

# Can Avelion Airways Maneuver CrowdStrike Outage Turbulence?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** On July 19, 2024, global travel nose-dived into chaos following the CrowdStrike outage. As numerous computers displayed blue error screens, resulting in grounded flights across multiple airlines,<sup>2</sup> Avelion Airways<sup>3</sup> (Avelion) was also straddled with managing stranded passengers, compensation claims, and scheduling disruptions. To minimize damage, maintain stakeholder trust, facilitate quick recovery, and protect reputation, Avelion must implement a crisis communication framework: pre-crisis planning (risk assessment, stakeholder identification, business continuity drills, etc.), effective and rapid response (centralized communication, transparency, multiple channel communication), and post-crisis evaluation and long-term resilience measures. The case examines how the incident disrupted operations, revealed critical vulnerabilities, and exposed risks to the aviation industry because of its increasing dependence on interconnected technologies and lack of preparedness to address crises from unprecedented circumstances. Instructors can use this case to discuss a company's crisis communication strategy following a disruption such as the CrowdStrike outage.

**Keywords:** customer trust, crisis communication strategy, IT system vulnerabilities, operational resilience, interconnected technology risks.

## 1. Introduction

On July 19, 2024, a major tech failure caused chaos across the aviation industry. The global IT outage-led disruptions forced airlines to ground their flights,

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1. The name of the company (Avelion Airways) is disguised, and this case has been written on the basis of published sources only.
  2. Robert Plummer and Tom Gerken, CrowdStrike and Microsoft: What we know about global IT outage, BBC, July 19, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp4wnrxqlwo>
  3. Name Disguised

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inconveniencing both passengers and airlines with long queues, delays, manual check-ins, and cancellations at airports worldwide (see Exhibits 1 and 2).

**EXHIBIT 1: SCHIPHOL (AMSTERDAM) AIRPORT AFTER CROWDSTRIKE**



Source: All Schiphol flights delayed or canceled over global Windows outage; Fix in the making, NL Times, 19 July 2024,

<https://nltimes.nl/2024/07/19/schiphol-flights-delayed-canceled-global-windows-outage-fix-making>

**EXHIBIT 2: TRAVELERS STRANDED AT BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**



Source: Michael Hiltzik, The CrowdStrike meltdown reminds us that the hacking problem doesn't come only from outside, Los Angeles Times, July 23, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2024-07-23/the-crowdstrike-tech-meltdown-reminds-us-that-the-hacking-problem-doesnt-come-only-from-outside>

Cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike acknowledged that an update to its antivirus software for protecting Microsoft Windows devices from malicious attacks caused the outage. While a Microsoft statement promised “mitigation action” to