System Outage... How do you communicate with your customers?

While watching a movie tonight, the Amazon Prime video system had an outage, no Amazon videos would play on my Amazon Fire TV Device. Netflix and Hulu worked fine, other internet traffic worked fine, just no Amazon Prime videos.

After going to Twitter, I did some looking around and could find not status update on the outage on the official Amazon twitter account. Twenty minutes passed and still no update. There were many tweets calling out the issues from all over the world to @Amazon, and #amazonPrime, however no official word. Many were complaining about shopping cart issues beyond the watching of videos, so this appeared to be more than just a video playback issue.

It made me wonder the following:

- Do they know about the outage?
- Are they working on it?
- Is this a short term outage, or something more serious?
- Do they care about their customers?
- When will I be able to see the end of the movie?

As far as disaster recovery and system outages, the way that you communicate with your customers is one of the most important factors during the outage and the recovery. This is one of the key items that I teach during Disaster Recovery Training.

So far on this outage, Amazon has failed. No communication and nothing but promotions on their official Twitter feed. What a waste of a valuable resource that they could use to inform their customers. Is Amazon to big to communicate with their customers?

As a customer or a consumer, what type of communication do you expect during a system outage? Please post your response below.

Update: 30 minutes have passed, Amazon Prime videos still down, lots of people tweeting about the problem. No official word from Amazon. Some have posted that they phoned Amazon, and they heard that the service would be restored in an hour.

Update 45 minutes, my service is restored, still nothing on Twitter from Amazon. Many people still complaining about Prime video issues, some claiming it is fixed.

The lesson to be learned is that things happen, systems have outages, and I think that most people understand that. The important thing is how you communicate with your customers to let them know what is going on. Twitter, Facebook and other social media should be used as a tool to communicate with customers, not solely as a channel to push out marketing material. Even just a statement that says something like "we know about the problem and are working on it" would be enough to let people know the problem is being worked on.

How will you communicate with your customers in an outage scenario?