

[91] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in State of Union Address," January 25, 2011, White House Office of the Press Secretary, accessed September 8, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address.

[92] Condon, "Rand Paul in TSA Showdown After Refusing Pat-down;" Marsha Blackburn, "Not on my Watch: 50 Failures of TSA's Transportation Security Officers," May 30, 2012, http://blackburn.house.gov/issues/issue/?IssueID=3779.

particular, the document claims TSA is not accountable for the way they treat travelers and the agency's procedures and personnel need to be changed.

Protecting Travelers and Their Rights: Reforming the TSA for Security and Privacy

While the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks brought about a greater need for homeland security, the American people have already delivered their verdict on the Transportation Security Administration: its procedures—and much of its personnel—need to be changed. It is now a massive bureaucracy of 65,000 employees who seem to be accountable to no one for the way they treat travelers. We call for the private sector to take over airport screening wherever feasible and look toward the development of security systems that can replace the personal violation of frisking.[93]

TSA is an easy target and some politicians may have ulterior motives for taking advantage of that. Gary Martin, Texas blogger, speculated on incumbent Congressman Quico Canseco's public battle with TSA during "one of the country's hottest House races."[94] Martin suggested there might be political motive in bashing the agency because "an attack on an agency like the TSA could be a good political gamble in a year where voters are angry with the federal government."[95] Political leaders can funnel public resentment for government spending and inefficiency towards an agency that is both visible to the public and already creates controversy through security practices. The end result is an exaggeration of TSA's problems and negative scrutiny that is much higher than other government agencies struggling with some of the same issues.

Congressman Mike Rogers, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, addressed concerns about TSA's relationship with government leaders. "In addition to its relationship with the traveling public, TSA must improve its relationship with the Congress… The rhetoric in Congress is largely a reflection of the

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[93] "2012 Republican Platform adopted by Republican National Convention," August 27, 2012, Republican Party, accessed September 8, 2012, 25, http://www.gop.com/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/2012GOPPlatform.pdf.

[94] Gary Martin, "Rep. Quico Canseco vs. the TSA: 'Assault' or 'Unruly Passenger,'" Texas on the Potomac (blog), August 20, 2012, http://blog.chron.com/txpotomac/2012/08/rep-quico-canseco-vs-the-tsa-assault-or-unruly-passenger/.

[95] Ibid.

general public's attitude towards TSA. TSA needs to conduct a comprehensive analysis of its communications efforts in order to better articulate its policies, and improve its overall relationship with the American people."[96]

Margetta commented:

> While the TSA has its Democratic backers, the agency doesn't have much in the way of loud, unconditional defenders. Owing to the agency's size and scope—it not only handles a multitude of programs associated with aviation passenger and cargo screening, but also has a role in freight rail, intercity buses, trucking and the credentialing of port security workers—lawmakers have an easy time finding something about it they don't like.[97]

Although not common, TSA has received support from at least one politician. Texas Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee praised TSA for having over 10,000 military veterans in their workforce and for initiating the Wounded Warrior Program to ensure veterans are screened with dignity and respect. The congresswoman also stated TSA had made positive changes under Administrator Pistole, including modifying screening procedures for children and the elderly, RBS, and implementation of AIT technology.[98]

f.   Aviation Stakeholders Also Impact Public Opinion

The opinion held by different aviation stakeholders can also impact public opinion. TSA recognizes the importance of working with stakeholders and has taken positive steps to work with those outside of the agency. TSA is gathering public feedback through a new passenger advocacy group formed as a subcommittee to the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC).[99] The eight-member passenger advocacy group

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[96] Subcommittee on Transportation Security Committee on Homeland Security, Rebuilding TSA into a Smarter, Leaner Organization, 2012, http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/092012_TSA_Reform_Report.pdf, 7–8.

[97] Margetta, "Screening the TSA."

[98] Ranking Member Subcommittee on Transportation Security, "Has TSA met the Deadline to Provide Expedited Screening to Military Service Members? 112th Cong (2012) (statement of Sheila Jackson Lee), accessed September 10, 2012, http://chsdemocrats.house.gov/SiteDocuments/20120711140022-24491.pdf.

[99] Catharine M. Hamm, "TSA Subcommittee to Address Passenger Concerns," Los Angeles Times, August 24, 2012, http://articles.latimes.com/2012/aug/24/news/la-trb-tsa-passenger-advocacy-group-20120823.

is co-chaired by industry representative Geoff Freeman from the U.S. Travel Association, and TSA's Director of Airline Stakeholder Affairs; they work with representatives from the airlines, airports and passenger advocacy groups.[100] The group's goals are to "improve the aviation security experience" and will include examining "other overarching customer concerns, such as how TSA communicates with and responds to complaints/concerns from the public."[101] Specifically, the subcommittee's charter is to provide TSA with "recommendations to improve the passenger security experience through the use of efficient and customer friendly practices."[102] Despite their stated goals, the executive director's August 2012 meeting notes included an extremely offensive nickname for TSA officers and several anecdotes were not verified.[103]

One subcommittee member praised TSA for seeking input from consumers. Charlie Leocha, Director of the Consumer Travel Alliance, stated, "Before the meeting, I was skeptical. Everybody from TSA I met was very positive about the committee and they actually seemed genuinely interested."[104] Another subcommittee member Douglas Kidd, Executive Director for the National Association of Airline Passengers, was harsher. Kidd reported after the first meeting in May 2012 that they have a long way to go: "There is a very real disconnect between how the TSA sees the public and how the public views the TSA. They would like us to change our views. We must help them change theirs."[105]

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[100] Douglas Kidd, "Meeting Notes, August 9, 2012," accessed August 28, 2012, http://www.righttofly.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1385819.

[101] Transportation Security Administration [TSA], "Aviation Security Advisory Committee: Summary," May 21, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/research/asac/index.shtm, 3–4.

[102] National Association of Airline Passengers, "Passenger Advocacy Subcommittee—Draft Charter," accessed August 28, 2013, http://www.righttofly.org/Default.aspx?pageId=1361159.

[103] Douglass Kidd suggested "for many people" the acronym for Transportation Security Officers (TSO) stands for "**T**hief and/or **S**ex **O**ffender." Kidd, "Meeting Notes, August 9, 2012."

[104] Hamm, "TSA Subcommittee to Address Passenger Concerns."

[105] Kidd, "Meeting Notes, August 9, 2012."

B. IMPACT OF PUBLIC-IMAGE CHALLENGES

The impact of TSA's public-image challenges are a loss of public trust and confidence, the risk of impacting mission effectiveness and efficiency, and a negative effect on employee morale.

1. Loss of Public Trust and Confidence

TSA needs to build public trust and confidence by promoting the agency's efforts to mitigate threats and by telling passengers how they can prepare for security. For example, when the "more thorough" (and thus more intrusive) pat-down was implemented in November 2010 (to combat the threat identified through the underwear bomber's attempt to hide explosives), TSA did not prepare the public in advance. As a result, the media delivered the message instead of TSA, and the result was disastrous— media networks blasted out negative coverage and reported that passengers were boycotting flying. The following New York Times Business Daily article was typical of the media coverage about TSA's new security procedures:

> In the three weeks since the Transportation Security Administration began more aggressive pat-downs of passengers at airport security checkpoints, traveler complaints have poured in. Some offer graphic accounts of genital contact, others tell of agents gawking or making inappropriate comments, and many express a general sense of powerlessness and humiliation. In general passengers are saying they are surprised by the intimacy of a physical search usually reserved for police encounters.[106]

a. Negative Publicity

TSA received more than its share of publicity in November 2010 and the vast majority was negative. The Pew Research Center confirmed that during that time, six percent of *all* newspaper, television, radio and online news coverage were about TSA screening procedures.[107] The Research Center also confirmed the debate over new

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[106] Susan Stellin, "Pat-Downs at Airports Prompt Complaints," *New York Times Business Daily*, November 18, 2010, accessed August 18, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/19/business/19security.html?_r=1.

[107] Data relating to news coverage was collected from November 15–21, 2010. Pew Research Center, "Economy, Elections and Pat Downs," November 24, 2010, Pew Research Center Publications, accessed August 18, 2012, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1811/public-interest-tsa-passenger-screening-fda-warnings-alcoholic-energy-drinks.

airport screening procedures was closely followed by 47 percent of the public.[108] In addition, "heavy interest in the new measures cut across all three social media platforms… for the week of Nov. 22–26, more than half (54%) the news links on blogs were about the security measures, making it the No. 1 subject."[109] As a result of the negative media coverage, the traveling public came to security checkpoints for the busy Thanksgiving holiday travel period expecting the worst. Although complaints spiked significantly for several months, it was also common for passengers to say, "is that all it is?" after receiving the pat-down that had been exaggerated by the media.

TSA missed the opportunity to frame the message in a manner that would have instilled public trust and confidence, and it could be argued TSA has still not recovered. Katie Paine explains, "the biggest damage a badly managed crises will have on your organization is what it does to that trust, and to the relationships and reputation built on it."[110]

TSA should have considered the impact of not preparing the traveling public and airline stakeholders prior to implementing more intrusive security procedures, especially right before the busy holiday travel period. Not only is there an increase in passengers that do not travel frequently (potentially more susceptible to concerns about going through security), peak travel periods also mean airline stakeholders are more concerned about security throughput so they can get their flights out on time. John Doorley points out organizations need to focus on the outcomes or the impact a "crisis may have on the stakeholders who matter to a company, and how the company can maintain the trust and confidence of those stakeholders as the event plays out."[111]

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[108] "A third of the public (33%) says they followed the debate over new airport screening procedures very closely, while 14% say this was the news they followed most closely." The survey was collected from November 18–21, 2010 and included a nationally representative sample of 1,004 adults. Research Center, "Economy, Elections and Pat Downs."

[109] Pew Research Center, "Social Media Deride TSA Security Measures," December 2, 2010, Pew Research Center Publications, accessed August 18, 2012, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1816/social-media-tsa-security-pat-downs.

[110] Paine and Paarlberg, *Measure What Matters*, 170.

[111] Doorley and Garcia, *Reputation Management,* 330.

b.   *Information Needs to be Put Out In Advance*

The timeline of events shows TSA did not effectively disclose information about the new pat-down procedures to the public in advance of implementation.

- August 27, 2010, TSA Blog—"You may have read about TSA implementing enhanced pat-downs as part of our layered approach to security. Using the latest intelligence, TSA constantly updates our screening procedures to stay ahead of those who wish to do us harm and keep the skies safe for the flying public."[112]

- October 28, 2010, statement on TSA website when new more thorough pat-down procedures were implemented—"TSA is in the process of implementing new pat-down procedures at checkpoints nationwide as one of our many layers of security to keep the traveling public safe. Pat-downs are one important tool to help TSA detect hidden and dangerous items such as explosives."[113]

- November 11, 2010, TSA blog response to complaints. "As we've discussed before, TSA's screening procedures change regularly based on the latest intelligence. Pat-downs have long been one of the many security measures TSA and virtually every other nation has used in its risk-based approach… There's nothing punitive about it—it just makes good security sense. And the weapons and other dangerous and prohibited items we've found during pat-downs speak to this. It's worth mentioning that only a small percentage of passengers end up needing a pat-down."[114]

- November 22, 2010, first TSA media release—"Administrator John S. Pistole today issued a public service announcement to thank the traveling public for their continued support and partnership and address new implemented procedures… For your safety, we have instituted new screening procedures at checkpoints. Please take a moment to read the materials available about these procedures and your options as a passenger."[115]

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[112] Transportation Security Administration, "Enhanced Pat-downs," The TSA Blog, August 27, 2010, accessed August 19, 2012, http://blog.tsa.gov/2010/08/enhanced-pat-downs.html.

[113] Transportation Security Administration, "TSA Statement on New Pat-down Procedures," October 28, 2010, accessed August 19, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/press/happenings/102810_patdown.shtm.

[114] Transportation Security Administration, "New TSA Pat-down Procedures," The TSA Blog, November 11, 2010, accessed August 19, 2012, http://blog.tsa.gov/2010/11/new-tsa-pat-down-procedures.html.

[115] Transportation Security Administration, "TSA Administrator John Pistole Issues Public Service Announcement," news release, November 22, 2010, accessed August 19, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/press/releases/2010/1122.shtm.

Although TSA's blog mentioned the enhanced pat-down as early as August 2010, TSA leadership did not put out a press release until weeks after the controversy developed. In the interim, the media controlled the message. Ronald Alsop contends, "the first few days are the most critical in trying to limit reputation damage in a crisis… A communications void is highly dangerous during a time of crisis."[116]

c. *Proactive Crisis Communication*

Should TSA have considered the implementation of a more thorough (and intrusive) pat-down a potential crisis? Doorley and Garcia define a crisis as a "decision that would determine whether a course of events would unfold one way or another, for better or worse."[117] Arguably, an awareness of the public's perceptions about aviation security procedures in general would have indicated that a change to the pat-down that requires more focus on (i.e., touching) sensitive areas of a passenger's body (to combat the threat exposed by the underwear bomber hiding explosives in his underwear) would indicate yes. According to Doorley and Garcia, "A crisis is not necessarily a catastrophic event, but rather an event that, left to usual business processes and velocities, causes significant reputational, operational, or financial harm."[118] Doorley and Garcia suggests the answers to key questions will help determine whether something that is about to happen will result in a crisis:

- Is this a non-routine event?
- Does it risk undesired visibility?
- Would that undesired visibility in turn threaten reputational damage?[119]

If the answer is yes to these questions, then the organization needs to implement strategic communications to address the crisis.

Congressman Mike Rogers admonished TSA for its lack of effective communication about the new pat-down procedures.

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[116] Alsop, The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation, 220.

[117] Doorley and Garcia, *Reputation Management,* 330-331.

[118] Ibid., 328.

[119] Ibid., 330.

The implementation of enhanced pat-downs in October 2010 marked a critical turning point in the relationship between TSA and travelers. . . While TSA did make a brief statement on this significant change, its immediate rollout and shoddy implementation left travelers confused and frustrated. Pat-downs were initiated in direct response to a serious, imminent, ongoing terrorist threat. That TSA continues to garner public resentment from this procedure is indicative of TSA missing the mark both on implementation (e.g., waiting a year to realize children should not be subject to full-body pat-downs by adults, particularly without parental consent) and communication. Pat-downs have hit a nerve with the general public, and TSA has failed to adequately explain why it continues to use this procedure two years after its initial rollout.[120]

d.   *TSA Needs to Deliver the Message*

TSA should have provided information that would have prepared the traveling public for the new pat-down procedures and explained what they could do to minimize the chances of requiring a pat-down. According to W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, authors of *Blue Ocean Strategy*, to get support for an approach, one must have discussions with the stakeholders and the general public. The authors explain:

> The key challenge is to engage in an open discussion about why the adoption of the new idea is necessary. You need to explain its merits, set clear expectations for its ramifications, and describe how the company will address them. Stakeholders need to know that their voices have been heard and that there will be no surprises.[121]

If TSA puts out information to the public in advance of new security procedures, it has the opportunity to set a positive tone and increase public confidence. Jamie Gumbrecht, *CNN*, reported that it is more effective to inform the public about new security procedures and that the UK has received more public acceptance by doing so.

> A study published in *Security Journal* last year found that passengers in the United Kingdom had a higher opinion of whole-body scanners after they were presented with unbiased information about them, including risks and sample images. They found them fast and less intrusive than pat-downs. Not informing passengers about scanners can open the door to

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[120] Subcommittee on Transportation Security Committee on Homeland Security, Rebuilding TSA, 7.

[121] W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2005), 139.

misinformation and critics, the study's authors said, and hurt the long-term acceptance and legitimacy of airport security.[122]

2.   Mission Impact

A poor public image, even if held by a minority of the public, has an impact on mission effectiveness and efficiency.

a.   *Mission Effectiveness*

Mission effectiveness is impacted if officers are distracted form focusing on real threats because they need to respond to passengers that are not prepared for security or do not want to comply with security procedures. When passengers rely on distorted or inaccurate media messages, they come to security checkpoints with biases about the security screening process. Some passengers expressed concerns about being treated the way they had heard about in the media. Other passengers take the opportunity to generate more media coverage by publically expressing their disagreement as the passenger in Portland did in April 2012 when he stripped naked to protest TSA security procedures.[123]

There is also a risk that upset passengers that cause disruptions at the checkpoint could be a ploy to divert attention away from someone with the intent to cause harm. TSA reports that calming down people at the checkpoint increases the potential for observing behaviors of those with ill intent. In one report, it states:

> In a calm environment, it is easier to spot anomalies and deter threats. Working in a chaotic environment can trigger strong emotions. At the moment their emotions are triggered, officers have a decision to make. They can go into "fight or flight" mode or they can step back, check emotions, and create calm.[124]

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[122] Gumbrecht, "How Much Do We Really Hate the TSA?"

[123] Nancy Trejos, "Portland Man Strips Naked to Protest TSA Patdown," *USA Today* [Travel Online], April 18, 2012, http://travel.usatoday.com/flights/post/2012/04/portland-man-strips-naked-to-protest-tsa-patdown/675765/1.

[124] Transportation Security Administration, The 3 Cs of Security: Key Messages from the ENGAGE! Training Manual, accessed August 18, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/weekly/100308.shtm.

b.   *Mission Efficiency*

Efficiency is impacted because there is a cost in time and resources for resolving alarms and handling complaints or claims. First, there is a manpower cost when officers have to perform more pat-downs for those passengers that "opt out" of AIT technology because they relied on inaccurate messages that the AITs are unsafe or that their privacy is not safeguarded.

Second, passengers that are not prepared for security increase wait times because they take longer to divest their items (removing all items from their pocket, placing their shoes in the bins, and taking off outerwear), require more assistance from checkpoint officers and may require additional screening. Longer wait times increase frustrations for other passengers and the airlines that need to get their flights out on time with maximum seats filled. There is also a negative impact on TSA's management if wait times go up—regardless of the reason.

Finally, the passenger's lack of trust causes more work for TSA personnel who spend time trying to resolve passenger's concerns or claims that are often unfounded.[125] If a passenger received additional screening or was not allowed to take a prohibited item through, they may project that experience onto their perception of the officer with whom they interacted. As a result, passengers sometimes overreact to TSA officers performing standard screening procedures and assume any missing items are the result of TSA officers stealing their property. It is a common occurrence to research customer complaints about theft only to find out the item was left elsewhere or is inside the passenger's carry-on luggage.

It takes time and resources to resolve passenger concerns or complaints regarding missing or damaged property. Every serious passenger complaint takes

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[125] From 2005 to 2012, approximately nine million passengers and their luggage were safely screened at the author's airport. In that time, the author researched hundreds of complaints that missing items were stolen or damaged by TSA Officers. In almost all cases reported promptly (video is available for a limited time), the video review or computer tracking system resolved TSA officers of any wrongdoing. In some cases the passengers found the "stolen" or missing item elsewhere. In only four occurrences, a passenger's property was left out during baggage screening and accidently placed in the next bag screened.

approximately two hours to research and multiple levels of employees may be involved before a complaint is resolved. Resolution typically requires contacting the passenger for more information, researching computer bag tracking systems (for checked luggage), time consuming reviews of closed circuit television (CCTV) video, obtaining statements from Officers involved, analyzing the information for any inappropriate behavior, and finally follow on response back to the passenger. The agency's reputation is also impacted if the response is not timely, which can be difficult if there is a surge of negative feedback when new unpopular security procedures are implemented.

3. Employee Morale

Employee morale may also be impacted by TSA's poor public image. A GAO report cited TSA officer's job satisfaction scores are 11 percent lower than the average for other federal agencies and low morale in turn has a negative impact in recruiting, motivating, and retaining talented employees.[126] The report noted a variety of issues led to employee morale problems (concerns have previously been about pay, performance appraisal concerns, and lack of trust in leadership).[127] DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano expressed concerns about TSA employees' morale and suggests it can be improved if employees are given proper training before being placed in new supervisory positions.[128] TSA employee morale is an ongoing problem and needs to be considered when looking for solutions to public image problems.

a. *Value of Positive Reputations*

Ronald Alsop points out positive reputations boost employee morale and attracts talented employees.[129] In addition, officers with low morale (when treated badly or if they do not like their job for whatever reason) are not likely to provide good

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[126] U.S. Government Accountability Office, U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 6–7.

[127] Ibid., 9.

[128] Keith Lang, "Napolitano Worried about TSA Job Morale," The Hill's Transportation Report [blog], July 19, 2012, http://thehill.com/blogs/transportation-report/tsa/239043-napolitano-worried-about-tsa-job-morale.

[129] Alsop, *The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation*, 16–17.

customer service. Tom Connellan suggests, "there are definite correlations between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction."[130]

Employees also want to work for employers with a positive reputation. Henry Tajfel, an expert in social identity theory, points out people seek to be part of a group with a positive social identity.[131] However, when employees mentions they work for TSA, they are faced with hearing complaints about something that occurred during screening years ago or the person had to get a pat-down the last time they flew. The way society evaluates the group people belong to—in this example the employer—impacts employees' satisfaction.

b.   *Passenger Overreactions*

Although fortunately only a small minority of the traveling public, some emboldened passengers go too far in addressing their complaints to the TSA employee on the frontline, who has no authority to change procedures. Arguably, the public's treatment of officers may be a contributing factor to TSA employees' low morale indicated on those surveys. Some TSA officers have been treated rudely by passengers, threatened, yelled at, "flipped off," called offensive names like "perverts" or "molesters," or have been photographed or videotaped while following TSA standard operating procedures over which they have no control to change. To counter this, TSA officers and their supervisors are trained to diffuse tense situations and some checkpoints have signs to remind passengers that officers also have rights:

> Thank you for your patience as we carry out security procedures designed for your safety and required by law. Our Transportation Security Officers also have rights. To protect their safety, threats, verbal abuse or violence of any kind will not be tolerated. Please give our officers the respect they deserve.[132]

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[130] Connellan, *Inside the Magic Kingdom*, 94.

[131] Henri Tajfel, ed., Social Identity and Intergroup Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 34.

[132] TSA, "Prepare for Security, Officer Rights," TSA signage posted at some security checkpoints.

It is no doubt a stressful environment, when passengers are in a hurry and they cannot find their belongings, but overreactions make the situation more difficult for everyone involved. Passengers have claimed their property was stolen when their carry-on items were not physically searched or handled by a TSA employee (i.e., no opportunity).[133] Sometimes the officer will re-X-ray the bag to help the passenger find the missing item. Checkpoint CCTV video is often invaluable in helping to resolve allegations of wrongdoing.

c.   Everyone is an Expert

Passengers also give their unsolicited advice about how TSA officers should perform their duties or how the checkpoint should operate. One passenger complained that the female officer performing her pat-down did not smile but admitted the officer had been professional and courteous throughout the screening process; the passenger stated she was a paying customer and demanded that officers should be required to smile (conversely another passenger might consider an officer's smile during the pat-down to be offensive).[134] TSA trains its officers to have a command presence and to be professional and that often results in a serious focus on their job. According to TSA, "Having a command presence sends a signal to potential terrorists that they are up against a hard target. Command presence does not mean intimidating passengers, but rather treating passengers with respect and presenting yourself as an authority figure."[135]

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[133] The author has researched numerous passenger allegations of theft and the results were no theft occurred (either the passenger's property was never physically touched by a TSA employee or the CCTV video provided evidence that nothing was taken or left out of the passengers' bag).

[134] Author's personal experience with a passenger.

[135] TSA, "The 3 Cs of Security."

C.   IT IS TIME TO TRY A NEW APPROACH BY SEEKING SMART PRACTICES FROM OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT

I expect to pass through this world but once; any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

–Stephen Grellet, 1773–1855

A renewed focus on customer service will provide opportunities to improve the public's trust and confidence in TSA. The starting point is to seek expertise from outside of government to find methods that have worked well in nongovernmental areas. Per William Bratton, "when information and networks or human and political capital are locked down behind institutional barriers, it's time to find a fix" that may require going outside of the agency.[136]

Chapters III and IV study customer service initiatives in place at Southwest Airlines and Disney—both recognized leaders in providing customer service. Similarities in managing direct contact with millions of customers' means there may be some lessons learned that could make a difference for the 1.7 million passengers going through TSA security checkpoints each day. The case studies were analyzed and compared to determine if there were consistencies in smart practices in both Southwest and Disney that would have merit if applied within the government. It is time to increase the focus on customer service and work to win more public support by examining lessons learned from customer-focused initiatives that have worked elsewhere.

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[136] William J. Bratton and Zachary Tumin, *Collaborate Or Perish!: Reaching Across Boundaries in a Networked World*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Business, 2012), 37.

III. SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CASE STUDY

A. OVERVIEW

Southwest Airlines was chosen as an aviation industry case study because of its reputation for excelling in customer service and for successfully maintaining a positive public image. Although a private organization, Southwest is a relevant case study because like TSA, it has a high volume of customers 365 days a year, manage the flow of customers in queues, and provide customer service both in person and through customer contact centers. In addition, a stakeholder highly effective at providing good customer service and promoting a positive public image provides a fresh perspective for government to consider. Most importantly, Southwest Airlines' smart practices may offer solutions to some of TSA's challenges.

Although the research was predominately positive, no company is without flaws. One concern is whether Southwest will be able to maintain its positive corporate culture now that long-time leaders Herb Kelleher and Colleen Barrett are no longer at the helm.[137] Competitors in the airline industry see Southwest as the big company that comes in, sells seats lower than anyone else can, and then takes over routes. Perhaps its most significant negative publicity was in 2008 when a Federal Aviation Administration

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[137] Note: Southwest Airlines founder Herb Kelleher was named as one of the greatest entrepreneurs of our time. Kelleher started Southwest Airlines and along with key team members including Colleen Barrett, he built a successful culture focused on employees. According to Byrne, "He kept costs extraordinarily low and customer service high—and he did both by creating a culture that respected the people he carefully hired . . . And Kelleher got his people to sign on to the program through profit-sharing plans and stock options that made employees feel and act like owners. It separated Southwest from the pack." John A. Byrne, "The 12 greatest Entrepreneurs of our Time," CNN Money, last updated April 9, 2012, http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2012/news/companies/1203/gallery.greatest-entrepreneurs.fortune/10.html.

(FAA) whistleblower reported Southwest's aircraft had been allowed to fly after a potential safety issue was discovered.[138]

Since none of these challenges reflect on its current internal employee or customer service procedures, the case study is still applicable to this research. This case study's focus is on finding answers to the specific research questions and looking for smart practices that may be helpful at TSA.

1. Company Profile

Southwest Airlines started operating in 1971 by providing short distance flights within Texas. Kim and Mauborgne, authors of *Blue Ocean Strategy,* point out Southwest created a "blue ocean" by innovating within the airline industry; Southwest filled the customers' needs to have the same economy (lower cost) and flexibility (frequent departure times) of traveling by car while decreasing the overall travel time through faster air travel.[139] Over time, Southwest Airlines expanded its routes and with the purchase of AirTran Airways, it now serves over 103 destinations in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.[140] Together, Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways operate nearly 4,100 flights a day.[141] Southwest continues to operate low cost airline flights under a business strategy that focuses on "friendly service, speed, and frequent point-to-point departures."[142]

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[138] "On March 7, 2008, Chairman Oberstar held a news conference at which he described some of the allegations made by 'whistleblowers' within the FAA. This was the first notice we had of any details about the allegations made by the FAA whistleblowers. . . Our investigation of this matter was ordered to be expedited. On March 10, 2008, we received the preliminary results. Two issues had to be addressed immediately. The first was that better judgment should have been exercised than to allow those aircraft to fly after the potential non-compliance was discovered. The second was that senior management should have been consulted on such a significant issue, but was not." Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Airlines Provides Testimony to U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure," April 3, 2008, accessed September 1, 2012, http://www.swamedia.com/releases/1573b383-b9fb-1da8-c5f7-b7f54b466350?search=faa+safety.

[139] Kim and Mauborgne*, Blue Ocean Strategy,* 38.

[140] Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," June 30, 2012, http://swamedia.com/channels/Corporate-Fact-Sheet/pages/corporate-fact-sheet, 1.

[141] Ibid., 2.

[142] Kim and Mauborgne, Blue Ocean Strategy, 39.

Although TSA provides security screening for 66 different domestic airlines, Southwest is its biggest airline stakeholder.[143] The Department of Transportation (DOT) ranks Southwest Airlines as the largest domestic carrier when measured in passenger enplanements (i.e., passenger volume).[144] Moreover, Southwest Airlines has an annual operating budget of $14.965 billion.[145] Remarkably, Southwest has had 39 consecutive years of profitability—even during a depressed economy (with high fuel prices) that hit the airline industry especially hard.[146] Southwest Airlines' mission statement has remained unchanged since 1988—"dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit."[147] In *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World*, Chris Lauer highlights the fact the mission statement does not mention *airplane* or *transportation*; instead it focuses on *customer service*.[148]

Southwest Airlines' success is evident in the numerous awards it has received in recognition of the company's efforts to maintain a strong corporate culture focusing on employees and customer service. A few of their most recent notable awards include:

- Best Airline Customer Experience—Temkin Group, 2012.[149]
- Tenth most admired company in the world—*Fortune* magazine's survey of corporate reputations, 2012.[150]

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[143] Transportation Security Administration, "Transportation Sector Network Management: Commercial Airlines," accessed August 29, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/tsnm/commercial_aviation/commercial_airlines.shtm.

[144] Research and Innovative Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, "Southwest Airlines," accessed August 30, 2012, http://www.transtats.bts.gov/carriers.asp?pn=1. Note, data is from June 2011 through May 2012.

[145] Southwest Airlines, 2011 Annual Report to Shareholders, March 16, 2012, http://southwest.investorroom.com/company-reports, 43.

[146] Ibid., 1.

[147] Southwest Airlines, "The Mission of Southwest Airlines," accessed August 5, 2012, http://www.southwest.com/html/about-southwest/index.html?int=GFOOTER-ABOUT-ABOUT.

[148] Chris Lauer, Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2010), 153.

[149] Temkin Group, "2012 Temkin Customer Service Rankings," accessed August 30, 2012, http://www.temkinratings.com/temkin-ratings/temkin-customer-service-ratings/.

[150] "Worlds Most Admired Companies—Southwest Airlines," CNN Money, March 19, 2012, http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/most-admired/2012/snapshots/2068.html.

- Top spot on the Transportation Index for Customer Satisfaction—American Customer Satisfaction Index, June 2011 (they were number two in 2012).[151]

- Customer Service Hall of Fame—MSN Money, 2011 and 2012.[152]

- Top Airline in Customer Service—Consumer Reports, May 2011.[153]

Jody Gittell, author of *The Southwest Airlines WAY*, suggests Southwest's success factors include leadership, culture, strategy, and coordination.[154] However, Southwest's focus on its employees and living the Golden Rule stands out the most. As Lauer explains, the "Golden Rule: Treating others as you want to be treated is not only good for business, it is good for everyone involved."[155]

2. Focus on Employees

Southwest Airlines has earned a reputation for maintaining good employee practices and is a role model for other companies. As a result, it was not surprising *Fortune* magazine ranked Southwest number one in the aviation industry for people management in 2012.[156] Having a good working relationship between management and employees is crucial when the company faces challenges that require everyone's extra effort. As an example, when Southwest Airlines had to respond quickly to competitors targeting its routes in California in the 1980s, it added so many new flights that it could not hire and train new employees fast enough. Southwest California employees worked double and triple shifts to make it work. As part of the "Helping Hands" program,

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[151] According to American Customer Satisfaction Index, "After 18 years of nearly undisputed customer satisfaction leadership in the airline industry, Southwest has relinquished first place to ACSI newcomer JetBlue." American Customer Satisfaction Index, "Passengers See Change for the Better in Airline Service; Diners Find Fast Food as Pleasing as Sit-Down Restaurants," news release, June 2012, accessed August 30, 2012, http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=283:press-release-june-2012&catid=14:acsi-results&Itemid=359.

[152] Karen Aho, "2012 Customer Service Hall of Fame," MSN Money, accessed August 30, 2012, http://money.msn.com/investing/2012-customer-service-hall-of-fame-1.

[153] Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," 9.

[154] Jody Hoffer Gittell, *The Southwest Airlines WAY: Using the Power of Relationships to Achieve High Performance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 12.

[155] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 88.

[156] CNN Money, "Worlds Most Admired Companies—Southwest Airlines."

Southwest managers volunteered to help pack bags, flip burgers, and serve pizza to show their thanks for the California teams' hard work.[157] In the end, they pulled through because everyone worked together for the success of the company. Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, authors of *Taking Brand Initiative,* suggest "the consistency of Southwest Airlines' relationship to its employees has been a mainstay of this company's management practice and gives a foundation for asking employees to give their full support during times of change."[158]

Southwest has never had a mass layoff of employees "even after the airline industry practically shut down after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and during one of the most difficult economic recessions in U.S. history in 2008 and 2009."[159] Instead, Southwest offered buyouts to employees and looked for other ways to economize. In contrast, most of the other large airlines laid off 11 percent to 24 percent of its employees after 9/11.[160] As Lauer explains, Southwest believes if it shows loyalty to its employees, they will worker harder. Lauer goes on to state, "Building morale through a sense of increased job security is just one way Southwest keeps it people happy and raises their productivity levels."[161]

The company's focus on the employee is also reflected in their low employee turnover rate; the voluntary turnover rate is three percent or less.[162] Colleen Barrett maintains that taking care of employees is important: "Our People know we care. They know that it's genuine. We don't do those things to get accolades; we do them because it's the right thing to do."[163]

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[157] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines–Corporations that Changed the World*, 85–87.

[158] Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, *Taking Brand Initiative: How Companies Can Align Strategy, Culture, and Identity Through Corporate Branding* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 221.

[159] Lauer, Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World, 4.

[160] Gittell, *The Southwest Airlines WAY,* 238.

[161] Lauer*, Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 56.

[162] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 35.

[163] Ibid., 128.

3.   Similarities

Southwest Airlines and TSA both seek to have and maintain a positive public image and share some of the same customer satisfaction goals. Southwest and TSA also share the same customers—the traveling public. Southwest has a mix of customers familiar with its unique operating practices as well as customers that have not flown on Southwest before. TSA also works with a variety of customers—some travel frequently and are familiar with security requirements while others are unfamiliar with TSA's continually changing security procedures.

Southwest and TSA both place an emphasis on training employees. Southwest Airlines' "University for People" trains employees to do their job, but, more importantly, it helps to keep the corporate culture strong. The university also offers classes on interview techniques, presentation skills, writing, and public speaking, which help build employee communication skills. Chris Lauer notes that training has resulted in "better-educated, upwardly mobile employees; smarter leaders; and a unified workforce that shares similar educational experiences." [164] Deborah Bowker, one of the authors highlighted in *Brands and Branding,* confirms Southwest Airlines' training places "customer-focused brand promise at the forefront of their new employee orientation, training, and reward and recognition programs."[165]

Although TSA also places a priority on training, the majority of TSA's training has previously been conducted by field training departments or through on-line training. However, TSA is in the process of building a training center at the DHS Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) near Glynco, Georgia, that will provide professional training opportunities for TSA employees. The first course in the new

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[164] Lauer*, Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 42.

[165] Deborah Bowker, "The Public Relations Perspective on Branding," in *Brands and Branding*, ed., Rita Clifton and John Simmons (Princeton, NJ: Bloomberg Press, 2004), 149.

training center was designed for TSA supervisors to further develop essential communications, coaching, mentoring, problem solving, and technical skills.[166]

Southwest and TSA employees are also both represented by unions. Although TSA employees have only recently been unionized, Southwest has worked with unions representing their different employee groups for many years. Gittell claims "Southwest is one of the most highly unionized airlines in the U.S. Airline industry."[167]

4. Differences

Southwest's hierarchy is very different from TSA's standard top down hierarchical structure. Southwest Airlines servant-leadership style means its hierarchy pyramid has frontline employees who deal with customers at the top—they are responsible for the needs of the customers (see Figure 1). The leadership's responsibility is to serve and be responsive to its employees' needs so they can accomplish their goals.'[168]

Figure 1.   Representation of Southwest Airlines' Hierarchy, from *Lead with LUV*.[169]

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[166] Statement of John W. Halinski, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/testimony/080112_halinski_testimony.pdf, 4–5.

[167] Gittell, *The Southwest Airlines WAY*, 5.

[168] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV*, 95.

[169] Ibid.

Another major difference is Southwest's customers have a choice whether to select Southwest or the competition; TSA customers do not have that same choice. However, public loss of confidence in TSA may lead to customers choosing not to travel by air.

As a private company, Southwest Airlines does not operate with the same level of political scrutiny as TSA does, nor does it follow the public sector laws applicable to federal government. However, Southwest does need to operate within federal rules and regulations from the Department of Transportation (DOT), FAA, and TSA among others.

Perhaps the most significant difference is Southwest is a profit driven corporation and TSA is a relatively new federal government agency. Southwest's goal for profits would naturally place an increased focus on decreasing costs and maintaining customer loyalty. However, since this thesis is seeking customer focused initiatives that will improve TSA's public image, the successful ways Southwest Airlines has built its reputation for providing excellent customer service is more important than why it does so (e.g., profits).

Table 1 compares Southwest Airlines and TSA using common indicators in order to put the similarities and differences between the two in perspective.

Table 1.   Summary Chart Identifying Key Characteristics for Southwest Airlines and TSA.

	Southwest Airlines	TSA
Years in Operation	41 years[170]	11 years
Annual Operating Budget	$15 Billion	$8 Billion[171]
Hierarchy	Bottom Up	Top Down
Passengers Annually	127 Million[172]	450 Million
Employees	45,392 Total[173]	50,000 Officers
Employee Unions	Yes (82%)[174]	Yes
Employee Starting Salary per Hour	$10-$12[175]	$14[176]
Number of Top Level Leadership in the Last 10 Years (turnover)	2	6[177]
Employee Turnover	3%	7%[178]

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[170] Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," 1.

[171] U. S. Department of Homeland Security, "FY2011 Budget in Brief," accessed August 30, 2012, http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/budget-bib-fy2012.pdf, 17.

[172] Note: AirTran Airways data is included since Southwest Airlines purchased them as a wholly owned subsidiary in May 2011. Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," 6.

[173] Southwest Airlines, 2011 Annual Report to Shareholders, 20.

[174] Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," 7.

[175] Estimated starting hourly salary is based on information from two online sources, which gave a starting salary of $10.00 to $11.60 per hour. Glassdoor, "Southwest Airlines Salaries," last modified August 28, 2012, http://www.glassdoor.com/Salary/Southwest-Airlines-Salaries-E611.htm. Estimated lowest hourly rate of $10.00; estimated lowest hourly rate of $11.60. PayScale, "Hourly Rate for Southwest Airlines Co. Employees," accessed September 2, 2012, http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Employer=Southwest_Airlines_Co/Hourly_Rate.

[176] TSA officers are hired at a minimum starting pay of $25,518. [$25,518 plus 14.16% minimum locality pay, divided by 2,087 (estimated annual hours used for pay calculations) equals $13.96 per hour]. Transportation Security Administration, "Pay Scales at TSA (2011 and 2012)," accessed September 3, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/join/careers/pay_scales.shtm.

[177] TSA has had six administrators (including one "acting"): John Magaw (2002), Admiral James Loy (2002–2003), Rear Admiral David Stone (2003–2005), Kip Hawley (2005-2009), Gail Rossides (acting Administrator from 2009–2010), and John Pistole (2010 to present). "Transportation Security Administration," Wikipedia, accessed June 4, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transportation_Security_Administration.

[178] TSA attrition was 18 percent in 2004, but was down to 7.2 percent in 2011. Statement of John S. Pistole, Administrator, Before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security, 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/press/speeches/index.shtm, 2.

	Southwest Airlines	TSA
Customer Relations Staff **(that handle feedback—not including field personnel)**	70	78[179]
Complaints Annually	354[180]	60,000[181]
Twitter Followers	1,370,476	30,751
Mission Statement	"The mission of Southwest Airlines is dedication to the highest quality of Customer Service delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, and Company Spirit."	"The Transportation Security Administration protects the Nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce."[182]
Core Values	Performance People Planet[183]	Integrity Innovation Team Spirit[184]

5. Case Study Goal

Finding customer focused initiatives to improve TSA's public image requires thinking outside of normal governmental practices. Although there are significant differences between Southwest Airlines and TSA, ultimately the differences do not matter if the private industry initiatives that improve the customers' experience can be

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[179] Kidd, "Meeting Notes, August 9, 2012."

[180] U.S. Department of Transportation, Air Travel Consumer Report—Consumer Complaints January–December 2011 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, 2012), http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/reports/index.htm, 47.

[181] According to Halinski's testimony, "Of the 600 million passengers screened on an annual basis, the TSA Contact Center receives approximately 750,000 contacts from the traveling public, of which less than eight percent constitute complaints" [note: 750,000 x 8% = approximately 60,000 complaints.]. Statement of John W. Halinski, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/testimony/080112_halinski_testimony.pdf, 2.

[182] Transportation Security Administration, "Mission, Vision, and Core Values," accessed August 29, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/who_we_are/mission.shtm.

[183] Southwest Airlines, 2011 Southwest Airlines One Report, March 31, 2012, http://www.southwestonereport.com/2011/.

[184] TSA, "Mission, Vision, and Core Values."

translated to government use. TSA has a chance of improving its public image if it can incorporate customer service smart practices exhibited by Southwest Airlines.

Michael Raynor, guest contributor for *Fortune* magazine, warns, "business books often exaggerate what case studies can actually teach us."[185] There is a risk the root cause of success will be misinterpreted. Raynor identifies the challenge of identifying which smart practices at a successful organization are having the desired results:

> Is Southwest recognized because of its strategy? That's certainly a plausible view, but what about its culture? That is in many ways an equally compelling position, although one based on very different information. Could it be because of its strategy and its culture? And, oh yes, its leadership, an attribute that seems critical when the company is viewed from yet another perspective. When everything seems important, how are we supposed to know what to focus on?[186]

Perhaps there is a risk of identifying smart practices that although positive, may not have directly contributed to Southwest Airlines' overall success. However, the ideas generated from the case study are a starting point for further consideration.

B.   CASE STUDY OF SOUTHWEST AIRLINES SMART PRACTICES

The objective of this case study is to find answers to the research questions and to look for patterns and relationships in how Southwest has encouraged positive public opinion through customer-focused initiatives. The primary research question is: What smart practices can be derived from outside of government to help solve TSA's most significant public-image challenges? The research question was broken down into the following six case study focus questions.

1.   What Smart Practices Have Been Used to Promote a Positive Public Image?

Southwest promotes a positive public image by maintaining a corporate culture that focuses on the positives and celebrates both individual and company successes. Colleen Barrett, president and director of Southwest Airlines from 2001 to 2008, was

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[185] Michael E. Raynor, "Business Case Studies: Overused, and Often Abused," CNN Money, January 30, 2012, http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2012/01/30/case-studies-abuse/.

[186] Ibid.

influential in developing Southwest's corporate culture through her early years as corporate secretary and executive vice president of customers.[187]

a. Build a Positive Culture

Through Barrett's vision, the Southwest's Cultures Services Department of 28 employees promotes a positive culture through their management of corporate charity work, "Internal Customer Care" (i.e., taking care of employees), internal customer communications, and companywide celebrations.[188] The Cultures Services Department has four main teams:

- *Internal Customer Care Team* acknowledges important events in the lives of Southwest employees and their families. The team responds with phone calls, cards, or gifts to acknowledge the birth of a baby, injury or illness, graduation, wedding, etc. If an illness is long term, they call regularly and will refer the employee to the Benefits Department if they need help.[189]

- *Customer Communications Team* handles all customer and fellow employee compliments (complaints go to the Customer Relations Department); the team issues the employee a commendation along with a personal message signed by the CEO.[190]

- *Culture Activities Team* coordinates service projects along with 120 employee volunteers from all levels in the organization. The volunteers participate for three-year terms and meet four times each year to brainstorm ways the company can show employees they are appreciated. The Culture Committee helps keep the spirit alive—members plan celebrations, resolve issues, and work to keep the corporate identity intact. Many of the culture events are done on the employees' personal time.[191]

  - They coordinate, order food, handle logistics, and set up events like pizza days, grilling burgers, or an ice cream bar to show employees their hard work is appreciated.[192]

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[187] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 16.

[188] Ibid., 32–34.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Ibid., 34.

[191] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 126–127.

[192] Lauer, Southwest Airlines—*Corporations that Changed the World*, 35.

- Two large "Spirit Parties" are held each year; they are open to all employees and provide network opportunities.[193]

- Annual awards banquets honor employees that have served for 10, 20, 25, 30, or 35 years with a black-tie event for the employee and their guest.[194]

- Other events include chili cook offs, Halloween celebrations, and activities for every holiday. Even Southwest's ticket counters and gates are decorated for the holidays.

- *Culture Ambassadors* act as a liaison between Southwest Airlines' executive office and employee work groups (ground employees, flight attendants, cockpit pilots, mechanics, customer support services, and provisioning agents). Each of the eight ambassadors represent different work groups and are on the road coaching local leaders and keeping the Southwest Way culture alive.[195]

A side benefit of employees working together on these morale activities are the bonds they form. Lauer found "stronger and longer-lasting relationships are built between people when they work shoulder to shoulder while helping others who need help, whether they are sick children or coworkers who have to work on a busy holiday."[196]

b.   *Positive Messaging*

Southwest's Proactive Customer Service (PCS) team coordinates all customer communications and works directly with Southwest's operational, communication, and support departments in order to improve their messaging. They "make sure the information being provided to our internal and external Customers is accurate, timely, consistent, and meaningful."[197] Fred Wiersema, editor of *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest,* explains that since many of the Southwest

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[193] Ibid., 36–37.

[194] Ibid., 37.

[195] Ibid., 38–39.

[196] Ibid., 83.

[197] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV*, 130.

passengers are frequent flyers and loyal customers they try to know them by name—the PCS team even sends birthday cards to Southwest's Rapid Reward members.[198]

Employees also help to put customers at ease. Flight attendants and pilots often tell personal stories, make jokes, or sing to entertain passengers and to make them more comfortable. One flight attendant even created a rap song that advised passengers to store their luggage in overhead bins and to fasten their seat belts.[199]

Southwest Airlines uses the same positive messaging in their marketing campaigns. Although it was risky at the time, Southwest was the first airline in the United States to advertise after 9/11. However, they followed the advertisement with a "compassion" campaign one week later that was patriotic, showed Southwest Airlines' employees who were committed to their work and communicated the "deep emotional commitment that Southwest's leaders felt toward both their employees and their passengers."[200]

c.   *Promote the Positive Culture in Corporate Language*

The mission statement's focus is unmistakable in the key words: ***customer service***, ***friendliness***, ***pride***, and ***company spirit*** and is expressed throughout the company's messaging. Even the language that Southwest uses emphasizes its culture. It capitalizes the "E" in "Employee" and the "C" in "Customer" because they want those terms to stand out.[201] When referring to a Southwest pilot they capitalize the "P," but if referring to a pilot from another air carrier it does not. Lauer explains that capitalizing the words they believe are important and developing their own terminology helps perpetuate the positive culture.[202] Even the corporate stock symbol "LUV" is tied into their favorite terminology. Fred Wiersema describes "Southwest's WAY" of doing business is to use

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198 Fred Wiersema, ed.*, Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* Charles Schwab, Lands' End, American Express, Staples, and USAA (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 28.

199 Lauer*, Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 129–130.

200 Ibid., 162.

201 Ibid., 121.

202 Ibid., 121.

evocative titles like "Executive Vice President of Customers," "People Department," "Spirit" magazine, and "Culture Committee" in order to send a clear message on what is important.[203]

A consistent message reinforces the company's culture. Bowker suggests when employees share an understanding of the company's values, it "brings a vibrancy and momentum to an organization and helps focus people on the need for consistently high standards of performance."[204]

d.   Ensure Employees are Happy

Southwest's number one priority is its commitment to employees. In addition, Southwest focuses on its employees first and customers second, and this commitment is evident in both the culture of the organization and how they operate. Wiersema explains the company's strategy is simply: "if our employees are not happy, our customers aren't going to get decent service."[205]   Barrett insists the main reason employees are happy is because they are treated with respect and "everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute to the overall success and well-being of the Company."[206]

Ken Blanchard and Colleen Barrett, co-authors of *Lead with LUV*, suggest Colleen was chosen as the president of Southwest Airlines because she knew "how to love people to success" (she began her career as an executive secretary).[207]   Certainly, Barrett was instrumental in instilling the positive corporate culture that focuses on treating employees well.

> When we talk to our People, we proudly draw a pyramid on the chalkboard and tell them: You are at the top of the pyramid. You are the most important Person to us. You are our most important Customer in terms of priority. Therefore, I am going to spend 80 percent of my time treating you with Golden Rule behavior and trying to make sure that you

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[203] Wiersema, Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines, 37–38.

[204] Clifton and Simmons, *Brands and Branding*, 144.

[205] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 20.

[206] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 14.

[207] Ibid., 1.

have an enjoyable work environment where you feel good about what you do, about yourself, and about your position with this Company. But if I do that, what I want in exchange is for you to do the same thing by offering our Passengers—who are our second Customer in terms of priority—the same kind of warmth, caring, and fun spirit. If you do that consistently, our Passengers will recognize how significantly different this is from the behavior they witness at other businesses, and they will come back for more.[208]

Southwest's message to its employees listed just after is mission statement explains it expects this commitment to pay forward:

We are committed to provide our Employees a stable work environment with equal opportunity for learning and personal growth. Creativity and innovation are encouraged for improving the effectiveness of Southwest Airlines. Above all, Employees will be provided the same concern, respect, and caring attitude within the organization that they are expected to share externally with every Southwest Customer.[209]

Employees are encouraged to live the "Southwest WAY," which has three key values: warrior spirit, servant's heart, and fun-LUVing attitude. First, the warrior spirit means Southwest Airlines' employees have a fighting spirit and strive to "be the best, work hard, be courageous, display a sense of urgency, persevere, and innovate."[210] They focus on "getting the job done, and done well, for our Customers."[211] Second, a servant's heart is defined as "treat others with respect, put others first, be egalitarian, demonstrate proactive customer service, and embrace the Southwest Airlines family."[212] Third, Southwest's employees have a fun-LUVing attitude. That is exhibited when employees "show each other and our valued Customers that we care about them, and we want them to feel like extended family members while they are in our presence."[213]

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[208] Ibid., 29.

[209] Southwest Airlines, "To Our Employees," accessed August 5, 2012, http://www.southwest.com/html/about-southwest/index.html?int=GFOOTER-ABOUT-ABOUT.

[210] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 71–72.

[211] Ibid., 91.

[212] Ibid., 75.

[213] Ibid., 83.

That philosophy is working. Southwest's employees have consistently treated customers well and that has resulted in business success. Since employees are owners in the company, it is also in their best interest to do so. Chris Lauer agrees Southwest has proven "happy and motivated employees are more productive and extend their goodwill to the company's millions of customers each year."[214]

e.   *Employee Recognition*

Another way Southwest Airlines takes care of their employees is to make sure they are recognized for their outstanding efforts. Blanchard explains it is important to recognize employees—"the key to developing people and creating great organizations is to catch people doing things right and accentuate the positive by praising them."[215] Praise has to be specific to ensure "that person will know you're sincere and really know what she is doing."[216] Southwest's most notable employee recognitions include: weekly Chief Executive Officer (CEO) messages with "shout outs" to employees that have done something special, stories about outstanding employees shared in company publications, the best customer compliments are published in "Good Letters," and "Winning Spirit Awards" are presented at annual award ceremonies.[217] Wiersema explains the added benefit of celebrating positive experiences is it helps employees become passionate about their business.[218]

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[214] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 17.

[215] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 8.

[216] Ibid., 9.

[217] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 157.

[218] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 37–38.

2. What Effective Strategies Have Been Used to Provide Good Customer Service?

> We're in the Customer Service business—we just happen to provide airline transportation. It's that simple. But it focuses all the energy of our People on taking care of our Customers.
>
> –Colleen Barrett, President Emeritus of
> Southwest Airlines

Southwest uses several strategies to provide good customer service. It has leadership that emphasizes the importance of customer service, set high customer service standards, and encourage teamwork and collaborative problem solving.

a. *Leadership Emphasis on Customer Service*

First, Southwest's leadership puts an emphasis on good customer service and helps employees make that happen. Blanchard explains, Southwest's Servant Leaders "help people achieve their goals."[219] The traditional pyramid hierarchy is "turned upside down so that the frontline people, who are closest to the customers, are at the top" and:

> Now *they* are responsible—able to respond—to the needs of the customers. In this scenario, leaders serve and are responsive to people's needs, training and developing them to soar like eagles so they can accomplish established goals and live according to the vision and values.[220]

Barrett believes it takes an attitude of seeing the "glass half full," and she demonstrates that "when I make heroes out of those who do selfless good deeds for the betterment of others; and when I find a way to best utilize a person's strengths and minimize his or her weaknesses."[221]

Southwest Airlines' management also backs its employees up when needed. According to Blanchard and Barrett, "Our People understand that as long as the Customer Service decisions they make are not illegal, unethical, or immoral, they are free to do the right thing while using their best judgment—even if that means bending or

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[219] Ibid., 95.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid., 122.

breaking a rule or a procedure in the process." [222] Southwest's servant leadership philosophy means when things go well leaders give everybody else credit, but when the reverse is true they do not pass out blame. Barrett and Barrett explain, "When things go wrong, these Servant Leaders look in the mirror and ask questions like 'What could I have done differently that would have allowed these people to be as great as they could be?' That requires real humility."[223]

Southwest's leadership also stays in touch with field employees. Managers and executives at Southwest are required to work in the field or in other departments outside of their normal area, at least four times each year. Wiersema noted Southwest's executives even load bags on the busiest travel days.[224] They "really work" at baggage check in, as gate agents, etc., and often at another city so they can experience how different operations work. Workers are also encouraged to cross train in other positions and then "pitch in to help their fellow employees as needed."[225] Jim Poisant, author of *Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization,* agrees that managers and executives should be encouraged to spend time working on the frontline. This provides motivation for employees and also gives managers an appreciation for what employees go through.[226] Working in the field also helps to identify problems. For example, while the Southwest Chief Financial Officer (CFO) was helping to tag bags at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), cruise ship passengers started lining up at the counter and the line went out the door and all the way to the next terminal. One of the supervisors told the CFO to "write lots of checks" so they could upgrade their airport's facilities to handle the peak number of passengers.[227] The CFO was able to see the problem first hand and fix it because he took time to get out in the field.

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[222] Ibid., 103.

[223] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 115.

[224] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 37–38.

[225] Ibid., 19.

[226] Jim Poisant, Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization: A Book about Taking Care of the People Who Take Care of the Customers (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002), 120–121.

[227] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 86.

b.   *Set High Customer Service Standards*

Second, Southwest understands the importance of providing good customer service. Southwest sets a standard for service capabilities that "far exceed those of the competition, and that even exceed Customer expectations."[228] Customer service is considered one of the main pillars of the company, along with speed and efficiency.[229] Wiersema explains how important it is to maintain focus on customer service:

> Customer service is the balancing act that juggles the company's super rational, lean business processes with the reality of emotional customers, unpredictable weather, and other wild cards. Customer service is the in-between that makes both the operating model and the customer hum.[230]

c.   *Teamwork and Collaborative Problem Solving*

Lastly, teamwork and collaborative problem solving are emphasized at all levels. Southwest's quick turnaround strategy ensures it gets its planes out quickly because planes on the ground are not making money. The strategy relies on employees from multiple areas working together and communicating between working groups to quickly resolve any problems that come up. Jody Gittell points out, "problem-solving communication in turn enables employees to adapt quickly and work together when things go wrong."[231] To be successful, employees need to be able to bring up and discuss problems without blame in order to find innovative solutions. Gittell added, "to implement this kind of strategy—a strategy based on leanness, speed, and reliability—requires highly effective working relationships among all parties involved."[232]

Southwest tries to identify problems early and fix them. The airline has a flexible hierarchy, which allows employees at all levels to have input on how the company operates. In addition, senior leaders have an open door policy that reportedly works. Lauer states this can keep "employees and managers motivated and engaged,

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[228] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 43.

[229] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 6.

[230] Ibid., 36.

[231] Gittell, *The Southwest Airlines WAY,* 29.

[232] Ibid., 15.

while also keeping the leaders at the top of the company in touch with innovations that are apparent only to the people who work directly with customers on their front lines and their direct supervisors."[233] Employees are encouraged to talk to senior leaders about problems and since they work in the field alongside of their employees on a regular basis, it provides another opportunity to identify and resolve problems together.

3.   How Has Key Information Been Effectively Shared with Customers?

Southwest's customer communications are effectively managed by their Proactive Customer Service team in coordination with its operational, communication, and support departments. As a result, Southwest shares important information with its customers and maximizes the use of social media to reach a larger audience.

a.   Set Clear Expectations for Passengers

Southwest helps set their passenger's expectations at a reasonable level by providing clear information on topics that are important to them. As an example, since the airline does not offer meals on any flights in order to keep costs low, it reminds passengers of that when they purchase their tickets (over the phone or in person) so they will bring food with them.[234] Another example is found in Southwest's official customer service commitment that reads in part:

> Regardless of the circumstances that may arise during your flight, we have already thought about your safety, your wellbeing, your pocketbook, and your expectations. You see, we are here not only to get you from point "A" to point "B," we are here to help when things aren't going quite right for you or for us. To further emphasize our promise to you, our valued Customer, Southwest Airlines is proud to incorporate its Customer Service Commitment in its official Contract of Carriage.[235]

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[233] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 49.

[234] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 34.

[235] Southwest Airlines, "Customer Service Commitment," July 13, 2012, http://www.southwest.com/html/about-southwest/index.html?int=GFOOTER-ABOUT-ABOUT19.

b.   *Maximize Use of Social Media*

Southwest has also maximized their use of social media tools, including its company website, "Nuts about Southwest" blog, and Twitter to provide information to their customers. Southwest's easy to navigate website, with clear frequently asked questions (FAQs), provides important advice for passengers. Southwest answers FAQs about unaccompanied minors, no cost checked bags, and explains there is no assigned seating.[236] The site also reminds passengers they need to arrive early and their luggage may be searched by TSA.[237] Not only does providing that information cause less frustration for passengers, it is also more efficient for the organization when passengers are better informed and thus more prepared.

Southwest's blog is lighthearted and carries the same fun attitude as the airlines' other messaging. The blog highlights new routes, charity and volunteer efforts (positive public image), and offers opportunities for passengers to win free tickets (encourages more followers). The blog's authors explain the goal of *Nuts about Southwest* is to provide "our visitors the opportunity to take a look inside Southwest Airlines and to interact with us."[238]

Southwest has over 1.3 million Twitter followers, much more than TSA's almost 31,000.[239] Even though TSA has over three times as many passengers as Southwest, it has less than three percent of the number of followers on Twitter. Southwest sends tweets (messages) from its single Twitter account, while TSA risks having an inconsistent message coming from its 19 different Twitter accounts.

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[236] Southwest Airlines, "FAQs," accessed September 3, 2012, http://www.southwest.com/html/customer-service/faqs.html?int=GFOOTER-CUSTOMER-FAQ.

[237] Southwest Airlines, "Customer Service Commitment," 10–11.

[238] Southwest Airlines, "Nuts About Southwest," accessed September 3, 2012, http://www.blogsouthwest.com/about.

[239] Southwest Airlines, "@SouthwestAir," Twitter account, accessed September 3, 2012, https://twitter.com/southwestair. TSA, "@TSA" and "@TSABlogTeam," Twitter accounts, accessed September 3, 2012, https://twitter.com/TSA and https://twitter.com/TSABlogTeam.

4. How Has Customer Feedback Been Used to Improve Operations?

Blanchard and Barrett claim Southwest's "Servant Leaders look at feedback as a gift."[240] Servant Leaders value feedback because "the only reason they are leading is to serve, so if anybody has any suggestion on how they can serve better, they want to hear all about it."[241]

a. Collect and Use Customer Feedback

Southwest Airlines has 70 employees in its customer relations department to handle customer contacts. Its website provides three main options for customer contacts: phone number (13 other phone numbers are available for specific travel reservation, rapid rewards, and other departments), single mailing address, and email on-line fill in form.[242] All feedback is tracked and the customer relations' staff has the added benefit of knowing if a person has called before and what her or his previous concerns were. It also prepares monthly reports, which show trends in customer complaints.[243] Wiersema explains how Southwest uses feedback to improve operations: "As we identify trends and themes throughout the year, we integrate learning opportunities to address the issues."[244]

b. Identify What Customers Like and Do More of It

Southwest Airlines listens to customer feedback and does more of what the customer appreciates. For example, Ronald Alsop explained that passengers "solely missed the airborne levity when Southwest decided to tone it down after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. There were fewer jokes, no Halloween costumes, and no gag playing. But after receiving letters from passengers asking for a return to Southwest's

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[240] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 132.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Southwest Airlines, "Contact Us," accessed September 3, 2012, https://www.southwest.com/contact-us/contact-us.html.

[243] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 30–31.

[244] Ibid., 21.

stand-up comedy routines, the airline slowly began bringing back the fun."[245] Southwest
flight attendants returned to cracking jokes like "OK, people, its open seating, just like at
church—saints up front, sinners in back."[246]

Hatch and Schultz agree Southwest's employees are known for their fun
attitudes and their customers enjoy the personal treatment and humor they provide:

> Southwest's laid-back style is celebrated inside the company and out in
> story after story like the ones about the ways in which mundane aspects of
> air travel are handled, from the way flight crews joke with their passengers
> about the limited amount of space under the seat in front of them to the
> sincere playfulness with which service staff provide Southwest's signature
> no-frills peanuts.[247]

Wiersema also noted Southwest's employee's fun attitude includes jokes,
singing, and sometimes even costumes depending on the employee's creativity.[248] That
fun spirit must be working, because Southwest reportedly receives five times as many
compliments as it does complaints.[249]

c.   Manage Negative Feedback

Wiersema explains, "Southwest has consistently received the lowest ratio
of complaints per passengers boarded of all Major U.S. carriers since September 1987
(when DOT began tracking Customer Satisfaction statistics and publishing its Air Travel
Consumer Report)."[250] In calendar year 2011, Southwest reported only 354 passenger
complaints.[251]

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[245] Alsop, The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation, 111.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Hatch and Schultz, Taking Brand Initiative, 17.

[248] Note, Southwest employees are encouraged to use humor but sometimes that will result in an upset
passenger. Management does not want to dampen their employee's spirit, so if the employee's humor was
not appreciated, management will apologize to the customer. Wiersema*, Customer Service: Extraordinary
Results at Southwest Airlines,* 15.

[249] Ibid., 30.

[250] Southwest Airlines, "Southwest Fact Sheet," 7.

[251] U.S. DOT, Air Travel Consumer Report, 47.

Southwest's history of taking care of employees has resulted in a sense of security when it deals with angry customers.[252] Wiersema explains that Southwest's customer relations' staff tries to take negative feedback in stride even when the passenger is very angry, which can happen when flights are delayed or cancelled. Wiersema elaborates:

> If you're in the customer service business, you have to be thick-skinned in this type of environment. You have to realize that when someone yells at you or calls you a name or is disrespectful to you, it's not really you they're angry with. They're upset with the situation.[253]

To help employees handle those situations, Southwest provides conflict resolution and stress management training for employees. Southwest believes that "when employees have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and support, they are more confident in dealing with customers, even irate ones."[254] According to Wiersema, "The goal of customer service is to take care of a problem at the point of occurrence, not to pass it along to someone else to deal with later."[255]

Southwest empowers its employees to do the right thing and supports them regardless of the outcome. When things go wrong, the customer receives a personal response after the situation is researched. A complaint about a late flight and a rude employee requires checking flight logs and the employee's performance records. A sample response might be: "Your plane was late because bad weather in Kansas City kept it grounded for an extra hour before it could take off. As for the rude attendant, we have noticed that after five years of perfect conduct, that individual has received three complaints in one month's time. We will be meeting with her immediately to see what might be wrong."[256]

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[252] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 120.

[253] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 20.

[254] Ibid., 21.

[255] Ibid., 23.

[256] Ibid., 30.

When employees make mistakes, the company apologizes and tries to win the customer back.[257] However, when the customer is wrong, management backs the employee. "We will not tolerate an Employee's physical or verbal abuse by a Customer, and we will back the Employee completely if we see this happening."[258] Blanchard and Barrett believe, it is important for employees to know the company is behind them. A response to a customer complaint when they did not deserve preferential treatment might be, "I'm sorry that we disappointed you, but we do allow our people to make judgment calls. And in this particular case, the judgment call didn't go in your favor."[259]

5.   **What Efficiencies Were Used to Manage the Flow of Customers in Queues?**

Southwest has created efficiencies in the management of customer flows by streamlining their boarding process, working to identify any problems early, and using consistent processes.

a.   *Unique Boarding Process*

In 2007, Southwest Airlines streamlined its boarding process with a unique queuing system unlike any other airline. Southwest passengers are now rewarded for checking in early (or paying a small fee), which gives them an A, B, or C priority group. Southwest uses a visual reminder of what group is currently boarding and passengers automatically line up by number under the appropriate A, B, or C sign. Passengers even assist other passengers that are unfamiliar with the process. When passengers board the plane with their group, they can pick out any available seat since none are assigned.[260] This queuing process means passengers in a higher priority group have first choice of their seat and overhead storage space. It also results in efficient and orderly boarding of passengers because passengers self-organize in the priority queues by number.

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[257] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 77.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 15.

[260] Lauer, Southwest Airlines - Corporations that Changed the World, 63.

b. *Consistent Processes*

Southwest uses consistent processes to be more efficient and it also benefits passengers because they know what to expect. For example, Southwest's gate queues are consistent at every airport. In addition, Southwest uses one aircraft type, which provides more consistency for employees and passengers. The Airlines' passengers know what the seat layout will be like and what items will fit in the overhead containers so they can board more quickly. This also means it is easier for Southwest's employees who maintain and work on only one type of aircraft.[261]

6. How Did They Encourage Public Participation to Improve Operations?

Southwest has encouraged public participation to make its queuing process more efficient and its customer's suggestions have resulted in process improvements.

a. *Customers are Rewarded for Learning and Using their System*

Southwest customers that learn their system for assigning boarding passes are rewarded if they check in early with a priority boarding group and number. As a result, Southwest has loyal customers who understand the unique boarding system well and become some of the company's "best spokespeople." It is not uncommon for a passenger to explain to another passenger how the boarding process works. Wiersema claims "other than the obvious can-do attitude of our employees, the secret of the quick turns is that we have our customers well trained."[262] Customers are rewarded for learning and using the company's system because they can obtain a higher priority in boarding by doing so. Passengers are also encouraged to use online booking and check in systems, which saves Southwest's time and resources.

b. *Customer Suggestions Result in Process Improvements*

Customer suggestions led to refinements in Southwest's unique boarding procedures. It now allows those that checked in early ("A" group) to get first selection of

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[261] Ibid., 61.

[262] Wiersema, *Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines,* 25.

their seats via a numbering system that provides a letter ***and*** a number to each passenger (rather than just by an A, B, or C group).[263] Prior to that feedback, passengers had to line up early to get a good spot in their group because everyone in the A group was competing with each other to get on the plane early in the boarding process. Now, passengers that check in early (or pay a small fee) are rewarded with a lower boarding number (e.g., "A16"). This new system allows passengers to relax at the gate and wait until their group is called. The process is also more orderly since all passengers are lined up in numerical order unlike other airlines where all passengers in the same boarding group surge on the gate at the same time trying to get to the front of the line. For those passengers that do not place a priority on picking a particular seat, they likely going to board as early as they would have on any other airline.

Southwest also listened to customers who wanted more lead time when planning vacations. Based on customer feedback, Southwest now has four months of flight schedules available at all times and tries to make flight schedules for peak holiday travel periods available as far in advance as possible.[264] According to J. D. Power and Associates, "carriers that find innovative ways to provide passengers with greater control, save them time, reduce hassles and make the airline experience more enjoyable and comfortable will reap satisfaction benefits."[265]

C.   ASSESSMENT OF LESSONS LEARNED

There are many lessons to be learned from the research on Southwest Airlines' successes. Considering the challenges TSA faces, Southwest's smart practices that have applicability follow three main themes: value your employees, create a positive corporate culture, and continuously look for efficiencies through a collaborative team approach to problem solving.

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[263] Lauer, *Southwest Airlines—Corporations that Changed the World,* 133.

[264] Ibid., 135.

[265] J. D. Power and Associates, 2012 North America Airline Satisfaction Study, June 13, 2012, http://www.jdpower.com/content/article-base/5EGQLXC/j-d-power-2012-north-america-airline-satisfaction-study.htm.

1.   Value Your Employees

Southwest's success shows it is imperative to value employees and ensure they are taken care of. That requires building a corporate culture that focuses on the employee first and encourages fun activities to build employee morale. When employees are encouraged and supported, they in turn provide that same positive attitude to customers. Jody Gittell, author of *The Southwest Airlines WAY*, suggests Southwest's ability to build strong relationships also helps it be more resilient during a crisis. Gitell also explains,

> They see these relationships—with their employees, among their employees, and with outside parties—as the foundation of competitive advantage, through good times and bad. They see the quality of these relationships not as a success factor, but as the most *essential* success factor. They believe that to develop the company, they must constantly invest in these relationships.[266]

Southwest Airlines' senior leaders prioritize their commitment to employees and show that by spending time interacting with employees on the frontline. Southwest's servant leadership philosophy also means leaders at every level take responsibility for mistakes rather than adding more pressure to the lowest level employees. Jim Poisant comments:

> A caring working environment is one in which employees can act without fear of being criticized or intimidated, a place where they feel free to express their opinions, make suggestions, and feel that they are counted on and respected.[267]

In addition, field managers focus on understanding employee issues and concerns, removing barriers and frustrations, and including employees in collaborative problem solving.

Southwest understands employee recognition needs to be frequent and personal so employees know that their efforts are recognized. That is demonstrated through employee praise that is specific and sincere. Stewart Liff, author of *Managing Government*

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[266] Gittell, *The Southwest Airlines WAY*, 266.

[267] Poisant, *Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization*, 36.

Employees, suggests saying "thank you" to an employee "is one of the best ways for reinforcing good behavior, as long as it is delivered and accepted as being sincere."[268]

1. Create a Positive Corporate Culture

Southwest Airline's leadership sets the tone and builds the corporate culture that results in a great place for employees to work and succeed. Leadership is responsible for developing the positive customer service culture, instilling that culture in the workforce, and making sure it is continually monitored and upheld over time. In addition, employee and organization successes are communicated and celebrated inside and outside of the company. As a result, Southwest Airlines has successfully provided a positive group identity for its employees. Employees seek to belong to groups that provide a positive identity and will work harder when group cohesion is encouraged. Fathali Moghaddam explains Tajfel's social identity theory and the importance of group membership means employees want to belong to groups that have a positive reputation.[269] Members or employees benefit from belonging to a positively viewed organization, which provides prestige and a positive social identity.[270]

2. Continuously Seek Operating Efficiencies

Southwest continuously seeks operating efficiencies through an environment open to continuous learning and considers passenger feedback important. As a result, it has been able to identify problems early and has made process improvements that increased efficiencies. The key is working collaboratively with people from different disciplines to consider new approaches and new solutions for the agency's challenges.

The lessons learned from the study of Southwest Airlines provide opportunities for implementing solutions to some of the challenges faced by TSA. Southwest's best practices will be considered along with those identified in the following chapter's case study on Disney. Disney is another private industry leader that excels at providing

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[268] Stewart Liff, *Managing Government Employees: How to Motivate your People, Deal with Difficult Issues, and Achieve Tangible Results* (New York: American Management Association, 2007), 60.

[269] Fathali M. Moghaddam, *Multiculturalism and Intergroup Relations: Psychological Implications for Democracy in Global Context* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 95.

[270] Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, 34–35.

outstanding customer service. Interestingly, there is a connection between the case studies because Colleen Barrett acknowledges that Southwest learned about courtesy and friendliness from Disney.[271] The best practices from both case studies as well as those identified in the literature review will be summarized in Chapter V's recommendations.

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[271] Blanchard and Barrett, *Lead with LUV,* 112.

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IV.   DISNEY CASE STUDY

A.   OVERVIEW

The Walt Disney Company, specifically Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, was chosen as a case study because like TSA, it interacts with millions of customers each year and need to manage long queues. Other compelling reasons are that Disney has a positive reputation and is known for excelling at providing customer service. Disney's approach to "imagineering" (imagine the future and then take steps to create it) could be modeled at TSA to create a more positive experience for passengers.[272] Implementing customer-focused improvements at TSA requires thinking outside of the box, and there are opportunities to learn from customer service research on Disney's success. As stated in the previous case study, the focus is to find answers to the specific research questions and to look for smart practices that may be applied at TSA.

1.   Company Profile

Walt Disney World Resort opened in 1971, and it has since grown to have approximately 64,000 employees (referred to as "Cast" members).[273] The Disney World property is twice the size of Manhattan, has 32 hotels, and is one of the largest tourist destinations in the world.[274]

The Walt Disney Company (parent company) has had steady leadership at the helm with only six chief executive officers (CEOs) in its 82-year history; the two most recent CEOs are Michael Eisner from 1984–2005 and Bob Iger from 2005 to present.[275] The 2011 annual operating budget for all parks and resorts was $7,383 million.[276]

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[272] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 111.

[273] Walt Disney World, "Walt Disney World News: Delivering the Magic," news release, accessed October 20, 2012, http://wdwnews.com/releases/2010/09/01/delivering-the-magic/.

[274] Lee Cockerell, *Creating Magic—10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies from a Life at Disney* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 4.

[275] Walt Disney Company, Fact Book 2011, accessed October 27, 2012, http://cdn.media.ir.thewaltdisneycompany.com/2011/annual/2011-fact-book.pdf, 19, 20.

[276] Walt Disney Company, "Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Financial Report and Shareholder Letter," accessed October 27, 2012, http://thewaltdisneycompany.com/investors/financial-information, 31.

Disney is known for having a positive reputation and commitment to customer service. Disney claims to "deliver the magic" by "delivering legendary guest service and one-of-a-kind experiences."[277] Disney's efforts were recognized by *Fortune* magazine as the thirteenth most admired company in the world in 2012. Breaking that survey down by industry group reveals Disney was ranked number one in the entertainment industry for key attributes of reputation including innovation, people management, and quality of products and services.[278]

2. Reputation for Good Employee Relations

Like most strong companies, Disney strives to have good employee relations and recognizes it is an important element to success. According to Disney Institute, "Organizations everywhere have begun to understand that their employees are their most important asset. This is particularly true in the delivery of Quality Service. Often, employees are on the front lines, face-to-face with customers."[279] It is evident employee relations are a priority when one considers Disney's expectations for "Guests" (customers) and "Cast" (employees) are essentially the same (see Figure 2).

Guest Expectations	Cast Expectations
• Make me feel special.	• Make me feel special.
• Treat me as an individual.	• Treat me as an individual.
• Respect me and my children.	• Respect me.
• Be knowledgeable.	• Make me knowledgeable.

Figure 2.   Comparison of Disney's Guest Expectations and Cast Expectations.[280]

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[277] Walt Disney World, "Walt Disney World News: Delivering the Magic."

[278] Worlds Most Admired Companies—Walt Disney," CNN Money, March 19, 2012, accessed August 30, 2012, http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/most-admired/2012/snapshots/2190.html.

[279] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest*, 31.

[280] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 53.

Disney's success in maintaining good employee practices was recognized in the 2012 *Fortune* magazine survey; Disney was ranked number one in the entertainment industry for people management.[281] In addition, *U.S. News and World Reports* ranked Disney Parks and Resorts in the top "50 Best Places to Work for 2012."[282]

3. Similarities

Disney and TSA are similar in the ways they encourage employee input, provide in person customer service, and understand the impact on perceptions when employees working in public areas area are always on stage.

Disney and TSA both encourage employee ideas and suggestions. Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson, authors of *The Disney Way*, explain that Walt Disney instilled a culture that "everyone was invited to voice his or her opinions and to make suggestions—in fact, not just invited but required."[283] Lee Cockerell, former Disney executive and author of *Creating Magic*, claims managers are held to that standard, "We let it be known that managers and executives would be evaluated not only on their bottom line results but on how those results were obtained."[284] That means leaders are expected to get input and to show Cast Members their input is valued.[285] TSA uses a popular on-line "Idea Factory" to seek employee feedback and collect their ideas and suggestions. Employees are encouraged to submit ideas and rate those submitted by others—the best ideas are often implemented. TSA program managers also use the Idea Factory to encourage employee collaboration by specifically asking employees about issues they are working to resolve. In addition, TSA has an employee advisory council at every hub airport that provides a mechanism for employees to suggest areas for improvements or to resolve problems.

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[281] CNN Money, "Worlds Most Admired Companies—Disney."

[282] Ben Baden, "The 50 Best Places to Work for 2012," U.S. News and World Report, December 14, 2011, http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2011/12/14/the-50-best-places-to-work-for-2012.

[283] Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson, The Disney Way: Harnessing the Management Secrets of Disney in Your Company (New York: McGraw Hill, 2007), 27.

[284] Cockerell, *Creating Magic*, 9.

[285] Ibid.

Disney cast members provide customer service in person and that means handling issues face-to-face. That is not always easy, because customers "show up in every imaginable mood and physical condition," and they provide instantaneous feedback so employees have to stay on their toes.[286] TSA faces the same challenge when dealing with the traveling public who has varying perceptions and expectations about the screening experience. Disney recognizes that each contact with a customer is an opportunity to create a positive impression. Like TSA employees, Disney "cast members are on stage whenever they are in the public areas."[287] Disney employees are trained to consider the impact of what they say and do as soon as they arrive at work.

4. Differences

A major difference between TSA and Disney is that Disney has developed a strong reputation and frequently receives positive press. *Forbes* ranked Disney as the twenty-first most reputable company in the world (seventh in the U.S.).[288] In addition, a 2012 Harris Poll ranked Disney in the "excellent" category as the sixth most reputable U.S. company after considering social responsibility, vision and leadership, emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, and financial performance.[289] The same Harris Poll ranked the U.S. government as a whole in last place (just behind the tobacco industry).[290]

Table 2 compares Disney and TSA using common indicators in order to put the similarities and differences between the two in perspective.

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[286] Ibid., 25–26.

[287] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 24.

[288] Klaus Kneale, "World's Most Reputable Companies: The Rankings," Forbes, May 6, 2009, accessed October 20, 2012, http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/06/world-reputable-companies-leadership-reputation-table.html.

[289] The survey interviewed 17,555 people. Harris Interactive, The 2012 Harris Poll Annual RQ Public Summary Report: A Survey for the U.S. General Public Using the Reputation Quotient, February 2012, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/Products/ReputationQuotient.aspx, 8–9.

[290] Ibid., 19.

Table 2.   Summary Chart Identifying Key Characteristics for Disney and TSA.

	Disney	TSA
Years in Operation	41 years	11 years
Annual Operating Budget	$7.4 Billion	$8 Billion
Customers vs. Passengers Annually **(attendance vs. enplanements)**	47 Million[291]	450 Million
Employees	64,000 Total	50,000 Officers
Employee Unions	Yes (32 unions)[292]	Yes (1 union)
Employee Starting Salary per Hour	$8[293]	$14
Number of Top Level Leadership in the Last 10 Years **(turnover)**	2	6
Twitter Followers	1,414,240	30,751
Mission Statement	"At Walt Disney World Resort, our vision is to deliver magical entertainment experiences with integrity and do so in ways that engage the imaginations of people of all ages and interests."[294]	"The Transportation Security Administration protects the Nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce."
Core Values	Honesty, integrity, respect, courage, openness, diversity, and balance.[295]	Integrity Innovation Team Spirit

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[291] The 2011 attendance report indicates that Walt Disney World's top four parks had over 47 million visitors. Magic Kingdom had 17.1M visitors, Epcot had 10.8M, Animal Kingdom had 9.8M, and Hollywood Studies had 9.7M. AECOM and Themed Entertainment Association, 2011 Theme Index: Global Attractions Attendance Report, accessed November 18, 2012, http://www.aecom.com/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=764f4ca4114a7310VgnVCM100000089e1bacRCRD.

[292] Disney operates "under 10 collective bargaining agreements with 32 separate unions." Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 21.

[293] Estimated starting hourly salary is based on two online sources that listed $7.60 to $8.36 per hour. Estimated lowest hourly rate of $7.60. Glassdoor, "Disney Parks & Resorts Salaries," accessed November 18, 2012, http://www.glassdoor.com/Salary/Disney-Parks-and-Resorts-Salaries-E13843.htm. Estimated lowest hourly rate of $8.36. PayScale, "Hourly Rate for Walt Disney Company Employees," accessed November 18, 2012, http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Employer=The_Walt_Disney_Company/Hourly_Rate.

[294] Walt Disney World, "About Walt Disney World," accessed October 27, 2012, http://wdwnews.com/releases/2009/09/10/world-in-brief/.

[295] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 250–252.

5.   Case Study Goal

Despite the differences between Disney and TSA, there is an opportunity to learn from an industry leader with a reputation for providing excellent customer service. Smart practices in the private industry may offer new and better customer focused approaches that can be used to improve TSA's public image.

B.   CASE STUDY OF DISNEY SMART PRACTICES

The objective of this case study was to find answers to the research questions and to look for patterns and relationships in how Walt Disney World has encouraged positive public opinion through customer focused initiatives. The primary research question is: What smart practices can be derived from outside of government to help solve TSA's most significant public-image challenges? The research question was broken down into the following six case study focus questions.

1.   What Smart Practices Have Been Used to Promote a Positive Public Image?

Disney promotes a positive public image through a strong training program that emphasizes its values and commitment to customer service, by using positive corporate language, and by taking care of its employees.

a.   Create Magic Through Orientation Training

Disney's service excellence is credited to a focus on training. Training begins when new employees attend orientation and continues with professional development training throughout their Disney career. Disney employees participate in professional development courses on leadership skills, business practices, and customer service.[296] In total, the Disney University offers 225 different classes ranging from hospitality to basic computer skills.[297]

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[296] Ibid., 13.

[297] Walt Disney World, "Walt Disney World News: Delivering the Magic."

A quality orientation program helps transmit Disney's corporate identity.[298] Capodagli and Jackson explain the importance of Disney's orientation training referred to as "Traditions." They elaborate, "Every new cast member must spend several days in Traditions training before starting the job. During this orientation period, the Disney culture is communicated through powerful storytelling."[299] New employees are trained on Disney's "history and legacy of superlative Guest service."[300] They learn performance tips that explain "courtesy in action" and how showing courtesy contributes to a positive experience for customers. They also learn how posture, gestures, and body language can impact the guest's experience.[301] Disney's performance tips include:

- Greet and welcome Guests.

- Seek out Guests that need help or assistance. Listen to their needs, answer questions, and offer assistance.

- Provide immediate service recovery—resolve a Guest service failure before it becomes a Guest service problem. Always find the answer for a Guest or find someone else that can.

- Display appropriate body language—attentive, good posture, appropriate facial expression.

- Focus on the positive, rather than the rules and regulations.

- Never talk about personal or job-related problems in front of Guests.

- Thank Guests as they leave.[302]

Disney's performance tips clearly define how employees are expected to interact with their customers and are used as a basis for accountability. Cockerell states, "Fulfilling the performance guidelines is a condition of employment at Walt Disney World. Cast members who do not use them are subject to progressive disciplinary actions."[303]

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[298] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 76.

[299] Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 41.

[300] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 116.

[301] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 85.

[302] Ibid., 86.

[303] Ibid., 87.

b. Customer-Focused Corporate Language

Disney also uses unique words to reinforce a positive company culture. Employees are called "Cast Members," customers are "Guests," interviews are "auditions," and a job is known as a "role." Regardless of whether employees are working in a theatre production or managing rides, public areas are called "onstage," behind the scenes is called "backstage," and uniforms are referred to as "costumes."[304] Using unique words helps focus Disney employees on what is important. Disney explains, "words create images and corresponding assumptions in people's minds"—if employees think of a customer as a "Guest," "you feel a greater obligation to ensure his or her happiness."[305]

c. Ensure Employees are Happy

Like Southwest Airlines, Disney understands happy employees make a difference. According to Capodagli and Jackson, "Walt Disney went out of his way to make sure that employees were satisfied with their jobs and with the company. No one had to tell Walt that workers who are happy take pride in their work and do it well."[306] Author Lee Cockerell agrees it is important to take care of employees and contends "you must have committed people at every level who feel involved, appreciated, and proud of what they do."[307] Disney Cast Members are "trained to treat each and every Guest with the utmost care and respect. And they do this consistently because they are treated exactly the same way by the Disney leadership: with the utmost care and respect."[308]

Disney's focus on keeping employees happy results in a "win-win" situation. As Cockerell points out, "When everyone matters and everyone knows he or she matters, employees are happy to come to work, and they're eager to give you their

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304 Ibid., 81.

305 Ibid., 81–82.

306 Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 78.

307 Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 27.

308 Ibid., 5.

energy, creativity, and loyalty. The result is predictable: more productivity and satisfaction; less absenteeism and turnover."[309]

d.   *Employee Recognition*

Disney also makes sure employees are recognized for their outstanding efforts. Cast Members are recognized at service celebrations, annual Cast appreciation events, local recognition programs, and through the Walt Disney Legacy award program.[310] During his time with Disney, Lee Cockerell made it a priority to express his appreciation to employees. He believes that also helps turn employees into better leaders because they pass that encouragement on. He explains, "Like good parents, the best leaders accentuate the positive and reinforce it constantly. They know that people do their best work when they're confident, and nothing fuels self-confidence like positive feedback from a leader."[311] Cockerell explains it is important to pay particular attention to frontline employees because "they often get overlooked when leaders dole out positive recognition, and they are often the most likely to be degraded, reprimanded, and given heat from customers."[312]

2.   What Effective Strategies Have Been Used to Provide Good Customer Service?

It's not the magic that makes it work; it's the way we work that makes it magic.

–Lee Cockerell, *Creating Magic*

Disney's excellent customer service reputation is due in large part to leadership emphasis on customer service, collaboration with employees, and because the company creates a customer service plan before new services or programs are implemented.

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[309] Ibid., 35.

[310] Walt Disney World, "Walt Disney World News: Delivering the Magic."

[311] Cockerell, *Creating Magic*, 194.

[312] Ibid., 202.

a. *Leadership Emphasis on Customer Service*

Disney's leaders emphasize the importance of customer service. Disney believes leadership makes the difference. As Cockerell explains, "if you want your employees to deliver excellent service, you'd better provide them with excellent leadership."[313] The focus is on leadership because:

> …all business problems boil down to leadership problems. Everything you wish to accomplish is driven by great leadership, and the strategies for achieving that are the same regardless of the industry you're in, the continent you're on, the products or services you provide, or the number of workers you employ.[314]

A Disney initiated study suggests there is a direct link between strong leadership skills and business success. According to Cockerell:

> The study found that business units with the highest scores in Guest satisfaction were the same ones whose leaders received high ratings from their direct reports in qualities such as listening, coaching, recognizing people's efforts, and giving people decision-making authority. In short, great leadership leads to employee excellence, which leads to customer satisfaction and strong business results. In other words, the customer doesn't come first; *leadership* comes first.[315]

The Disney formula for success is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3.   Disney's Formula for Success.[316]

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[313] Ibid., 7.

[314] Ibid., 14.

[315] Ibid., 7.

[316] Ibid.

Disney managers are required to get out from behind their desks and watch what the Guests are doing in order to find out how they can improve customer service.[317] When company leaders are out in public areas, they examine service and operations from the Guests' point of view. Cockerell claims that when this happens on a regular basis, "it will enable you to root out flaws, measure progress, and resolve minor problems before they become major issues."[318]

b. Collaboration with Employees

Disney's leaders consult with their employees and value their opinions. They have found that including employees in decision-making results in more buy-in and cooperation. Cross-functional team reviews also identify problem areas that need resolution and spread smart practices to other areas of the company. When Disney managers audit operations at other locations, they ask questions, observe operations, and look for weaknesses. Cockerell claims that in those cross-functional reviews, managers were able to "spot flaws in the operations they visited, but they also found good ideas for processes and procedures to implement in their own departments."[319]

A collaborative environment can significantly increase the number of potential solutions for problem solving. Capodagli and Jackson suggested "bringing people together in cross-functional teams often sparks a flurry of new ideas that, in turn, produce solutions to problems."[320] They continue, "Because such teams constantly draw on the diverse experience and opinions of a number of people from across the organization, they are better able to look at the company as a whole and suggest integrated product, service, and process improvements."[321] The result is lower level employees feel empowered when they participate in collaborative efforts and more ideas are generated, which benefit the company.

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[317] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 42.

[318] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 171.

[319] Ibid., 156.

[320] Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 87.

[321] Ibid.

c.   *Use an Integration Matrix to Plan for Good Customer Service*

Disney uses an "Integration Matrix" to identify its quality service goals. The matrix is used as a "diagnostic tool to isolate, analyze, and brainstorm solutions to service lapses" and can be used to identify "effective *and* inexpensive approaches to creating service moments."[322] The desired behaviors or service standards are listed on the matrix rows, and the delivery systems are listed in the columns. For example, employees have the ability to provide courteous service; however, the processes put in place can help them do so. As the matrix is filled in, the way a particular service standard is put in place is further defined into a complete "Quality Service experience."[323] (An example of a customer service integration matrix applied to TSA is provided in the following recommendations chapter.)

3.   How Has Key Information Been Effectively Shared with Customers?

Some of the most effective ways Disney shares key information with their Guests is by preparing employees with positive responses to FAQs, using queue wait times as another opportunity to provide information, and maximizing the use of social media.

a.   *Positive Messaging Provided for Employees to Use*

Disney focuses on preparing employees so they have the right answers to FAQs since employee to customer communication is often the main source of information for customers. According to the Disney Institute, "On a property the size of Walt Disney World with an annual guest list of millions of people, effective guest communication is a critical element in service delivery, and much of that communication flows directly from the cast to the guests."[324]

Employees are trained to seek out guest contact so they can answer questions and offer assistance. Employees need to be provided with the right information in order to do that effectively. Disney service processes are specifically "aimed at

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[322] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 180.

[323] Ibid.

[324] Ibid., 153–154.

preparing the cast to give guests the answers they need on the spot. These processes are designed to provide the right information in the right manner at the right time."[325] Several different internal communication methods transmit the information employees need to help guests:

- 60,000 copies of a weekly newspaper communicate information property wide.

- Pocket-sized fast-fact cards are printed and distributed with information about new attractions or events.

- Company intranet.

- Broadcast emails.[326]

Disney also strives to make sure cast members are notified when things change. When Disney has information that is specifically related to just one site, it is only shared with employees in that area. Their overall goal is to "provide the right information in the right manner at the right time."[327]

b.   *Take Advantage of Queue Wait Times to Provide Information*

Disney uses the inevitable queue wait times to educate, inform, and entertain its Guests through cast member interactions and videos. The company understands cast members have a unique opportunity to share information with those waiting in line, and they can promote other rides and attractions at the same time. The Disney queue videos have two advantages—they provide information the Guests need and they help Guests pass the time while waiting in long queues.[328]

c.   *Maximize Use of Social Media*

Disney has maximized its website and social media tools including the Disney Parks blog to provide information to customers.[329] Disney's website has answers

[325] Ibid., 154.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 154–155.

[328] Ibid., 149.

[329] Walt Disney World, "Disney Parks Blog," accessed January 19, 2013, http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/news/digital-tools/.

to FAQs that benefit its guests and information is pushed out through Walt Disney World's Twitter account to over 1.4 million followers (as mentioned previously, TSA has less than 31,000 Twitter followers).[330]

4. How Has Customer Feedback Been Used to Improve Operations?

Walt Disney understood that customer opinions are important.[331] Although that should be a standard for all companies, Capodagli and Jackson found many companies say they focus on the customer, yet they often fail to do so. They explain, "Although a 'customer first' policy usually makes its way into most of the mission statements we've read, far too few companies really live those words."[332] Disney demonstrates their focus on the customer by studying guests, collecting and analyzing customer feedback, and responding to negative feedback.

a. Study Guests to Find out What is Important to Them (Guestology)

Disney leaders look at their operations from their Guests' perspective and continuously work to improve customer service. Lee Cockerell explains that Disney coined a unique word for research into what the customer wants: "Guestology is the study of what Guests like and don't like, as well as what they want and don't want."[333] Disney's Guestology can be further defined as the "science of knowing and understanding customers" and includes demographic and psychographic information.[334]

- Demographics help companies identify who their customer base is so they can target services for them. According to Disney Institute, "Demographic information reveals who customers are, where they come from, how much effort they expend to get here, how much they spend, etc. . . Demographics help ensure that the Quality Service Cycle is correctly targeted."[335]

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[330] Walt Disney Company, "@Disney," Twitter account, accessed October 11, 2012, https://twitter.com/Disney.

[331] Ibid., 40.

[332] Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 63.

[333] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 221.

[334] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 47.

[335] Ibid.

- Psychographic information is the "clues to what customers need, what they want, what preconceived notions they bring to the table, and what emotions they experience."[336]

Authors Robert Ford and Duncan Dickson interviewed Disney's Bruce Laval, who is credited as the father of Guestology and first coined the phrase. Laval explained how Guestology was used to innovate at Walt Disney World.

> Disney was always extremely focused on the guest. It has always been world renowned for its exceptional guest service. That is a tradition that goes all the way back to Walt Disney himself and Disneyland. What Guestology did is provide management with more analytical tools and more sophisticated information, which in turn enabled them to make better informed and educated decisions on how to improve the guest experience.[337]

> Guestology leads to innovation by doing the research to constantly seek out new knowledge. It's the knowledge obtained and insights gained from the research and data analysis that leads to the innovation. No matter what the operation is, there are always areas that need to be improved. No matter how successful you are, you always need to improve. What Guestology does is provide the science and discipline that allows you to identify those solutions, test those solutions and implement them.[338]

Disney uses the results from Guestology studies to exceed Guest expectations. The Disney Institute explains:

> It means analyzing that experience from the guest's perspective, understanding the needs and wants of the guest, and committing every element of the business—from the design of each element of the infrastructure to the interaction between guest and cast—to the creation of an exceptional experience for each of them.[339]

Disney has found that a better understanding of its customers means it is able to anticipate their needs and provide a higher level of customer service.

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[336] Ibid., 48.

[337] Robert C. Ford and Duncan R. Dickson, "The Father of Guestology: An Interview with Bruce Laval," Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship 13, no. 3 (2008), 94.

[338] Ibid., 96.

[339] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 26.

b.   *Collect and Use Customer Feedback*

Disney collects feedback through a variety of methods and uses the data to identify what is working and what areas need additional attention. Disney uses face-to-face and telephone surveys, focus groups, comment cards, mystery shoppers, and "listening posts" at strategic locations to answer guest questions, solve problems, and collect information.[340]   Guest letters and emails are included with other forms of customer feedback and employees provide their "opinion and observations of guests as a standard part of their jobs."[341] In total, Disney collects feedback from over one million Guests each year and uses that information to improve service.[342]

Cockerell explains how customer feedback benefits Disney and helps improve operations:

> The purpose is to gather accurate, reliable information in order to provide better products and services, and that's something every business needs to do. So take advantage of every method available for gathering information about your customer base. And be sure to make the results of your research available to everyone in your organization.[343]

When the feedback information is disseminated back out, it allows process owners to make adjustments to their areas of responsibility that will improve the service they provide.[344]

c.   *Manage Negative Feedback*

Disney also has to manage and respond to negative feedback. Disney recognizes that when Guests are inconvenienced and their problems are not resolved,

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340 Ibid., 43–44.

341 Ibid.

342 Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 222.

343 Ibid.

344 Although TSA also collects feedback through several methods (see Appendix), it does not effectively consolidate, analyze, and disseminate the results back out to the field offices. More information is included in the recommendations chapter.

"combustion points can easily turn into explosion points."[345]   The Disney Institute explains:

> The best way to identify key combustion points is to study your guests. What do they complain about? Where do they get stuck during the service experience? What are the common problems they face when moving within your organization? The answers to these questions are the *combustion statements*.[346]

Disney found that typical combustion statements are universal to all companies—"customer flow, employee-to-customer communication, customers with special needs, and poor process design."[347] TSA faces those same challenges.

Tom Connellan explains Disney works to earn customer loyalty by using "Service Recovery." They do not want customers to go away unhappy, so when things go wrong they try to bring the situation back in balance. Every employee is empowered and encouraged to resolve issues. Not only is that considered "crucial in maintaining guest loyalty," but it "also helps keep cast members committed because it gives them the opportunity to fix things right on the spot for that guest."[348]

5.   What Efficiencies Were Used to Manage the Flow of Customers in Queues?

Walt Disney World's biggest complaint is customer concerns about waiting in lines.[349] The company addressed those concerns by implementing new innovations in queue management and designing the queue to make the wait time seem shorter. Cockerell contends "over the years the company has been relentless in trying to shorten queue times for popular attractions and to make the waiting period as pleasant and as comfortable as possible."[350] Disney strives for efficiency and that means keeping the line moving.

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[345] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 144.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid., 145.

[348] Connellan, Inside the Magic Kingdom, 175.

[349] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 148.

[350] Ibid.

a. *Innovative Queue Management*

Disney was able to improve its queues by analyzing the problem from different angles. First, Disney made sure it had the resources in place to handle the customer flows. The Disney Institute states: "The company studies guest flow and usage patterns to provide the proper equipment and staffing levels. Operational checklists ensure preparedness for the demands of each business day."[351]

Second, Disney's approach to "*optimizing guest flow* means enabling guests to self-manage their movement through the service experience."[352] It also includes "educating guests about the benefits of certain choices and monitoring flow continually so you can offer them accurate information."[353] Disney managed to do that through an innovative solution called the FASTPASS system targeted at long queue lines on the most popular rides. The FASTPASS system allows guests to swipe their admission card to reserve a one-hour time slot later in the day. When they return at their allotted time they move rapidly through a special line. Cope, Cope, Bass, and Syrdal studied Disney queue management and reported their findings in the *Journal of Service Science*. The authors noted Disney customers' "satisfaction levels skyrocketed" after FASTPASS was introduced.[354]

> The system has since been expanded to all Disney theme parks worldwide, and is now in use by over 50 million guests per year… Guests are assisted in making their choice by information regarding estimated waits of both options. Thus, they can decide to wait in the traditional line, or take a FASTPASS ticket and return at a later time with no further wait. These published wait times also serve to self-regulate and stabilize the system. . . The key feature of the FASTPASS systems is *choice*.[355]

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[351] Disney Institute*, Be Our Guest,* 63.

[352] Ibid., 147.

[353] Ibid.

[354] Rachelle F. Cope, Robert Cope III, Anna N. Bass, and Holly A. Syrdal "Innovative Knowledge Management at Disney: Human Capital and Queuing Solutions for Services," Journal of Service Science 4, no. 1 (2011), 17.

[355] Ibid.

Cockerell points out, "with a little insight and creativity, you can make process changes that no one would even expect but that make a huge difference to grateful customers."[356]

b.   *Queue Setting*

Disney's queue setting is designed to make the wait times seem shorter. Queues wrap around different sections so customers do not see all of the people in line in front of them. Customers are kept comfortable with fans and mists and provided with information about the ride and other park features. Disney also uses the setting to instruct customers or assist them through the service experience. Cockerell explains, "Cast Members are trained to treat impatient Guests with kindness and to keep restless children occupied; video screens are displayed to entertain and inform the people in line."[357] "The setting can define the experience and tell a story while the physical layout helps keep customers on track."[358] For example, Disney queue lines have arrows on the floor to clearly show customers where to go next.

6.   How Did They Encourage Public Participation to Improve Operations?

Disney has encouraged public participation in improving operations by rewarding their customers for learning and using their unique queuing system and posting wait time information, which allows their customers to have an impact on shortening their queue waits.

a.   *Customers are Rewarded for Learning and Using their System*

Disney guests can impact the length of their wait times by learning to use the FASTPASS system and are rewarded for doing so by spending less time standing in queues. As a result, the public's participation in Disney's innovative FASTPASS system has helped to improve operational wait times and gives customers more time to spend on

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356 Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 148–149.

357 Ibid., 148.

358 Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 133.

other attractions. Guests staying at Disney hotel properties are also rewarded with early access to the park. That benefits the guests but also helps Disney World relieve congestion at park entrances during opening times and encourages customer loyalty to Disney hotels.

b.   *Customers Rely on Posted Wait Time Information*

Disney also advertises wait times on a "tip board" so guests are informed and can decide whether to enter the queue or come back later. The Disney Institute states, Disney not only clearly explains wait times, but it also does its best to stay under the maximum time quoted.[359] The main benefits are guests know what to expect and management and employees have metrics to indicate how well their efforts have achieved the goal to minimize customer waits. The Disney Institute also explains, "Disney also found that by measuring the length of the waits, it helps your cast members understand the impact that has on guests."[360] An added benefit is that operations are improved when customers have wait time information because peak flows are spread out more.

C.   ASSESSMENT OF LESSONS LEARNED

There are several lessons to be learned from the research on Disney's successes in customer service and creating a positive public image. Considering the challenges TSA faces, Disney's smart practices that have applicability follow two main themes: understanding the customers' perspective and innovative approaches to queue management.

1.   Understanding the Customers' Perspective

Translating Disney's approach to TSA would involve trying to see the security experience from the customers' perspective. That does ***not*** mean security levels would be reduced if the traveling public does not like them. Instead, TSA's new approach should be to understand the impact of security procedures on the traveling public, increase the

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[359] The Disney Institute also recommends overestimating wait times because "a shorter-than-expected wait is much preferable to a longer-than-expected one." Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 148.

[360] Ibid.

agency's efforts to help the passenger understand them better, and improve customer service during the required security processes.

Disney employees show courtesy by being friendly, being prepared with the answers to commonly asked questions, and proactively reaching out to assist and engage with customers. For example, Disney's FAQ is: "What time is the three o'clock parade?" Instead of laughing at the obvious question, Disney employees explain to their guests what they really want to know, which is "What time the three o'clock parade get to this location?" and where they will have the best view.[361] TSA's similar FAQ might be: "Is this bottle of water a liquid?"   What the passenger really needs to know is whether something they consider as harmless as water is really a prohibited item. TSA's courteous response might be:

> Yes, bottled water is a prohibited liquid. However, the queue line is not long right now, so please take time to finish your water before you come through the security checkpoint. If you want, you may bring in your empty bottle and refill it from a water fountain after security.

Going beyond the customer's actual question and providing the information they really need is superb customer service.

Disney uses Guestology, the study of its customers, to continuously improve or "debug" their products and services. The company recognizes that although things will not be perfect the first time, "new technologies and techniques soon appear that allow us to make it even better."[362] TSA should model this smart practice, which will result in a better understanding of the customer's perspective. This can be done through an analysis of customer feedback and using that information to improve customer service and operating processes.

As TSA moves to a more customer focused organization, it should use Disney's Integration Matrix as each new security procedure or technology is introduced to ensure the customer's perspective is considered. *The Disney Way* authors explain:

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[361] Cockerell, *Creating Magic*, 221.

[362] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 164.

Innovation is a three-legged animal that must encompass product, service, *and* process. In terms of product, innovation not only means making something entirely new, but perhaps rethinking how the old works or how it is used. Process innovation leads to improvements in the way the product is produced, and service innovation changes the way the product is integrated into the entire organization.[363]

2. Innovations in Queue Management

Disney's innovations in queue management include reporting wait times for customers so they can self-manage their experience, optimizing customer flows, and using the setting to provide information.

Disney understands that the customer's perceptions about queue wait times (too long, unpleasant, etc.) need to be considered. Duncan Dickson, Robert C. Ford, and Bruce Laval, authors of the article "Managing Real and Virtual Waits in Hospitality and Service Organizations," identified the influences on customers' perceptions about wait times:

- *Unoccupied time feels longer than occupied time*. When customers have nothing to occupy their waiting time, the wait will seem longer than if they have something to keep them busy.

- *Anxious, sad, and angry waits feel longer than relaxed ones*. If people are afraid of, angry about, or feeling sad about what will happen to them once the service experience begins, the wait will seem longer.

- *Waits of uncertain length feel longer than certain ones*. If customers have no idea when the wait will end and the service experience will begin, the wait will seem longer than if they have a sense of the expected wait time.

- *Unexplained waits feel longer than explained waits*. When customers do not know what is holding up a line or causing a delay, the wait will feel longer than if they know the reason.

- *Uncomfortable waits feel longer than comfortable waits*. When customers must endure environmental conditions that cause discomfort, the wait will feel longer than if they were in comfortable conditions.

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[363] Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 46.

- *Unfair waits feel longer than fair ones*. When customers feel that others who arrived after them are being served first, the wait will seem longer than if customers are served according to their order of arrival.[364]

Dickson, Ford, and Laval also identified that:

when waiting customers are unsure of the selection rules governing the wait process, believe them to be unfair, or believe that they are being applied in an unfair way, they are likely to display higher levels of dissatisfaction with their wait.[365]

The lessons learned from the study of Walt Disney World provide additional opportunities for implementing solutions to some of the challenges faced by TSA. The following chapter brings everything together by summarizing the key recommendations that resulted from the extensive literature review and case studies on Southwest Airlines and Walt Disney World. Chapter V lists specific customer focused areas that TSA should target in order to improve their public image.

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[364] Duncan Dickson, Robert C. Ford, and Bruce Laval, "Managing Real and Virtual Waits in Hospitality and Service Organizations," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2005), 60–62.

[365] Ibid., 62.

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V. RECOMMENDATIONS: APPLYING THE LESSONS

The intent of the case study analysis was to identify Southwest Airlines and Disney's customer service smart practices and then analyze them to determine if they are applicable to TSA's challenges. In addition, key points or lessons learned from the literature study have been considered. The overall objective was to identify customer focused solutions that may improve TSA's public image.

Some of the most pressing challenges related to the public's acceptance of TSA have been identified as unpopular screening procedures (outside of this thesis research), customer service perceptions, lack of information provided to travelers, and negative media attention. As stated earlier in this thesis, by identifying these challenges and seeking solutions from smart practices in the private industry, there is an opportunity to implement innovative ideas that may improve TSA's public image. If TSA can improve the public's perception of the agency, employees will be in a better position to focus on security because they will not be diverted to handle complaints or receive the brunt of the traveling public's often negative response. An added benefit is that 50,000 officers will perform their duties in a more positive work environment.

A. SMART PRACTICES APPLIED TO TSA CHALLENGES

Although there were numerous ideas generated from the case study analyses, only the strongest ideas and those most applicable to TSA were included in the following recommendations. The strategies for improving TSA's public image follow the same format as the case study questions.

1. Strategies to Promote a Positive Public Image

The review of literature and case studies confirmed that companies with respectable public images have worked to promote positive public messages and have a workplace culture that focuses on the positives.

a.   *Promote Positive Public Messages*

TSA Public Affairs can do more to promote the agency's successes. A public information campaign focused on positive stories and assertive correction of inaccurate media messages will help offset the current trend towards primarily negative media coverage about TSA.

(1)   Share Positive TSA Messages with the Traveling Public. TSA needs to promote positive messages to the millions of passengers that go through security checkpoints each day. TSA video monitors at every large checkpoint should display consistent messaging about TSA's successes in keeping prohibited items off of planes and promote local and national employee role models (positive employee recognition also encourages good customer service behavior).

Modeled after TSA's blog, the consistent message should be: 11 million passengers were screened this week and those passengers were screened effectively and safely. In that process, TSA kept 29 guns from being taken through the security checkpoints (21 were loaded) and identified other prohibited items including knives, firearm components, realistic replica firearms, stun guns, brass knuckles, ammunition, inert shells from anti-personnel mines, and batons (example from week of March 17–22, 2012).[366] Providing that information at security checkpoints will help the traveling public understand that TSA employees are focused on security and are effective in keeping dangerous items off flights.

In addition, there are many employee success stories that can be shared externally with the checkpoint audience. TSA employees have provided critical care as first responders to heart attack and choking victims, helped law enforcement identify criminals and prevent kidnappings, are working on advanced degrees in homeland security, volunteer in their communities, and many are honorable veterans or active duty

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[366] Transportation Security Administration, "TSA Week in Review: Debrainer Discovered at BWI," The TSA Blog, March 23, 2012, http://blog.tsa.gov/2012/03/tsa-week-in-review-debrainer-discovered.html.

Guard and Reservists. Telling their stories externally has the added benefit of cultivating a positive workplace culture.

(2) Assertively Respond to Inaccurate Media Messages. Companies with positive public images promptly address inaccurate media messages when they inevitably come up. In many cases, the negative stories about TSA that receive widespread attention are inaccurate and result in more damage to TSA's already flawed reputation. CCTV camera systems at checkpoints and baggage screening areas can be used to verify whether security procedures were appropriate when responding to complaints reported in the media. Due to the risk of complaints going viral, TSA should consider installing CCTV systems over screening areas where they are not already available. Having an indisputable video of what actually happened protects TSA and their employees from false allegations, and when employees have acted inappropriately the CCTV evidence allows disciplinary action to be immediately taken. This will demonstrate TSA's responsiveness to the public's concern about inappropriate or illegal activity by TSA's staff.

In those instances when there is impropriety, TSA should send a strong public message that appropriate disciplinary action was taken. When there was no impropriety but instead misinformation was fed to the public, TSA should quickly counter that message with accurate information and video evidence. That will require TSA public affairs to have strong relationships with the media that can be leveraged during crisis communications or to turn around inaccurate messages. Clarke Caywood provided sound advice. Caywood notes, "If government leaders want to reach out to gain public support, they have no choice but to work with the media. If they fail to do so, they surrender valuable communication channels to their critics."[367]

b. Build a Positive Workplace Culture

Although TSA has been actively working to create a more positive workplace culture, there is more that can be done. Building a positive workplace culture

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[367] Caywood, The Handbook of Strategic Public Relations & Integrated Communications, 463.

begins with a strong message at new hire orientation, promoting positive internal messages, increased efforts to improve employee morale, recognizing employees for their accomplishments after they are on the job, and developing servant leaders.

(1)   Use Officer New Hire Orientation Training to Introduce Agency Customer Service Expectations and Promote a Positive Workplace Culture. Following Disney's example, TSA's new employee orientation training should help instill a positive culture and showcase a commitment to customer service. TSA's Public Affairs office should create positive internal messages for orientation that will communicate not only the agency's history and mission but also emphasize the company's goals and expectations. Orientation training should also define the customer service standards employees will be held to, including the professional and courteous treatment of passengers.

Jim Poisant explains that orientation programs are extremely important because "they provide organizations with a unique opportunity to instill the values, traditions, and practices of the organization." [368]   A few of Poisant's key recommendations for an outstanding orientation program include:

- Present the history and traditions of your organization.
- Explain the mission and vision.
- Set expectations.
- Create a team spirit among employees.
- Enhance the self-image of new employees.
- Explain reward and discipline guidelines.
- Provide information on administrative issues including employee benefits.
- Answer new employee's questions.
- Provide a tour of work areas.[369]

TSA's model workplace (MWP) coordinators and role model officers should participate in orientation training at field airports so they can help deliver a

[368] Poisant, Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization, 75.

[369] Ibid., 76.

consistent message on the agency's priorities.[370] Officers that excel at customer service and have behaviors the agency wants to be emulated should be assigned as mentors to help new employees assimilate to the work environment and more importantly to spread the positive employee behaviors the agency is striving for.

(2)   Widely Promote Positive Internal Messages. Southwest and Disney both use positive internal communications to emphasis their priorities, including a strong commitment to employees and providing good customer service. Those internal messages have an impact on corporate culture and set the tone for employer and employee relations. Communicating employee and agency successes internally will also encourage employees' pride in their work.

TSA can follow their examples by sending weekly headquarter senior leadership messages (modeled after Southwest Airlines' "shout outs") to highlight agency successes and employee behaviors that matter the most. For TSA, that might be recognizing employees (by airport and name) who identified dangerous prohibited items during screening or that provided exemplary customer service or aid to a passenger. Local director or manager praise and appreciation for high performing employees should be regularly shared with those employees in person and in group settings, posted as "kudos" on TSA's intranet site for each airport, and also included in employee performance files to be highlighted during performance reviews. In addition, passenger compliments should be posted as "kudos" on TSA's intranet sites as well as included in employee performance files. With passenger permission, a sample of the best compliments could be included on checkpoint videos.

(3)   Improve Employee Morale by Hosting More Celebratory Events and Acknowledging Employees Personally. Southwest and Disney both place a high priority on making sure their employees are happy. TSA should continue its efforts to build a more positive culture and encourage events that build employee morale.

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[370] TSA model workplace personnel are assigned at each major airport and work to improve the work environment for employees. They work closely with local employee advisory councils that represent uniformed employees and address their concerns or ideas for improving operations.

TSA has faced many challenges with low employee morale and although the agency has made improvements, TSA officers' job satisfaction scores are still among the lowest in federal government. Jim Poisant suggests when managers focus on employees and creating a positive work environment, they will improve employee morale.

> Many in management have not accepted that focusing on employee motivation is the *most critical* aspect of organizational success. But when all is said and done, it is the employees who ultimately determine the success or failure of any organization. If there's one single difference between superior customer service organization and those that are not, it's the attitude senior managers have about people. Superior leaders truly care about people. In turn, they provide a caring work environment for them.[371]

TSA's MWP coordinators at field offices should implement ideas from Southwest's Cultures Services Department in order to build a more positive culture at TSA. Modeling Southwest's best practices, TSA should acknowledge important events in the lives of TSA employees and their families (employee birthdays, promotions, graduations, childbirths, weddings, etc.), and celebrate holidays, organizational accomplishments, and other milestones. Positive actions can be implemented inexpensively via in person contacts, personal notes, messages on bulletin boards, newsletters, and postings on internal websites, or mentioning those events during shift briefs or at quarterly award ceremonies.

MWP coordinators should also check on TSA employees when they experience personal misfortune such as the hospitalization or death of a family member, and ensure they are aware of their benefits, including paid time off and employee assistance programs.

(4)   Reevaluate Employee Recognition Programs to Make Sure They Focus on Agency Goals of Security Effectiveness and Customer Service. Following Southwest's model, TSA should ensure employee recognition programs focus on behaviors the agency wants to see more of and then celebrate employee successes at regularly scheduled award ceremonies. TSA already has an award budget and process for

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[371] Poisant, Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization, 36.

issuing "on the spot" cash performance awards. The process can be improved and the award categories updated to include behaviors that directly impact risk-based security and customer service goals. That means setting specific guidelines that must be met before an award can be issued, for example: Did the employee's action result in significant improvement in security effectiveness? Did the employee's action meet or exceed TSA's highest customer service standards? Does the action directly tie into TSA's stated primary goals? Was the employee's action a role model behavior? Is the award type and/or amount appropriate for the action and does it result in a clear message to employees on the actions that the agency values most?

To raise the bar on customer service, TSA needs to put more emphasis on exemplary customer service behaviors in employee recognition programs. That will require performance goals and quarterly/annual award categories to reflect the behaviors exhibited when providing good customer service: professional appearance, greeting passengers politely, ability to provide knowledgeable and courteous security advisements, ability to diffuse tense situations and gain cooperation, showing a sense of urgency while on duty, maintaining a command presence and focus on duties (not standing around, no personal conversations), serving as a positive mentor for new employees or leading by example as a customer service role model, etc. Establishing stronger customer service performance goals and recognizing officers that excel in those areas as they perform their security duties will encourage more of that behavior.

Quarterly award ceremonies should be consistently held to ensure employees are recognized for providing good customer service. Employee recognition events need to be a priority and attended by all levels of management. Stewart Liff suggests:

> A good way to reinforce the right behavior is to compliment an employee
> in front of others, particularly high-level officials. . . Moreover, when that
> employee is complimented for an accomplishment that supports the
> organization's mission, goals, and objectives, it establishes a consistency
> of purpose and promotes further acts along that same line.[372]

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372 Liff, Managing Government Employees, 119.

In addition, the names of the most deserving award recipients should be posted on the agency's internal website. Managers should also ***personally*** acknowledge each employee's commitment when they reach years of service milestones (5, 10, 15 years, etc.). Every effort should be taken to highlight those positive achievements that support the agency's mission and goals.

(5)   Develop Servant Leaders. Following Southwest's servant leadership philosophy means TSA leaders at every level should take responsibility for mistakes rather than adding more pressure to the lowest level officers. When something goes wrong, good leaders ask what they could have done to prevent that from occurring.

TSA's leadership course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center could be adapted to include the benefits of servant leadership. During periods of high stress (e.g., staff shortages, peak travel times, or when new procedures or equipment are rolled out), TSA servant leaders and field managers need to show their support by pitching in and being present at screening locations to make sure employees have everything they need. When success has been achieved, employees should be complimented on that success and local management needs to continually monitor the new process to make sure everything is working well. Employees that work 365 days a year need to know that management appreciates their commitment and will stand by them.

2.   Strategies to Improve Customer Service

TSA should also consider new ways to demonstrate its commitment to customer service. Efforts to promote a more positive public image will not be successful unless TSA can raise the bar on customer service. Randall Stoner points out in *Practical Promotion: Strategies for Improving Services and Images*, a government agency must first ensure it has improved processes and offers quality customer service before it tries to promote itself—"it must have its house in order."[373]

Other agencies have proven that focusing on customer service does make a difference. For example, *Imperial Valley News* reported "90% of travelers agree that

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[373] Stoner, Practical Promotion, 33.

DHS's U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers are welcoming and provide the right information at the right time in a hospitable manner."[374] TSA needs to seek that level of customer service and the resulting positive media coverage it brings. That will require more leadership emphasis on the importance of customer service and setting specific, high standards for officers to follow.

a.   Leadership Emphasis on Customer Service

TSA's renewed leadership focus on customer service needs to continue. *MSN Money* analyzed years of Customer Survey Hall of Fame results and found the best companies have leadership that emphasize customer service, continually look for ways to improve, and empower their employees. Aho notes, "These are companies where people want to work. Companies that excel at customer service are often also known for providing relatively good pay and benefits. They trust their employees to make decisions, then routinely stand behind those decisions."[375] Southwest and Disney have also shown that leadership excellence is a critical element of success. Cockerell explains good managers are needed to get results, but it is their leaders that drive excellence:

> Excellence requires common sense leadership. . . Being a leader means doing what has to be done, when it has to be done, in the way it *should* be done, whether you like it or not, and whether *they* like it or not. It means making the right things happen by bringing out the best in others. I like to say that good leaders are environmentalists. Their responsibility is to create a sustainable business environment—calm, clear, crisp, and clean, with no pollution, no toxins, no waste—in which everyone flourishes.[376]

(1)   Provide a Consistent Leadership Message that Customer Service is a Priority. TSA needs to send a clear message to the workforce that customer service standards can be maintained along with high security standards. Randall Stoner explains that government agencies have many options to instill that message:

> Managers can, through a series of relatively simple efforts, send a definite message to employees that customer service is important and deserves

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[374] *Imperial Valley News*, "White House Releases New Travel and Tourism Progress Report," 3.

[375] Aho, "2012 Customer Service Hall of Fame."

[376] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 15.

attention. For instance, the organization's mission statement can be revised to include a strong customer service message. Other documents that should be revised in this way are position descriptions, performance standards, performance reviews, standard operating procedures, department polices, and orientation materials.[377]

(2)   Leaders Need to Spend Time on the Front Lines. As mentioned in the previous section, TSA's leaders need to spend more time in the field to better understand what is important to employees and customers (including aviation stakeholders and passengers). TSA's Office of Security Operations (OSO) senior leaders should visit airports known for excelling in customer service and also those struggling to get there.[378] That means not just meeting with field staff employees, but also working with officers and talking to passengers about their concerns. They need to stand on the frontline with their employees greeting passengers, moving bins, and pushing bags so they can build morale and also identify and fix problems the officers face. Joseph Lampel explains in *Strategy Safari*, when senior leaders get out in the field, they will see opportunities to become more efficient and effective, "In a learning organization managers become accustomed to walking around and interacting with their subordinates in their work settings."[379] Kim and Mauborgne also maintain that managers must listen to their most disgruntled customers firsthand, "there is no substitute for meeting and listening to dissatisfied customers directly" and it is the best way to find out the gap in perceptions.[380] Leaders at Disney and Southwest make that a priority and find it helps them stay on top of the issues and build employee morale at the same time. An additional benefit is they have a better understanding of the customer's perspective by doing so.

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[377] Stoner, Practical Promotion, 44.

[378] "The Office of Security Operations (OSO) is the operational arm of the TSA and employs the largest TSA workforce. OSO is responsible for airport checkpoint and baggage screening operations." Transportation Security Administration, "Office of Security Operations," accessed June 2, 2013, http://www.tsa.gov/careers/new-horizons-tsa-offices.

[379] Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, Strategy Safari (New York: Free Press, 1998), 214–215.

[380] Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy,* 155.

b.　　*Set Higher Customer Service Standards*

TSA needs to put more emphasis on customer service goals that improve the passenger's experience at security checkpoints. Setting high customer service standards is important because as the authors of *Reputation Management* explain, people form opinions based on information from three main sources: "What we experience ourselves. What other people tell us directly based on their experience and knowledge. What we read, hear, and see in the media."[381] Passengers expect good customer service. Jim Poisant noted, "Superior customer service organizations create and sustain their superiority because their corporate culture is focused on meeting or exceeding customer expectations."[382] In order to achieve a higher level of customer service, TSA needs to define and implement higher customer service standards.

　　　　　(1)　　Use Integration Matrix to Define Customer Service Standards. As TSA moves to a more customer focused organization, they should use Disney's integration matrix (example in Chapter IV) as each new security procedure or technology is introduced to ensure the customer's perspective is considered. The matrix tool can help TSA identify specific quality service goals before new screening procedures or processes are implemented (see Table 3). Specific service goals will clearly define how employees are expected to interact with TSA customers and should be used as a basis for employee accountability.

　　　　　An example of a customer service integration matrix applied to TSA shows how employees, settings, and processes should be considered when identifying quality service goals:

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[381] Helm, Liehr-Gobbers, and Storck*, Reputation Management,* 112.

[382] Poisant, Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization, 115.

Table 3.   Example of Disney's Integration Matrix applied to TSA.

	Cast (Employees)	Setting	Process
	How will TSA employees deliver…	How does the TSA checkpoint setting help…	How do TSA security processes provide…
Safety	*How will TSA employees deliver safety to our customers?*	*How is TSA's setting helping to provide a safe environment for customers?*	*How are TSA's security processes ensuring customer safety?*
	TSA employees ensure passengers in wheelchairs are not asked to stand for screening unless they can do so safely.	TSA's public areas are clear of obstacles and tripping hazards. Passengers are able to see their property at all times.	New security equipment and procedures are independently tested to ensure they are safe for passengers and employees.
Courtesy	*How will TSA employees show courtesy to customers?*	*How is TSA's setting designed to show courtesy to customers?*	*How are TSA security processes showing courtesy to customers?*
	TSA employees follow defined customer service standards and are given "facts they can use" to inform passengers.	Checkpoint design layouts allow for the efficient movement of passengers. Signage and videos provide important information.	Passengers are given courteous advisements and they have the right to request private screening.
Show	*How will TSA employees exhibit professionalism?*	*How is TSA's setting improving the customers' experience?*	*How will TSA security processes demonstrate that security is important?*
	TSA employees present a professional appearance, greet passengers, and use courteous language in a professional tone.	Clean security checkpoints along with video monitor displays that show wait times and examples of prohibited items.	Officers confidently inform passengers about security procedures.
Efficiency	*How will TSA employees efficiently process customers?*	*How is TSA's setting improving efficiency?*	*How will TSA security processes create a more efficient guests experience?*
	Employees exhibit a sense of urgency while working, are vigilant on duty, and direct prepared passengers to the shortest line.	Efficient queue designs and signage that informs passengers how they can speed up the security process by being prepared.	Queue and equipment layout should maximize the efficiency of moving passengers through security screening areas.

(2)	Expand use of Passenger Advocates. TSA's promising new Passenger Support Specialist (PSS) program has the potential to improve TSA's public image and should be expanded with more training and defined customer service standards. Political leaders encouraged TSA to have passenger advocates available at checkpoints at every major airport to help resolve some of the frequent customer complaints.[383] As a result, TSA implemented the PSS program that now includes 3,000 officers who have volunteered for the collateral duty. PSS officers "receive additional training involving scenarios such as resolving traveler-related screening concerns and assisting travelers with disabilities and medical conditions."[384]

PSS officers can help TSA improve their image by spending more time with passengers that need assistance. Wiersema shares another key assertion made by Southwest: "We genuinely try to do the right thing instead of just doing things right."[385] That statement is significant, and if applied to TSA, means being empowered to make a judgment call when a passenger has a unique situation that requires extra care and compassion. Security must still be maintained and that means following procedures, but TSA PSS officers should listen to the passenger and try to find a solution that meets the passenger's needs while maintaining security. Supervisors should be called in to help handle sensitive situations; they have the authority and experience to resolve issues at the point of conflict. Most of the serious complaints that make the news about TSA were the result of a passenger with special needs that did not feel they were accommodated. For example, a passenger coming through security after a recent surgery wants privacy and sensitivity to their condition. Currently, officers are trained to offer private screening and to use extra care on sensitive areas. However, the way they conduct themselves and the

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[383] "At Senate Judiciary Hearing, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano Says She 'Absolutely' Supports Schumer's Call for Passenger Advocates at Nation's Airports and Announces TSA Moving Toward Implementation of Program," news release, April 25, 2012, http://www.schumer.senate.gov/Newsroom/record.cfm?id=336608.

[384] Transportation Security Administration, "TSA Travel Tips Tuesday—Have You Heard About TSA's New Passenger Support Specialists?" TSA Blog, April 23, 2013, accessed April 28, 2013, http://blog.tsa.gov/2013/04/tsa-travel-tips-tuesday-have-you-heard.html.

[385] Fred Wiersema, Customer Service: Extraordinary Results at Southwest Airlines…, 7.

manner in which they demonstrate courtesy and compassion to passengers can alleviate the passenger's stress and turn the experience from negative to positive.

PSS officers need to demonstrate strong customer service skills and be role models that train other officers on how to provide good customer service. Beyond the initial three hours of training, defined customer services standards need to be provided including:

- Greet passengers in a positive, courteous manner (proper tone of voice and body language, presenting a professional and courteous manner, etc.).[386]

- Answer passenger questions, provide assistance for passengers with unique needs, and help passengers unfamiliar with the security process.

- Advise passengers on what they need to do and help prepare their carry-on items for X-ray screening.

- Listen to passengers and address concerns promptly.

- Provide extra assistance for passengers with disabilities or with unique medical needs so that they are screened safely and with sensitivity.

Like Disney, TSA employees need to remember that they are on "stage" whenever they are in public areas and their distinctive uniforms mean they represent TSA even outside of screening areas. Professional employees that dress and act the part make a more positive impression on the public. Cockerell points out: "… true professionalism is mainly about attitude and demeanor and the image you project to the world… True professionals demonstrate with their actions that they are trustworthy."[387] For TSA that means pressed uniforms, neat appearance, no gum chewing or personal cell phone use, breaks taken in non-public locations, and refraining from personal conversations while on duty.

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[386] The impression given by front line employees on your customer is important. Jim Poisant suggests the best way to analyze your customers' experience is to consider how they are greeted and what impression they are given when they come into your space. Poisant, Creating and Sustaining a Superior Customer Service Organization, 106.

[387] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 231.

c.   *Encourage More Teamwork and Collaboration*

Southwest's focus on teamwork and Disney's collaboration with all levels of employees in order to improve operations can be models for TSA. It will take a dedicated team working together to focus on improving TSA's public image. William J. Bratton and Zachary Tumin, authors of *Collaborate Or Perish!,* suggest those seeking to improve customer service need to find a way to get others in the agency to question their existing beliefs.[388]   Success will require collaboration internally as well as externally with aviation stakeholders.

The "Crafty Bastards™" collaborative approach to problem solving should be implemented within TSA. As Kathleen Kiernan explained, 'it seeks to bring the experiences of individuals from diverse career backgrounds and their varied perspectives into the discussion of solving problems.'[389]   A collaborative approach is required to address the challenges, consider solutions, and ultimately implement process improvements. TSA collaboration strategies include working groups focused on improving strategic communications and analysis of customer feedback.

3.   Strategies to Share Key Information with Customers

TSA needs to consider a new communication strategy that proactively disseminates key information to the traveling public. Clarke Caywood, expert on public relations explains:

> As communicators, we have not succeeded in shaping communications into information the target public wants or needs. We typically organize our information into an understandable and (what we believe to be) creative format and then blurt it out in the public arena and hope for the best. That rarely works.[390]

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[388] Bratton and Tumin, Collaborate Or Perish!, 158.

[389] Kathleen Kiernan, in classroom discussion on "Crafty Bastards™," Naval Postgraduate School, April 2012.

[390] Clarke L. Caywood, The Handbook of Strategic Public Relations & Integrated Communications (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 511.

a.   *Strategic Communications Working Group Oversight*

A TSA strategic communications working group should be created to better address communication challenges, consider solutions, and implement process improvements on an ongoing basis. A more proactive approach is needed to market new security processes or technologies and the improvements in security they provide. The goal should be to communicate the threats, prepare passengers for security and help set clear expectations, and inform the public about new security procedures prior to implementation.

The working group should include representatives from Public Affairs (both at the headquarter level and in the field), the TSA Contact Center (knowledge of customer questions, concerns, and complaints at the headquarter level), customer support and quality improvement managers (CSQIM) (work directly with the public in the field), stakeholder relations managers (SHM) (liaison with airline and airport stakeholders), and security operations leadership (responsible for implementing new security methods).

TSA field offices should create local or regional working groups to upload feedback to the strategic working group on what is working well or needs to be fixed. Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) Professor Paul J. Smith suggests the benefits are local investment and buy in: "Local or regional working groups can help identify problem areas and implement improvements by feeding information back up to Regional Directors who can then say to the headquarter group that we have a problem— all of my airports are telling me _____."[391]   TSA's customer support and quality improvement managers and stakeholder relations managers in the field can facilitate sharing information with employees and stakeholders, and then push their suggestions and concerns to the working group.

(1)   Communicate the Threats More Effectively. The public needs to be provided with more and better information about threats to the transportation industry and

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[391] Paul J. Smith (thesis advisor and instructor for the DHS Center for Homeland Defense and Security [CHDS]), personal communication, October 2012.

what TSA is doing to mitigate those threats. The U.S. Travel Association contends TSA needs to build a better relationship with passengers:

> TSA consistently fails to engage the millions of travelers—business or leisure—who rely on predictable, safe, efficient transportation. As a result of this myopic approach, TSA has developed little political support nor an effective advocacy community that can help create a political climate conducive to policies that might be unpopular but effective from a risk perspective.[392]

Randall Stoner points out success in managing crisis communications was found when:

> …communications to citizens, the media, city staff, elected officials, managers, the private sector, and other involved parties were extensive, timely, accurate, open, clear, and without bias. No efforts were made to cloud or gloss over the real issues and problems; no information was held back or deemed unfit for public consumption.[393]

Along the same line, Stephen Covey recommends calling things what they are without a "spin," being open and transparent without a hidden agenda, and clarifying expectations can improve public trust.[394] These are all areas that TSA can improve upon.

In addition, TSA needs to send a stronger message that security procedures were put into place for passenger safety and security and these security procedures were designed to counter terrorists' actual attempts and intelligence based threats. If passengers **understand** the reasons for aviation security and TSA screening procedures, they will be better prepared psychologically (less stress and frustration) and physically (divesting all items from pockets, removing shoes and laptops, no prohibited items, etc., will lessen the chances of additional screening).

Passengers need to be reminded of why specific security measures were put into place, and when security procedures change they need to know how that will impact them. TSA can learn from the past and avoid making those same communication

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[392] U.S. Travel Association, "A Better Way," 29.

[393] Randall C. Stoner, Practical Promotion: Strategies for Improving Services and Image, (Washington, DC: International City/County Management Association, 1992), 122.

[394] Covey, Link, and Merrill, Smart Trust, 203.

mistakes in the future. For example, previously some passengers were allowed to keep their shoes on, but if the shoes were bulky or thick they had to be removed for X-ray so that it could be verified there were no explosives hidden in the shoe (a result of the Richard Reid shoe bombing attempt in 2001). Later, security procedures changed to require all passengers (with few exceptions) to remove their shoes.[395] TSA did not effectively promote why it was critical for the safety of passengers to have shoes go through X-ray (so they could be screened for nonmetallic explosive components that could be hidden in the shoes). Kip Hawley pointed out an added benefit that should have been promoted was that having all passengers remove their shoes actually improved the line speed. TSA officers no longer had to visually look at shoes and make a decision whether the passenger had to step back out of line to put their shoes on the X-ray belt.[396] In addition, intelligence indicates terrorists will keep trying to make shoe bombs and the X-ray is the quickest way to detect them.[397] Arguably, if the members of the public were more aware of the threat, they would be less frustrated with having to comply.

The goal is not to flood the public with information, but instead to find the balance between sharing the right amount and type of information while still safeguarding sensitive security information that could benefit those planning terrorist attacks (TSA intelligence experts should review and scrub information before release). CHDS Professor Robert Bach, suggests, "one of the core issues must be why certain information cannot be released . . . transparency and communication often begins, in the intelligence world, with this type of fundamental reassessment of the information."[398]

TSA's message should be designed to instill public confidence rather than cause public overreaction. James Breckenridge and Philip Zimbardo point out there is a

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[395] TSA now allows passengers 75 and older, and children 12 and younger, to leave their shoes on. Transportation Security Administration, "Traveler Information: Screening for Passengers 75 and Older," accessed January 27, 2013, http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/screening-passengers-75-and-older.

[396] Hawley and Means, *Permanent Emergency,* 111.

[397] Hawley, "Why Airport Security is Broken," 4.

[398] Robert Bach, personal communication, October 2012 thesis feedback.

risk that "public threat perceptions can escalate rapidly, outpacing rational analysis."[399] The airports and airlines will not welcome publicity that could scare passengers from traveling. In addition to the obvious benefits of not having citizens overly concerned, reducing public overreaction also defeats terrorists' goals.

(2)   Prepare Passengers for the Security Experience and Help Set Clear Expectations. TSA messaging should also provide information the traveling public needs to prepare for the security screening process and set reasonable expectations. Using the right language and thanking passengers that are well prepared will help passengers understand what they are expected to do when they arrive at a TSA security checkpoint; it may also encourage their cooperation.

Enhancements in the type of information provided and clear messaging will help the traveling public better understand TSA's often-complicated security rules. The U.S. Travel Association supports providing passengers with better information:

> An important part of a smoothly operating security checkpoint is an educated traveler. Travelers play a critical role in making the system operate smoothly, from packing their bags in a manner that facilitates screening, to following checkpoint procedures, and treating TSA and aviation employees with respect and courtesy.[400]

The goal should be to give passengers the information they need to improve their security experience. Messages should explain how security measures protect passengers and the aviation industry and tie back to TSA's mission.

- The traveling public should understand that all passengers are subject to screening, they will experience random screening procedures, and all alarms or anomalies have to be resolved through additional screening measures regardless of the passengers age, gender, or nationality.

- All carry-on items need to be divested and ran through the X-ray.

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[399] Breckenridge and Zimbardo, "Terrorism and Fear: The Strategy of Terrorism and the Psychology of Mass-mediated Fear," 14.

[400] U.S. Travel Association, "A Better Way: Building a World-class System for Aviation Security," news release, 2011, accessed August 29, 2012, http://www.ustravel.org/news/press-releases/roadmap-new-air-travel-security-system-unveiled-travel-industry-security-experts, 15.

- Passengers cannot select the walk through metal detector just because they do not want to be screened by advanced imaging technology.

- They may request a pat-down instead of going through either the advanced imaging or walk through metal detector screening technologies; however, pat-downs are ***thorough*** in order to verify that there is nothing hidden on the body.

- Liquids that not do not meet TSA's "3-1-1" liquid rules will not be allowed through.

By providing more complete information, passenger expectations will be more realistic about the security screening process.

(3)   Inform Public About New Security Procedures Prior to Implementation. TSA should take a more proactive approach that provides information to the public ***before*** new security procedures or technologies are put in place. TSA's message should inform passengers that security procedures and technologies will change as intelligence identifies new threats and what impact those new procedures will have on the traveling public (i.e., how the security experience will change for them, how they can prepare for security, and what they can do to minimize their chances of requiring additional screening). The public should also be informed about the effectiveness of new security methods.

Notices should be posted on TSA's public website and public comment should be welcomed. For example, if imaging technology is being installed at a particular airport, the public should know that in advance and should have the opportunity to ask questions or provide input. The new technology or procedure would still be implemented if it was critical to security, but many of the customer's questions could be answered in advance. At a minimum, customer feedback will help the agency better understand the traveling public's concerns so that they can be addressed in TSA's communication strategy.

b. *Improve TSA Messaging*

TSA messaging would improve by providing more facts for employees to use in direct employee to customer information flow, updating the public website, and expanding the use of social media.

(1)   Provide Positive Facts for Employees to Use. TSA officers should be provided with positive talking points that they can use to effectively explain security procedures or respond to passenger questions. More focus on this area will ensure consistent messages across the country from TSA's 50,000 officers. TSA Public Affairs currently has effective one-page "facts you can use" bulletins on key topics, but they are not updated frequently enough and only cover a small number of topics.

Similar to the talking points provided to TSA's directors before they go in front of the media, frontline officers also need professional phrases they can use to respond to passenger frequently asked questions (beyond standard operating procedure advisements). Local strategic communications working groups could help develop talking points or provide feedback to TSA Public Affairs on the topics that need to be covered. Examples:

- Thank you for having your 3–1-1 liquids pulled out and placed separately in the bin—that saves time because those items need to be X-rayed independently and additional testing may need to be performed.

- Thank you for forming two lines and for having your boarding pass and government issued identification ready. Your cooperation is appreciated.

The messages need to be concise because busy travelers do not have much time. Herbert Rotfeld, author of *Adventures in Misplaced Marketing*, was referring to airlines but his comments could also be applied to TSA when he said, "the consumer wants frustrations to be minimized—period—not addressed with explanations by caring employees."[401] That requires short, concise, but well thought out responses to FAQs.

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[401] Herbert Jack Rotfeld, Adventures in Misplaced Marketing (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2001), 39.

Professor Paul J. Smith recommends taking advantage of shift briefings to get new talking points out to TSA officers before they begin work.[402]

(2)　　Update TSA's Public website. TSA's public website www.tsa.gov was recently updated to make it easier to find the topics passengers need the most. Although significant improvements were made, the strategic communications working group should consider additional changes that focus on helping customers clearly understand why security measures were put in place and how they can participate in the security process by being prepared (liquids and laptops out, no prohibited items, shoes, belts, and jackets off) and by being aware (so that they are an additional layer of security—i.e., "see something say something").

Although the website's "can I bring my_____" fill in box is a great tool for passengers, the answers need to be revised so they are clear and the search function needs to be more sophisticated. For example when the word "knife" is entered, the passenger is provided with six options to choose from: carving knife, ceramic knife, diving knife, fixed knife, hunting knife, and knife. In addition, TSA's current response to prohibited knives is not concise:

> In general, you are prohibited from traveling with sharp objects in your carry-on baggage; please pack these items in your checked baggage. Scissors with blades smaller than 4 inches, small needles carried for special medical needs, and other sharp objects that do not contain a blade may be placed in carry-on baggage.
>
> Any sharp objects placed in carry-on or checked baggage should be properly sheathed or securely wrapped to prevent injury to TSOs and baggage handlers. Even if an item is generally permitted, it may be subject to additional screening or not allowed through the checkpoint if it triggers an alarm during the screening process, appears to have been tampered with, or poses other security concerns. The final decision rests with TSA on whether to allow any items on the plane.[403]

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[402] Smith, personal communication.

[403] Transportation Security Administration, "When I Fly, Can I Bring My…?," accessed September 16, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/.

Since all sharp knives are prohibited, the response to all six options should have been a simple clear message such as: ***All*** knives with a sharp edge are prohibited from carry-on luggage. Passengers may pack knives in their checked luggage that are properly sheathed in order to prevent injury. Instead, TSA's response talks about scissors and needles instead of knives and uses the acronym "TSOs," which would not be understood by the general public.[404] In another example, when the words "fish hook" are entered, the passenger is provided with a menu asking them to select from among five options: fish hook (small), fish hook (large), fish hooks (small), fish hooks (large), and fish hooks for trout fishing. The redundancy is unnecessary because all of them provide the same response.

The TSA FAQ section needs to be expanded to include topics identified by monitoring customer questions and feedback. For example, there is currently no information provided about checkpoint opening times. TSA missed the mark by not providing hours of operation for security checkpoints or contact information so the passengers can obtain the information themselves. In comparison, CBP has easy to search answers to almost 350 FAQs and posts the hours of operation and phone number for every facility.[405]

(3)   Expand TSA's Use of Social Media. TSA's communication strategy should include looking for opportunities to expand the use of social media. Providing information to the public has become easier with the availability of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and blogs. Social media is an important tool to get positive messages out and correct inaccuracies reported by the media. Beyond providing information, social media is also a tool for public involvement. For example, TSA's blog allows the public to ask questions and effectively addresses many of the passenger concerns and inaccurate media messages. However, TSA representatives should maintain

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[404] The "TSO" acronym stands for Transportation Security Officer.

[405] U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "INFO Center," accessed September 16, 2012, https://help.cbp.gov/app/home/search/1; Locate a Port of Entry—Land, Air, or Sea," U.S. Customs and Border Protection, accessed September 16, 2012, http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contacts/ports/.

a professional image and that means avoiding flippant messages or attempts at humor (humor is selective) because that detracts from the agency's serious mission.

c.   Take Advantage of Queue Wait Times to Provide Information

TSA needs to take full advantage of the opportunity to provide information to the millions of passengers that process through security checkpoints each week. Currently, the opportunity to positively interact with the traveling public is underutilized yet TSA attempts to put out positive messages through Twitter accounts to a tiny fraction of those numbers. TSA should incorporate digital signage, more entertaining videos, bin advertising, and in the future consider new technologies to push positive and informative messages to the traveling public waiting in queues. The information needs to be quick, attention grabbing, and easy to understand.

(1)   Install Digital Signage. Digital signage monitors should replace printed signage at every large airport. The overabundance of printed signs is "eye pollution" and often ignored. It is also expensive and time consuming to print and post new signs at 450 airports as procedures change. Instead, TSA should use digital signage monitors that will engage passengers' interest and look more professional. Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., has made the change to digital signage in the queue area controlled by the airport—the digital monitors are sleek and attention grabbing. Its queue is no longer littered with framed signs on every other stanchion. Digital signage displays should have the capability to be easily updated to reflect new security procedures and can rotate critical security information from DHS and other federal or state agencies.

- Digital messages should include a display of prohibited items, highlight passengers who are prepared for security, showcase customer compliments, and recognize employee role models.

- Federal agency and law enforcement alerts could also be displayed digitally at TSA's security checkpoints - the FBI's most wanted lists and law enforcement missing children reports would be visible by millions of passengers each day.

(2)   Update Checkpoint Videos. Videos provide passengers with the basic information they need to prepare for the checkpoint and get through the line faster. However, TSA's video should be improved and updated more frequently to take advantage of access to the millions of passengers that stand in queue lines every day. Another DHS agency has partnered with Disney to create an informative video for their ports of entry. According to an article in the *Imperial Valley News*, "DHS has, with assistance from Disney, created the video, Welcome to America, Simple as 1–2-3, which clearly and simply explains port of entry procedures for visitors and is seen by over 25 million people each year."[406]

TSA's video could also highlight exemplary passengers that arrive with their items organized and ready for the screening process on the video; a photo of a smiling passenger properly divesting items promotes more of the behavior that speeds up the screening process.

(3)   Use Bin Advertising for TSA's Message. Like Disney, TSA should use the queue setting to provide information to customers. Currently private vendors negotiate marketing agreements with some airports so they can use the advertising space at the bottom of divesture bins to promote their products to the traveling public.[407] Instead of having commercial marketing in the bins, TSA should purchase its own equipment and use the marketing space on the bottom of the bins to help passengers prepare for TSA screening. For example, TSA could use the advertising space to remind passengers they need to remove their 3–1-1 liquids and laptops (a photo of a laptop on the bottom of the bin is a good reminder), to say thank you to passengers for divesting all of their items, to share information on how to provide passenger feedback, or to remind

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[406] "White House Releases New Travel and Tourism Progress Report," *Imperial Valley News*, September 19, 2012, http://www.imperialvalleynews.com/index.php/news/national-news/1678-white-house-releases-new-travel-and-tourism-progress-report.html, 4.

[407] Private vendors supply the equipment (divesture bins and carts) for TSA use if they have a marketing contract with the Airport (not TSA) to conduct bin advertising. When the advertisement changes, new bins with the latest marketing advertisements are rotated in to replace the previous version. TSA does not receive any funds, but they do benefit by having bins and carts provided by the intermediary marketing company.

passengers to keep moving bins to the end of the divesture area so other passengers have space to divest.

(4)   Consider New Innovations in Marketing Including Avatars. A promising new marketing technology is the use of "avatars"—a computerized holographic image projected onto Plexiglas that looks and talks like a person. At approximately $60,000 each, avatars are currently too expensive for widespread use, but this new technology should be evaluated as part of TSA's future strategic communication plans. As this new technology expands the costs may drop enough for widespread use. Avatars could be used to remind passengers of the steps they need to prepare for security. Currently, avatars are not technologically savvy enough to respond to passenger questions, but future plans are for them to be able to respond to FAQs in multiple languages.[408]

4.   Strategies for Using Feedback to Improve Operations

TSA's interaction with 1.7 million passengers on a daily basis results in a tremendous opportunity to gather feedback that could be used to improve customer service and ultimately, the public's perception of the agency. In order to promote a positive public image, TSA needs to have a better understanding of what the traveling public wants or expects—that requires seeing the big picture of what the issues are, understanding the public's perceptions and expectations, and using that information to seek process improvements. That will also require a change in how TSA customer feedback is collected, handled, and used.

Ronald Alsop suggests "more companies are trying to move closer to their customers and sincerely listen to what they have to say."[409]   Since TSA's mission requires constant interaction with the public, the customer's point of view (or experience)

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[408] Avatars run a 90-second loop of information that answers passenger's most FAQs. Newark Liberty, LaGuardia, and Kennedy International Airports have all installed avatars in the Airport's public areas. "Together they cost $180,000, but are never late for work, don't require health benefits and are on the job seven days a week, 24 hours a day." Tom De Poto, "Libby the Avatar gets a Job at Newark Liberty International Airport," The Star-Ledger (blog), August 8, 2012, http://blog.nj.com/business_impact/print.html?entry=/2012/08/libby_the_avatar_gets_a_job_at.html.

[409] Alsop, The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation, 111–112.

needs specific consideration. The U.S. Travel Association asserts, "an important but often overlooked voice in the security process is that of the traveler."[410] In addition, when TSA does not effectively manage customer feedback, it opens the door for critics to take on that role.

The Sikh Coalition created its own "Fly Rights" app that it advertises as an "easy way to report complaints of air travel discrimination in real time, right after the incident occurs."[411] The Sikh Coalition also claims "reports filed through the Fly Rights app will be considered official, actionable complaints by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS)."[412] TSA needs to make it easy for passenger concerns to go directly to TSA, rather than to outside groups.

a. Study Passengers

Following Disney's example, TSA should continuously seek opportunities to improve customer service by examining the screening experience from the passenger's perspective. Disney's commitment to customer service "means more than simply treating people the way we would want to be treated; it means treating them the way that *they* want to be treated, with recognition and respect for their emotions, abilities, and cultures."[413]

If TSA modeled Disney's Guestology approach to consider the customer's perspective it might indicate:

- TSA customers need to successfully process through security so they can board their flight.

- Most TSA customers want to experience quick and nonintrusive screening. They may be ambivalent about the screening process as long as they are not delayed or do not have to go through additional screening.

- Many TSA customers' have preconceived notions about TSA's role and how important that is (or is not). TSA customers' attitudes may reflect

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[410] U.S. Travel Association, "A Better Way," 2.

[411] The Sikh Coalition, "Fly Rights," accessed November 23, 2012, http://fly-rights.org/.

[412] Sikh Coalition, "Air Travel: Major Developments," April 29, 2012, http://www.sikhcoalition.org/resources/air-travel.

[413] Disney Institute, *Be Our Guest,* 60.

their personal opinions about privacy issues, government in general, or safety concerns about advanced imaging technology.

- Passengers have a positive or neutral experience when they are greeted in a courteous manner, their questions are answered, or when they are helped through what may be an unfamiliar screening process.

- Passengers have a negative experience when they have a long wait, experience inconsistencies, have to go through additional screening without understanding why, or are treated without courtesy or respect.

TSA can learn more about the passenger's experience by improving the methods used to collect, track, and analyze customer feedback.

b. Centralize Collection, Tracking, and Analysis of all Customer Feedback

Currently, TSA does not effectively or efficiently measure customer perceptions. Ideally, all customer feedback should be collected, tracked, and analyzed at the national level to identify what satisfied passengers appreciate and watch for negative trends that may require changes in daily operations, messaging, or customer service. However, TSA does not consolidate all passenger feedback under one headquarter program office and does not have a data collection system that slices and dices the information. As a result, the customer feedback received directly at over 450 individual airports (in person, phone calls, mail, emails, and customer comment cards) is not captured. Although TSA staff at field offices may perform analysis on the feedback they receive directly, there is no big picture look at what the feedback tells the agency. That means a lost opportunity to determine which airports/field offices are doing well and should be examined further to identify smart practices that could be used elsewhere.

This recommendation is in line with a 2012 GAO report that recommended TSA "establish (1) a consistent policy for receiving complaints, (2) a process to systematically analyze information on complaints from all mechanisms, and (3)

a policy for informing passengers about the screening complaint processes and mechanisms to share best practices among airports."[414]

(1) Establish TSA Contact Center Oversight. The TSA Contact Center (TCC) program office should provide oversight and be the central collection point for all customer feedback (including those received directly at field offices) to ensure efficiency of effort, personalized responses when required, consistent messages, and timeliness in response.

- *Efficiency*—TCC contract staff should continue to respond to topics that are national issues or general in nature (liquid rules, questions on prohibited items, etc.) and be responsible for disseminating feedback metrics to the appropriate field or headquarter offices.

- *Personalized response*—Non-routine customer feedback should continue to be automatically routed to field customer support and quality improvement managers. These subject matter experts conduct research into claims or concerns and provide a personal response applicable to their airport. The passengers should be assured their feedback has been heard, their concern will be researched (via closed circuit television and witness statements), and they will receive a timely response.

- *Consistency*—Public Affairs should provide professional responses to FAQs to ensure consistent responses at the over 450 airports. ***Everyone*** that responds to the public (TCC, customer support personnel in the field, frontline officers, etc.) should use the same responses or talking points for a consistent, nationwide agency message.

- *Timely*—Response times should be dependable with the continued goal of initial contact within one to two business days.

This consolidated approach to customer feedback improves coordination, avoids duplication, and saves time if the majority of customer feedback is automated. Most importantly, 100 percent of customer feedback would be collected for analysis at the headquarter level. Recently, TSA combined two of the contact types (Contact Center and Talk to TSA). Although a positive step in the right direction—further action is needed to ensure 100 percent of all customer feedback is collected and analyzed by the TSA Contact Center.

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[414] U.S. Government Accountability Office, Air Passenger Screening: Transportation Security Administration Could Improve Complaint Processes, GAO-13-43 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012).

(2)   Use Electronic Formats to Collect Data in a Central Database. TSA needs to track customer feedback in a central database. This requires consolidating all feedback through the TSA Contact Center and maximizing the use of electronic feedback methods to gather public opinion. A focus on more efficient electronic collection methods and the use of technology or software to electronically capture and consolidate feedback information will ensure feedback can be analyzed quickly and disseminated to problem solvers.

TSA should seek feedback in electronic formats that are easy to capture and analyze. Customer feedback is currently received in too many different formats, which makes it more difficult to efficiently (i.e., electronically) collect and track all types of feedback at the agency level. Passengers may contact the agency in a myriad of ways: in person at airports, by phone, email, mail, customer comment cards at security checkpoints, TSA website on-line forms, blog, via the TSA mobile application, or through twitter (see Appendix A). Only a few of these formats result in the efficient use of electronic collection methods that capture the data for analysis. For example, the majority of feedback collected in the field is from handwritten TSA comment cards available to passengers at security checkpoints. The passenger feedback from comment cards or direct contacts at field offices are not captured nationally because they would require manual data entry, and there is currently no IT system in place for collection at the agency level. Rather than the numerous options now available for passengers to contact the agency, TSA should reduce that to three main options for providing feedback: kiosks at large airports (electronic point of contact that capitalizes on the opportunity to gather information right after the passenger has been screened), TSA's website "Talk to TSA" online forms (web based), or the TCC directly (phone or email).

- Kiosks. Kiosks should be considered for large airports so passengers can provide immediate electronic feedback about their experience.[415] Kiosk surveys would use appreciative inquiry (phrased in a positive manner) to generate constructive feedback that will direct positive changes in areas that would not impact the overall level of security (i.e., although TSA

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[415] Kiosks would only be placed at larger airports where the total number of feedback currently received warrants the cost. Passengers at smaller airports that do not have feedback kiosks would be directed to the national TCC (phone or email) or "Talk to TSA" online form to provide their feedback.

performs a pat down to ensure security, where and how the pat-down is conducted and the words and tone used by the officer have an impact on how the procedure is perceived).[416] In addition, targeted questions can be used to collect focused information for problem solving.

- Online Feedback. The "Talk to TSA" online form should be used as an alternative for passengers that want to provide feedback later, or for smaller airports that do not have a customer feedback kiosk (as a result of cost benefit analysis). John Doorley points out, "the Web enables companies to get feedback in real time and makes it easier to measure and analyze the feedback received."[417] Instead of offering customer comment cards, TSA signage (including quick response codes that directly link the consumer with mobile technology to the website source) should direct customers to provide feedback online at www.tsa.gov.

- TSA Contact Center (TCC) Emails and Phone Calls. TCC already collects information from customers that email or contact them directly. It would need to ensure that the data is combined with the kiosks surveys at checkpoints and online forms, and use all of the nationally collected information to track trends.

(3)   Create Summary Reports. The TCC will need to consolidate all customer and employee feedback on a regular basis (weekly or monthly), analyze for content, and report the top categories of positive and negative feedback.

c.   Solicit Employee Feedback on Operations

TSA should also encourage employees (traveling on agency funds) to provide specific feedback on their TSA security experience at other airports. That would allow TSA to tap into the expertise of employees that know what should be occurring at security checkpoints and have seen firsthand what is working and not working well when they travel.

For example, if experienced TSA employees traveling home from a temporary duty assignment observed too many employees standing around,

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[416] Frank Barrett explains appreciative inquiry (AI) provides a framework to focus attention on the positive and encourages individuals to see the possibilities. It becomes "self-fulfilling" and "it creates more hope and confidence in the human capacity to achieve something together." "The words we use guide what we notice, and indeed how we interpret our experiences." An example of using AI for kiosk surveys would be: How could we have improved your experience at the checkpoint today? Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry, Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity, 1st ed. (Chagrin Falls, OH: Taos Institute Publications, 2005), 41–43.

[417] Doorley and Garcia, *Reputation Management,* 115.

unprofessional behavior, or inefficient use of queues and passed that to the appropriate field office as constructive feedback that is actionable. The insider perspective on what is working well, or what should be considered for process improvements is invaluable. On the flip side, if the informed traveler witnessed good customer service practices, their feedback can be used to encourage more of that positive behavior and identifies specific employees and airports that can be used as role models.

TSA should modify evaluations already developed for other "secret shopper" type evaluation programs to make a quick questionnaire focused on the experience from an informed traveler. The questionnaire could be linked to the travel accounting system so that when a travel reimbursement voucher was submitted the employee would receive an automatically generated email with the survey. Like all other types of feedback, the internal feedback should be routed to TSA's Contact Center and included in their summary reports.

d.   Manage Negative Feedback and Promote Best Practices

> The customer doesn't expect everything will go right all the time; the big
> test is what you do when things go wrong.
> –Sir Colin Marshall, CEO of British Airways

The most important step begins after the feedback has been collected. Southwest and Disney both analyze feedback to identify negative trends and to look for opportunities to improve customer service or operations. Customer feedback is essential to identify what issues are important to the traveling public and what they appreciate so the agency can do more of that. TSA should focus on the positives and build on success, but it is also important to look back at lessons learned and take steps to not repeat things that did not work well the first time.

By examining complaints, TSA can identify problem areas and fix them. Bill Gates, Co-founder of Microsoft, wisely noted, "your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning." [418]   The authors of *Strategy Safari* concur,

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[418] Bill Gates, "Business @ The Speed of Thought," The Quotations Page, accessed August 13, 2012, http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Bill_Gates/.

"organizations can learn as much, if not more, from failure as from success. Learning organizations fight the natural tendency to bury failure and forget it as soon as possible."[419]   The goal is to improve the passenger's experience at TSA security checkpoints by creating a collaborative working group that will identify root causes and work on problem solving.

(1)   Create a Working Group to Solve Problems and Spread Successes. A collaborative working group is needed to address the challenges identified from customer and employee feedback, consider solutions, and ultimately implement process improvements. The working group should include subject matter experts from different size airports, including representatives from: training (to incorporate additional training for officers), Public Affairs (to provide better messaging to prepare passengers and to inform them of what to expect about the screening process so their expectations are reasonable), customer support and quality improvement managers (personally respond to passenger's individual inquiries), security officers (uniformed role models that excel at providing good customer service), and security managers (so they are in touch with passenger and stakeholder concerns about their security operations). Employees in leadership development programs could also be included so they can learn the benefits of collaborative processes.

The working group should meet face-to-face initially but could continue to meet via electronic meetings every two weeks to ensure the focus stays on improving customer service. The "in person" meeting locations should be selected from those airports identified as excelling at customer service so the working group can see firsthand what is working well and share those best practices throughout the agency. In between meetings, the working group members should be assigned problems that require future research and continue to network with their peers on potential solutions.

(2)   Identify Root Causes and Solutions. The working group will need to "dive deep" to find the root causes of issues that were identified as either widespread challenges or that cause a negative spike for a particular area or airport.

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[419] Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, *Strategy Safari,* 214.

- *Identify Information Topics*—What is the public asking about? Is there more that could be done to get information out to the public via the website, media, signage, checkpoint videos, or employee to customer messaging? Is TSA effectively informing the public about security procedures and the importance of them? Is TSA proactively providing information in advance of implementing new security procedures? Is TSA aggressively correcting inaccurate media messages?

- *Identify What the Customer Wants*—What are the top five things passengers respond favorably to? Is that holding steady or is positive public opinion increasing or decreasing? Should we do more of what the passenger responds favorably to?

- *Identify Smart Practices*—What airports are receiving the most positive customer feedback? Is there something that they are doing that should be implemented elsewhere?

- *Identify Specific Problems*—What are the top five passenger concerns across the country? Is that holding steady or is negative public opinion increasing or decreasing? What is the root cause of these problems?

- *Identify Problem Areas*—Is there a pattern of negative feedback occurring at specific airports or in specific regions that needs to be addressed?

Customer feedback metrics and trend reports along with the analysis and recommendations from the working group should be provided to those involved with customer service at TSA headquarters and in the field, and program offices that have an impact on the customer's experience at security checkpoints. Airports and employees that do well could be recognized for sustaining a high level of customer service or for showing improvement.

5.   Strategies to Manage the Flow of Customers

Both Southwest and Disney have used innovative strategies to effectively manage the flow of customers in queues. Their strategies most applicable to TSA are improving consistency between airports and designing queue settings that will reward prepared travelers.

a.   *Improve Consistency from Airport to Airport*

Southwest's example of instilling consistency at each airport makes them more efficient and the passengers know what to expect. There is a saying in TSA, "If you

have seen one airport, then you have seen one airport," which means that every airport is unique and there are many things that vary from airport to airport. However, TSA inconsistencies that impact the traveling public make it frustrating for passengers that are trying to follow security procedures. TSA should strive for more consistency in both security procedures and checkpoint layouts (when possible because available airport space restricts some checkpoint designs). Although passengers should see consistency in screening processes from airport to airport, the U.S. Travel Association's survey in 2010 identified that 77 percent of travelers believe "security procedures are inconsistent from airport to airport, and even from one TSA line to another."[420] TSA could improve consistency at their ticket document checking areas, in application of liquid rules, and with options for handling prohibited items.

(1) Create Consistency in Travel Document Checking Queues. Currently, some airports have passengers stand behind a line on the queue floor and only approach the TSA Travel Document Checker (TDC) podium when requested—at other airports passengers line up on both sides of the podium.[421] The most effective method should be consistently followed so passengers know what to expect. TDC lines should have passengers lined up on both the right and left sides (speeds up the process because you do not have to wait for passengers to find their boarding documents and identification—Officers turn to the first passenger on either side that has everything ready). Signs with arrows should be posted on TDC podiums to help passengers efficiently form two lines.

(2) Instill Consistency in Applying Liquid Rules. Liquid rules should be uniformly applied from airport to airport. If TSA officers are not following rules consistently (passengers repeatedly claim 3–1-1 liquid rules that require 3.4 ounce or less liquids to be placed in baggies and separated from carry-on luggage are not followed at

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[420] Sample from 1,000 travelers was conducted between November 29 and December 10, 2010. Consensus Research Group, Report of Findings: A Study of Air Traveler Perceptions of Aviation Security Screening Procedures, December 21, 2010, accessed August 28, 2012, www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/.../TSA_Survey_Slide_Deck.ppt, 9.

[421] Travel Document Checker (TDC) is where passengers present their boarding pass and identification prior to entering TSA security screening.

every airport) then the rules need to be changed or enforced.[422] Paul J. Smith suggests, "It causes more frustrations for passengers when liquids are not pulled at large airports and they are pulled at smaller airports. Passengers expect more consistency in the application of liquid restrictions."[423]

(3)   Provide Options for Mailing Prohibited Items. All large airports should have vendor provided mailing services that enable passengers to mail valuable or treasured prohibited items to themselves. Currently located at some airports, these vendor provided kiosks allow passengers to mail items to an address of their choice if they are prohibited in the secure area of the airport. Although there is a cost paid by the passenger directly to the vendor, the cost is typically less than a checked bag fee and allows passengers the option of keeping their property without having to come back through security a second time. Passengers will appreciate this service when they find out their grandfather's pocketknife is not allowed and they forgot to remove it.

b.   Review Queue Designs

Disney excels at the effective management of people in queues and provides ideas for use at TSA. Following Disney's model, TSA should reconsider the queue design and setting. Model queue designs should be created and the agency should strive for creating more common practices at TSA checkpoints across the country. Currently, local TSA or airport leadership has an impact on queue designs so they can vary significantly from airport to airport. Available space and layouts also have an impact on maintaining consistency.

Queues need to be designed for maximum efficiency so the next passenger in line is directed to the shortest screening lane. Often the queues are only the first line—then passengers select a screening lane, and they end up in another line (while watching

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[422] Select passengers in TSA Pre✓™ lanes at participating checkpoints are allowed to leave their 3-1-1 compliant liquids inside of carry-on luggage. However, many passengers say there is inconsistency in application of liquid rules at non TSA Pre✓™ lanes (where liquids are still required to be removed).

[423] Smith, personal communication.

passengers move more quickly in the lane they did not select). Ideas for TSA to consider include:

- Bypass lanes in the checkpoint queue (for passengers in wheelchairs, flight crews, and airport employees) should be clearly marked and separated from the rest of the queue so the queue lines keep moving.

- During non-peak times, queue shortcuts need to be opened so passengers have quick, straight access (without having to navigate through an empty queue maze of stanchions).

- Offer a separate lane and divesture area for passengers that need more time (this may include passengers with multiple carry-on items, families traveling with young children, and the elderly).

6.   Strategies to Encourage Public Participation in the Security Process

TSA has the opportunity to encourage more public participation in security processes. Passengers can be rewarded if they are prepared for security, information on wait times will help passengers make informed decisions about arrival times, and which checkpoint to use, and stakeholder and community group suggestions can help the agency continue to make improvements.

a.   Reward Passengers for Preparing for Security

Both of the case studies show that it benefits the company if customers are rewarded for learning and using their systems designed to increase efficiency. Southwest's passengers quickly learn their company's A, B, or C boarding process and are rewarded if they check in early with an "A" boarding card resulting in early boarding, better seat selections, and first access to overhead storage space. Disney customers that learn their FASTPASS queue management system can self-manage the length of time they spend waiting in line and are rewarded with more time to spend elsewhere in the park.

TSA needs to consider new queue methods that allow passengers to have more control about their security checkpoint experience and encourage passenger behavior that results in efficiency. TSA has already tried two different methods for processing passengers in expedited lines.

- The first approach was TSA's "black diamond" lanes put in place several years ago at some airports. The black diamond concept was designed to let the prepared traveler with few carry-ons process through a separate lane that usually moved faster. Passengers in the black diamond lane received the same type of screening as all other passengers, but were not slowed down by travelers with multiple carry-ons or infrequent travelers (both need more time to divest). The line also moved faster because of fewer carry-on items that needed to be X-rayed. TSA's goal was "to provide travelers with dedicated screening lanes based on their needs, including 'black diamond' lanes for frequent fliers who know the drill."[424]

- Recently, TSA implemented a new risk-based security approach. TSA Pre✓™ allows pre-identified low risk passengers to move to an expedited line where they process through more quickly because those selected do not have to remove their shoes, light outerwear, laptops, or liquids—thus the processing time is much faster.

Both of these methods have been popular with eligible passengers. However, the new TSA Pre✓™ method currently in place is not available to every passenger (only those that sign up and it often involves a fee) and does not reward passengers specifically for being prepared.

TSA should encourage the passenger behavior that allows the agency to be more efficient by rewarding passengers that exhibit it with shorter lines (like the 10 items or less line at the grocery). In addition to TSA Pre✓™, TSA should consider a dedicated speed lane at large airports for passengers with ONE single small carry-on (or none) who demonstrate they are prepared for security with their liquids baggie and laptop already pulled out. This option should be available at every large airport with multiple lanes, as a reward for passengers who check their luggage and travel light through security. Passengers would then have a choice—potential for long lines that are often the result of passengers with several carry-ons and multiple bins of items *__or__* short lines as a reward for passengers that will be able to divest quickly, which keeps the line moving. On duty airport employees could also use this lane (but not if they were flying with multiple carry-on items).

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424 Transportation Security Administration, "Black Diamond Update," The TSA Blog, September 23, 2008, accessed November 24, 2012, http://blog.tsa.gov/2008/09/black-diamond-update.html.

If the speed lane option is attractive enough, it could reverse the trend of passengers taking too many items through security to avoid the bag fees imposed by the airlines.[425] That benefits the passenger by being able to process through security faster, benefits the airline stakeholders because passengers take less time getting on and off airplanes, and benefits TSA because fewer items are going through checkpoint X-rays and that means reduced bag searches.

The speed lane would have to be distinctive, and marketed as a reward for passengers that are engaged in making the security process more efficient. TSA's dedicated speed lane should send a positive message to passengers—passengers are allowed to go in this lane *because* they are prepared for security with shoes off, liquids and laptop out, and one small carry-on ready.

b.   *Monitor and Provide Wait Time Information*

Disney understands that when customers have accurate wait time information they make an informed decision about the time to arrive at a particular location. TSA can also have a positive impact by monitoring the amount of time it takes passengers to progress through the security checkpoint (referred to as "wait time"), using that information to improve processes, and sharing wait times with passengers and stakeholders. [426]   TSA, stakeholders, and the public are better informed and better prepared when wait time information is monitored and shared. The few airports that do provide reliable wait time information receive positive media and public response.

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[425] Largely due to airline checked bag fees, passengers now come through TSA security checkpoints with multiple carry-on items requiring many bins to hold everything. As a result, they take longer to divest items and there is more chance of having prohibited items or cluttered bags resulting in bag searches—all factors that slow down the line. In addition, it takes longer for the passenger to recompose afterwards and that clogs down the back of the line.

[426] Wait time information should be provided at all large airports (TSA category X and I).

TSA can only do so much to impact the passengers' speed through the security checkpoint, but it can have a positive impact on the passenger's perceptions.[427] Rachelle Cope points out that even if an organization cannot manage the time customers will arrive in a queue, it can focus on managing the "*perception* of the wait."[428] "One thing that is inherent in waiting lines is the universal dislike for the process. In fact, the feelings and opinions developed in waiting lines influence the customer's perception of the awaited experience."[429]

Without accurate measurement of wait times, TSA is also missing an important customer service metric they could promote (if wait times are kept within a reasonable range) or improve if needed. TSA claims it is keeping wait times low, but there may be a gap between what is actually happening and what the public's perception is. Passengers often think the wait time is much longer than it is, so posting wait time information may prevent those negative perceptions. One report claims "in 2011, over 99% of federalized airports' checkpoint operational hours maintained wait times of less than 20 minutes."[430] However, the public may not believe the statement if there is no recorded wait time information.

TSA should begin to collect real time and historical wait time information in order to provide a higher level of customer service to the millions of passengers that travel each day. A RAND study on efficient aviation security contends there are intangible costs to passengers for the amount of time they spend undergoing security

[427] There are many factors impacting TSA wait times. 1) TSA staffing has to be sustainable; there is a cost to having too many officers working to cover a peak that may be short term. 2) Passengers need to be prepared for the security process. Passengers that understand security requirements and arrive prepared can significantly increase the speed of going through the security checkpoint. 3) Passengers with a large number of carry-on items (largely due to airline fees for checked luggage) take longer to process through security. 4) Significant changes in security procedures may slow the checkpoint lines, especially if there is a learning curve for TSA employees to perform unfamiliar procedures. On the flip side, RBS will speed up the wait time for passengers selected to go through expedited screening.

[428] Cope et al., "Innovative Knowledge Management at Disney," 16.

[429] Ibid., 13.

[430] *Imperial Valley News*, "White House Releases New Travel and Tourism Progress Report," 3.

procedures.[431] Monitoring wait times will ensure TSA operations are efficient and wait times do not exceed an acceptable customer service level (debatable, but should be consistently under 20 minutes). It also communicates that TSA understands and considers the customers' perspective (do not want to wait in long lines) and stakeholders' perspective (passengers in lines are not spending money in retail areas or boarding their planes). This will require streamlining the methods currently used to collect and monitor passenger wait times, and analyzing the results to improve processes.

(1) Use Technology to Continuously Measure and Monitor Wait Times. Wait times need to be tracked by technology and used to manage personnel in order to keep wait times low. Security is of course the primary concern, but efficient use of personnel and scheduling can help keep wait times in an acceptable range. As an additional benefit, the very act of monitoring wait times may cause an automatic improvement because the tendency is for employees to be more efficient when they know they are being scrutinized.

Kelly Hoggan, while in the position of TSA's Assistant Administrator for the Office of Security Technologies, testified on technological innovations the agency is considering:

> Automated Wait Time (AWT) systems utilize technology to monitor and track queuing traffic at the security checkpoint, enabling TSA to reallocate resources to areas of higher congestion and priority as needed. The AWT system includes the ability to display wait times to the traveling public on monitors within airport checkpoints. TSA preliminarily tested an AWT system at the TSIF and anticipates testing it in airports in the coming months.[432]

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[431] Brian A. Jackson et al., "Efficient Aviation Security: Strengthening the Analytic Foundation for Making Air Transportation Security Decisions" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1220, summary xv.

[432] TSIF stands for Transportation Systems Integration Facility and is where TSA tests new equipment and technology. Statement of Kelly Hoggan, Assistant Administrator, Office of Security Capabilities, before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security, 112th Cong. (2012), accessed August 11, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/press/speeches/index.shtm, 5.

TSA's current monitoring of passenger wait times involves manually recording wait times and the use of passenger supplied wait time estimates. Both of these methods are limited in use and applicability.

- *TSA Manually Recorded Wait Time Information* (internal use only). TSA wait time information is manually recorded when wait times are considered to be excessive. One method is a "time stamped" card handed to the last passenger in line—the card is time stamped again when it is collected from the passenger after they have completed the screening process. The advantage of this approach is limited cost. The disadvantages are inconsistencies in the frequency of wait time collections and no measured wait time information is available to passengers or stakeholders. Although wait times vary significantly based on the day of the week and the time of day, TSA does not provide that information to the public.

- *Passenger Supplied Wait Time Information* (external use only). TSA created a "My TSA" mobile application for smart phones, which provides security wait time information (also airport status, travel tips, and information on permitted and prohibited items). However, wait time information is based *only* on passenger estimates (not measured data). "My TSA" allows passengers to post their perceived wait time and see wait times posted by others.[433] This system is cost effective because passengers populate data (saves TSA resources by using crowdsourcing).[434] The disadvantages are that the information is only available to passengers with smart phones and tablets, information is not posted on TSA's website, and it relies on passengers to populate data (passenger estimates may not be accurate and very little data is actually posted).[435]

Until AWT technology is readily available, TSA should manually measure wait times (either through time stamped cards handed to passengers or through observation) and upload them to digital displays.

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[433] Transportation Security Administration, "My TSA Mobile Application," accessed August 21, 2012, http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/mobile/index.shtm.

[434] The term crowdsourcing was first used in 2006. It is defined as obtaining "content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers." Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, s.v. "Crowdsourcing," accessed August 21, 2012, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crowdsourcing.

[435] The "My TSA" app is only as good as the accuracy of passenger input and if passengers do not submit data it is not populated. For example, on July 13, 2012 Anchorage only had one wait time reported and it was 19 days old; the much larger Denver International Airport had only one wait time reported within the last three days and that was for 1:25 a.m. (not a time when most passengers go through security).

(3)   Display Wait Times at Checkpoints and on TSA and Airport websites. TSA should provide accurate wait time information (at all large airports) as a basic customer service for stakeholders and the traveling public. Wait times should be posted on monitors in front of each checkpoint and also on TSA and Airport websites.

A study by J. D. Powers identified that one of the most important topics to travelers is getting through security quickly. [436]   The Tampa International Airport conducted a survey of more than 300 passengers and found that "an overwhelming majority—more than 84 percent—said they would like the airport to provide information on security checkpoint wait times." [437]   Other stakeholders agree that wait time information is important. The U.S. Travel Association conducted a "Blue Ribbon Panel" to look at some of the challenges in aviation security. One of the issues they addressed was the lack of information about wait times and the impact that has on the traveling public. The Travel Association claims:

> Given the importance of passenger wait times to both security and levels of passenger frustration, it is unfortunate that, as of 2009, TSA has stopped providing information on average security checkpoint wait times to the general public. This lack of information not only inhibits passengers from adequately gauging the necessary arrival time before a flight but it also prevents independent analysis of TSA's success in reducing wait times year-over-year.
>
> In addition, because most travelers are unwilling to risk missing flights and thus incur airline fees to change a ticket or fly "stand-by," travelers must plan for the worst-case scenario on security wait times and arrive at the airport far in advance of each flight. Many U.S. airlines advise their customers to arrive at the airport sixty (60) or seventy-five (75) minutes before the flight even if they are not checking luggage. While most passengers arriving this early will have cleared security far in advance of their flight, the "wait time" near the airport departure gate should be considered an unnecessary by-product of inconsistency at the TSA checkpoint.[438]

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[436] J. D. Power and Associates, 2010 North America Airport Satisfaction Study, January 1, 2010, accessed August 24, 2012, http://www.jdpower.com/content/study/7ldlX0O/2010-north-america-airport-satisfaction-study.htm?page=2.

[437] Tampa International Airport, "Tampa Airport to Test Security Checkpoint Wait Time Displays," news release, March 7, 2012, http://www.tampaairport.com/about/media/articles/security-wait-times.asp.

[438] U.S. Travel Association, "A Better Way," 9.

Implementation of customer focused wait time initiatives to improve the passengers experience at security checkpoints is important for several reasons.

- TSA managers and scheduling officers benefit from accurate wait times that show whether TSA personnel are scheduled efficiently.

- Airport stakeholders want efficient checkpoint operations for their customers so they have more time to spend money in shops and restaurants.

- Airline stakeholders want to make sure their passengers will arrive at the gate for an on time departure.

- Passengers need to know how long it will take to process through the security checkpoint so they can adjust their plans (arrival time and which checkpoint to go through if there are more than one) if needed.

- Finally, passengers standing in a long queue line may have the perception that wait times are much higher than they actually are, which causes stress—by posting the actual wait times that may relieve some stress.

Hutch Carpenter points out that "improving the customer experience is also a critical opportunity. In an era of social-media empowered customers impacting your brand, the consequences of failing to improve the customer experience are higher than ever."[439]

Prominently displaying wait time information at airports where passengers have the option to go through more than one checkpoint allows them to make an informed choice. Jeff Clabaugh reports:

> Dulles International Airport is the first airport in the country to install video screens displaying real-time wait times at its security lines. The technology, provided by French-based software maker Blue Eye Video SA, uses video recognition analytics to measure the number of people in line, how long it is taking people to complete the security screening process, and a calculation of how fast the line is moving. The displays are installed at both east mezzanine and west mezzanine checkpoints, which give passengers the opportunity to choose which line to queue up in, since both mezzanines are connected on the other side of the security checkpoints. The information is also available in real time on the Metropolitan

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[439] Hutch Carpenter, "The Four Quadrants of Innovation: Disruptive vs. Incremental," December 1, 2009, accessed August 25, 2012, http://www.cloudave.com/1129/the-four-quadrants-of-innovation-disruptive-vs-incremental/.

Washington Airports Authority website, meaning a passenger could check the status of security lines before arriving at the airport.[440]

Posted wait times also provide an opportunity for TSA to engage passengers (when they seek wait time information online) to provide tips so they can process through security screening more quickly. It is also important to set reasonable wait time expectations for passengers and stakeholders. A potential TSA message could be:

> Wait times are currently ___ minutes. Typically wait times run from 5 to 25 minutes. Passengers are encouraged to arrive the recommended 1½ hours prior to your flight departure to ensure you can get to your gate in time. Passengers with fewer carryon items and that are prepared for security help reduce wait times. Thank you for partnering with TSA to improve wait times.

c.   *Expand Stakeholder and Community Outreach*

TSA federal security directors (FSDs), federal security directors for law enforcement (AFSD-LE), stakeholder managers (SHMs), and field intelligence officers (FIOs) routinely interact with other federal, state, and local agencies. In addition, customer support managers regularly meet with community and disability groups. Their outreach should tie into the positive public information campaign and seek feedback to improve local processes. For example, when TSA's representatives interact with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and local law enforcement, it should ask if there are any community groups that have problems going through security. Professor Paul J. Smith emphasizes the benefits of that partnership to TSA, "If they are speaking to a Muslim group that believes they are always singled out for secondary screening, and pass that feedback on to TSA, then TSA has the opportunity attend the next community meeting to answer questions and address concerns."[441]

Interacting with local disability groups can result in training opportunities for both sides. TSA representatives can provide information the passengers need to

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[440] Jeff Clabaugh, "Dulles International Airport Displays Security Wait Times," August 9, 2012, http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2012/08/09/dulles-displays-security-wait-times.html?s=print.

[441] Smith, personal communication.

navigate through the security processes and TSA can obtain feedback on the experience from the passenger's perspective that can result in process improvements. Each interaction with a stakeholder or community group provides the opportunity to share positive information about the agency and help correct misconceptions.

B.   SUMMARY

The recommendations are a result of an extensive review of literature and examination of best practices in Southwest Airlines and Disney—two private companies known for excelling in customer service. Implementation of these recommendations will help TSA improve customer service and ultimately their public image. The goal is to move from being a reactive agency to one that is proactively planning and implementing customer focused initiatives.

The next and final chapter summarizes the thesis, considers implementation challenges, suggests an implementation strategy, and recommends areas of further research that should be considered.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. RECAP OF THESIS STATEMENT AND EVIDENCE

> To disregard what the world thinks of us is not only arrogant but utterly shameless.
>
> > –Marcus Tullius Cicero, Ancient Roman Lawyer

TSA has faced significant challenges during the 11 years it has been in operation. The agency's phenomenal growth rate and a work environment that is sometimes described as "permanent whitewater" has resulted in public-image challenges.

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate customer focused initiatives that can be used to improve TSA's public image. A positive public image is important for all government agencies because it promotes the effectiveness of the organization and builds public trust and confidence. If the public has confidence in TSA, they are more likely to accept and cooperate with security processes, resulting in increased security effectiveness.

TSA receives more than their share of negative scrutiny from the public and political leaders. Congressman Mike Rogers, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, contends TSA needs do a better job:

> In many ways, TSA has become its own worst enemy by underestimating the privacy impact of its operations, and limiting lines of communication and the flow of information to the public. The American people could be more supportive of TSA if they understood why TSA was implementing a particular policy or procedure and what threat or vulnerability it was addressing. Instead, in the last eleven years the American people have become increasingly more critical of TSA.[442]

It is easy for some to be critical about an agency that screens over 1.7 million passengers each day and often has to get into the passengers' personal space in order to do so. Despite the agency's efforts, criticism has increased to the point that it is common to have negative media coverage about TSA. Arguably, many of those media reports are

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[442] Subcommittee on Transportation Security Committee on Homeland Security, Rebuilding TSA, 7.

inaccurate or distorted, but TSA still needs to address the fact there is a public image problem. Regardless of the criticisms, TSA has been successful and there are many dedicated employees that work hard to ensure they remain so. Everyone agrees TSA's first priority is and should be security, but the research supports that customer service should also be important.

It is time to build up the public's trust and confidence in TSA. I propose that TSA continues to focus on security, but leadership should steer the organization toward a more customer friendly environment. TSA needs to improve customer service by considering the passenger's point of view. If I am right, then TSA will have a more positive impact on the over 600 million passengers that fly commercially each year.

B.   SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The research suggests TSA can boost its public image by increasing the focus on the customer's experience. The biggest opportunities follow four main themes: building a more positive work environment for employees, improving TSA messaging and information sharing about security procedures, improving the passengers experience at security checkpoints, and maximizing the use of customer feedback to understand the customer's perspective and ultimately improve operations.

First, TSA should continue efforts to improve employee morale and build a more positive work environment. Employees that take pride in what they do and feel appreciated are more likely to provide a high level of customer service.

Second, more targeted information needs to be provided to the traveling public so they have a better understanding of the security threat. Passengers need to be reminded of why specific security measures were put into place, need to be better informed on how they can prepare for the security checkpoint and most importantly, when security procedures change they need to know how that will impact them. The U.S. Travel Association agrees, "too many travelers enter the checkpoint unaware of the security screening process and fail to live up to their responsibilities to make the system work

smoothly."[443] Public trust and confidence can also be improved by generating more positive messages about TSA successes. Ronald Alsop cautions companies must protect their reputation, "You can't be too vigilant. It's as simple as that. Whether through careless neglect or outright hubris, many companies are not nearly sensitive enough to the never-ending threats to their precious reputations."[444]

Third, TSA needs to put more emphasis on improving customer service. TSA's priority is security, but how screening is conducted and how TSA responds to passengers is important. TSA needs to improve the passenger's experience at security checkpoints by raising the bar on providing professional and courteous customer service and by efficiently managing queues to keep passenger wait times low. That will also require considering the passenger's perspective before implementing new security procedures. Bill Capodagli and Lynn Jackson explain, "Customer perceptions are very powerful and often become reality. Therefore, every system in the organization must be evaluated through customers' eyes."[445]

Finally, customer feedback needs to be consolidated and used more effectively as a mechanism for analysis and improvements. Since TSA's mission requires constant interaction with the public, it is essential for the agency to seek to improve relations with customers. The best way to do that is to collect feedback from the traveling public and then use the information to develop customer service improvements in daily operations. That will require moving toward the TSA Contact Center as the central location to collect *all* passenger feedback—including feedback currently collected only in the field. Collecting and analyzing 100 percent of passenger feedback will identify what passengers appreciate (so TSA can do more of that) and problems that can be addressed.

The more detailed list of recommendations listed in Chapter V is meant to be used as a tool by a strategic working group. It is important that a collaborative process is used to consider the costs and benefits of implementing the recommendations. It is estimated

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[443] U.S. Travel Association, "A Better Way," 15.

[444] Alsop, The 18 Immutable Laws of Corporate Reputation, 134.

[445] Capodagli and Jackson, *The Disney Way,* 75.

there would be significant costs for some of the recommendations; for example, installation of customer feedback kiosks and software to collect and analyze customer feedback data nation-wide. However, there are short-term fixes that can be implemented with little cost that will still make a difference. There also needs to be further work and consideration of imaginative solutions to the challenge of building the public's trust and confidence in TSA.

C.   IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Implementation challenges within the agency may include internal resistance to change in general and specifically, to change that includes a higher emphasis on customer service. Lee Cockerell suggests there are two attitudes that can sabotage success, "One is: But this is the way we have always done it. The other is: But we've never done it that way before."[446]

The concern may be that the officers should not be distracted from their focus on security. They are correct; officers should only focus on security. However, managers at every checkpoint should consider the passenger's point of view (as identified through a more thorough analysis of customer feedback). For example, that may involve ensuring staffing resources are sufficient to keep wait times at a manageable level. It is not the officer on the frontlines fault if wait times are long, it is the fault of the manager that did not ensure sufficient staffing was in place through efficient scheduling and management of personnel.

1.   Leadership Support for a Customer Focused Approach

TSA senior leadership has shown a renewed focus on customer service and that has resulted in positive changes at the airport level. Continued management support can be gained through an understanding of the benefits of a customer-focused operation.

MSN Money's analysis of Customer Survey Hall of Fame results indicates leadership is critical to good customer service. Aho argues, "Good service starts at the top. Companies with great service have chief executives who make it their mission. They're

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[446] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 75.

not afraid to spend money, hire experts and structure the corporation around the goal of sterling service."[447] TSA Administrator John Pistole recognizes the difficulty of that task. He states, "One of TSA's key challenges is to ensure the most effective security while striving to achieve 100% customer service, which is desirable, but usually never attainable."[448]

There needs to be consistent customer service leadership within TSA that understands the customers' point of view and is an advocate for those impacted by TSA security procedures and processes (passengers as well as aviation security stakeholders). Disney's innovation model considers "product, service, *and* process… service innovation changes the way the product is integrated into the entire organization."[449] TSA has implemented many new products and processes, but not enough attention has been given to customer service. TSA's new approach should be to understand the impact of security procedures on the traveling public, increase the agency's efforts to help the passenger understand them better, and improve customer service during the required security processes.

a. *Federal Government Agencies Should Provide Good Customer Service*

At one time, TSA prided itself on providing world-class customer service. Over time, intelligence on new threats led to the implementation of more intrusive security procedures and they were rolled out without adequately preparing the passenger for them. Those security procedures are necessary to combat the known threats; however, that does not mean the agency cannot place a higher priority on customer service. It is possible to focus on both, and all government agencies have to consider their responsibilities to the public they serve. Sidney J. Levy, *Brands, Consumers, Symbols, and Research*, suggests the general public's "basic wish is to have a benevolent,

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[447] Aho, "2012 Customer Service Hall of Fame."

[448] TSA, "Aviation Security Advisory Committee: Summary," 2.

[449] Capodagli and Jackson*, The Disney Way,* 46.

protective government, one that safeguards persons by rendering routine or 'necessary' services without otherwise impinging too strongly."[450]

President Obama's Executive Order 13571 requires agencies to "continuously evaluate their performance," "learn from what is working in the private sector and apply those best practices," and "solicit customer feedback" and use that to make service improvements."[451] However, a recent GAO report supports the need for improvement in TSA's collection, tracking, and use of customer feedback. GAO found that "because TSA does not have a consistent process for categorizing air passenger complaints data, including standardized categories of complaints, it is unable to compile and analyze all of the data to identity patterns and trends."[452]

b.   *The Status Quo is Not Working*

There are times when an agency has to try something new; especially when public sentiment demands a renewed priority on improving TSA's customer service. The authors of *Strategy Safari* contend that continuous learning helps an organization improve.

> A learning organization rejects the adage "if it ain't broken, don't fix it." All the processes that regulate work in the organization can be improved even when they appear efficient under superficial scrutiny. The source of the improvements is often buried deep within existing ways of doing things. A learning organization undertakes a periodic reexamination of systems, routines, and procedures to discover whether they still perform a needed function and should be retained. New technology, new knowledge, and new practices often allow organizations to redesign routines to make them more efficient and effective.[453]

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[450] Sidney J. Levy and Dennis W. Rook, Brands, Consumers, Symbols, & Research—Sidney J. Levy on Marketing (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Aviation Security Advisory Committee: Publications, 1999), 231.

[451] Office of the Press Secretary, White House, "Executive Order 1357,"1 Sec. 1.

[452] GAO, "Air Passenger Screening," 25.

[453] Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel*, Strategy Safari,* 214.

Lee Cockerell encourages organizations to prepare employees for change, "great leaders orient their people not only to expect change but to welcome it. In fact, they take it a step further: They train people to look for positive ways to initiate change."[454]

c.   Cost of Screening Hassles

TSA should consider the impact of screening procedures on the members of the traveling public and consider their point of view because hassles in screening procedures have a direct financial cost to the aviation industry. The Travel and Tourism Advisory Board reported "hassles largely driven by aviation security caused an estimated 41 million avoided trips, generating a loss of $26.5 billion to the U.S. economy and $4.2 billion in lost federal, state, and local tax revenue."[455]

d.   TSA Benefits from Improvements in Customer Service

TSA's managers benefit from improvements in customer service because understanding what is important to customers provides them the opportunity to increase their success. The benefit for 50,000 TSA officers that interact with the public is increased security effectiveness. Improvements in customer service should result in a more supportive public that understands security requirements (less time spent explaining), prepares for the security process (fewer bag checks), and cooperates with security officers (less frustration) so they can focus on identifying those persons and items that are a threat to security. An added benefit to TSA raising the bar on customer service—through professional and courteous treatment of passengers—may result in the public responding in kind.

2.   Public Perceptions May Continue to be Negative

Regardless of improvements made in customer service, the public's perception of TSA will still be influenced by personal experiences with TSA, such as having luggage

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[454] Cockerell, *Creating Magic,* 77.

[455] Rossi Ralenkotter and Sam Gilliland, "The Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, Letter to Secretary Gary Locke," May 23, 2011, accessed August 28, 2012, http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/ttab/TTAB_Meetings.html, 3.

searched or going through unpopular screening procedures. However, there are advantages to improving the passenger's experience as much as possible.

It may take a while to change public opinion, and those fully locked into their beliefs that TSA does not have authority to conduct additional screening are not likely to change their perceptions. Levy and Rook explain:

> Once people develop a set of ideas and impressions about a product, company, institution, it is part of their characteristic outlook; the more they feel it characteristic of themselves to have the image they do, and the more basic an observation it seems to them to be, the more firmly they will stick to it. They do not yield easily, even, at times, in the face of new or contradictory evidence, but because it conserves energy not to change their minds and because they are prone to believe themselves to be correct and right in the first place.[456]

There are also some people that just do not like government. Sidney Levy cautions "it seems difficult for people to avoid the heavily stereotyped images of government agency people as motivated by laziness, security, and inadequacy, in a setting that is both careless and rigid."[457]

Turning the tide of negative media attention may be the most difficult challenge. Donella Meadows, author of *Thinking in Systems*, cautions that the news will often focus on the negative. According to Meadows, "Examples of bad human behavior are held up, magnified by the media, affirmed by the culture, as typical. This is just what you would expect. After all, we're only human. The far more numerous examples of human goodness are barely noticed."[458] TSA needs to maintain high customer service standards, and promote positive stories about their employees and successes to combat the negative sentiment.

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[456] Levy and Rook*, Brands, Consumers, Symbols, & Research,* 226.

[457] Ibid., 230.

[458] Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking In Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008), 184.

3. Unintended Consequences

There may be unintended consequences if TSA implements customer focused strategies to improve the passenger's experiences. A pitfall is the agency may raise the level of passenger expectations higher than can be achieved on a consistent basis. In *Organizational Perception Management*, Kimberly Elsbach points out researchers have found people with "high expectations are more disappointed by the same poor outcomes than those who have low expectations."[459]

Another unintended consequence may be too much scrutiny of TSA wait times. There will still be times when wait times will be longer than desired. Even if the agency has wait time information available (historical and real-time), staffing is sufficient, and resources are allocated to the optimal worksites, there will be times when long wait times are unavoidable. The wild card is TSA cannot predict (with certainty) passenger arrival times. For example, one passenger might arrive two hours early while another passenger arrives only 30 minutes before their flight departure.

Visible wait time information may also result in more scrutiny from airport and airline managers who benefit from low wait times. It will be important to set reasonable stakeholder expectations by stressing cooperation, security has priority over speed, and ultimately, that passengers have a responsibility to prepare for and arrive with enough time to get through security. There is also a risk passengers will rely on routinely low wait times and arrive too close to their flight departure time, which will backfire when unavoidable spikes in wait times occur.

D. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Organizations are risk averse. If you fail, fail forward. If you fail, learn something from that and use it to increase your learning experience.
–Kathleen Kiernan, CHDS

TSA should implement customer-focused initiatives designed to improve the passenger's experience at security checkpoints. A TSA national strategy designed to

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[459] Kimberly D. Elsbach, *Organizational Perception Management* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 144.

improve information sharing and increase the focus on customer service, will begin to improve public opinion. This strategy requires high-level headquarter support but should be refined and implemented at airport field level offices.

Changing the direction of the negative sentiment against TSA requires a new approach. The authors of *Strategy Safari* point out, "The trick for management is to figure out where it can intervene, what it can change and leave others to change, when, how fast, and in what sequence."[460] Hopefully, this thesis will play into the deliberation of solutions to customer service challenges.

1.   Strategic Working Group

Deputy Administrator John Halinski is already working to address TSA's public-image challenges. Halinski has implemented a strategic working group to consider customer focused initiatives and develop a strategy for moving forward. It is imperative that TSA's strategic working group continues to lead the effort to improve TSA's public image and works toward new and imaginative solutions through a collaborative process. William Bratton suggests those seeking to improve customer service need to look for the "trigger" that will get others in the agency to question their existing beliefs—"to weaken the bias toward the status quo."[461] The goal is to get past those that stand in the way and "turn to the strategies, plans, and tactics that reach across boundaries and lead to collaboration."[462]

2.   Collaboration

The working group should include a cross section of TSA employees to include those working with customers in the field. There will be more buy-in if field level representatives are included in the planning and implementation decisions. Key players within TSA include:

- Public Affairs—responsible for internal and external communications. It should implement public relations campaigns designed to address issues

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[460] Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, *Strategy Safari,* 331.

[461] Bratton and Tumin, *Collaborate Or Perish!,* 158.

[462] Ibid., 37.

raised by customers and employees. Improved messaging will prepare passengers for security and set reasonable expectations. Public Affairs also needs to promptly address inaccurate media messages when they arise and market positive messages at checkpoints.

- Customer Support Personnel in the Field (CSQIMs)—provide local expertise, personally respond to passenger's inquiries, and can help implement changes at individual airports.

- Security Managers—although primarily focused on the mission, they can help implement positive changes in customer service.

- Training—they can develop additional training or aides to target issues. Additionally, TSA's orientation training should instill a positive culture and a commitment to customer service.

- Disability Office—provide guidance on the impact of screening procedures on passengers with disabilities or medical conditions.

- Privacy Office—provide guidance on protecting the privacy of citizens.

- Ombudsman—resource when other resolution efforts have been unsuccessful.

- Office of Civil Rights—provide guidance for resolving passenger claims of discrimination.

- Uniformed Workforce—employees will support new procedures better if they have the opportunity to participate in problem solving.

Before implementing changes, it is important to get frontline employees and field staff input and suggestions. They work directly with TSA's customers and understand the current challenges.

When the issues involve security stakeholders, TSA needs to include them in problem solving. TSA's airline and airport industry stakeholders provide an important perspective that should be considered in order to help the agency have a clear view of the problems. TSA can also learn from their stakeholder's successes; for example, Southwest Airlines' focus on friendly service and speed should be a model for TSA.[463]

3. Begin with the Easy Fixes

TSA can keep the costs low by holding collaboration meetings at headquarters or central locations to reduce travel costs and by using virtual meetings after the initiative

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[463] Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy,* 39.

gains momentum. The TSA working group should begin with the easy fixes by considering short term solutions that will make a positive difference—eliminating feedback input to the two most effective methods already in place, digital signs at checkpoints, updating FAQs on TSA's website, developing positive messages for the checkpoint audience, etc. Since the problems have been ongoing for a long time, it is important to scope the issues down and get a partial solution started. In the book *Collaborate or Perish!*, William Bratton suggests success can be built if people "Get everyone moving in the same direction through collaboration. Get some early wins. Then repeat."[464]

The working group should then consider other more involved solutions that will require input from different program offices and pilot tests in the field to ensure successful implementation. Examples of the more extensive projects include: consolidating all customer feedback under the TCC (field *and* headquarter level customer feedback), automated wait time monitoring and reporting as a customer service to passengers, improved consistency between airports, and analyzing 100 percent of customer feedback and getting analysis reports out to those in the field that can impact change or corrections. Implementation of these projects at pilot airports will allow the agency to further refine the solutions.

E.   FUTURE RESEARCH/NEXT STEPS

This thesis has opened up the debate about TSA's public image and the challenges of providing better customer service while still maintaining high security. Future research should focus on managing expectations, new technologies, security procedures that will be less intrusive, and the impact of leadership on public image and employee morale.

1.   Managing Expectations

More research needs to be done to understand the public's expectations, and how TSA can have a positive impact on those. Sidney J. Levy noted that when individuals are

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[464] Bratton and Tumin, *Collaborate Or Perish!,* 78.

asked to describe government agencies overall, "people tend to see the government agency as rigid, complicated, demanding, unknowing, and unconcerned."[465] When the public has formed a negative opinion, it is difficult to get them to see the government in a different light.

A RAND study on "Efficient Aviation Security" addressed the loss of public confidence in TSA:

> What the public and other stakeholders expect from security is also complex and has varied over time. At the same time that some constituencies or decision makers might express a desire to minimize (or even attempt to eliminate) the risk of terrorist attack on the aviation system, it has also become clear in the past decade that the public's and private-sector organizations' tolerance for inconvenience and other security costs is not inexhaustible. The increasing burden that security places on passengers, cargo shippers, and other businesses, coupled with the perception that some security elements are invasive or unclearly justified, has at times led people and institutions from passengers to the U.S. Congress to question the decision making process used for pursuing aviation security.[466]

2. New Technologies

Although outside of the scope of this thesis, future research and developments that will result in improvements in security screening technology should continue. TSA needs to continuously adapt to new technologies that will improve screening capabilities. However, the passenger's perspective should be considered during development and before implementation.

There are new technologies under development that will improve the passenger's experience. Thom Patterson reported these new technologies will help with airport efficiency, especially when you consider "the number of yearly U.S. commercial airline passengers is expected to nearly double to 1.2 billion by 2032."[467] Patterson also states, "If some visionaries have their way, the future of mobile travel will touch virtually every

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[465] Levy and Rook, *Brands, Consumers, Symbols, & Research,* 229.

[466] Jackson et al., "Efficient Aviation Security," 3–4.

[467] Thom Patterson, "Apple's Secret Plan to Join iPhones with Airport Security," CNN, September 19, 2012, http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/19/travel/mobile-airport-travel-apps/?hpt=tr_.

key activity at the airport—including security and U.S. passports."[468] The Apple company is also testing smart phone technology for checking in bags, boarding passes, and providing identification for passengers. Patterson explains:

> Under Apple's patent, a traveler's phone would automatically send electronic identification to a TSA agent as soon as the traveler gets in line. . . Next, at the X-ray stations, a traveler's phone would confirm to security agents that the traveler's ID had already been checked. Throughout the process, the phone photo could be displayed on a screen for comparison with the traveler. Facial recognition software could be included in the process.[469]

In addition, Avatars are an exciting new technology that can be used to provide information to passengers and future versions may even answer travelers' questions. These are just a small sample of the technological innovations under development.

3.   Intrusive and Unpopular Screening Procedures

Future research is needed on developing effective screening procedures that are less intrusive to passengers. Brian Jenkins suggests nongovernment research institutions should be selected to consider modifications to TSA security procedures:

> Nongovernment research institutions could be selected to independently design an optimal aviation security system, beginning not with the four decades of accumulated security measures currently in place but starting instead from scratch. The competing models would be reviewed and the best ideas would be put forward.[470]

Having independent validation of security processes and procedures should also help build the public's trust in TSA and if added to the Public Affairs messaging can prevent overreactions and misunderstandings later on.

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[468] Ibid.

[469] Ibid.

[470] Brian Michael Jenkins, "TSA Procedures Need to be Remade from Scratch," *U.S. News*, September 28, 2012, http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2012/09/28/tsa-procedures-need-to-be-remade-from-scratch.

4. Impact of Leadership on Public Image and Employee Morale

Another topic for future research is determining if there is any negative impact from the high turnover of TSA's senior and field leadership on TSA's public image and employee morale. Leadership is responsible for developing a positive customer service culture, instilling that culture in the workforce, and making sure it is continually monitored and upheld over time. A constantly changing work environment (new procedures and new technology), and a change in focus because of new senior leadership may have a strong impact on employee morale, which in turn impacts the quality of customer service provided.

TSA should continue its efforts to build a positive culture that supports employees. Although some improvements have been made, employee surveys indicate the agency has more work to do. The workforce will benefit from a positive culture that builds employee morale.

F. SUMMARY

TSA's mission is to provide security for transportation systems and that should remain the number one focus of the agency. TSA's second in command, John Halinski, reported that the agency has faced "repeated unsuccessful attempts to attack our aviation system."[471] "The threat to aviation is real, and we use intelligence, technology and partnerships with law enforcement across the country and around the world to stay ahead of threats and ensure our workforce is prepared to address them."[472]

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[471] According to Halinski, "Since TSA's inception, there have been repeated unsuccessful attempts to attack our aviation system—the liquid explosives plot in 2006, the Christmas Day underwear bombing attempt in 2009, the cargo explosive attempt in 2010, and the renewed threat of explosives concealed on the body this year." Statement of John W. Halinski, Deputy Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security 112th Cong. (2012), http://www.tsa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/testimony/080112_halinski_testimony.pdf, 1.

[472] Ibid.

Brian Jenkins acknowledged the sheer enormity of what TSA's mission entails:

Aviation security is costly, controversial and contentious. It dramatically demonstrates the basic tenet of terrorism—that small groups with a limited capacity for power can achieve disproportionate effects by using terrorist tactics. Terrorists need to recruit only one bomber; the United States has to protect 450 commercial airports, with tens of thousands of flights daily.[473]

Regardless of any negative sentiment towards TSA, the mission of protecting the transportation system remains. Politicians and the public will not accept weaknesses in aviation security that would allow terrorists to conduct another successful attack against the United States. Kip Hawley points out that TSA's future success will require public support and cooperation.

In America, any successful attack—no matter how small—is likely to lead to a series of public recriminations and witch hunts. But security is a series of trade-offs. We've made it through the 10 years after 9/11 without another attack, something that was not a given. But no security system can be maintained over the long term without public support and cooperation. If Americans are ready to embrace risk, it is time to strike a new balance.[474]

The agency's focus included the customer in 2005 when TSA pledged an "ongoing commitment to customer service in the fulfillment of its security mandate."[475] However, there is now a disconnection between TSA's intentions and the public's perceptions. It is time to seek opportunities to improve the public's trust and confidence in TSA through improvements in customer service. In order to do that, TSA needs to get feedback from the traveling public and examine the screening experience from the passenger's perspective.

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[473] Jenkins, "TSA Procedures Need to be Remade from Scratch."

[474] Hawley, "Why Airport Security is Broken," 6.

[475] TSA, "TSA's New 'Pledge to Travelers' Emphasizes Security, Customer Service."

The bottom line is the public deserves better customer service from TSA. In a hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Transportation Security, TSA Administrator John Pistole affirmed, "public service requires public trust and demands adherence to the highest ethical and personal conduct standards. As public servants charged with protecting the Nation's vital transportation systems, we owe the traveling public nothing less."[476] TSA can make improvements that will improve the passenger's experience and any resulting improvements in public opinion will make it easier for the uniformed officers who interact with well over a million passengers each day.

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[476] Statement of John S. Pistole, Administrator, Before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Transportation Security, 2.

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APPENDIX. TSA CUSTOMER FEEDBACK OPTIONS

TSA Office	Feedback Type	Contact Information	How Public Is Informed
TSA Customer Support Personnel at Field Airports	In Person	Specific to Each Airport	Employee referral
	Phone	Specific to Each Airport	Airport website or forwarded from TSA Contact Center (TCC)
	Email	Specific to Each Airport	Airport website or forwarded from TCC
	Mail	Specific to Each Airport	Local address on customer comment cards at checkpoints
	Customer Comment Card	Specific to Each Airport	Signage and drop box at security checkpoints
	TSA Mobile Application	Specific to Each Airport	TSA website
	Talk to TSA website Form	https://apps.tsa.dhs.gov/talktotsa/	TSA website
TSA Cares	Phone	855-787-2227	TSA website
TSA Claims Office	Email	tsaclaimsoffice@dhs.gov	TSA website
	Mail	TSA Claims Management Branch 601 South 12th Street - TSA 9 Arlington, VA 20598–6009	TSA website
TSA Contact Center	Phone	866-289-9673	TSA website
	Email	TSA-ContactCenter@dhs.gov	TSA website
	website Form	https://apps.tsa.dhs.gov/tsacontact/	TSA website

TSA Office	Feedback Type	Contact Information	How Public Is Informed
	Mail	TSA HQ (TSA - 2) ATTN: 49 CFR 1503.3 Reports 601 South 12th Street Arlington, VA 20598–6002	TSA website
TSA Office of Civil Rights and Liberties	Phone	877-336-4872 or 800–877-8339 (TTY)	TSA website
	Email	TSA.Civilrights@dhs.gov TSAExternalCompliance@dhs.gov	TSA website
	Mail	Office of Civil Rights and Liberties 601 12th Street Arlington, VA 20598–6006	TSA website
TSA Ombudsman	Phone	571-227-2383 or 877–266-2837	TSA website
	Email	TSA.Ombudsman@dhs.gov	TSA website
TSA Public Affairs	Blog	http://blog.tsa.gov/	TSA website
	Twitter	https://twitter.com/#!/TSA	TSA website

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