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September 6, 2010

# Chief of ABC News Is Resigning

By **BILL CARTER**

**David Westin**, the longtime president of ABC News, has decided to resign his position on Tuesday.

In an e-mail that Mr. Westin sent to the staff on Monday night, he cast the decision in personal terms, saying that after almost 14 years, he had decided it was time “to move on.” He also pledged to stay in the position until the end of the year to give ABC time to find a replacement.

One staff member informed before the release of the e-mail said that the decision was also related to a long-running conflict between Mr. Westin and the management of the network, including ABC’s parent company, **Walt Disney**, over the financial standing of the news division.

Mr. Westin, 58, did not respond to a request for comment. He is expected to address the staff on Tuesday, an ABC News employee said. In his e-mail, Mr. Westin said, “There are some other things I want to do professionally — things that I cannot explore while fulfilling my responsibilities here.”

Anne Sweeney, president of the ABC/Disney television group, said in a statement that Mr. Westin “helped reinvent our news organization, and positioned us for great success going forward.”

The ABC News staff member informed of the decision said that Disney and ABC managers had pressed Mr. Westin for years to make the division more profitable, but had been unhappy with his efforts to accomplish that goal. ABC announced in February that it would reduce its staff by up to 400 employees, about 25 percent of its work force.

But one senior ABC executive said the two issues were separate and financial pressures over news costs had not been a factor in Mr. Westin’s decision. Another senior ABC News executive said the division had been consistently profitable, but ABC had sought to increase its profit margin to 15 percent, from 5 percent. The executives spoke on the condition of

anonymity so that Mr. Westin's and Ms. Sweeney's statements would be the only official comment on Monday night.

ABC News programs typically rank second to NBC News programs among the most important ones, but ABC lags far behind in terms of earnings.

This year, the division's late-night news program, "Nightline," has advanced to a much more competitive position against the late-night entertainment shows on **NBC** and **CBS**, hosted by **Jay Leno** and **David Letterman**, which have both had sharp slides in ratings.

But ABC News has never been able to move up over all in the network news standings. In the two most competitive areas, the morning and evening news programs, ABC has continued to trail NBC. Changes in the anchor position at both broadcasts — **George Stephanopoulos** at "Good Morning America" and **Diane Sawyer** at the evening newscast "World News" — have resulted in steady performances but have not led to any gains in ABC's ranking.

And unlike NBC News, which owns the cable news channel MSNBC, ABC News does not own a cable channel that could provide profit to support the rising costs of operating a television news division.