

McChrystal Group

DAVID GILLIAN

Retired Brigadier from the Australian Army, leading practitioner in building adaptable organizations, specialist in intelligence operations and decision support, Partner at McChrystal Group.



David Gillian is a retired senior Australian Army officer who specializes in building adaptable teams and leaders for the 21st century. He is a Partner at McChrystal Group, an elite advisory services firm composed of a diverse mix of professionals from the military, academic, business, and intelligence sectors who specialize in transforming stagnant and siloed organizations into cohesive, adaptable “teams of teams.”

At McChrystal Group, Gillian leads Advisory Services project teams working intimately with clients to understand and embed new techniques for leading and managing their organizations in the 21st century. He brings his more than three decades of leadership, intelligence, and strategy experience to drive deep, sustainable change in industries as diverse as energy, technology manufacturing, engineering and construction, mining, healthcare, and banking and finance, both in the United States and internationally. In addition, he gives keynote speeches and leads roundtable discussions with business leaders and professional organizations.

Military Background. Gillian joined the Australian Army in January 1981, graduating from the Royal Military College of Australia in December 1984. Specialising as an intelligence officer, he spent the next three decades involved in intelligence collection and combat operations against the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact in West Germany during the Cold War, against Iraq in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and operations in Afghanistan in 2009-10, while also mastering the subtle but complex transition to supporting peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. As the Australian Army’s most senior intelligence professional responsible for supporting operations worldwide, Gillian developed and provided strategic advice at the highest levels of the Australian military and government, while also building deep links across the international intelligence community.

As General Stan McChrystal’s Deputy Chief of Intelligence in Afghanistan, Gillian was responsible for the operations and employment of an intelligence architecture of over 6,500 people from 46 nations, while at the same time, building and maintaining links to multiple countries’ national and military intelligence organizations. Building relationships, creating transparency, driving common purpose and dealing with complexity was a daily demand that was critical to achieving operational success. With the same focus on changing leadership behaviors and systems and processes that he brought to operations in Iraq, McChrystal

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retooled his Afghanistan organization into a networked team of teams that was able to adapt to an even more complex environment. As an integral part of McChrystal's team, observing and learning from McChrystal himself, Gillian reinforced and deepened his experience in the value of cross-functional teams, the resilience and adaptability of network-based operations, and the enduring impact of effective leadership.

Driving Strategy to Execution. With Masters degrees in International Relations and Strategic Studies, long experience in supporting and developing national security and military strategy, and diverse and deep operational proficiency, Gillian has been exposed to the challenges inherent in connecting strategies to execution. Throughout his career, Gillian recognized the value in building networks as a means of overcoming complexity, and mastered the ability to draw on these networks in times of fluidity and uncertainty to achieve operational success. As the environment continually evolved, he specialized in establishing and leading new types of intelligence organizations, with a focus on building multi-agency, cross-functional teams designed to achieve operational success in highly fluid and evolving environments. With over twenty years' experience in building and operating fusion cells in support of strategic and operational execution Gillian has been rewarded for his work multiple times with national honors, including being made a Member of the Order of Australia, a Commendation for Distinguished Service, and a US Defense Intelligence Agency Directors Award for services to the international intelligence community.

Experienced organizational consultant. Gillian is now immersed in bringing these lessons to the business community. Since joining McChrystal Group he has led engagements driving transformational change in US and international organizations from Fortune 500 to national healthcare systems. As the former Chief Growth Officer for McChrystal Group he introduced our ideas to new markets and companies, big and small, helping them translate those ideas into practical, scalable solutions.

Engaging Speaker. Gillian is an engaging and convincing speaker, weaving his experiences of an ever-changing environment and the impact of complexity with the simple lesson for businesses that basking in yesterday's success is no answer for tomorrow's challenge. Listeners will walk away with a clear understanding of the need for change and compelling, practical insights into how it can be achieved.

Potential Speaking Topics:

- Dealing with complexity
- Building networks and cross-functional teams
- Connecting strategy to execution
- Intelligence, fusion centers and connecting data to decisions