

# Taran swan at nickelodeon latin america case study

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Taran Swan at Nickelodeon Latin America (A)Case StudyBackground and Scope In 1979, Nickelodeon, “ a cable channel for kids 2-11 years old, was launched in the United States”. Nickelodeon provided a wide-range of programming which including “ live-action, comedy, drama, animation, musicand sports and game shows”. By 1995, Nickelodeon was the highest rated basic cable network and international expansion was very realistic and just getting started. To successfully transition internationally Nickelodeon allowed the channel to have its own “ on-air identity and slogan” for each endeavor.

Nickelodeon used an “ International Swat Team” to launch the network into other countries and once established turned it over for local personnel to operate. By 1998, Nickelodeon had already expanded and operating on 30 countries. However, back in 1993, Ms. Taran Swan, then Director of Business Development for Nickelodeon, initially entertained the opportunity to expand in Latin America. Latin American TV did not cater to children. Due to the economic conditions programs were outdated and stagnant. This would be an opportunity for Nickelodeon to introduce programs that “ gave kids a voice” while still embracing theirculture.

The steps required to meet this goal would not be easy. Swan recognized the task at hand and the need to “ prove her business plan by securing minimum distribution” (at least 2 million households). Swan believed in a “ big bets” strategy and keeping the “ bottom line” at the forefront of her thought process. This paper will present obstacles that Swan and her team had to deal with, not just in selling the channel, attracting advertisers but also managing each other. Swan’s style and dedication allowed her to hand-pick  
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her team to ensure deadlines were met and meeting expectations of the network.

Swan was known for her “ smart and strategic business directives”. In addition issues addressing personal work/life balance, succession/transition plans will be explored. Finally, recommendations not only for Swan but for Nickelodeon as a company will be presented to attempt to mitigate issues that arose while expanding Nickelodeon internationally in Latin America. Swan being so involved in every step from conception to implementation would prove to be more challenging than she anticipated both in personal and professional management ways. Current Situation

At the end of the second year of operations at Nickelodeon Latin America (NLA), Swan prepared for a Town Hall with MTV. She prepared a speech in which she wanted to promote the advancements that NLA had realized for the previous year. Days before the Town Hall, however, Swan was informed by her doctor that she was unable to continue traveling for work as her four month pregnancy showed signs of high risk. Though Swan planned to leave after the Town Hall, she was hospitalized the day of the meeting. As she left to go back home, she considered the many challenges that still lay ahead of her.

After leading the NLA project from research to launch, there remained additional tasks that needed to be completed before the project could be turned over to local management. NLA was on the verge of two crucially important deals. The first deal was with Argentina’s largest provider, Cablevision/TCI, which would add 1.5 million subscribers. A second deal would give them access to the Brazilian marketplace through a Portuguese  
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feed. These issues were exacerbated by currency volatility, marketing problems and advertising issues. Swan had a significant hand in resolving each of these issues.

Now Swan is faced with a decision on what to do about continuing operations during her leave. Her experience showed that her team needed consistent direction but that they were able to communicate with her remotely. Thus, she considered how she may continue to lead the project from her home. Another option she faced was installing an interim manager who would be charged with leading the station forward. She further considered installing multiple leaders for different functions. She understood that regardless of what decision she made, she would have to adapt her management style and skills.

**Situation Analysis** Due to Swan's medical situation, there are three critical activities that must be managed effectively in her absence: increasing advertising sales, increasing affiliate sales, and the executing the Brazil-specific feed. Advertising sales was a key concern for NLA. They had missed their goal by 11% last year. Though the overall bottom-line goal was met, this lack of revenues did not make for a sustainable business model. In addition, the Latin American economy was very rocky, and Brazil was undergoing a currency devaluation.

In order for the company to continue on its path to success, the sales team was going to need to land more advertising accounts, and take advantage of the upcoming World Cup to drive much-needed revenues. Increasing affiliate sales was also key. In particular, the deals with Cablevision/TCI in Argentina and Telemundo in the United States were very important. These deals would

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expand the viewership by 1.5 million people in Latin America and millions more in the United States. In turn, this increased viewership would help increase advertising sales, and would also strengthen NLA's foothold within the region.

It was also help to show the corporation that the NLA project was succeeding. This could lead to a larger budget and more dedicated resources from the corporation. Finally, getting the Brazil-specific feed up and running was critical. Brazil has the largest population and the largest market in all of Latin America. Though NLA had secured carriage on major Brazilian networks, they still had to develop programming for the feed. This would require a significant amount of work as the company would need to customize the programming for the Brazilian culture, as it differed from other Latin American countries.

Creating a successful feed in Brazil would open up new advertising opportunities and new affiliate sales opportunities and would solidify NLA as a major brand in Latin America. Swan knew that she would need to manage all three of these critical activities from New York to make sure that NLA continued to progress. However, she was unsure how to do so. Recommendations Taran Swan has become pregnant at an important time in her company's progress, when there are still several challenges to complete. Among these include attracting profitable advertisers, closing a deal with Cablevision/TCI and broadcasting to Brazil.

There is no simple way to achieve these goals, and they all fall under problems that need to be addressed over time with the proper management.

There are options that Swan has as it relates to the management of <https://assignbuster.com/taran-swan-at-nickelodeon-latin-america-case-study/>

Nickelodeon while she is away on pregnancy. 1. Swan could give the responsibility of managing the company to a single person. 2. Swan could have two or more people share her responsibilities. 3. Swan could manage her team remotely and possibly appoint another lower manager to handle the day-to-day tasks.

If Swan decides to take option 1, she will need to carefully evaluate the candidates and select the best one, and get Viacom's approval. The best candidates that come to mind include Donna Friedman, Valerie McCarty and Stephen Grieder. All of these candidates joined within the first few months after Nickelodeon's project to expand into Latin America began. Stephen Grieder has had the most experience with Nickelodeon out of the three, was familiar with the Latin American culture, and was described as a creative genius. Valerie McCarty was energetic and had good communications skills.

Like Grieder, she was familiar with the Latin American culture. She also had taken charge of tasks, even when they weren't completely her responsibility. However, she was relatively new to the company. Donna Friedman was particularly known for her creativity. For example, she developed the "Grow Down" campaign, and thought of making the Jornadas party which attracted thousands of people. Swan felt that Donna didn't yet have "multidimensional strategic thinking" needed to take on a more managerial role at the moment, but that Donna could be taught these skills.

Swan could decide to take option 2 and have the responsibilities shared by two or more people. This method seemed to work out when Swan divided the marketing roles between McCarty and Friedman. It might help reduce the amount of work each individual has to do. It could also help give the team

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more diverse views and skillsets. In the last option, Swan could operate the facility remotely. Most of the people working in her team already have experience communicating and working with people from different countries. Swan has already been shown to be an effective leader, and doing it this way would result in the least amount of change.

The team would not need to take a risk on an unproven leader. Our recommendation is that Swan operates the facility remotely, while having another “second in command,” or day to day manager. In the event Swan was unable to run the project for any reason, the person second in command would take over. This would allow Swan to continue to run the project for as long as she was able to, and potentially throughout the entire time she was needed. She should train another person to be in charge of the project, without putting the full responsibility onto them.

This would lower the chance of conflicting orders or conflicting goals that could result from shared leadership and mitigate any potential damage that might occur if Swan were suddenly unable to run the plant. Alternatives / Potential Problems Donna Friedman, Valerie McCarty and Stephen Grieder all seem like they could be great potential leaders on their own. However, they are not yet tested in such a position. Putting one of them in charge at such a crucial point in the company could jeopardize their progress, and puts a large risk on the company. If the responsibilities were shared, it could help mitigate that risk.

However, it could result in misunderstandings, communication problems and overall confusion about the direction of the company if the managers did not always agree. The leaders would need to be careful that they maintained a

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consistent and clear message. Additionally, it could result social loafing. Social loafing is the phenomenon where people tend to work less in collaborative efforts than in on their own because they expect the other person to fill in the work, and also because they will not get full credit for their work (Latane, Williams & Harkins, 1979).

Lastly, there is the option for Swan to operate the company remotely. She is the safest leader, since she has already proven herself. Though the risk is that due to her pregnancy, or a medical complication, she would be unable to manage the business remotely. Additionally, there might be times when it is difficult to contact her or convey all the needed information to her without her being there in person. This would leave the project without a leader.

#### Conclusion

We learn that Taran Swan might have some team trust issues because of her uncertainty of who to leave in charge during her absence. Every relationship among team members depends on trust. Swan feels her situation has a high level of risk and she is unsure of the best option for her team to succeed while she is gone. Working remotely will allow Swan to have some control over the situation, but that stress might further her complications and prevent her from working all together.

Swan needs to trust her team and give them the tools they need to development their team roles through team building exercises. If Swan communicates effectively to the team members and passes on all training information, she should be able to manage the company remotely without caring too much stress during her medical absence. References McShane, S.

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