

# THE REPORT@ROBERTLEOS.COM

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## ***F. Gary Valdez Founder, President/CEO Focus Strategies, LLC***

*By Robert H. Leos*

**G**ary Valdez began his banking career in 1975 with Texas Commerce Bank in Austin, Texas. In 1986, after managing the Metropolitan Banking Group at Texas Commerce, Mr. Valdez became a founding shareholder, President and CEO of Cattlemen's State Bank. During his nine-year tenure as President and CEO, Cattlemen's assets grew from just over \$2 million to over \$110 million. When Norwest/Wells Fargo acquired Cattlemen's, Valdez became President until 1999 when he started Focus Strategies in Austin.

*We met in Focus Strategies' offices on Congress Avenue in downtown Austin, Texas.*  
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### **ROBERT LEOS: What are the primary objectives of Focus Strategies?**

**GARY VALDEZ:** Focus Strategies is an investment banking firm. We provide traditional investment banking services (M&A and private placement of capital and debt), advisory and consulting services to help companies that need financing assistance. We will work with their management teams, look at their goals and objectives, and try to match those with their financing needs.



***F. Gary Valdez***

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**ROBERT LEOS:** *What are some examples of the types of financing assistance that Focus Strategies can provide?*

**GARY VALDEZ:** A management team might need someone to come in from the outside and help with some ideas on different types of structures based on what is available out in the market. We do that on a consulting basis. We also go out and help companies' management teams find financing. It can be financing for growth capital or recapitalization. Recapitalizations are important when an ownership group wants to take on a partner and provide liquidity for the existing owners in the business. We also work with businesses that might want to buy or sell a company. We work with companies on their longer-term equity needs to grow their business, or in some cases, to sell their business. Focus Strategies puts all those services together to provide our full service investment banking services.

**ROBERT LEOS:** *I read an article in the business journal that described the role that Focus Strategies played in assisting a local company with its plans to expand. Can you describe the specific role you played in that arrangement?*

**GARY VALDEZ:** We initially helped them find some financing for the growth aspect of their business. In that particular situation, however, we also invested some long-term equity in the company. In that arrangement, we provided both types of services.

**ROBERT LEOS:** *How did your banking career lead to your founding Focus Strategies?*

**GARY VALDEZ:** I originally started with Texas Commerce Bank. I started Cattlemen's and stayed with them for nine years. When I sold Cattlemen's to Norwest, which became Wells Fargo, I stayed with them for four years. At that time, I wanted to do something on my own, so I founded Focus Strategies in November of 1999. That is how I started Focus Strategies.

**Gary Valdez**  
**Focus Strategies, LLC**

From [www.focus-strategies.com](http://www.focus-strategies.com)

Gary Valdez founded Focus Strategies Investment Banking, a firm specializing in Mergers and Acquisitions, Private Placements of Debt and Equity, and Corporate Finance Advisory, in 1999 after 24 years in a highly successful commercial banking career.

Valdez began his career in 1975 with Texas Commerce Bank. After managing the Metropolitan Banking Group, he became a founding shareholder and President/CEO for Cattlemen's State Bank in 1986. During his tenure at Cattlemen's, assets grew from \$2MM to \$110MM in nine years. Later, upon Cattlemen's acquisition, Valdez assumed the position of president at Norwest Bank/Wells Fargo and Managing Officer for the Austin Region Business Banking Group until forming Focus Strategies.

Some of his current board positions include Ascension Health Ventures, Stewart Title Austin Inc., Seton Healthcare Network, and St. Edward's University. Gary earned a BA from Texas Lutheran University in Business Administration and Accounting and a MBA from St. Edward's University. Mr. Valdez holds Series 62 and 63 securities licenses.

Visit Focus Strategies on the web at  
<http://www.focus-strategies.com>

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**ROBERT LEOS:** *Will Focus Strategies expand into other areas in the future?*

**GARY VALDEZ:** Eventually we would like to do more investing. That is probably the growth area. As we get better at what we do in our core areas, then we will expand out. We do a little bit of that today, but we would like to do it in a bigger fashion someday.

**ROBERT LEOS:** *Was it your goal to become a banker when you were in high school? How did that interest develop?*

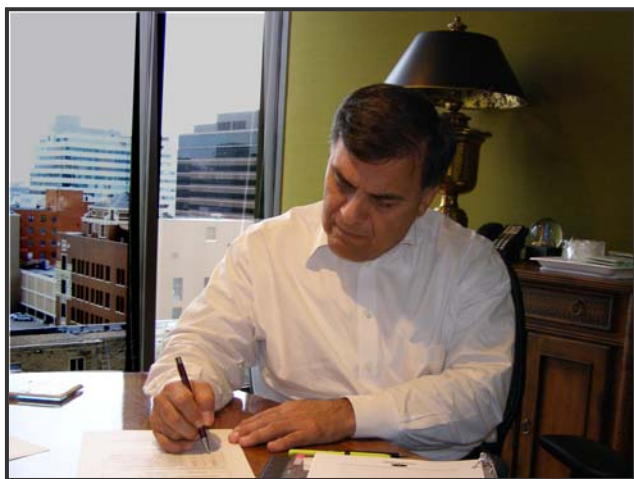
**GARY VALDEZ:** I had always wanted to go into business for myself. I had a great uncle who owned a tailor shop. He was my mentor and the person that I linked to when I thought about business.

When I went to Texas Lutheran University, I ended up majoring in accounting, because accounting students typically had a chance to go into accounting firms and deal a lot with companies.

One of my accounting professors knew someone at Texas Commerce Bank. So when I graduated from Texas Lutheran, I had a connection there. I went to work at Texas Commerce Bank and did my graduate work at St. Edward's University at night.

**ROBERT LEOS:** *What advice would you give to middle or high school students who are interested in a career in banking or finance?*

**GARY VALDEZ:** I believe students can get good exposure to all facets of business by getting involved in Junior Achievement. Junior Achievement does a great job of teaching elementary, middle, and high school students different aspects of business, from bank financing to starting your own business. We try to encourage students at early levels to get involved in Junior Achievement because they do a good job of showing how it all comes together. It is hard to think through all of those things unless you have parents or a relative like my great uncle who have been in business for themselves. There are so many things that capture students' attention, from Game Boys® to television. The trick is trying to get that attention directed to areas where they have interests. Junior Achievement does a great job of that.



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Learn More about Junior Achievement at  
<http://www.JA.org>

Gary Valdez was named “2004 Austinite of the Year” by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.