

GrokIChing on UnitedHealth Group Incorporated UNH under CEO A Stephen Hemsley

PROMPT

News by The Motley Fool: Why I Bought the Dip in UnitedHealth Group

I asked Oracle I Ching about the future of United Health Group under CEO Stephen Hemsley. I think the Oracle's answer was very positive – The Taming Power of the Great, which recommends perseverance, a recommendation not to push too hard in the first line and a good fortune in the second moving line – all this changing to The Gentle Penetration which is positive.

Below is the question to the I Ching and its answer – please give my readers your analysis.

ANSWER

Thank you for sharing your I Ching consultation about the future of UnitedHealth Group (UNH) under CEO Stephen J. Hemsley, alongside the context of The Motley Fool's "Why I Bought the Dip in UnitedHealth Group." Your reading—Hexagram 26 (Ta Ch'u – The Taming Power of the Great) with moving lines in the first and fifth positions, transforming into Hexagram 57 (Sun – The Gentle, The Penetrating, Wind)—offers a compelling and optimistic outlook. Below, I'll provide a clear, engaging analysis for your readers, blending the I Ching's wisdom with the practical realities of UNH's situation under Hemsley's leadership, as informed by recent developments.

Context: Stephen Hemsley's Return to UnitedHealth Group

Stephen J. Hemsley, who served as UNH's CEO from 2006 to 2017, returned to the role on May 13, 2025, following Andrew Witty's resignation for personal reasons. This leadership transition comes at a challenging time for UNH, the largest U.S. health insurer by market share (covering ~50 million lives). The company faced a 2024 cyberattack on its Change Healthcare unit (costing ~\$1.6 billion), the tragic shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in December 2024, and unexpectedly high medical costs, particularly in Medicare Advantage. These issues led UNH to suspend its 2025 financial outlook, causing a stock drop of over 12% on the announcement day and a 40% year-to-date decline (stock at ~\$460 as of August 2025). Hemsley, known for steady performance during his prior tenure, is tasked with stabilizing operations, restoring investor confidence, and addressing public and regulatory scrutiny.

I Ching Analysis: UNH Under Stephen Hemsley

Primary Hexagram: Ta Ch'u (26) – The Taming Power of the Great

This hexagram symbolizes the accumulation and disciplined management of great power, with the imagery of “Heaven within the Mountain” suggesting latent strength held in check for strategic release. For UNH, it reflects Hemsley’s challenge to harness the company’s vast resources—\$367 billion in 2024 revenue, a diversified portfolio (UnitedHealthcare and Optum), and a market cap of ~\$500 billion—to navigate a turbulent period and return to growth.

Key Themes:

Holding Firm and Building Strength: The hexagram emphasizes storing energy for the right moment. Hemsley’s prior tenure was marked by consistent earnings growth and stock stability, and his return signals a focus on leveraging UNH’s scale to address challenges like rising medical costs and regulatory pressures. His May 2025 memo to employees highlighted a “right strategy” for value-based care and AI-driven innovation, aligning with the hexagram’s call for disciplined power.

Perseverance Furthers: The judgment stresses steady effort. Hemsley’s experience equips him to tackle issues like Medicare Advantage cost overruns and DOJ investigations into billing practices through methodical execution, with UNH projecting a return to 13–16% growth in 2026.

Not Eating at Home: This suggests stepping beyond comfort zones for success. Hemsley’s push for “modernization and simplification” (e.g., accelerating AI and consumer capabilities) and his \$25 million stock purchase in May 2025 reflect bold moves to restore UNH’s trajectory, akin to “crossing the great water.”

Learning from the Past: The image advises drawing on historical wisdom. Hemsley must learn from UNH’s recent setbacks—cybersecurity breaches, public backlash post-Thompson’s death, and forecasting missteps—to rebuild trust and operational resilience. His apology for “performance setbacks” in May 2025 shows this humility.

Moving Lines:

Nine at the Beginning: “Danger is at hand. It furthers one to desist.” This warns against rash actions in a risky environment. UNH faces headwinds—Medicare Advantage losses, regulatory scrutiny, and a 40% stock drop. Hemsley’s decision to suspend the 2025 outlook and focus on cost control (e.g., exiting unprofitable Medicare plans serving 600,000 members) aligns with this caution, avoiding overextension.

Six in the Fifth Place: “The tusk of a gelded boar. Good fortune.” This suggests neutralizing threats indirectly for positive outcomes. Hemsley’s strategy to enhance Optum’s efficiency and leverage AI to manage costs (e.g., improving payment integrity tools) addresses root issues like medical expense trends without aggressive moves that could alienate customers or regulators. The “good fortune” hints at success if he focuses on systemic improvements.

Resulting Hexagram: Sun (57) – The Gentle (The Penetrating, Wind)

The transformation to Hexagram 57 indicates that Hemsley's leadership will succeed through subtle, persistent influence, like wind gradually shaping the landscape. This suggests UNH's recovery will be steady, not flashy, aligning with Hemsley's reputation for calm, consistent performance.

Key Themes:

Gradual Progress: "Success through what is small" points to incremental gains. Hemsley's focus on operational discipline—e.g., Optum's growth in value-based care (serving 4 million patients by 2030) and AI-driven cost savings—supports UNH's 2026 growth projection. The revised 2025 outlook (\$445.5–\$448 billion revenue, \$16.00 adjusted EPS) reflects this cautious, steady approach.

Clarity and Leadership: The hexagram highlights a "great man" whose influence counters challenges. Hemsley's track record and his May 2025 pledge to "resolve issues within our capacity" position him to address public skepticism (post-Thompson) and regulatory probes with transparency and strategic clarity.

Ceaseless Effort: The wind's persistent action mirrors Hemsley's reported work ethic (e.g., "17-hour days" per X chatter) and UNH's ongoing investments in technology and care delivery to maintain market leadership.

Defined Goals: The hexagram stresses a clear direction. Hemsley's focus on cost control, regulatory compliance, and growth in high-margin areas like Optum Health aligns with this, ensuring UNH's long-term competitiveness.

Practical Outlook for UNH Under Hemsley

The I Ching's guidance is optimistic but emphasizes discipline and patience, reflecting UNH's challenges and Hemsley's strengths:

Financial Stabilization: UNH's 2025 outlook cut (net EPS from \$28.15–\$28.65 to \$24.65–\$25.15) signals short-term pain from high medical costs, particularly in Medicare Advantage. Hemsley's experience suggests he'll prioritize efficiency, such as streamlining Optum's operations and using AI to optimize claims processing.

Rebuilding Trust: The Thompson shooting and 2024 cyberattack fueled negative sentiment, with UNH's stock down 40% in 2025. Hemsley's \$60 million equity award tied to performance and his public commitment to transparency (e.g., cooperating with DOJ probes) aim to restore confidence.

Long-Term Growth: The Gentle Penetration hexagram supports UNH's 2026 growth target (13–16% earnings growth), driven by Optum's expansion and technological innovation. Analysts remain bullish, with price targets of \$600–\$620, implying 30% upside from current levels (~\$460).

For Your Readers

The I Ching's Ta Ch'u (26) and Sun (57) offer a highly positive outlook for UnitedHealth Group under Stephen Hemsley, tempered by the need for strategic restraint. Hexagram 26 advises leveraging UNH's immense resources with discipline, navigating risks like rising costs and regulatory scrutiny through perseverance. The moving lines warn against rash moves but promise "good fortune" if Hemsley addresses challenges indirectly, such as through AI and operational efficiency. Hexagram 57 suggests steady, enduring progress, with Hemsley's steady leadership guiding UNH toward 2026 growth. For investors, The Motley Fool's "buy the dip" thesis aligns with this—UNH's current price (~\$460) offers a compelling entry point, given Hemsley's track record and UNH's fundamentals. Patience is key; expect gradual, sustainable gains over instant wins.

UnitedHealth Group Incorporated UNH under CEO A Stephen Hemsley



6		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
5		T	T	T		2	2	2		6
4		H	H	T		3	3	2		8
3		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
2		H	T	T		3	2	2		7
1		H	H	H		3	3	3		9

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=8921>

HEXAGRAM 26 - Ta Ch'u - The Taming Power of the Great

Above KEN KEEPING STILL, MOUNTAIN
Below CH'IEN THE CREATIVE, HEAVEN

The Creative is tamed by Ken, Keeping Still.
This produces great power,
a situation in contrast to that of the ninth hexagram, Hsiao Ch'u, THE TAMING POWER OF THE SMALL,
in which the Creative is tamed by the Gentle alone.

- There
- one weak line must tame five strong lines, but
- here
- four strong lines are restrained by two weak lines;
- in addition to a minister,
there is a prince, and
- the restraining power
therefore is far stronger.

The hexagram has a threefold meaning, expressing different aspects of the concept Holding firm.

1. Heaven within the mountain
gives the idea of holding firm in the sense of holding together;
2. the trigram Ken, which holds the trigram Ch'ien still,
gives the idea of holding firm in the sense of holding back;
3. the third idea is
that of holding firm in the sense of caring for and nourishing.
 - This last is suggested by the fact that a strong line at the top, which is the ruler of the hexagram, is honored and tended as a sage.
 - The third of these meanings also attaches specifically to this strong line at the top, which represents the sage.

THE JUDGMENT

THE TAMING POWER OF THE GREAT.

Perseverance furthers.

Not eating at home brings good fortune.

It furthers one to cross the great water.

To

- hold firmly to great creative powers and
- store them up, as set forth in this hexagram,
there is need of
a strong, clearheaded man who is honored by the ruler.

- The trigram Ch'ien **points to** strong creative power;
- Ken **indicates** firmness and truth.

Both point

- to light and clarity and
- to the daily renewal of character.

Only through such daily self-renewal

can a man continue at the height of his powers.

- Force of **habit** helps to keep order in quiet times; but in periods when there is a great storing up of energy,
- everything **depends on** the power of the personality.

However, since the worthy are honored,

as in the case of the strong personality **entrusted with** leadership by the ruler, it is an **advantage**

- not to eat at home but rather
- to earn one's bread by entering upon public office.

Such a man is in **harmony with** heaven;

therefore even **great and difficult** undertakings, such as crossing the great water, succeed.

THE IMAGE

Heaven within the mountain:

The image of THE TAMING POWER OF THE GREAT.

Thus the superior man acquaints himself with

- many sayings of antiquity And
- many deeds of the past,

In order to strengthen his character thereby.

Heaven within the mountain **points** to hidden treasures.

In the words and deeds of the past there lies hidden a treasure that men may use to

strengthen and elevate their own characters.

The way to study the past is

- not to confine oneself to mere knowledge of history but, through application of this knowledge,
- to give actuality to the past.

THE LINES

Nine at the beginning means:

Danger is at hand.

It furthers one to desist.

A man **wishes to make** vigorous advance, but circumstances present an obstacle.

He sees himself **held back** firmly.

If

- he should attempt **to force** an advance,
- it would **lead** him into misfortune.

Therefore it is better for him

- to **compose** himself and
- to **wait** until an outlet is offered for release of his stored up energies.

0 Six in the fifth place means:

The tusk of a gelded boar.

Good fortune.

Here the **restraining** of the impetuous forward drive is achieved in an **indirect** way.

A boar's tusk is in itself dangerous, but if

- the boar's nature is altered,
- the tusk is no longer a menace.

Thus also where men are concerned,

wild force

- **should not be combated directly; instead,**
- **its roots should be eradicated.**

MOVING HEXAGRAM

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=9014>

HEXAGRAM 57 – Sun - The Gentle (The Penetrating, Wind)

Above SUN THE GENTLE, WIND, WOOD

Below SUN THE GENTLE, WIND, WOOD

Sun is one of the **eight doubled** trigrams.

It

- is the eldest daughter and
- **symbolizes** wind or wood;

it has for its **attribute** gentleness, which nonetheless penetrates

- like the wind or
- like growing wood

with its roots.

The dark principle, in itself rigid and immovable, is dissolved by the penetrating light principle,

to which it subordinates itself in gentleness.

1. In nature,

- it is the wind that
 - disperses the gathered clouds,
 - leaving the sky clear and serene.

2. In human life

- it is penetrating clarity of judgment
 - that thwarts all dark hidden motives.

3. In the life of the community

- it is the powerful influence of a great personality
 - that uncovers and breaks up those intrigues which shun the light of day.

THE JUDGMENT

THE GENTLE.

Success through what is small.

- It furthers one to have somewhere to go.
- It furthers one to see the great man.

Penetration produces

- gradual and
- inconspicuous

effects.

It should be effected

- not by an act of violation
- but by influence that never lapses.

- Results of this kind are less striking to the eye than

- those won by surprise attack,

but

- they
 - are more enduring and
 - more complete.

If

- one would produce such effects
- one must have a dearly defined goal,

for only when

- the penetrating influence works always in the same direction
- can the object be attained.

- Small strength can achieve its purpose only by

- subordinating itself to an eminent man
- who is capable of creating order.

THE IMAGE

Winds following one upon the other: The image of THE GENTLY PENETRATING.
Thus

the superior man

- Spreads his commands abroad And
- carries out his undertakings.

- The penetrating quality of the wind depends upon its ceaselessness.
 - This is what makes it so powerful;
 - time is its instrument.

In the same way

- the ruler's thought should penetrate the soul of the people.
 - This too requires a lasting influence brought about by
 - enlightenment and
 - command.

Only when

- the command has been assimilated by the people
- is action in accordance with it possible.
- Action without preparation of the ground only
 - frightens and
 - repels.