

CASE STUDY: MCCHRYSTAL GROUP SERVICES

# Red Teaming Workshop

Global Oil & Gas Company

A global Oil & Gas company was able to uncover potential risks to a new global venture through McChrystal Group facilitated Red Teaming workshops.

## Why this industry/problem set is relevant in the world today:

It is not always easy for an organization to objectively assess its own decisions. While careful research and planning may alleviate some of the risks associated with a big, strategic change, it is difficult to prevent personal or organization-level biases and assumptions from undermining success.

In 2019, McChrystal Group partnered with a Fortune 10 Oil & Gas company faced with a two-billion-dollar decision—whether or not to construct a new hydrocarbon cracking facility in Asia. The company’s new capital ventures division had spent months scoping, designing, and developing implementation plans for this global venture. However, it had not yet critically evaluated its plans for this unfamiliar, rapidly changing environment that demanded new external partnerships.



**I’ve been in countless meetings where we never get to the heart of the matter. And this time we identified it and are discussing it.”**

Company Leader

## Challenges

The company’s strategic objective was to meet the growing demand for chemical products in Asia. While substantial preparation for achieving this high-stakes goal had been done, company leaders recognized that the legacy processes of the much larger parent company would not be agile enough for this new environment. Prior to execution, company leaders needed to conduct an aggressive, flexible external pressure-test for their Asia venture plans.

### This pressure-testing included the following steps:

- Identify strategic risks and vulnerabilities of the Asia venture plans and develop mitigation plans.
- Articulate the Asia venture planning team’s assumptions and develop a method to resolve assumptions.
- Identify any gaps remaining that could eventually hinder the Asia venture’s success
- Align the team around a shared vision for success to energize the project team and reinforce its global team’s collaborative mindset.

# Solutions

McChrystal Group's team of expert Red Team facilitators developed a three-day intensive workshop to pressure-test the company's strategy for the Asia venture. This Red Team Workshop fused company leadership's unique knowledge of their strategy with McChrystal Group's specialized techniques to manage risks and vulnerability. The following steps were taken:

## **STAGE 1: Developed a Tailored Workshop Curriculum**

McChrystal Group spent six weeks gaining expertise on the company's industry, its competitive landscape, and the key strategies and stakeholders associated with its specific business challenge. McChrystal Group then developed the workshops to specifically address their precise challenge. McChrystal Group also trained company leaders with the facilitation skills they could apply to tackle future challenges.

## **STAGE 2: Align Participants Around their Strategic Vision**

McChrystal Group immersed company leaders in exercises that forced them to envision the end state of the Asia venture project in five years. The exercise drove leaders to understand the potential for the project's success or failure depending on certain behaviors and assumptions.

## **STAGE 3: Determine the Assumptions and Action Plan to Resolve**

Participants explored the unexamined assumptions that underpinned the strategy. This allowed participants to establish areas of weakness that might undermine the project's success and identify ways to build resilience to these challenges into their strategy.

## **STAGE 4: Identify Vulnerabilities and Risks to the Venture Plan**

Participants collectively examined each potential cause for failure of their strategy and established its criticality to the Asia venture plans. Specifically, participants completed facilitated exercises around the construction, project management, contracting, and procurement strategies. This enabled participants to identify and discuss specific ways to improve alignment and generate consistent communication and trust among company leaders and external contractors in order to accomplish all parts of their strategy.

# Impact

## **1. Uncovered Elements of Company Culture that Strongly Risked Undermining the Asia Venture Plan**

Participants determined that a top risk for their strategy was the disconnect between the company's rigid and insular culture and the high-stakes decisions the organization made. McChrystal Group's facilitated discussions not only revealed this blind spot but also motivated plans to better connect and communicate culture and decision-making in the future.

## **2. Enrich Their Understanding of and Participation in the Strategy**

Along with a 24% increase in participant understanding of the strategy noted in a post-workshop survey, company leaders were able to clarify and understand the strategy together. McChrystal Group created a forum for them to express and hear new ideas and increase their overall engagement in the strategy, enabling a globally dispersed team to craft a shared vision for the organization's future.

## **3. Gain Their Own Red Teaming Facilitation Capabilities**

Company leaders not only critically examined their strategy to better inform this high-stakes decision but were also empowered with the tools to Red Team future strategies and decisions. McChrystal Group's Workshop enhanced the organization's internal pressure-testing capabilities to advance the creative problem-solving and foresight of its leaders.