

GrokIChing on Comparing 2 Mandates of Heaven: CRM and ADBE

Salesforce, Inc. CRM under CEO Marc Benioff (2025)

<https://icic.com/?p=10689>

Adobe Inc. ADBE under CEO Shantanu Narayen

<https://icic.com/?p=10692>

Grok Prompt:

Adobe Systems Inc. ADBE under CEO Shantanu Narayen

<https://icic.com/?p=592>

On 9/8/2012 I asked UI I Ching about the future of Adobe under Shantanu Narayen

His first Time /Space was Gathering Together

A positive Hex that came with a warning and some managerial advice:

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.

He has a positive Stage

Six in the second place means:

Letting oneself be drawn

Brings good fortune and remains blameless.

If one is sincere,

It furthers one to bring even a small offering.

In the time of GATHERING TOGETHER, we should make no arbitrary choice of the way. There are secret forces at work, leading together those who belong together. We must yield to this attraction; then we make no mistakes. Where inner relationships exist, no great preparations and formalities are necessary. People understand one another forthwith, just as the Divinity graciously accepts a small offering if it comes from the heart.

However, his second Time/Space is negative – Oppression (exhaustion)

Times of adversity are the reverse of times of success, but they can lead to success if they befall the right man. When a strong man meets with adversity, he remains cheerful despite all danger, and this cheerfulness is the source of later successes; it is that stability which is stronger than fate. He who lets his spirit be broken by exhaustion certainly has no success. But if adversity only bends a man, it creates

in him a power to react that is bound in time to manifest itself. No inferior man is capable of this. Only the great man brings about good fortune and remains blameless. It is true that for the time being outward influence is denied him, because his words have no effect. Therefore in times of adversity it is important to be strong within and sparing of words.

Because Adobe is going through a difficult period, I felt it was time to consult UI I Ching once again.

Adobe Inc. ADBE under CEO Shantanu Narayen
<https://icic.com/?p=10692>

His First Time/Space is the Abysmal or Water on Water – a difficult condition and plenty of advice for the CEO to navigate through it al; however, dealing with difficulties is not the same as having good fortune.

He has 3 Stages pointing to Misfortune and danger.

His Second Time/Space is one of the worst Time/Spaces – The Marrying Maiden.

In conclusion, he lacks the Mandate of Heaven. He must look for a replacement.

About CRM

Salesforce.com – CRM – under CEO Marc Benioff - 2013
<https://icic.com/?p=1766>

on 9/20/2013 I asked UI I Ching about the future of Salesforce CRM under CEO Marc Benioff

His only Time/Space - Dispersion

Wind blowing over water disperses it, dissolving it into foam and mist. This suggests that when a man's vital energy is dammed up within him (indicated as a danger by the attribute of the lower trigram), gentleness serves to break up and dissolve the blockage.

Here the subject is the dispersing and dissolving of divisive egotism. DISPERSION shows the way, so to speak, that leads to gathering together. This explains the similarity of the two texts.

Through hardness and selfishness the heart grows rigid, and this rigidity leads to separation from all others. Egotism and cupidity isolate men. Therefore the hearts of men must be seized by a devout emotion. They must be shaken by a religious awe in face of eternity – stirred with an intuition of the One Creator of all living beings, and united through the strong feeling of fellowship experienced in the ritual of divine worship.

It is a positive Time/Space

Salesforce, Inc. CRM under CEO Marc Benioff (2025)

<https://icic.com/?p=10689>

On 9/18/2025 I asked UI I Ching about the future of Salesforce under Marc Benioff

His only Time/Space is Pushing Upward – a very positive one.

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
o from obscurity and lowliness
o 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.

In conclusion, Marc Benioff has a clear Mandate of Heaven and should continue as CEO

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

GROK'S ANSWER:

Analysis of Adobe Inc. (ADBE) under CEO Shantanu Narayen

The I Ching readings provided paint a contrasting picture for Adobe: a 2012 consultation yielding "Gathering Together" (positive with precautionary advice on preparation and unity) versus a 2025 reading of "The Abysmal" (dangerous waters requiring careful navigation) and "The Marrying Maiden" (an inauspicious alignment suggesting misalignment or forced unions). This shift implies a transition from managed growth to potential exhaustion or instability, with the user concluding a lack of "Mandate of Heaven" warranting CEO replacement. From current data as of September 2025, Adobe is experiencing robust AI-driven financial growth, but faces broader market pressures like stock volatility and competitive AI landscapes. Below, I break this down managerially (focusing on leadership, strategy, and operations) and from an investor's lens (financials, risks, and returns).

Managerial Perspective

The 2012 "Gathering Together" hexagram emphasizes proactive risk mitigation—arming against strife in large groups or asset accumulations—and yielding to natural attractions for unity without excessive formality. This aligns with Narayen's tenure since 2007, during which Adobe pivoted from perpetual licenses to a subscription model (Creative Cloud), fostering community and recurring revenue while democratizing tools. The advice on sincere, small offerings resonates with Adobe's focus on accessible creativity, as seen in partnerships and AI integrations like Firefly, which emphasize responsible innovation. However, the hexagram's warning of breakthroughs (e.g., water overflowing) mirrors potential overextension in AI ambitions, where rapid scaling could invite regulatory scrutiny or internal strife.

The 2025 readings—"The Abysmal" (water on water, symbolizing peril) and "The Marrying Maiden" (subordination without true harmony)—suggest deeper challenges. "The Abysmal" advises inner strength and sparing words amid adversity, implying Narayen must navigate difficulties without letting exhaustion break the spirit. This could reflect Adobe's current "difficult period," as noted by the user, amid AI hype cycles and antitrust concerns (e.g., ongoing Figma acquisition fallout). Three stages pointing to misfortune highlight dangers like overreliance on AI for growth, potentially alienating creative users if tools feel commoditized. "The Marrying Maiden" warns of improper alliances, perhaps critiquing strategic bets like AI partnerships or acquisitions that lack organic fit, leading to operational discord.

Managerially, this calls for introspection: Narayen, now in his late 50s with over 15 years as CEO, has driven Adobe's market cap from ~\$15B to over \$160B, but the readings suggest stagnation or misalignment. To heed the advice, leadership might prioritize adaptability—modesty in AI rollout, stronger internal unity, and succession planning. Replacing Narayen could inject fresh energy, aligning with the "Mandate of Heaven" loss, but his track record in AI (e.g., generative models) argues for continuity if he bends without breaking. Overall, the readings urge caution: success in adversity requires cheerfulness and reaction power, not rigid control.

Investor's Perspective

Adobe's financials remain strong, defying the negative I Ching tone. Q3 FY2025 revenue hit \$5.99B (up 11% YoY), with adjusted EPS at \$5.31, beating estimates and driven by AI-infused products like Acrobat AI Assistant. The company raised FY2025 guidance, with AI-influenced ARR exceeding \$5B, signaling monetization success. Digital Media and Experience segments grew 10-11%, bolstered by demand for tools in content creation and marketing.

However, the stock tells a cautionary tale: As of September 19, 2025, ADBE closed at \$365.90, down ~17% YTD from ~\$444 at year-start, and far from its 2021 peak of \$688. This volatility echoes "The Abysmal's" perils—market skepticism on AI hype, competition from open-source alternatives, and economic headwinds. Forecasts predict year-end 2025 prices around \$399 (up 8% from current), with longer-term growth to \$459 by 2026, but bearish sentiments dominate short-term. Investors should weigh P/E ratios (historically high) against growth: If AI delivers, returns could be supreme, but "Marrying Maiden" misalignment risks (e.g., regulatory blocks) suggest diversification. Hold for long-term AI upside, but monitor for leadership shifts if performance falters—Narayan's vision has paid off, but exhaustion could cap gains.

Analysis of Salesforce Inc. (CRM) under CEO Marc Benioff

In contrast, Salesforce's I Ching trajectory is consistently upward: 2013's "Dispersion" (dissolving blockages through gentleness and unity) to 2025's "Pushing Upward" (modest, adaptive ascent to power). This affirms Benioff's "Mandate of Heaven," with the user recommending continuity. As of September 2025, Salesforce is capitalizing on AI agents amid solid revenue growth, though not without job cuts and stock dips. The analysis follows the same dual lenses.

Managerial Perspective

"Dispersion" in 2013 highlights breaking egotism via devout emotion and fellowship, akin to Benioff's Ohana culture and philanthropy (e.g., 1-1-1 model). It explains Salesforce's evolution from CRM pioneer to AI-integrated platform, dissolving silos through Data Cloud and Einstein. The hexagram's link to gathering underscores Benioff's relational leadership, fostering unity in worship-like events (e.g., Dreamforce).

The 2025 "Pushing Upward" reinforces this: vertical ascent through modesty, not violence, with supreme success via adaptability and seeking great men (e.g., partnerships with NVIDIA). Departure southward (activity) brings fortune, mirroring Benioff's bold AI pivot—Agentforce replaces roles while empowering humans, cutting ~4,000 customer service jobs for efficiency. This effort will align with the hexagram's emphasis on unobstructed rise from lowliness, as Salesforce integrates AI across Customer 360 without disruption.

Managerially, Benioff's charisma and vision embody the mandate: At 60, he's validated AI's role in SaaS, dismissing "death of SaaS" narratives. The readings advise continued modesty—avoid overexpansion in AI (e.g., high valuations like Palantir's, which Benioff critiques)—and leveraging propitious times. No replacement needed; his stability drives reaction power, making him ideal for adversity-to-success arcs.

Investor's Perspective

Salesforce's Q2 FY2026 (calendar Q3 2025) revenue reached \$10.24B (up 10% YoY), exceeding \$10B for the first time, with raised FY guidance to \$41.1-41.3B. Adjusted EPS expectations align with estimates (~\$2.85 midpoint), fueled by AI agents and Data Cloud. Despite this, stock fell post-earnings on weak forecasts, down ~25% YTD to ~\$244 as of September 18, 2025, from highs of ~\$365 in late 2024.

This dip contrasts "Pushing Upward's" optimism but fits its effort theme—growth requires work amid competition (e.g., Oracle, Microsoft). Forecasts see 2025-end prices at ~\$302 (up ~24% from current), potentially \$666 by 2029, with P/E at 29.81 signaling value. Investors benefit from Benioff's mandate: AI agents position CRM for outperformance, but risks like layoffs (signaling efficiency or morale issues) warrant monitoring. Buy for long-term AI tailwinds, as the hexagram promises assured success through adaptability.