The Devil’s Advocate Group

We Stress Test Your Strategies

Overview

DevilsAdvocateGroup.com
We help business leaders increase the robustness of their strategies and increase the odds of success.
Co-founders and Managing Directors

Chunka Mui is a co-author of *Billion-Dollar Lessons: What You Can Learn from the Most Inexcusable Business Failures of the Last 25 Years*. Chunka is also the co-author of the best-selling *Unleashing the Killer App: Digital Strategies for Market Dominance*. Chunka was previously a managing partner and chief innovation officer at Diamond Management & Technology Consultants and a vice president at CSC Index.

Paul Carroll is a co-author of *Billion-Dollar Lessons: What You Can Learn from the Most Inexcusable Business Failures of the Last 25 Years*. Paul spent 17 years at the *Wall Street Journal* as an editor and reporter, getting about as broad an exposure to the world of business and to senior executives as the paper could provide. The paper nominated him twice for Pulitzer Prizes. He was a finalist once. During his time at the Journal, Paul wrote *Big Blues: The Unmaking of IBM*, a best-seller published in 1993 about the travails of what was then the world’s leading company.
Other Group Members

Vincent P. Barabba has held senior strategy and market-research positions at General Motors, Xerox and Kodak. Vince also served twice as director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census and is a member of the Market Research Hall of Fame. He is the author of numerous books, including *Surviving Transformation*, *Meeting of the Minds*, and *Hearing the Voice of the Market*.

Robert E. Evanson has been at the helm of some of the largest content companies in the country, including as president of McGraw-Hill Education and chief operating officer of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. During the course of his career, Bob led a number of acquisitions and divestitures and oversaw the start-up of numerous business units. He was a senior advisor to Apax Partners Inc., a $31 billion private equity company.

Dr. Alan Kay is one of the world’s foremost technologists. He is widely recognized as one of the fathers of the personal computer. He is the recipient of the Charles Stark Draper prize and the Alan M. Turing prize, the highest honors in engineering and computer science, respectively. Alan has held senior research and technology positions at Xerox, Atari, Apple, Disney, and HP.

Ken Krushel has deep insight into the digitization of media-related industries. Ken had senior strategy positions at NBC, Paramount and MGM. He has consulted with Warner Brothers, Sega Corp., MGM and Lifetime Television. He was CEO of College Enterprises Inc., which merged with Blackboard Inc. to create the largest enterprise educational software company in North America. He also founded Proteus Inc., a pioneer in marketing specialized subscription-based content for mobile phones.

Dr. Janey Place was responsible for innovation and strategic investing at Bank of America and Mellon, where she reported directly to the CEOs. In 2007, Janey was recognized by BTN Magazine as one of the top 20 financial services innovators over the last 20 years. She is a co-author of the National Academies Panel book, *Engaging Privacy and Information Technology in the Digital Age*, and is a former president of the Financial Services Technology Consortium.

Tom Waite is an expert on the management, development, marketing and sales of professional services. Tom has nearly 30 years of experience working in or consulting to many of the premier services firms in the world. Tom also co-founded, grew and sold his own successful marketing consulting firm. He is the author of numerous articles on management, service innovation and marketing and sales.
We are experts at fostering innovation. We also know where problems might lurk—and how to avoid them.
Our Services

Design strategy processes that create the space for innovation while ensuring robust debate and deliberation.

Conduct fast, thorough and objective assessments of strategic initiatives.

Provide briefings that enhance the context and content for innovation and strategic success.
Who Should Care About a Strategic Stress Test?

Understand strategic and operational risks before initiating or restructuring an investment

- Legitimize questions and concerns about strategies under consideration
- Contribute to strategic discussion and vet their own major decisions
- Broaden dialogue with management while providing a doublecheck
- Build consensus and reassure the board through a quick, inexpensive review

- Investors
- Front Lines
- Senior Management
- CEO
- Board of Directors
- Board of Directors
- Front Lines
- Senior Management
- CEO
- Investors
When is a Stress Test Appropriate?

**Earliest stages** — To ensure a robust articulation of the alternatives

**Throughout development** — To make sure potential red flags are given due consideration

**Before final adoption** — To test critical assumptions and design choices

**Remediation** — To ensure that weaknesses and opportunities for improvement are addressed
The Strategic Stress Test

Apply:
- Relevant case examples
- General strategy lessons
- Strategy-specific lessons

Assess:
- Strategic assumptions
- Strategic pivot points
- Alternative future scenarios

Synthesis
- Highlight key assumptions
- Summarize tough questions
- Identify weaknesses
- Make recommendations for improvement

Closure
- Proceed as planned
- Strengthen
- Abandon

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No plan is perfect. We help you construct the strongest option.

Contentious yet constructive deliberation avoids self-censorship, ensuring key issues are considered.

Arrive at the Best Answer

Articulate Key Risks

Build Real Consensus

Preserve Graceful Exit

Be clear-eyed about challenges, rather than papering over potential issues.

Requiring the strategy to pass a stress test means the leadership has an out.
Further Information

1. Visit devilsadvocategroup.com

2. See:
   - “Seven Ways to Fail Big,” Harvard Business Review, September 2008
   - Beyond Fear and Greed: Capitalizing on Opportunities in the Current Crisis, Devil’s Advocate Group working paper
   - Perfecting the Art of the Deal: Applying Strategic Stress Tests to Greatly Increase the Odds of M&A Success, Devil’s Advocate Group working paper

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