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Interviewee: Mr. Ralph de la Vega - Vice Chairman of AT&T, Inc. and CEO of Business Solutions & AT&T International, LLC.

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Summary:

I had the pleasure of conducting a research interview with the Vice Chairman of AT&T, Inc. and CEO of Business Solutions & AT&T International, LLC, Mr. Ralph de la Vega. We discussed welcoming obstacles, keys to leading a team, and how software is redefining the technology industry. This interview gave me great deal of information on being a leader and the importance of never giving up.

Interview:

We began by discussing Mr.de la Vega's background. Mr.de la Vega has been in the telecommunications industry for a long time, he was the President of the Latin America Division at BellSouth, then he was the Chief Operations Officer at Cingular Wireless, he later came to AT&T where he was the President and CEO of the AT&T Mobility division and then became the President and CEO of the AT&T Mobility and Business Solutions, and he is now the Vice Chairman of AT&T, Inc. and CEO of Business Solutions & AT&T International, LLC. He explained to me his main job is to lead the different teams in a project to deliver a product.

We then discussed the importance of effective leadership and what it means to be a good leader. Mr.de la Vega responded by hitting on two key points: One, being able to deal with adversity; Two, being able to deal with failure and continue moving forward. To emphasize on the importance of moving past failure he told me about his time working on the Motorola Rokr, a phone that I had never heard of. The Motorola Rokr was one of the first devices to sport the Apple iTunes Music Store, however, did not sell as well as expected. Mr.de la Vega told me about his experience working on the Rokr and that even though it was a failure he pushed through, he also talked about while working on the Rokr he was able to work with Steve Job,

which eventually helped lead to a partnership when Apple sold the iPhone exclusively through AT&T.

Mr.de la Vega also introduced me to the Form-Strom-Norm-Perfom leadership methodology. The form stage is where the team first comes together, then the storm stage is when the team begins to start having disagreements and various issues arise within the group, which leads to the norm stage where issues are resolved and objectives are clarified, then the team enters the perform stage where the team is productive and is effectively delivering goals. We also discussed the steps in effectively leading the team from start to end.

1. Create a strategy and get input from team
2. Develop a plan to implement strategy
3. Align the team
4. Monitor & Adjust
5. Recognize the wins (regardless if small or big)

When creating a strategy, it is important to get team input about what each team member can provide in order to ensure that the strategy chosen is not impossible within the time frame. Then it's important to develop an effective plan in order to properly and successfully execute the strategy. Then after the team begins to work it is important to align the team ensuring the whole team is on the same page and the team knows what they are responsible for delivering. While the project is ongoing it is important to make sure everything's running smoothly, and that if there are any issues they are addressed and fixed. Also during the project and at the end of the project it is important to recognize the wins regardless of the magnitude of the win. I was curious to know what Mr.de la Vega felt the best part of being a leader was, and he responded by telling me that it is "when you can get your team to do something they thought was impossible."

We then discussed software and how it is redefining the world of technology. The advancements in software have led to decreased on dependency on physical hardware. Software has been replacing hardware, Mr.de la Vega explained this with exemplification using the iPhone and its function as an alarm and how it replaced the physical alarm clock, or it replacing the flashlight a calculator. Software has been changing the world of technology by migrating

technology that used to be hardware to software allowing better portability and efficiency of devices.

Throughout the interview Mr.de la Vega emphasized the importance to get out of my comfort zone and try something new as well as never giving up. He gave the example of Steve Jobs who had taken a calligraphy class in college for fun, which eventually came back to aid him when he was designing the Apple typography. He also stressed the importance of persevering through his example of the Rokr. Overall this interview gave me great insight on being a great leader and the changing world of technology.