



Strategy Execution with Extraordinary Leadership at AT&T – Driving Transformation & Unity

A case study from AT&T

The Client Need

After a series of joint ventures and acquisitions, AT&T had assembled a wide array of assets. The objective of the senior leadership team was no longer about acquisitions for scale and transformation; it was now about executing on the combined set of assets. AT&T needed to break down silos, change its culture to incorporate more innovative and collaborative thinking, and focus on the complexities and trade-offs in executing on its 3-year plan. The company also needed to foster a “One AT&T” mindset, and develop a market leader mentality, as one of the largest integrated communications company on the planet.

BTS Approach



LEADING with DISTINCTION

was the inaugural leadership and organizational development initiative at the newly formed AT&T University.

Highly-Customized, Cascading Strategic Initiative

BTS interviewed more than 25 senior executives at AT&T, including the COO, CFO and CMO, developing the customized solution in 16 weeks.

The centerpiece of the initiative was a business simulation – the “One AT&T Case Experience” – which featured AT&T’s strategic imperatives, key initiatives and 3-year business plan. The simulation enabled leaders to practice successful execution of the company’s 3-year plan, by focusing on the execution capabilities of the company’s leaders in key areas across the business.

More than 10 years of experience with AT&T, as well as its predecessor companies – SBC, BellSouth, Cingular and AT&T – enabled BTS to develop a solution focused on how leaders within AT&T can understand the entire business, and leverage collaborative efforts to execute across business units to succeed in an evolving digital ecosystem.

The Solution – An Experience Enabling Leaders to Practice Successful Execution of AT&T’s 3-year Plan

Solution: A cascading strategic initiative comprised of 5-day, 3-day and 2-day workshops with online pre-work and post-session follow-up.

The solution, “LEADING with DISTINCTION” (LwD), is a world-class leadership and strategic alignment initiative custom-designed for AT&T. The program combines experiential learning, Officer and Senior Manager led discussions, subject matter experts, and peer networking, to focus on the following key areas of development:

- Alignment with the one AT&T strategic direction
- Global strategic perspective
- Leading change and innovation
- Collaboration and employee engagement
- Cultural transformation
- Financial and business acumen

The interactive, discovery-based online pre-work served to level set participants on AT&T’s key financial and operational terminology, as well as strategic imperatives and macroeconomic and industry trends.

LEADING with DISTINCTION
3-Day Workshop Flow with the
One AT&T Case Experience as
“The Velocity On Button”



Business Outcomes

Client Testimonial

Team-based Approach Focused on Collaboration, Innovation & Extraordinary Leadership

Participants in each workshop collaborate in teams, which vie with each other for customers and talent in a dynamically competitive marketplace. Teams must execute on AT&T’s strategy while focusing on success factors in AT&T’s Extraordinary Leadership model, a strength-based approach to leadership development.

As the first step, teams devise their 3-year plan for successful execution of AT&T’s business plan, including an articulation of the culture required for success. This strategic roadmap includes measurable goals on AT&T’s primary business metrics, prioritization of AT&T’s key strategic imperatives, and alignment of capabilities across business units and functional areas.

Successful execution requires leaders on each team to work collaboratively across functions to maximize their competitiveness in the market. Teams discover that it is critical to break down silos if they are to drive profitable growth for One AT&T. In addition, leaders are encouraged to take a long term view involving calculated risks. The teams who are able to see and seize new opportunities achieve competitive advantages and superior results.

The experience aligns participants to AT&T’s strategic direction and objectives, and enables them to develop and practice leadership skills that will support successful execution of the company’s plans, including leading change.

Each participating leader committed to a personal action plan, drawing line of sight from the company’s strategic objectives to their day-to-day work. These plans focused on concrete actions leaders would take to lead with distinction and accelerate execution of AT&T’s strategic imperatives. In addition to providing a monetary profit improvement estimate, leaders outlined how their plan served to improve Return on Invested Capital, a long-term measure for the company. To date, participants have targeted hundreds of millions of dollars of improvements aligned to the One AT&T strategy. Moreover, the initiative has been credited with accelerating the formation of new workgroups and organization changes to support the strategy.

The initiative also included a feedback mechanism to senior management, whereby participants were provided with an opportunity to engage with senior AT&T executives. During these dialogues, participants discussed key challenges and barriers for AT&T.

The success of the program for AT&T vice presidents led the company to elevate it to its senior officer group, as well as cascade it to executive directors and directors. Approximately 5,800 leaders are expected to participate in 2009, in events of 50-60 participants.

Message from CEO Randall Stephenson to AT&T University team after the first session:

“Seven of your participants flew home with me [after LwD]. They were genuinely energized, grateful, stretched, enthusiastic, motivated and exhausted. You hit it out of the park. This will make a difference in this company. You know this is one of my top priorities for AT&T. You made me real proud today. Well done.”

Sampling of other BTS Clients

- Accenture
- Coca-Cola
- Liberty Mutual
- Roche
- Aetna
- Gap Inc.
- Liz Claiborne
- Sony
- AstraZeneca
- Genentech
- Macy’s Inc.
- Texas Instruments
- AT&T
- Hewlett-Packard
- McKinsey
- Time Warner
- Bank of America
- Honeywell
- Microsoft
- Toyota Motor Sales
- Biovitrum
- IBM
- Motorola
- Vodafone
- Cisco Systems
- ING
- Nokia
- Weyerhaeuser

About BTS:

BTS partners with leading companies to accelerate change and improve business results. We are the world leader in customized business simulations and other discovery learning solutions that enable leading corporations to change, grow and succeed. BTS adds value for our Global Fortune 1000 clients through three practice areas: Strategic Alignment & Business Acumen, Leadership & Management, and Sales. We have additional capability in Operational Excellence & Project Management and offer an innovative Engage for Change process. BTS is a public company listed on the Swedish Stock Exchange and trades under the symbol BTS B. For more information please visit www.bts.com.

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