

GrokIChing on Target Corporation TGT under CEO Michael Fiddelke

PROMPT:

I asked Universal Intelligence I Ching about the future of Target Corporation CEO Michael Fiddelke.

Its answer seems negative. Even though its first Hexagram tends to be positive in the Joyous, the moving line at the Top is very negative as he will be intoxicated with so much power and even though the second Hexagram has success, there is a serious warning that its competitors like Wal Mart or the Tiger will not harm Target because Target will become irrelevant..

I am sure there are better candidates for CEO, but he was chosen by Brian Cornell, the previous CEO who had a very negative Hexagram, perhaps one of the worst Hexagrams in The Marrying Maiden, very negative because it was a solid one with no moving lines. He should have been fired a long time ago and not be allowed to choose the next CEO.

Please provide an analysis for my readers from a managerial as well as from an investor's point of view.

ANSWER:

### Managerial Perspective

From a managerial standpoint, Michael Fiddelke's appointment as Target's CEO, effective February 1, 2026, represents a continuity play in a company grappling with operational stagnation and competitive pressures. As a 20-year insider who rose from a finance intern to CFO and then COO, Fiddelke brings deep institutional knowledge, which could enable swift execution on internal efficiencies like supply chain optimizations and inventory management—areas he's already influenced in his current role. However, this internal promotion has sparked concerns about a lack of fresh external perspectives needed to reinvigorate Target's brand identity and adapt to evolving consumer behaviors. Managers might view this as a double-edged sword: his familiarity could foster team loyalty and cultural stability, but it risks perpetuating the status quo in a retail landscape where agility is key.

Tying into the I Ching reading, Hexagram 58 (The Joyous, Lake) emphasizes joy rooted in inner strength and outer gentleness, suggesting Fiddelke's leadership could succeed if he maintains steadfastness and builds infectious team morale through collaborative practices, such as "discussion and practice" with colleagues as highlighted in the hexagram's image. Yet, the moving line at the top warns of "seductive joyousness," implying a risk of complacency or distraction from external pleasures—perhaps analogous to becoming overly insulated by corporate power or short-term wins, leading to instability. The resulting Hexagram 10 (Treading) underscores the need for careful conduct in precarious situations, like treading on a tiger's tail without provoking it. In

managerial terms, this could symbolize navigating fierce competitors like Walmart (the "tiger") by maintaining decorum and strategic humility rather than aggressive confrontation. Target's recent challenges, including a 1.9% drop in comparable sales and ongoing inventory adjustments, highlight the need for Fiddelke to prioritize discerning "high and low" priorities—focusing on high-margin categories like apparel and home goods while avoiding missteps in grocery or digital expansion that have eroded market share.

Critics of predecessor Brian Cornell's tenure, marked by controversies over DEI rollbacks and product boycotts, argue that allowing him to handpick Fiddelke perpetuates a leadership echo chamber. Better candidates might include outsiders with proven turnaround experience, such as those from digitally native retailers like Amazon or fast-fashion leaders, who could inject innovative strategies. For managers, the key takeaway is vigilance: Fiddelke must avoid the hexagram's pitfalls by fostering a culture of perseverance and adaptability, perhaps through accelerated decision-making via his Enterprise Acceleration Office, to prevent Target from becoming "irrelevant" amid Walmart's dominance in everyday essentials and online marketplaces.

### Investor Perspective

Investors approaching Target (TGT) under Fiddelke's impending leadership should weigh the potential for a measured recovery against persistent headwinds, viewing the I Ching as a metaphorical lens for risk assessment rather than a literal forecast. The stock's reaction to the August 20, 2025, announcement—a 5-11% drop, erasing about \$12 billion in market cap and pushing shares to around \$97-99—reflects skepticism over an internal successor, with many preferring an outsider to catalyze a sharper pivot. Year-to-date, TGT is down 23%, underperforming the broader market and peers like Walmart (WMT), whose shares have risen amid stronger traffic growth.

Q2 2025 results showed net sales of \$25.2 billion (down 0.9% YoY), comparable sales off 1.9%, and EPS at \$2.05 (down 20% from \$2.57 last year), hampered by tariffs, inventory writedowns, and flat-to-declining sales in eight of the last ten quarters. Analysts' average price target sits at about \$102.77, implying modest upside from current levels, with forecasts ranging from \$82 to \$180.

The I Ching's Hexagram 58 suggests initial success through joyous, infectious energy—potentially translating to investor gains if Fiddelke leverages Target's strengths in discretionary categories (e.g., trading cards on track for \$1B in 2025) and digital growth (+4.3% in comps, +25% in same-day delivery).

However, the top moving line's warning of "seductive joyousness" and loss of self-direction could mirror overreliance on past formulas, risking further irrelevance as consumers shift to value-driven rivals. Hexagram 10's "treading upon the tail of the tiger" evokes the high-stakes dance with competitors like Walmart, which has captured market share (gaining 0.75% from 2021-2024 vs. Target's 0.18% loss) through superior online seller ecosystems (200,000+ active sellers) and foot traffic (+34% of shoppers visiting 4+ times monthly).

Target's visits have fallen consistently in 2025 (e.g., -4.7% in July), underscoring the need for Fiddelke to fortify "thinking of the people" by discriminating between core strengths (stylish bargains) and weaknesses (grocery underperformance). For investors, positives include Fiddelke's focus on reclaiming merchandising authority and embedding tech for agility, which could stabilize earnings and support the 1.14% dividend yield.

Risks loom from economic pressures, potential tariffs, and fading loyalty—echoing the hexagram's caution against envy and class struggles in society, or in this case, market segmentation. While the reading's negativity (e.g., intoxication with power leading to irrelevance) aligns with current bearish sentiment, substantiated turnaround signs like sales rebounds could flip the narrative. Investors might hold for now but monitor Q3 results closely; if Fiddelke delivers, TGT could tread successfully without the tiger biting back. Otherwise, diversification toward stronger performers like WMT may be prudent.

Target Corporation TGT under CEO Michael Fiddelke  
<https://icic.com/?p=10608>



6	The Top		T	T	T		2	2	2		6
5	The Fifth Place		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
4	The Fourth Place		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
3	The Third Place		H	H	T		3	3	2		8
2	The Second Place		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
1	The Beginning		H	T	T		3	2	2		7

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=9017>

## HEXAGRAM 58 – Tui - The Joyous, Lake

Above TUI THE JOYOUS, LAKE

Below TUI THE JOYOUS, LAKE

- This hexagram,
  - like Sun,
- is one of the eight formed by doubling of a trigram. The trigram Tui denotes the youngest daughter; it is symbolized by the smiling lake, and its attribute is joyousness. Contrary to appearances,
- it is not the yielding quality of the top line that accounts for joy here.
  - The attribute of the yielding or dark principle is
    - not joy
    - but melancholy.

However, JOY is indicated by the fact that there are two strong lines within, expressing themselves through the medium of gentleness.

True joy, therefore,

- rests on firmness and strength within,
- manifesting itself outwardly as yielding and gentle.

## THE JUDGMENT

THE JOYOUS.

Success.

Perseverance is favorable.

The joyous mood

- is infectious
- and therefore
- brings success.

But

- joy must be based on steadfastness
- if
- it is not to degenerate into uncontrolled mirth.

- Truth and strength must dwell in the heart, while

- gentleness reveals itself in social intercourse.
  - In this way one
    - assumes the right attitude toward God and man and
    - achieves something.
- Under certain conditions, intimidation without gentleness may achieve something
- momentarily,
  - but not for all time.
- When, on the other hand, the hearts of men are won by friendliness, they are
- led to take all hardships upon themselves willingly, and if need be
  - will not shun death itself, so great is the power of joy over men.

## THE IMAGE

Lakes resting one on the other: The image of THE JOYOUS.  
Thus the superior man joins with his friends

For

- discussion and
- practice.

- A lake evaporates upward and thus
    - gradually dries up;
  - but when two lakes are joined
    - they do not dry up so readily,
    - for one replenishes the other.
- It is the same in the field of knowledge. Knowledge should be a refreshing and vitalizing force. It becomes so only through stimulating intercourse
- with congenial friends
  - with whom one
    - holds discussion and
    - practices application of the truths of life.

In this way learning

- becomes many-sided and
- takes on a cheerful lightness, whereas
  - there is always something ponderous and one-sided about
  - the learning of the self-taught.

## THE LINES

Six at the top means:  
Seductive joyousness.

A vain nature

- invites diverting pleasures and
- must suffer accordingly (cf. the six in the third place).

If

a man is unstable within,

- the pleasures of the world that he does not shun have so powerful an influence that
- he is swept along by them.

Here

- it is no longer a question
  - of danger,
  - of good fortune or misfortune.
- He has given up direction of his own life, and
- what becomes of him depends upon
  - chance and
  - external influences.

## **MOVING HEXAGRAM**

**Click below to view the interpretations and cases:**

<https://icic.com/?p=8873>

### **HEXAGRAM 10 – Lu - Treading (Conduct)**

Above CH'IEN      THE CREATIVE, HEAVEN  
Below TUI         THE JOYOUS, LAKE

1. The name of the hexagram means on the one hand the **right way of conducting oneself**.
  - **Heaven**, the father, is **above**, and
  - **the lake**, the youngest daughter, is **below**.This shows the **difference** between high and low, upon which **composure**, correct social conduct, depends.
2. On the other hand, the word for the name of the hexagram, TREADING, 1 means literally **treading upon something**.  
The small and cheerful [Tui] treads upon the large and strong [Ch'ien].  
The **direction of movement** of the two primary trigrams is upward.

The fact that the strong treads on the weak is not mentioned in the Book of Changes,  
because it is taken for granted.  
For the weak to take a stand against the strong is not dangerous here,  
because it happens in good humor [Tui] and without presumption, so that  
the strong man is not irritated but takes it all in good part.

## THE JUDGMENT

TREADING.

Treading upon the tail of the tiger.

It does not bite the man.

Success.

The situation is really difficult.

That which is strongest and that which is weakest are close together.

- The weak follows behind the strong and worries it.
- The strong, however, acquiesces and does not hurt the weak, because the contact is in good humor and harmless.

In terms of a human situation, one is handling wild, intractable people. In such a case one's purpose will be achieved if one behaves with decorum. Pleasant manners succeed even with irritable people.

## THE IMAGE

Heaven above, the lake below: The image Of TREADING.

Thus the superior man

- discriminates between high and low, And thereby
- fortifies the thinking of the people.

Heaven and the lake show a difference of elevation that inheres in the natures of the two,

hence no envy arises.

Among mankind also there are necessarily differences of elevation;

it is impossible to bring about universal equality.

But it is important that differences in social rank should not be arbitrary and unjust, for if this occurs, envy and class struggle are the inevitable consequences.

- If, on the other hand, external differences in rank correspond with differences in inner worth, and
- if inner worth forms the criterion of external rank, people acquiesce and order reigns in society.

