

GrokIChing on the Jaguar mistake and possible recovery

Analysis of I Ching Readings in the Context of Jaguar Land Rover's CEO Transitions

The I Ching readings provided offer a symbolic lens to interpret the trajectories of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) under its recent CEOs: the outgoing Adrian Mardell (Hexagram 39: Obstruction, static with no changing lines) and the incoming P.B. Balaji (Hexagram 46: Pushing Upward, with changing lines in the second and third places, transforming into Hexagram 45: Gathering Together). These hexagrams reflect themes of challenge, growth, and collective effort, which can be mapped to real-world events at JLR. Based on the company's recent history, including a controversial rebranding under Mardell and Balaji's appointment amid ongoing transformations, the readings align strikingly with actual outcomes and potential futures. I'll break this down by CEO, linking the oracle's advice to documented events, then extract managerial lessons from the "fiasco" (primarily the rebranding backlash).

Outgoing CEO: Adrian Mardell and Hexagram 39 (Obstruction)

Hexagram 39 depicts a state of impasse—a "dangerous abyss" ahead and an "inaccessible mountain" behind, symbolizing external and internal barriers that arise over time but can be overcome through strategic retreat, self-reflection, and seeking guidance from a "great man" (a wise leader or advisor). With no changing lines, the hexagram is static, emphasizing a "solid obstruction" without immediate pathways for transformation. The judgment advises pausing in the face of danger, joining like-minded allies, and persevering with inner purpose, as temporary adversity fosters self-development. The image reinforces introspection: the superior person "turns his attention to himself and molds his character," while the inferior blames others.

Alignment with Actual Events: Mardell, a 35-year JLR veteran, was appointed interim CEO in late 2022 following Thierry Bolloré's resignation and made permanent in 2023. His tenure initially showed promise, with JLR achieving record profits in fiscal year 2024, driven by strong sales of premium models like the Range Rover and Defender. However, the period was marked by significant obstructions, most notably the 2024 rebranding campaign titled "Copy Nothing." This initiative introduced a minimalist logo (removing the iconic leaping cat), vibrant colors, and an advertisement featuring diverse, non-traditional models in artistic poses—without showcasing any cars. Critics labeled it "woke" and disconnected from Jaguar's heritage of luxury performance, accusing it of alienating core customers (affluent, tradition-oriented buyers) in favor of a younger, urban demographic. The backlash was intense: social media erupted with mockery, sales reportedly declined (Jaguar's global deliveries fell by over 20% in the first half of 2025), and even high-profile figures like former U.S. President Donald Trump publicly derided it as "stupid" and "seriously woke," claiming it plunged the company into "absolute turmoil."

2 sources This mirrors the hexagram's "obstructions that appear in the course of time": the rebrand, intended as a bold pivot toward electrification and modernity, instead created a self-inflicted abyss (market rejection) and mountain (internal resistance or execution flaws). Rather than retreating to reassess—as the oracle suggests—Mardell's team pushed forward, defending the campaign as innovative. Reports indicate limited introspection; instead, blame was partially externalized to "misunderstandings" in media coverage.

2 sources The static nature of the hexagram (no changing lines) reflects the unyielding obstruction, culminating in Mardell's retirement announcement in August 2025, effective year-end, amid mounting headwinds like supply chain issues and EV transition delays.

2 sources While officially a retirement, the timing—shortly after the rebrand's fallout—suggests the adversity did not lead to the promised "good fortune" through perseverance, but rather a forced pause.

In essence, the reading accurately foreshadows a tenure defined by unaddressed barriers, where adversity could have been a catalyst for growth but instead amplified division.

Incoming CEO: P.B. Balaji and Hexagram 46 (Pushing Upward) Transforming into Hexagram 45 (Gathering Together)

Hexagram 46 symbolizes steady, effortful ascent—like wood pushing upward through earth—emphasizing modesty, adaptability, and seeing the "great man" for guidance. It promises "supreme success" through non-violent progress, heaping "small things" to achieve greatness, and advancing southward (symbolizing purposeful activity). The changing lines add nuance:

- Nine in the second place: Sincerity and upright character overcome brusqueness; even small efforts yield response without blame.
- Nine in the third place: Progress into an "empty city" (easy gains), but with caution about sustainability—no explicit promise of lasting fortune, urging one to seize the moment without misgivings.

These changes lead to Hexagram 45, which evokes massing forces like a lake over earth, stressing unity around a strong leader, religious/moral forces for cohesion, great offerings (significant efforts), and preparation for unforeseen challenges. The image warns of potential strife in gatherings, advising renewal of "weapons" (tools or defenses) to prevent breakthroughs.

Projection Based on Readings and Emerging Events: Balaji, formerly Tata Motors' Group CFO since 2017, is the first Indian to lead JLR, taking over in November 2025.

3 sources His background in finance and operations at Tata (JLR's parent) suggests a "pushing upward" from within the organization—rising from obscurity (relative to JLR's British roots) to influence, with effort rather than expansion. The lines fit: his "brusque" style (as a cost-focused executive) may not initially mesh, but sincerity (evidenced by his track record in turning Tata's finances around) could garner response.

The third line's easy progress might reflect inheriting a company post-rebrand cleanup, with opportunities in EV push and global markets, but the warning about longevity highlights risks like sustaining profits amid economic headwinds.

The transformation to Gathering Together projects Balaji fostering unity—perhaps by rallying teams around Tata's resources, making "great offerings" (investments in R&D or heritage revival), and approaching the "temple" (core values). Early indicators: His appointment strengthens Tata's grip, potentially gathering "like-minded friends" from the Indian parent to address JLR's challenges. 2 sources Success depends on preparation for the unforeseen, such as market volatility or internal cultural clashes.

Overall, the reading suggests a positive trajectory: upward momentum through modest, collective efforts, contrasting Mardell's stasis.

Managerial Practices Learned from This Fiasco

The "fiasco" refers primarily to the rebranding under Mardell, which amplified obstructions and led to his exit. Key lessons, informed by the I Ching's wisdom:

- Embrace Introspection in Adversity (From Hex 39): When obstacles arise (e.g., backlash), avoid blaming external factors like media or consumers. Instead, seek errors within—conduct thorough market testing and stakeholder consultations before radical changes. JLR's failure to anticipate alienation of loyal customers highlights the inferior path; superior leaders use setbacks for "inner enrichment."
- Build Gradually and Adapt Modestly (From Hex 46): Radical overhauls risk easy gains that don't last (line 3). Heap "small things" like incremental innovations or heritage nods to achieve sustainable height. For JLR, this means balancing EV transitions with core identity, not erasing it.
- Foster Unity and Prepare for Challenges (From Hex 45): Gather teams around a clear moral/strategic center, investing in "great offerings" (e.g., employee buy-in or cultural alignment). Arm against the unforeseen by diversifying risks—JLR could have mitigated rebrand fallout with contingency plans or phased rollouts.
- Seek Wise Guidance Early (Common to All Hexagrams): "See the great man" underscores consulting experts or mentors. Mardell's team might have benefited from diverse advisors to avoid cultural missteps; future leaders like Balaji should leverage Tata's global network.
- Persevere with Purpose, Not Force: Obstructions are temporary if met with retreat and adaptation, not defiance. The woke label stemmed from perceived inauthenticity—managers should align initiatives with authentic brand values to prevent self-sabotage.

In table form for clarity:

Lesson	I Ching Source	Application to JLR Fiasco
Introspect in Crisis	Hex 39 (Image)	Post-rebrand, analyze internal flaws vs. external blame to rebuild trust.
Gradual Ascent	Hex 46 (Judgment/Image)	Avoid all-or-nothing rebrands; iterate on heritage for lasting success.
Build Cohesive Teams	Hex 45 (Judgment)	Rally around shared goals post-transition to prevent internal strife.
Consult Experts	All (Great Man)	Involve advisors in decisions to navigate cultural/market obstacles.
Strategic Perseverance	Hex 39/46	Pause and adapt during pushback, turning adversity into growth.

Comment on the Outcome of Naming Adrian Mardell CEO of Jaguar JLR

Naming Mardell—a long-time insider with deep financial expertise—initially seemed prudent, stabilizing JLR after Bolloré's abrupt exit and delivering short-term wins like profit highs. However, the outcome has been mixed at best, embodying Hex 39's unyielding obstruction. His leadership oversaw operational successes but faltered in strategic vision, particularly the 2024 rebrand, which ignited a firestorm and contributed to sales slumps and reputational damage. 3 sources Retiring amid this "turmoil," Mardell's era underscores the risks of promoting from within without fresh perspectives: familiarity bred overconfidence, leading to a campaign that obstructed progress rather than overcoming it. Positively, it sets a stage for Balaji's ascent, but the lesson is clear — appointments must prioritize adaptability to avoid static traps.

Comment on the outcome of naming Adrian Mardell the CEO of Jaguar JLR



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

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=8960>

HEXAGRAM 39 – Chien - Obstruction

Above K'AN THE ABYSMAL, WATER
Below KEN KEEPING STILL, MOUNTAIN

The hexagram **pictures**

- a dangerous abyss lying before us and
- a steep, inaccessible mountain rising behind us.

We are surrounded by obstacles;

at the same time,

since the mountain has the attribute of keeping still, there is implicit a **hint as to how we can extricate ourselves.**

The hexagram **represents** obstructions

that appear in the course of time but

that **can and should be** overcome.

Therefore

all the instruction given is directed to overcoming them.

THE JUDGMENT

OBSTRUCCION.

- The southwest furthers.
 - The northeast does not further.
 - It furthers one to see the great man.
- Perseverance brings good fortune.

The southwest is the region of retreat, the northeast that of advance.

Here

an individual is **confronted** by obstacles that **cannot be** overcome directly.

In such a situation

it is wise

- to pause in view of the danger and
- to retreat.

However,

this is merely a preparation for overcoming the obstructions.

One must

- join forces with friends of like mind and
- put himself under the leadership of a man equal to the situation:

then

one will succeed in removing the obstacles.

This requires the will to persevere

just when

one apparently must do something that leads away from his goal.

This unswerving inner purpose brings good fortune in the end.

An obstruction that lasts only for a time is useful for self-development.

This is the value of adversity.

THE IMAGE

Water on the mountain:

The image of OBSTRUCTION.

Thus the superior man

- turns his attention to himself And
- molds his character.

Difficulties and obstructions throw a man back upon himself.

While

- the inferior man
 - seeks to put the blame on other persons, bewailing his fate,
- the superior man
 - seeks the error within himself, andthrough this introspection
- the external obstacle becomes for him an occasion for
 - inner enrichment and
 - education.

Jaguar JLR under CEO P.B. Balaji



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

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=8981>

Hexagram 46 – Sheng - Pushing Upward

Above K'UN THE RECEPTIVE, EARTH

Below SUN THE GENTLE, WIND, WOOD

- The lower trigram, Sun, represents **wood**, and
- the upper, K'un, means the **earth**.

Linked with this is the idea that wood in the earth **grows upward**.

In contrast to the meaning of Chin, PROGRESS (35),

this pushing upward is associated with **effort**,

just as a plant needs **energy** for pushing upward through the earth.

That is why this hexagram, although it is connected with success, is associated with **effort of the will**.

- In PROGRESS the emphasis is on **expansion**;
- PUSHING UPWARD indicates rather a **vertical ascent** - **direct rise**
 - from obscurity and lowliness
 - to power and influence.

THE JUDGMENT

PUSHING UPWARD

has supreme success.
One must see the great man.
Fear not.
Departure toward the south
Brings good fortune.

The pushing upward of the good elements

- encounters **no obstruction** and
- is therefore accompanied by **great success**.

The pushing upward is made possible

- **not by violence**
- **but by modesty and adaptability.**

Since the individual is borne along by the propitiousness of the time,
he advances.

He must go to see authoritative people.

He need not be afraid to do this, because success is **assured**.

But

he must set to work, for **activity** (this is the meaning of "the south") brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

Within the earth, wood grows: The image of PUSHING UPWARD.

Thus the superior man of devoted character

Heaps up small things

In order to achieve something high and great.

- Adapting itself to obstacles and bending around them,
wood in the earth grows upward without haste and without rest.

Thus too

- **the superior man**
 - **is devoted in character and**
 - **never pauses in his progress.**

THE LINES

Nine in the second place means:

If one is sincere,

It furthers one to bring even a small offering.

No blame.

Here a strong man is presupposed.

It is true that

- he does not fit in with his environment, inasmuch as

- he is too brusque and pays too little attention to form.

But as

he is upright in character,

- he meets with response, and
- his lack of outward form does no harm.

Here

- uprightness is the outcome of sound qualities of character, whereas in the corresponding line of the preceding hexagram
- it is the result of innate humility.

Nine in the third place means:

One pushes upward into an empty city,

All obstructions that generally block progress **fall away** here.

Things proceed with **remarkable ease**.

Unhesitatingly one follows this road, in order to **profit** by one's success.

Seen from without, everything seems to be in the **best of order**.

However, no promise of **good fortune** is added.

It is a question **how long** such unobstructed success can last.

But it is wise **not to yield** to such misgivings, because they only inhibit one's power.

Instead,

the point is to **profit** by the **propitiousness** of the time.

Six in the fourth place means:

The king offers him Mount Ch'i.

Good fortune.

No blame.

Mount Ch'i is in western China, the homeland of King Wen, whose son, the Duke of Chou, added the words to the individual lines.

The pronouncement takes us back to a time when the Chou dynasty was **coming into** power.

At that time

- King Wen introduced his illustrious helpers to the god of his native mountain, and
- they received their places in the halls of the ancestors by the side of the ruler.

This indicates a **stage in which pushing upward** attains its goal.

One

- **acquires** fame in the sight of gods and men,
- **is received** into the circle of those who foster the spiritual life of the nation, and thereby
- **attains** a significance that endures beyond time.

Six in the fifth place means:

Perseverance brings good fortune.

One pushes upward by steps.

When a man is advancing farther and farther,

- it is important for him not to become intoxicated by success.

Precisely when he experiences great success it is necessary

- to remain sober and
- not to try to skip any stages;

- he must go on slowly, step by step, as though hesitant.

Only such calm, steady progress, overleaping nothing, leads to the goal.

MOVING HEXAGRAM

Click below to view the interpretations and cases:

<https://icic.com/?p=8978>

HEXAGRAM 45 - Ts'ui - Gathering Together (Massing)

Above Tui THE JOYOUS, LAKE

Below K'UN THE RECEPTIVE, EARTH

This hexagram is **related** in form and meaning to Pi, HOLDING TOGETHER (8).

- In the **latter**, water is over the earth;
- **here** a lake is over the earth.

But since the lake is a place where water **collects**,

the idea of **gathering together** is even more strongly expressed here than in the other hexagram.

The same idea also arises from the fact that

- in the **present case** it is two strong lines (the fourth and the fifth) that
 - **bring** about the gathering together,

whereas

- in the **former case** one strong line (the fifth)
 - **stands** in the midst of weak lines.

THE JUDGMENT

GATHERING TOGETHER.

Success.

The king approaches his temple.

It furthers one to see the great man.

This brings success.

Perseverance furthers.

To bring great offerings creates good fortune.
It furthers one to undertake something,

The gathering together of people in large communities is

- either a natural occurrence, as in the case of the family,
- or an artificial one, as in the case of the state.

The family gathers about the father as its head.

The perpetuation of this gathering in groups is achieved through the sacrifice to the ancestors,

at which the whole clan is gathered together.

Through the collective piety of the living members of the family,

- the ancestors become so integrated in the spiritual life of the family that
- it cannot be dispersed or dissolved.

1. Where men are to be gathered together,
religious forces are needed.

2. But there must also be a human leader to serve as the center of the group.
In order to be able to bring others together,

this leader must first of all be collected within himself.

Only collective moral force can unite the world.

- Such great times of unification will leave great achievements behind them.
This is the significance of the great offerings that are made.
- In the secular sphere likewise there is need of great deeds
in the time of GATHERING TOGETHER.

THE IMAGE

Over the earth, the lake: The image Of GATHERING TOGETHER.

Thus the superior man renews his weapons In order to meet the unforeseen.

If the water in the lake gathers until it rises above the earth,

- there is danger of a break-through.

Precautions must be taken to prevent this.

Similarly

- where men gather together in great numbers, strife is likely to arise;
- where possessions are collected, robbery is likely to occur.

Thus in the time of GATHERING TOGETHER

we must arm promptly to ward off the unexpected.

Human woes usually come as a result of unexpected events against which we are not forearmed.

If we are prepared, they can be prevented.