



**Case Study: Chick-fil-A Face Criticism after
Commenting on a Gay Marriages in the US**

1. STATUS

A statement made by Chick-fil-A's CEO Dan Cathy in a Southern Baptist publication has provoked a wave of criticism by the society. Cathy's words went viral. What he said was that his company is supporting the "traditional definition of marriage". His opinion on same-sex marriages he expressed with the words that that kind of action will "violate God's plan" and "inviting His judgment" on the American nation, classifying the nation's attitude as prideful and arrogant. That statement brought tons of reactions by users and organizations that support either the same-sex marriage or homosexual individuals in general.

2. ISSUES

Chick-fil-A is not the first company to face a crisis situation. The majority of the issues haven't been related not to the company's services, but to its side activities and mostly focused on the management team. Beside the Cathy's statement, there have been accusations and demonstrations, followed by a sudden death of one of the company's longtime head of PR Don Perry. This happened not long after the Wall Street Journal noted that the giant exceeded the record \$4.1 billion for 2011.

The attention brought by those statements always leaves a print. The company which is the second-largest quick-chicken restaurant chain in the US also had been questioned about the brand's PR ethics. In July one of the Chick-fil-A's partners – Jim Henson Company voluntarily recalled its partnership with the chain restaurant. A couple days later one of the largest websites reported that the fast-chicken chain created a fake profile of a girl, defending the brand from negative comments.

Other factors that might have caused a huge issue for the chain's image are the numerous "kiss-ins" by gay-rights activists at the chain's restaurants across the US on August 3. The Chick-fil-A team managed to respond neutrally, avoiding direct conflict with any of those people.

After the CEO's Dan Cathy statement, he hasn't spoken on the subject that brought so many negative comments in public.

3. ACTIONS

To each of the occurred situations, Chick-fil-A answered very neutrally and politically correct. On its CEO's statement, the brand answered to the audience with the following: *"The Chick-fil-A culture is to treat every person with honor, dignity, and respect — regardless of their belief, race, creed, sexual orientation or gender. Going forward, our intent is to leave the policy debate over same-sex marriage to the government and political arena."* That managed to neutralize the reactions and make the damages less severe.

Another great move was the post after the “kiss-ins” demonstrations on August 3: *“At Chick-fil-A, we appreciate all of our customers and are glad to serve them at any time. Our goal is simple: to provide great food, genuine hospitality and to have a positive influence on all who come into contact with Chick-fil-A.”*

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Even in a friendly environment, people still recognize the CEO as the speaker of the company. What he or she says is associated with the company philosophy. It can go viral, and that is not always a good thing.

Making different public statements as a company’s speaker must be well coordinated with the company values and positions long before that.

It is extremely important to make each leader, manager or person that is part of a certain company or organization to realize that there is a certain price that comes with some actions or statements. Again, it’s not always positive.

Maybe the most important and vital factor not only for the positively perceived image of a brand, but also for its internal activities is the transparency. Being transparent and updating your audience on a regular basis can prevent a crisis or negative feedback.

Contact us:

BEYOO ONLINE.

Phone number: +41 76 624 00 15

E-mail: info@beyooonline.com

BEYOO ONLINE [**bi**: **ju**]: The process of joining two or more things together to form one entity...Be yourself!