

Lucy Kellaway



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The plague of compulsory creativity may be dying out



I'm not creative. Neither are most of my colleagues. The Financial Times employs clever people who know how to spot stories, write them elegantly, and give readers the right mix of familiarity and surprise. Experience, knowledge, practice, judgment, skill and intelligence play a part. So does an ability to write. And think. Creativity barely comes into it. This is not to insult the FT. It is to compliment it.

For two decades, business people have talked rot about what it is to be creative. More creativity is taken to be better than less — there can be no such thing as too much. On LinkedIn there are nearly 2m people with "creative" or "creativity" in their job title. On Indeed, the job search website, there are 32,000 openings specifying creativity in London alone, compared with only 2,700 requesting politeness, and barely 300 co-operativeness. This is baffling when you consider that being polite and co-operative are vital traits for every job I've heard of, whereas most companies have no use for real creativity at all.

The creativity plague has spread so far it has even reached the part in which it used to be taboo — the accounts department. AstraZeneca,

which is looking for someone to plan its cash flow, boasts in the advertisement about an atmosphere in which people are "rewarded for their ideas and creativity".

Management experts are fanning the fire by sillier and sillier research. The daftest was written up in the Harvard Business Review recommending companies give their staff ludicrous titles like "imagineers" to make them more creative. Most worryingly, it singled out for approving mention the "sandwich artists" who stuff turkey and processed cheese into bread at Subway. Not only is it patronising to expect these luckless workers to be cheered up by such a moronic name, creativity is surely not what the company is after in the first place. When you are a global machine that produces 4,800 Subway sandwiches a minute, creativity on the production line is not recommended.

“Those capable of new ideas are few and far between. I know two — neither would last five minutes in a corporate job”

Last week I came across the first sign that creativity worship may have peaked. Fast Company published an article entitled "How to be less creative at work, and why you sometimes should". It argued that too much creativity can make you a nuisance to your boss, and that often the smart thing for a business is to forget new ideas and go on doing what it is doing.

There are two extraordinary things about this. For a start it is right. Secondly it was published by an organisation that more than any other has hyped this brainless trend. Fast Company's dubious mission: to inspire "a new breed of innovative and creative thought leaders who are actively inventing the future of business".

It is possible that ordinary workers are starting to chafe after two decades of compulsory creativity. Last week Kantar Media, owned by WPP, invited all its employees to gather in rooms on different continents and play with Lego to construct their own versions of an "extraordinary world". Did they find pretending to be kids with colourful bricks unleashed a gale of creativity? Not all of them. One member of staff emailed me to tell me about the dismal day, writing in the subject line: "the

most nonsensical thing that ever happened in my workplace".

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says creativity is "the ability to make new things or think of new ideas". There are hardly any new ideas left, and most are either very bad, or so new that ordinary people can't recognise them as good. Van Gogh, after all, sold only one painting in his whole life.

Those capable of genuine new ideas are few and far between. I only know two: one a poet and the other an inventor. Both do things entirely their own way. Neither have made much money; neither would last five minutes in a corporate job — they would hate it, and it would hate them.

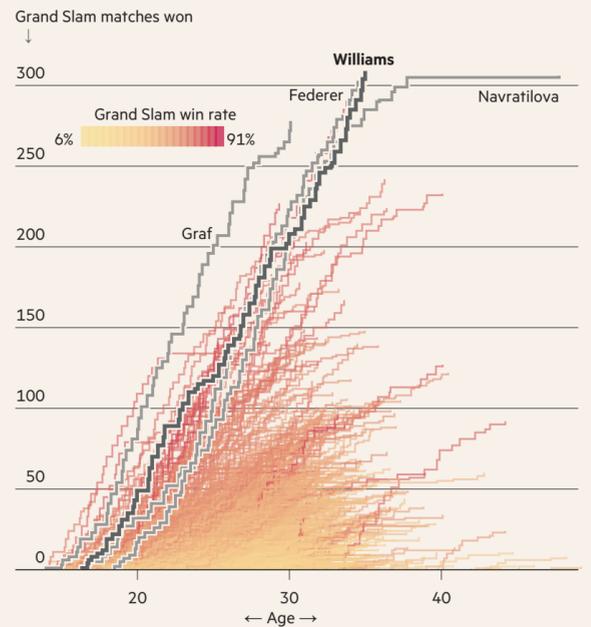
To survive, companies need to change from time to time. They need to do things slightly differently from how they were done before — but for that they don't need creativity. They need people with intelligence and judgment to work out the right variations on existing ideas. More than that they need people with the determination to test those ideas, tweak accordingly and turn them into sales.

lucy.kellaway@ft.com
Twitter: @lucykellaway

The Baseline

Serena Williams has now won more Grand Slam matches than any other tennis player in history

Williams surpassed Roger Federer's record of 307 in the US Open last week. Martina Navratilova is third on the list, having won her 306th Major match at the age of 47 after a decade away from the game



Graphic by John Burn-Murdoch/@jburnmurdoch
Source: ITF

Last week's US Open brought about the end of Serena Williams' reign atop women's tennis, with the eventual champion Angelique Kerber displacing the great American from number one spot in the WTA rankings.

Until her semi-final defeat to Karolina Pliskova, Williams had led the list for 186 successive weeks — a feat equaled only once in almost 50 years of Open Era tennis, by Steffi Graf who held the top spot between August 1987 and March 1991.

But although losing top spot on the brink of beating Graf's streak may sting, Williams walks away from New York with an even more outstanding record to her name. In beating her last sixteen opponent, Kazakhstan's Yaroslava Shvedova, Williams set a

new all-time record for the number of matches won by any single player at tennis's four Grand Slam tournaments.

Her subsequent quarter-final victory took the American to 309 Major match wins, where she now stands two clear of her contemporary on the men's tour, Roger Federer. That both players have continued to win multiple Grand Slam matches after their incredible longevity at the top of the game, and the mental and physical resilience that has made that possible.

At age 28 Kerber becomes the oldest ever first-time WTA rankings leader. Martina Hingis — almost a year younger than Williams — became the youngest first-time number one aged 16 in 1997. John Burn-Murdoch

WEATHER

Wind speed in MPH at 12 BST
Temperatures max for day °C

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Forecasts by MeteoGroup

| | | | |
|---------------|---------|----|----|
| Luxembourg | Sun | 29 | 84 |
| Lyon | Sun | 32 | 90 |
| Madrid | Sun | 33 | 91 |
| Manchester | Fair | 23 | 73 |
| Miami | Thunder | 31 | 88 |
| Milan | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Montreal | Sun | 23 | 73 |
| Moscow | Cloudy | 21 | 70 |
| Mumbai | Cloudy | 31 | 88 |
| Munich | Sun | 28 | 82 |
| New York | Sun | 25 | 77 |
| Nice | Sun | 28 | 82 |
| Paris | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Prague | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Reykjavik | Fair | 11 | 52 |
| Rio | Sun | 32 | 90 |
| Rome | Sun | 27 | 81 |
| San Francisco | Fair | 19 | 66 |
| Stockholm | Sun | 22 | 72 |
| Strasbourg | Sun | 31 | 88 |

Today's temperatures

| | | | |
|---------------|---------|----|-----|
| Abu Dhabi | Sun | 39 | 102 |
| Amsterdam | Sun | 29 | 84 |
| Athens | Sun | 30 | 86 |
| B'ham | Fair | 23 | 73 |
| Bangkok | Thunder | 31 | 88 |
| Barcelona | Sun | 29 | 84 |
| Beijing | Cloudy | 26 | 79 |
| Belfast | Rain | 19 | 66 |
| Belgrade | Sun | 30 | 86 |
| Berlin | Sun | 32 | 90 |
| Brussels | Sun | 29 | 84 |
| Budapest | Sun | 30 | 86 |
| Buenos Aires | Thunder | 21 | 70 |
| Cardiff | Cloudy | 22 | 72 |
| Chicago | Sun | 26 | 79 |
| Cologne | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Copenhagen | Sun | 22 | 72 |
| Delhi | Sun | 35 | 95 |
| Dubai | Sun | 37 | 99 |
| Dublin | Rain | 20 | 68 |
| Edinburgh | Cloudy | 21 | 70 |
| Frankfurt | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Geneva | Fair | 28 | 82 |
| Glasgow | Drizzle | 19 | 66 |
| Hamburg | Sun | 30 | 86 |
| Helsinki | Sun | 20 | 68 |
| Hong Kong | Sun | 32 | 90 |
| Istanbul | Fair | 28 | 82 |
| Jersey | Fair | 26 | 79 |
| Lisbon | Sun | 25 | 77 |
| London | Fair | 24 | 75 |
| Los Angeles | Fair | 23 | 73 |
| Munich | Sun | 28 | 82 |
| Miami | Thunder | 31 | 88 |
| Milan | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Montreal | Sun | 23 | 73 |
| Moscow | Cloudy | 21 | 70 |
| Mumbai | Cloudy | 31 | 88 |
| Munich | Sun | 28 | 82 |
| New York | Sun | 25 | 77 |
| Nice | Sun | 28 | 82 |
| Paris | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Prague | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Reykjavik | Fair | 11 | 52 |
| Rio | Sun | 32 | 90 |
| Rome | Sun | 27 | 81 |
| San Francisco | Fair | 19 | 66 |
| Stockholm | Sun | 22 | 72 |
| Strasbourg | Sun | 31 | 88 |
| Sydney | Fair | 20 | 68 |
| Tokyo | Drizzle | 27 | 81 |
| Toronto | Sun | 24 | 75 |
| Vancouver | Sun | 20 | 68 |
| Vienna | Sun | 30 | 86 |
| Warsaw | Sun | 29 | 84 |
| Washington | Fair | 29 | 84 |
| Zurich | Sun | 28 | 82 |

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MONDAY PRIZE CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

- Living-in pupil's exam success — needed for high-fliers (8,4)
- The most admired decoration left her unamused? (8,5)
- Heavenly sight delightful to shepherds (3,3,2,5)
- Company director — one involved with Paris and Rome (10)
- Homely, but in a really big way (8)
- It may get upset over trifles (7)
- It may help to preserve the ocean sailor (3-4)
- Louise break up the plant (5)
- Understand head of finance goes over the charges (4)

DOWN

- One's naughty spirit as an individual (7)
- Contacting everyone within call (8)
- One gets no thanks for this small item (4)
- Grub is put before the head — such indulgence! (10)
- Bill and Edward took part (5)

SOLUTION 15,331

The winner's name will be published in Weekend FT on September 24

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COMPANIES

Energy

Uniper set for volatile market debut

Demerged Eon unit attracts support but index investors are likely to sell

GUY CHAZAN — BERLIN

Germany's newest energy company Uniper will debut on the Frankfurt stock exchange today, with a market capitalisation of as much as €4.5bn — but analysts have warned that trading in the demerged unit of Eon could get off to a rocky start as index investors are forced to dump the stock.

Uniper came into being after Eon decided to split itself in two in what was at the time the most dramatic corporate response to Germany's Energiewende, or radical shift away from fossil fuels

and nuclear power towards renewables.

Eon and its rival RWE have seen profits tumble as subsidised wind and solar energy squeezed the energy they generate from coal and natural gas out of the market. Uniper, which has been operating independently since January, contains Eon's conventional power stations and energy trading division, while Eon has retained the renewables, networks and customer solutions business.

Short for "Unique Performance", Uniper was viewed as a kind of "bad bank" for Eon's struggling conventional assets — an impression reinforced by a string of writedowns Eon took on its power stations — €8.8bn last year and €2.9bn earlier in 2016. However, investor sentiment has gradually improved towards the company, especially after it prom-

ised to pay out €200m in dividends this year, and at least 75 per cent of its free cash from operations from 2017. It has also pledged to cut costs and sell €2bn of assets to strengthen its balance sheet.

A recent pick-up in wholesale power prices in Uniper's core markets has also helped improve the company's image.

"It was meant to be the 'bad bank', but without the German nukes, which stay with Eon now, it looks OK to us," said Sam Arie, a utilities analyst at UBS.

UBS sees fair value for Uniper equity in the range of €3-€4bn. "With a €200m dividend for 2016 that could mean a yield of as high as 6.5 per cent — not bad when the risk free rate in Germany is negative," Mr Arie said.

Deepa Venkateswaran, an analyst at Bernstein Research, said a reasonable

dividend yield range for the stock would be 7-10 per cent, which would translate into a market capitalisation of €2-3bn. Commerzbank gives a market capitalisation of €4.3bn, and a dividend yield of 4.7 per cent — broadly in line with the average in the European utilities sector.

But initial trading is set to be choppy. Mr Arie estimates 20 per cent of Eon shareholders are index investors. "Uniper won't be in the main indices that they track, so [they] might have to sell straight away," he said. "We could see 20-30m Uniper shares for sale today or early this week."

Eon has mandated Citigroup to manage such "flow-back", but it could be a tough job. "We expect a significant level of volatility in the first week of trading," said Ms Venkateswaran.

€4.5bn

The top estimate of Uniper's market capitalisation at the float

€200m

What Uniper has promised to pay in dividends this year

INSIDE BUSINESS

ON MONDAY

Jonathan Ford



Hinkley review offers chance to halt cascade of energy subsidies

No review of the Hinkley Point nuclear project of the sort Theresa May's new government is attempting would be complete without an assessment of its generous economics — and particularly its projected profitability. Assuming the plant can be built — admittedly not a small "if" given the troubled status of two similar projects its sponsor, EDF, has in Europe — the terms of the deal pretty much ensure a juicy payback. They ensure the French utility will receive more than double the present UK wholesale power price, indexed and guaranteed for 35 years.

Whatever electricity prices do in future, that should give EDF and its Chinese co-investors an annual return of about 10 per cent on their £18bn investment. This is well above EDF's cost of capital, estimated by Barclays at about 7 per cent. Indeed, such is the padding that even if the company delivers four years late and 25 per cent over budget, the bank still thinks it should make a positive return.

How, one might ask, were the French able to swing such easy terms? After all, when EDF first appeared nearly a decade ago, the idea was to build the two reactors, initially priced at some £9bn, in a mere six to seven years — with the developer taking the price risk on the power that was produced. Somehow, the UK has ended up paying twice that amount for the kit, accepting a 10-year construction timetable, and, by taking all the price risk, still guaranteeing the developers a healthy return.

It is customary when overly fat public-sector contracts are handed out to bemoan civil servants' lack of negotiating nous. But the explanation in this case is different. It is the government's energy policy that condemns it (or rather the consumer) to pay through the nose.

Subsidies are a byproduct of the state not only trying to reduce emissions, but also specifying the power sources to be employed in doing so. And, here, the original sin was committed 10 years ago when the then prime minister, Tony Blair, signed up to the EU's renewable energy directive. This ordained that by 2020, a full 15 per cent of Britain's energy (or 30 per cent of electricity excluding transport and heating) should come from renewable sources.

Concerns that the technologies were immature and delivered power only intermittently were swept aside. Customer-funded stealth taxes were introduced to encourage developers to pump money into wind turbines and solar panels. So, rather than the rational course of applying a neutral carbon levy and letting the market determine the best way to cut emissions, the government tried to pick the technological "winners".

This led to plenty of activity. Larded with subsidies that are set to rise to about £10bn a year by 2020, Britain now generates more than 20 per cent of its power from renewable sources.

But subsidy has begat subsidy. That's partly because of the nature of renewable energy. Being both intermittent and lacking in input costs, owners will rationally sell any power they produce for whatever they can get — driving prices down. That in turn means the thermal power stations required as back up cannot make money. So that leads to subsidy number two: the so-called "capacity market". To keep the thermal generators going, you must pay them an extra bung — set to run at about £1bn a year.

Of course, renewables are not the only technological bet the government has placed. There is also nuclear, where — to meet emissions targets — planners have identified a "need" for 14GW of nuclear capacity. Apply Hinkley-sized subsidies to the lot and the total annual top-up bill at today's prices would be nearly £7bn.

This cascade of subsidy is building huge rigidities into the UK's £34bn electricity supply market, the costs of which are borne by consumers. It is based on the assumption that fossil fuel costs rise relentlessly while renewables become more efficient. Yet both are inherently uncertain.

What we do know is that the policy is constraining the supply of new capacity at a time when the supply margin has been falling ominously. Not a single megawatt has been commissioned without a subsidy since 2012.

With the Hinkley review, Mrs May has a chance at least to pause the treadmill of escalating interventions. The consequences of doing so may not be clear. But the alternative looks much, much worse.

jonathan.ford@ft.com

Banks. Cross-selling

Fake accounts put focus on Wells Fargo culture

Fine of \$185m raises questions about bank's aggressive ways of meeting sales targets

ALISTAIR GRAY, BEN MCLANNAHAN AND STEPHEN FOLEY — NEW YORK

In the space of about five years, the number of employees fired by Wells Fargo for opening phantom accounts and making unauthorised money transfers would have been enough to staff the 16th biggest US bank by assets.

Wells, the world's most valuable bank by market capitalisation, let go of about 5,300 workers who were found to have been involved in these practices since the start of 2011 — more than the entire headcount of its San Francisco-based rival, First Republic.

As they strained to meet aggressive sales targets, Wells staff signed up as many as 2m customers across the US for new accounts and credit cards without them knowing anything about it, regulators disclosed this week.

"We're not talking about a branch or two," said Jeff Ehrlich, deputy enforcement director at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. "I don't think it's

'This needs a cultural fix. That cannot happen if current leadership remains in charge'



fair to characterise this as the work of rogue employees. This was a widespread, nationwide practice."

The bank has been fined \$185m and required to set aside \$5m to compensate customers who were stung by fees on accounts they did not even know existed. Staff put funds in the secret accounts by shifting money that customers held elsewhere in the bank.

The financial hit will barely be noticeable to shareholders in a bank that is forecast to produce \$20.6bn in net profits this year. The relatively small sums involved reflect that the scam was more about staff hitting account opening targets than extracting vast sums from unsuspecting customers.

The episode nevertheless raises important questions about the controls and wider culture in place under John Stumpf, chief executive of the US lending powerhouse for nine years. How could senior managers apparently not notice that more than 2m of its accounts may have been fake? Or did they simply not want to know?

"This was a systematic attempt to meet production goals through the misappropriation of customer funds," says Julie Ragatz, director of the centre for ethics in financial services at The American College of Financial Services.

"This is a cultural issue. It needs a cultural fix. That cannot happen if current leadership remains in charge."

On Friday, Wells Fargo said: "Our culture, our policies and our values are all focused on putting the customer's interests first. Instances where we provided a customer with a product they did not request are totally counter to our culture and our values."

The episode casts an unfavourable light on how the bank has produced peer-beating returns gaining it a premium valuation on the stock market.

On Friday Dick Bove, veteran banking analyst at Rafferty Capital Markets, downgraded his recommendation on Wells' stock from "hold" to "sell". "Breaking faith with customers is simply unacceptable for any company in any business and this is the biggest

issue facing Wells Fargo today," he said.

Cross-selling — convincing customers to take out several products — has long been an integral part of Wells' business model. But how staff went about signing customers up has attracted scrutiny. A 2013 investigation by the Los Angeles Times into high-pressure environments in Wells' branches led the city to file a lawsuit last May, heralding the wider action taken by national regulators.

Richard Cordray, the CFPB's director, said: "Unchecked incentives can lead to serious consumer harm, and that's what happened here."

Mr Stumpf has been playing down the bank's reliance on cross-selling. "Our Vision and Values [document] doesn't even talk about cross-sell," he told the Financial Times this year. "It talks about . . . building long-term sustainable relationships." For some critics, however, a new strategy is needed.

Wells said the total employees it had fired represented about 1 per cent of its branch workforce over the period, given staff turnover. It would not say how sen-

The world's most valuable bank by market capitalisation said it had improved staff training, and further reforms are on the cards

Rick Wilking/Reuters

ior the sacked workers were, other than that some were "managers".

"While we regret every interaction that was not handled properly, the number of instances and team members involved represent a very small portion of our business," Wells added.

The bank also said it had improved staff training, among other changes. Further reforms are on the cards: the CFPB has told Wells to hire an independent consultant to "conduct a thorough review of its procedures".

Shares in Wells hardly budged when the regulators made their findings public on Thursday, a sign the bank may be able to contain the fallout. All eyes will be on the stance of its largest shareholder. Wells is the largest publicly traded investment of Berkshire Hathaway, the investment vehicle founded by Warren Buffett whose 10 per cent stake is worth \$25bn. Mr Buffett declined a request for an interview. Yet his insistence on the ethical behaviour of his managers has been central to his public persona for decades.

Financial services

Private banks woo China's rising billionaires

DON WEINLAND — HONG KONG
LAURA NOONAN — LONDON

For China's new rich, nothing spells out the attraction of private banking quite like sipping wine with a European princess.

That, at least, is the hope at Liechtenstein's LGT private bank, which is owned by the microstate's "princely family" and recently deployed royalty to conduct a series of wine tastings with clients across Asia.

"Clients love her," a spokesperson for the bank said of Princess Marie von Liechtenstein, who wrapped up a two-week regional tour last week. "How many people can say, 'Hey, I just had a casual conversation with the princess of Liechtenstein?'"

Global private banks vying for the region's rapidly growing private wealth have stepped up their marketing tactics

— often at the expense of profitability — hoping to attract new customers and grab a bigger share of existing clients' cash. In China, some banks target clients' children, offering access to private schooling in Europe or the US.

Private wealth has grown rapidly in Asia over the past five years. In Hong Kong alone, assets under management at 35 private wealth managers have hit an estimated \$700bn so far this year, up from \$600bn in 2015, according to a survey from the city's Private Wealth Management Association and PwC.

Much of the wealth that flows into Hong Kong is generated by people based on the Chinese mainland, where a billionaire is created roughly once a week.

"From an Asian perspective, for a billionaire or ultra-high-net-worth individual, they want to feel like they are an important relationship to the bank," said Antoinette Hoon, a private banking

advisory partner at PwC in Hong Kong. "I think a lot of the banks are looking at these non-financial, value-added services as a way to distinguish themselves."

Some banks have planned yachting classes or even mock art auctions to teach newly rich how to bid on expensive paintings. Bank of Singapore, which is owned by OCBC, has taken clients on golf trips and brought in people such as the economists Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman to speak at private events.

Bankers in western Europe are wary of overstepping the bounds of financial advice, but Asia is not the only market where clients are lavishly treated.

"Clients in other regions, such as the Middle East and eastern Europe or Latin America, can be quite spoilt," an executive at a Swiss bank said, adding that the extras were laid on through a "well-connected relationship manager" rather than through a formal bank programme.

Media

Godzilla a monster corporate success

LEO LEWIS — TOKYO

After a long silence in the depths, Godzilla has returned to pit pure reptilian destruction against the defenders of 21st century Japan: grey-haired politicians, well-ordered committee meetings and efficient public-private partnership schemes.

Spoiler alert: the bureaucrats and the construction machinery triumph.

Shin Godzilla, most of whose 329-strong cast portray government officials, will make its US debut in Los Angeles next month, after a stunning domestic run.

The pairing of full-bore CGI monster effects with scenes of seamless inter-ministerial co-operation has resonated strongly in Japan.

A significant part of the film's appeal are the scenes of devastation across minutely recognisable segments of the

capital — an opportunity for office workers on informal company outings to cheer as the workplace of a hated competitor is reduced to dust.

Shin Godzilla's ¥6bn (\$58m) box office revenues have boosted the shares of Toho, the studio that has churned out 29 of the monster films since 1954, when

After six weeks, *Godzilla* is Japan's top-grossing film this year, seen by more than 4m people

the character was conceived as a post-Hiroshima metaphor.

After just six weeks, *Godzilla* is Japan's top-grossing film this year, seen by more than 4m people gripped by the face-off between monster and technocrats. For every scene where the camera dwells on

the cutting-edge technology deployed by Japan's armaments, there is another with photocopiers and whiteboards being wheeled into conference rooms.

The list of 250 household-name Japanese companies — from handbag retailers and airlines to engineering giants — acknowledged in the closing credits highlights the message that Japan's salvation lies in corporate collaboration with earnest, intelligent officialdom.

The realism of the special effects has spawned an online cottage industry of loss-adjusters calculating the price of *Godzilla*'s rampage. The consensus is that the heaviest losses would hit Mitsubishi Estate — the developer whose landmark central Tokyo office complexes are pulverised.

Analysts at a SoftBank unit put the imaginary total financial toll to Tokyo and Japan at ¥81tn — a figure of truly monster proportions.

COMPANIES

US prospectors feast on a shale oil 'layer cake'

Permian basin in Texas remains attractive proposition for drilling and acquisitions despite the crude price crash

ED CROOKS — NEW YORK

In the property business, it is often said that only three factors really matter: location, location and location. Much the same is true in the oil business.

In the tentative upturn in the US shale oil industry since May, most of the additional drilling and much of the acquisition spending has been focused on one hotspot: the Permian basin of western Texas and eastern New Mexico.

This formation, about 300 miles long and 250 miles wide, holds some of North America's most accessible shale oil reserves. Companies that have been lucky enough, or smart enough, to build strong positions there — such as Pioneer Natural Resources and Concho Resources — can expect to have a competitive advantage over other US shale oil producers, in what remains a difficult market.

As the share prices of US exploration and production companies have rebounded this year, those focused on the Permian have been the best performers. Shares in Diamondback Energy and RSP Permian, for example, have been hitting record highs, up 48 per cent and 66 per cent respectively over the past 12 months.

Even ExxonMobil and Chevron — the two largest US oil groups, which were left behind by smaller, more innovative rivals as the shale boom took off — now have opportunities in the Permian to make up some lost ground.

Although activity across the US oil industry slumped after the crude price crash of two years ago, the Permian has proved the most resilient of the "big three" US shale regions. From peak production, crude output has dropped by 40 per cent in the Eagle Ford shale of south Texas and by 25 per cent in the Bakken formation centred on North Dakota. In the Permian, by contrast, the drop is only 2 per cent.

In a sign of the region's attractions, EOG Resources, one of the most successful of the independent US shale producers, last week announced a \$2.5bn deal to buy the privately held Yates Petroleum. Among Yates's most valuable assets are drilling rights on 324,000 acres of the Permian.

EOG pioneered oil development in the Eagle Ford and is still the largest producer there. But William Thomas, EOG's chief executive, told analysts last month that it would spend 45 per cent of next year's capital budget in the Delaware, a sub-basin on the western side of the Permian.

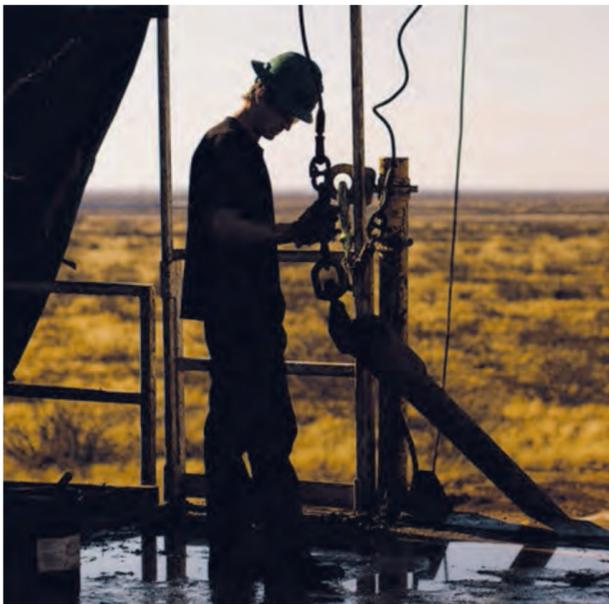
Since May, the number of rigs drilling horizontal shale oil wells in the US has risen by 77 to 325, according to the oil-field services company Baker Hughes. Of those, 49 were added in the Permian, compared with just four in the Eagle Ford and six in the Williston Basin, which includes the Bakken.

At the same time, the Permian has been a focus for deals. Of the \$30.8bn spent on mergers and acquisitions in the US exploration and production sector so far this year, 46 per cent has gone to the Permian, according to the research company Wood Mackenzie.

Companies have been attracted to the Permian because it holds some of the lowest-cost oil in North America.

Production costs can vary widely within each area, and the best spots in the Eagle Ford and Bakken are still competitive but, overall, the Permian has the most attractive economics. At current crude prices, bringing a well in the Delaware basin into production will generate an internal rate of return of about 18 per cent on average, according to Platts Analytics. That is higher than for any other shale region.

Slice of the action



Coming relatively late to the shale party, behind the Bakken and the Eagle Ford regions, the Permian has benefited from companies finding ways to cut costs and raise production.

Since 2012, average peak production per well has risen by 122 per cent in the Permian, compared with 67 per cent in the Eagle Ford and 78 per cent in the Bakken, according to data analysis firm NavPort.

Meanwhile, costs are falling sharply. Concho Resources told investors at a Barclays conference last week that, in the Midland basin, on the eastern side of the Permian, it had cut the cost per foot

'You don't do a deal and then wait for market conditions to improve. You get rigs in the field'

of wells by 48 per cent since the first quarter of 2015.

Long-term prospects for the region were also underlined last week when Apache, the US exploration and production company, announced the discovery of a "significant new resource play" in the Permian, which could hold more than 3bn barrels of oil and 75tn cubic feet of gas — in a part of a formation that had been neglected by other companies.

Geologists sometimes describe the Permian as a "layer cake" of oil-bearing formations, with names such as Wolfcamp, Spraberry and Bone Spring. Com-

panies are experimenting with techniques to optimise production from as many layers as possible.

Drilling rights are often held by smaller companies that are prepared to sell out, giving larger operators a chance to build positions. That also opens the door for private equity investors such as Blackstone, which last month committed \$1.5bn to two oil producers to buy Permian assets.

Exxon and Chevron also see great potential in the region.

Exxon said last month that it had cut unit development costs on the Permian by 70 per cent over the past two years, and "a large part" of the inventory of wells it could drill would be economically viable with crude at about \$40 a barrel.

Chevron said it had cut unit development costs by 30 per cent since last year, and raised production by 24,000 barrels per day. It was using six rigs there last month, and plans to raise that to 10 by the end of the year.

Heightened levels of M&A activity suggest other companies will add more rigs, too, even if the oil price remains at its present level of about \$45 for US crude.

"You don't typically do a billion-dollar deal and then wait for market conditions to improve," points out Benjamin Shattuck of Wood Mackenzie. "You get rigs in the field."

On that basis, the Permian seems set to remain a hot location for a long time to come.

angling to work on the potential listing will start in coming days, according to people briefed on the matter, marking the first firm step towards a stock market listing.

New Age has previously held talks over a mooted £2bn takeover by Genel Energy, another independent explorer chaired by Tony Hayward, former chief executive of BP. However, those discussions are no longer active and the company is looking at other options for returning cash to investors, including an IPO. As well as Och-Ziff, shareholders include Vitol, the oil trading company, Kerogen, an energy-focused investment company, and Hopu, the Chinese private equity company.

People close to New Age emphasised that preparations for a flotation were at the earliest stage and that a decision to go ahead would be subject to signs of recovery in the oil market.

"They are in no hurry," said one person involved in the process. "It could be 2017 or 2018. But they want to be

ready when the market turns."

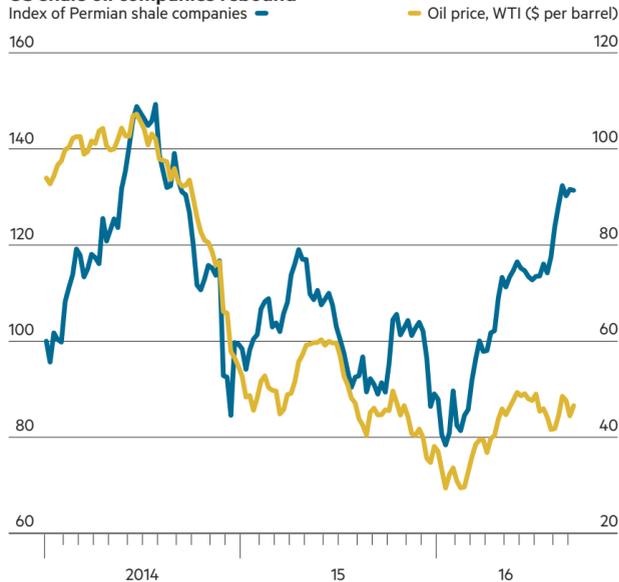
There has been few oil IPOs since crude prices collapsed two years ago, causing a commensurate crash in asset valuations. Many analysts and industry executives believe oil prices will recover as excess supply is gradually taken out of the market, although opinions differ widely over the likely timing and extent of any rebound.

People close to New Age said the company was under no financial pressure to float having raised \$1.4bn of equity and \$500m of debt in the past four years. The aim of a listing would be to provide liquidity for investors by selling existing shares, with no plans to issue new stock.

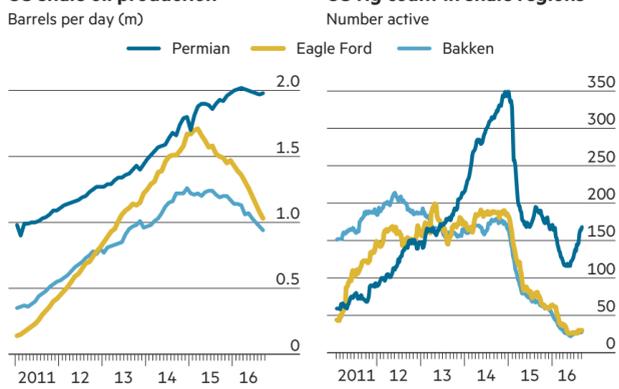
New Age was founded in 2007 by Steve Lowden, a 30-year industry veteran who previously held senior roles at Marathon Oil and Premier Oil.

The company has a portfolio of 12 oil and gasfields, four of which are already producing in Nigeria, Kurdistan and a partnership with Eni of Italy in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

US shale oil companies rebound



US shale oil production



Alternative activity Explorers look to Stack for future growth

While the Permian Basin of west Texas has become the focus for much of the US shale industry, other areas are also attracting increased activity.

Of these, the most popular has been the "Stack": a rather laboured acronym from the Sooner Trend Anadarko basin Canadian and Kingfisher counties, in Oklahoma.

In those two counties, to the west of Oklahoma City, the number of rigs drilling horizontal shale oil wells has risen from 13 in July to 20 today. That is a faster increase than any on the Eagle Ford shale of south Texas or the Bakken formation of North Dakota — the original heartlands of the US shale oil boom.

Activity is set to pick up further. At the Barclays energy conference in New York last week, seven companies including Marathon Oil and Devon Energy saw their position in the Stack as an important prospect for future growth.

Lee Tillman, Marathon's chief executive, described the Stack as the group's "first priority in the capital allocation process". In June, Marathon agreed a deal to pay \$888m for PayRock Energy, a private equity-backed company with drilling rights over 61,000 acres of the Stack.

Similarly, in December, Devon Energy agreed to pay \$19bn for 80,000 acres in the Stack from Felix Energy. Last week, Devon reported that it had already gone from running two rigs to four in the Stack, and was planning to bring on two more by the end of the year.

Ed Crooks

Oil & gas

New Age takes first steps towards flotation

ANDREW WARD — ENERGY EDITOR

New Age, an Africa-focused oil explorer backed by Och-Ziff, the US hedge fund, is considering an initial public offering that would put it among the UK's biggest independent oil companies by market capitalisation.

A beauty parade of investment banks

Public Notice

Lexinta Group
NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT

Lexinta is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Paul Fang as Group CEO. Dr Fang will start his new role as of October 1st, 2016.

Lexinta is a privately owned independent global asset management firm, headquartered in Zug, Switzerland. For further information about Lexinta please visit our website: www.lexintagroup.com or telephone: +41 41 544 8389.

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COMPANIES

Media. Intellectual property

EU copyright review gets its first screen test

Overhaul of rules seeks better deal for content owners amid rise of Google and Facebook

DUNCAN ROBINSON — BRUSSELS
ANNA NICOLAOU — NEW YORK

When the EU last overhauled its copyright rules, back in 2001, the German newspaper Bild was selling more than 4m copies a day, music lovers were buying 2.4bn CDs a year, and recently revived computer maker Apple had just brought out something called an iPod.

But while a lot has changed since then, the rules have stayed the same — which is why, this week, Brussels will try to bring them up to date. EU officials are promising an overhaul that will affect everything from YouTube's dealings with record labels to news aggregators' use of newspaper stories.

Leaked drafts of the proposals have already met with some criticism — both from media groups and politicians. Responses range from “lacks ambition” to “100 per cent bonkers”. But not everyone is displeased.

European Commission plans to help rights holders secure a better deal from YouTube, for example, have been music to the ears of record labels such as Universal and Sony.

For years, the major record labels have complained about a so-called “value gap” — a phrase now *de rigueur* among commission officials, as well.

While subscription-based music streaming services such as Spotify have been praised for paying \$2bn a year to rights holders while having a user base in the tens of millions, officials are concerned that advertising-based services such as YouTube are not generous enough. Last year, video upload sites had nearly 1bn users but contributed \$634m to the record labels.

Now, under the draft proposals, video-sharing websites will have to reach licensing deals with rights holders if they play an active role, for instance by “optimising the presentation” of the content, with lists of recommendations.



Plans to help rights holders secure a better deal from YouTube have pleased record labels such as Sony, which produces Beyoncé's music — Sony Music/Viewo

This would make negotiations between YouTube and record labels fairer, argue music industry insiders. At the moment, record labels are faced with a take-it-or-leave-it offer from the Google-owned video site.

Many in the music industry sense this may be a breakthrough. “By and large, we think this [proposal] is a good thing,” says one record label executive. “Google has a huge, powerful lobbying effort and what's really good about Brussels is they are not intimidated by that.”

Proposed tweaks to the limited liability that YouTube and other video hosting websites enjoy for rights breaches

are also aimed at improving rights holders' terms. At present, websites that host copyrighted content without permission are not liable, providing they take it down quickly when notified.

These rules, which have existed since 2000, have come under strain with the emergence of platforms such as Google and Facebook, which sit awkwardly between simply hosting the content of others and being publishers themselves.

Google, which declined to comment, has argued that record labels benefit from the millions of viewers YouTube provides, many of whom would not be willing to pay for music separately.

However, other proposals, such as demanding that video-hosting websites have software to detect copyright works, would only entrench YouTube's leading position, critics argue. YouTube has already spent \$60m devising a programme that automatically removes copyright content — a sum that smaller rivals may struggle to afford, if it becomes mandatory.

“This could ultimately result in the market for hosting services becoming increasingly difficult to access,” says Eleonora Rosati, a lecturer in Intellectual Property Law. “So much for creating a European YouTube.”

Elsewhere, the draft proposals suggest news publishers could be given the option to demand a fee from internet platforms that show snippets of their content, such as Google News. But copyright reform campaigners have slammed the idea as a “link tax” that misunderstands the way the online economy works.

Pure news aggregators that lack the scale of Google, such as Flipboard, would find their business models turned upside down, warned one EU diplomat.

At this stage, the drafts are so loosely written that even news snippets on

social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, could give rise to a claim for fees, argues Julia Reda, a German MEP who advocates a radical overhaul of copyright rules.

News publishers argue that having more rights over their content would strengthen their hands when negotiating with social media groups — at a time when sites such as Facebook and Twitter are generating revenues off the back of other companies' journalism.

“They are taking all the money,” said former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger. “They have algorithms we don't understand, which are a filter between what we do and how people receive it.”

Even so, media executives are not expecting a huge tonic from the new rules — the commission's own impact assessment revealed that news publishers expected at best a 10 per cent boost to their revenues.

Another major reform will make online video-on-demand services — such as BBC's iPlayer and SkyGo — available across the continent, with the broadcaster subject only to the copy-

“This could ultimately result in the market for hosting services becoming more difficult to access”

right rules of its country of origin. Commission officials argue that this will increase choice for users, but the plans have been met with howls of protest from the commercial broadcasting sector, which argues that it would diminish their ability to sell content country-by-country.

Viewers in one country would be able to get the same content from a broadcaster in another country, if they preferred.

“The commission has an ideological mission, of people watching the same content and laughing at the same jokes,” said one lobbyist. “They simply ignore that there is no real demand.”

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Media

Music streaming on song as UK revenues soar

DAVID BOND — MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

Music streaming revenues in the UK grew 49 per cent, to £251m, last year, according to a report on the state of the industry — but the country's live music market shrank 2 per cent.

Measuring Music, published by the industry's umbrella group UK Music, found that the growth in streaming services such as Spotify, Deezer and Apple Music was “the key to renewed and continued growth for British music and its artists globally”.

However, its report also highlighted the music industry's unease at the growing power of Google's video streaming platform YouTube, which has been criticised for failing to provide fair financial returns to artists and rights holders.

According to data from the media research company Midia, published in July, the amount YouTube paid to music labels, relative to the number of streams of their content, halved last year. This implied that the industry lost potential revenues of \$755m.

“The YouTube model, despite its reach, is yet to deliver fair financial returns for rights owners and creators,” said Jo Dipple, the chief executive of UK Music.

Publication of the report comes as UK policymakers prepare for the second reading of the Digital Economy Bill in the House of Commons tomorrow.

Matthew Hancock, minister of state for digital and culture, said last week that “enforcement and fair treatment of rights owners is critical to healthy creative industries”.

In a speech to the Creative Industries Federation, Mr Hancock added: “You can't grow the digital market if you don't support content.”

Ms Dipple said the Digital Economy Bill provided an opportunity for the government to consider what the British

market will look like. “The music industry wants a better relationship with those platforms because we are so reliant on them,” she explained.

YouTube argues that because its business model is based on advertising revenues, its streaming rates for musicians cannot be compared with the payments from other platforms, such as Spotify, which gives more than 80 per cent of its subscription revenues to artists.

YouTube says it pays half of its advertising revenues to partners such as Vevo or Warner Music, which provide video content for the site, and that it pays out \$3bn to the global music industry each year. “We can only pay a proportion of what we have,” the company said.

Measuring Music concluded that the success of artists such as Adele and Ed Sheeran helped the industry to contribute \$4.1bn to the British economy in 2015. One in six albums sold worldwide were by UK artists, and British performers took a 17 per cent share of the global market.

However, revenues from live music in the UK fell 2 per cent to £3.7bn owing to the closure of smaller, “grass roots” venues, such as the Marquee Club and the Astoria in London.



Artists such as Adele contributed to the industry's growth in the UK

Contracts & Tenders

Call for expression of interest for development of Krapina-Zagorje Airport Ltd.

Interested parties are invited to express their interest in participating in the further development of Krapina-Zagorje Airport Ltd. (Hereinafter: KZA) in terms of its content and facilities, number of employees, the size of the investment and the timetable of implementation of the investment.

The basis for the use of and investment in the further development of KZA's potential investor will realize by capital increase of the company KZA and / or the conclusion of the treaty establishing the right to build.

Expression of interest is given by delivering a letter of intent, which must contain:

1. Name, address and financial capacity of the applicant (in the case of a consortium it must be stated for all members of the consortium)
2. Details of the contact person: name, position, address, phone, e-mail address,
3. Basic guidelines for project development and the implementation framework plan,
4. Authorisation to represent the legal entity.

Letter of intent can be submitted by domestic and foreign legal and natural persons in writing in Croatian language or a certified translation into the Croatian language, to: Krapina-Zagorje, Magistratska 1, 49000 Krapina, Croatia with a note: “The letter of intent to participate in the development of KZSs – DO NOT OPEN”

The deadline for submitting a letter of intent is 31 October 2016 at 14:00 CET. Letters of intent arrived later than the deadline will not be considered, regardless of the time when they are sent.

Interested parties that submitted a letter of intent on time, assessed as the potential cooperators will be invited for further consultations.

Expressions of interest that received within this Call for Proposals will only be used for making a decision on the implementation of further procedures for the selection of a private partner in accordance with Croatian regulations.

Krapina-Zagorje County reserves the right to change information in this call, the right to suspend the proceedings and the right not to proceed with further actions.

Applicants are not entitled to reimbursement of any costs related to the production and delivery of a letter of intent.

About Krapina-Zagorje Airport Ltd.

All information related to this public invitation are published on the website of the Krapina-Zagorje County www.kzz.hr and on the official website of Krapina-Zagorje Airport www.zagorje-aerodrom.hr

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COMPANIES

Media

Sky scores with Manchester derby

Pay-TV group hits back in Saturday ratings amid rampant rights inflation

NIC FILDES
TELECOMS CORRESPONDENT

Sky Sports has hit back in the football ratings battle, after its coverage of the Manchester derby, the first blockbuster game of the season, attracted more than 2m viewers at its peak – twice the audience rival BT Sport achieved for Leicester's game with Liverpool.

Sky's emphatic win follows a much stronger start to the season for BT, which had won the Saturday ratings head-to-head for three weeks on the trot. BT claimed the honours on the

opening day of the season, with in-game average ratings of 726,900 for Manchester City vs Sunderland, beating Sky's 723,900 for Leicester vs Hull. BT then said it had remained on top of the table for the next two weekends.

Overall, ratings at BT Sport have crept up 8 per cent this year while Sky's Premier League ratings have drifted "slightly", according to insiders. Sky uses different metrics and disputes that BT had higher peak ratings on some Saturdays. Even so, both broadcasters have been under pressure to show that the rampant inflation in TV rights is justified. Sky is paying £1.4bn a year for the right to show the pick of the Premier League matches, a 70 per cent increase on its previous rights deal, while BT is paying £320m a year.

Delia Bushell, managing director of BT TV and Sport, said the strong start to the season in the ratings had boosted the telecoms company's confidence. "It is early days but it is a good sign. We are moving in the right direction."

But Sky appeared unconcerned over its seemingly slow start on Saturdays, having added Friday night games to its offering for the first time and maintained its lock on the "Super Sunday" broadcast schedule, when most fans tune in.

Barney Francis, head of Sky Sports, said: "Everyone knows it's about a weekend of live games and already we've shown nine of the top 10 matches. This builds on showing 49 of the top 50 best rated matches in each of the last three seasons."

Broadcaster is paying £1.4bn a year for the right to show the pick of the Premier League matches

Although Saturday is traditionally weaker than Sunday for ratings, it is the only day when the two big broadcasters compete directly with each other for viewers. BT now shows the later game on Saturdays, which typically enjoys a bigger audience than the early afternoon slot Sky reclaimed from BT in the latest auction.

BT has also been widening sports customer base by offering its TV service free to anyone on the EE mobile network it recently acquired.

But Ms Bushell said: "We are not trying to become the number one player and challenge Sky's dominance. It's about growing and supporting the core business." Nevertheless, she said BT Sport had become a "business in its own right" rather than a loss leader.

SMALL TALK

Kate Burgess



Dechra confident of winning best in show among the rare breeds

Dechra Pharmaceuticals is like one of the rarer breeds of pets it caters to. Beyond a small group of devotees willing to pay big bucks for the privilege of ownership, most people would be hard pushed to recognise it.

That will soon change. Dechra is one of the few UK quoted groups focused on developing and selling medicines for our four-footed friends. Floated in 2000 at about £60m, it is now valued at £1.2bn and turning over £250m a year. Last week, it unveiled profits before nasties of £50m for the year to June, having swallowed up three acquisitions in the US, Mexico and Croatia.

Yet the Cheshire-based business often falls unnoticed between vast pharmaceutical groups making billions from treating man's ills and teeny biotechnology hopefuls.

Animal healthcare is good business though. Emerging economies are not only buying more meat and dairy products, they are stocking up on petfood, too – pet ownership has become the aspiration of middle classes everywhere. About 9m dogs are kept as companion animals in the UK, but there are now 25m canine companions in China – only the US and Brazil own more, according to Euromonitor. It is not long since owning a dog was frowned on as bourgeois affectation in China.

North Americans still spend the most on their critters: more than \$60bn a year, says the American Pet Products Association. That sum has doubled in a decade and accounts for half the money spent worldwide on pet food, flea powders, pills and poo bags. About \$30bn of it goes on vets and medicines for animal complaints.

It is still a relatively immature market, though. Vets now demand animal-specific medicines but, for decades, "there weren't many veterinarian licensed products", explains Ian Page, Dechra's chief executive. He began transforming Dechra from a distributor of other company's products into a developer of its own drugs in the nightclubs.

It has since built a niche specialising in endocrinology, skin and eye treatments and poultry vaccines. Now, despite being tick-sized compared with Zoetis, the \$25bn market leader spun off by Pfizer in 2013, Dechra ranks among the world's top 20 animal drug businesses. And Mr Page – who last year paid \$200m for Putney, the biggest US developer of generic drugs for animals – has ambitions for it to rank higher.

One advantage that animal drug developers have over conventional pharma groups is an easier route to market, with less government interference. Drug approvals are quicker and cheaper. Dechra's spending on research and development was just £10m last year – a fraction of the billions rivals spend on human pharmacology.

True, treating Fido's ills doesn't have the same pricing power as curing man's ailments but margins are robust and they remain so for longer. When an animal drug patent lapses, there are few copycat alternatives competing to fill the market and generics make good money, too.

Even so, the big multinationals – under pressure to focus – have been hiving off their animal medicine arms: Novartis to Eli Lilly; Sanofi of France to Boehringer Ingelheim. With less than 5 per cent of the market, and ranking number four, the Sanofi animal business lacked scale, its parent company said.

Some think Dechra could be swept up in the consolidation. Mr Page is doubtful. Dechra's top selling remedy, Vetoryl, which tackles endocrine issues, brings in annual revenues of about £25m. That would be no more than a management "irritation" for big pharma groups, suggests Mr Page. He is happy to be left on the shelf, he says.

Bluster or not, the 55-year old has plans to expand further into livestock products and emerging markets to offset Dechra's exposure to Europe. It makes two-thirds of revenues there and is only just recovering from the backlash against overuse of antibiotics in farm animals.

Discounting takeover hopes makes the group's valuation – about 23 times forecast earnings for 2017 and 20 times the year after – look a tad high, at least compared with European rivals if not Zoetis (on 22 times earnings). Still, Dechra's revenues are forecast to rise a third next year and its earnings by 16 per cent.

Perhaps the price is right for a rare breed of business that has grown from toy to standard – and may one day become a giant.

kate.burgess@ft.com

Retail. Accounts black hole

Tesco waits to see what SFO has in store

After three executives are charged with fraud, corporate prosecution is a possibility

CAROLINE BINHAM
AND CATHERINE BELTON

Tesco purports to offer many great deals. Sadly for its shareholders, two-for-one offers on crystal balls are not among them.

Soothsaying would be useful right now: many uncertainties remain after the Serious Fraud Office said on Friday that it would charge three former executives over an accounting scandal that has rocked the UK's largest retailer.

Tesco has been under an SFO criminal probe since a black hole was found in its accounts two years ago – a hole that grew to £326m. Any ensuing corporate prosecution, while being a rarity, could mean a fine for the company as large as 400 per cent of any perceived gain.

So far, in something of a personal best for the resource-stretched SFO, where four-year investigations are routine, it has taken just 23 months to charge three individuals with fraud and false accounting. Chris Bush, the supermar-

It is a common tactic to charge underlings before deciding whether to go after superiors



ket's former head of its UK unit, and Carl Rogberg, the UK finance director, deny wrongdoing and say they will contest the charges. A lawyer for John Scouler, the UK division's ex-commercial director, did not respond to requests seeking comment.

But the wider question is whether the SFO's probe ends there. Officially, the SFO is at pains to stress that its investigation into Tesco, the company, continues. For its part, Tesco says it "continues to co-operate" with inquiries.

However, while all three defendants held top roles in the company, it is questionable whether any – even Mr Bush, the UK head – was senior enough to constitute what is known in English law as a "directing mind".

In order to prosecute a company, the SFO would need to show that someone who was aware of the fraud was senior enough to speak for the company.

The rank of former chief executive, Philip Clarke, would certainly constitute such a position, if there were sufficient evidence to charge him with an

Tesco has been under an SFO criminal probe since a black hole was found in its accounts two years ago – a hole that grew to £326m

—Chris Ratcliffe/Bloomberg

offence. He, along with Kevin Grace, the former group head of purchasing, were the most senior of the five men whom the SFO interviewed under caution – when suspects are read their rights.

Mr Clarke's lawyer, David Corker, says his client had "no knowledge" of the accounting irregularities, while Mr Grace's lawyer, Stephen Pollard, says his client denies wrongdoing.

Neither Mr Clarke nor Mr Grace have received any routine warning from the SFO that it is about to reach a charging decision over them.

Nevertheless, it is a common tactic to charge underlings before deciding whether to go after superiors who could make it easier to prosecute the company. "The initiation of charges against a number of people does not necessarily preclude charges against others in the future if the investigation is continuing," notes Jonathan Fisher QC, a barrister who acts in many financial crime cases.

Tesco understands the concept of the directing mind only too well: it was in a 1971 case involving Tesco that the cur-

rent laws were clarified. The House of Lords accepted that a store manager was too lowly to speak for the company when he replaced some washing powder under offer with regular-priced detergent. As a result, Tesco escaped a charge of false advertising.

For the SFO, the directing mind principle has been something of a bugbear. Its director, David Green, has long been an advocate for overhauling corporate criminal liability rules, arguing that the evidence trail "mysteriously dries up" the further up the corporate tree investigators climb. He also says it unfairly disadvantages small companies, which tend to have simpler hierarchies.

Even if the SFO were to find enough evidence to charge Tesco, the chances are a deferred prosecution agreement would be negotiated. Last year, the Financial Times reported that the SFO deemed Tesco to have co-operated sufficiently to be considered a candidate for any potential DPA, or plea deal. Such agreements involve a company accepting wrongdoing and paying a fine, in

exchange for overhauling its compliance and paying any compensation due.

They are a way of avoiding actual corporate prosecutions, which can prove financially ruinous. To secure one, the SFO must prove its case to a high enough standard that it could charge the company but for the agreement. There can be drawbacks, though, including potential follow-on civil actions.

For now, at least, uncertainty remains. Without a directing mind in the frame, Tesco might be tempted to withdraw its co-operation. There is also the fact that the SFO failed to prosecute Olympus last year over its own \$1.7bn accounting scandal.

Barry Vitou, a partner at Pinsent Masons, the law firm, says: "As it stands, these developments do not mean the end of the matter for Tesco. A crystal ball would be required to say what happens in the future."

For now at least, it is too early for Tesco to pop open the champagne, even if it is on a half price special offer. Additional reporting by Mark Vandevelde

Support services

Tech advice drives record turnover at PwC

HARRIET AGNEW

Professional services firm PwC has made record turnover and hit double-digit revenue growth for a consecutive year, buoyed by a growing clamour for assistance with emerging technologies.

PwC's revenue grew 11 per cent to £3.4bn in the year to June 30, with a strong performance across all of its four main business areas. It reflects almost £1bn in investments it has made since the financial crisis in people, technology and infrastructure.

Offering expertise in technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and cloud technology has further expanded the firm beyond its roots in audit. Turnover in consulting was up 26 per cent to £720m.

"We saw huge demand in areas like cyber security, data analytics and tech-

nology," says Kevin Ellis, who took over as PwC's UK chairman and senior partner in July.

"It's not only market demand – we're seeing more interest from our graduates in joining these areas."

He added: "Digital and data analytics will probably be the future of professional services."

All of the other divisions grew also. Assurance, PwC's largest business that includes audit, was up 11 per cent to £1.241bn, while tax grew 8 per cent to £822m and deals rose 4 per cent to £654m.

Outside London, UK regional revenues grew by 10.6 per cent.

The firm's profits increased to £829m, while distributable profit per partner before tax was down 5 per cent to £706,000, due to an increase in the number of equity partners from 885 to

926, and investment in the business. The firm's total tax contribution – taxes borne and taxes collected – was more than £1.12bn, up from £1.08bn the previous year.

Mr Ellis said the impact of the UK's vote for Brexit was still being worked through, saying: "There was definitely a slowdown in the last three months of our financial year, but over the last two months we've seen that stabilise. The stronger the UK is and the more confident we are going into any negotiations, the stronger our negotiations will be. We're going on business as usual."

Last year PwC, the largest of the "big four" professional services firms by revenues, became one of the first employers to drop Ucas points as an entry criteria for graduate jobs, in order to try to improve social mobility and the diversity of its recruits.

Financial services

Call for pension plans to have room to breathe

JOSEPHINE CUMBO
PENSIONS CORRESPONDENT

Pension costs facing thousands of UK employers could be cut by up to £350bn if company schemes were given more freedom to water down pension promises, according to new analysis.

The affordability of traditional "defined benefit" company pension schemes has risen up the political agenda, as persistent low interest rates have led to pension deficits blowing out to a record £1tn.

But new analysis by Hymans Robertson, the consultants, said deficits could be reduced by hundreds of billions of pounds if schemes could turn off, or reduce, the annual inflation rises which protect pensioner spending power.

Currently rules prevent companies

from breaking their promises, with around 75 per cent of the UK's 6,000 private sector DB pension schemes hooking annual increases to pensioner income to the Retail Prices Index.

But Hymans estimates deficits could be shaved by £300bn-£350bn if schemes could apply the minimum required by law, which allows no increases on benefits earned before 1997 and only uprate by the less generous Consumer Prices Index for pensions built after 1997.

A second, less dramatic option suggested by Hymans could see deficits potentially shaved by £175bn if schemes were given freedom to switch from RPI to CPI for annual increases for existing pensioners, ending the "lottery" which sees some schemes able to use CPI but others bound by RPI.

The consultants said a more extreme

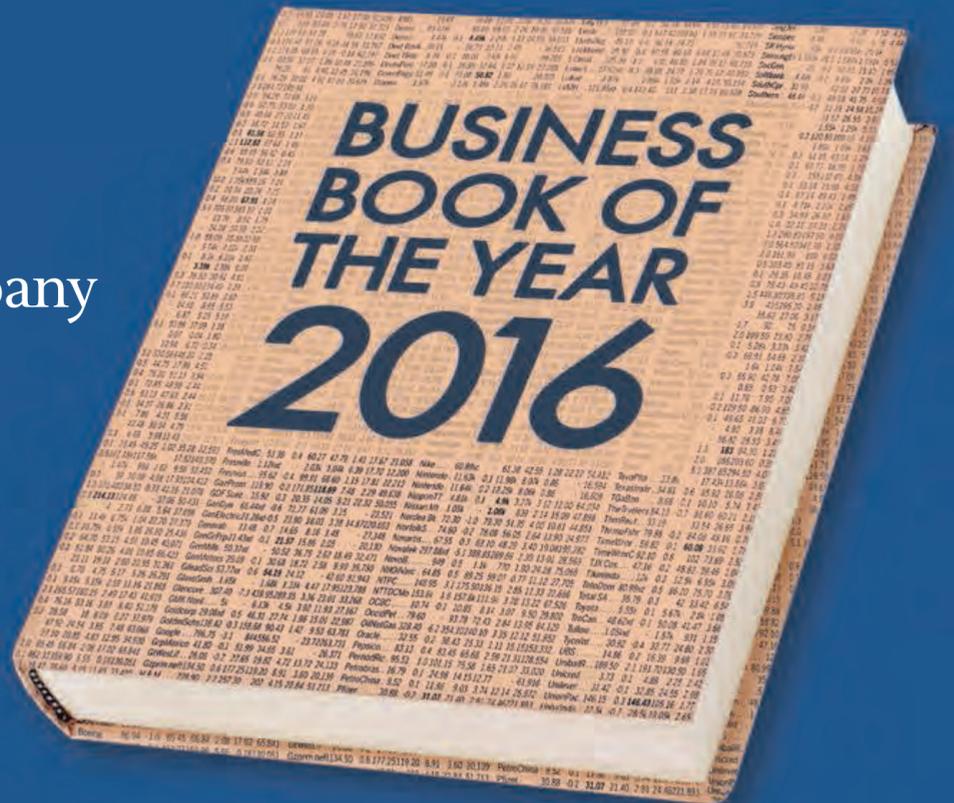
option would see schemes in "dire straits" temporarily allowed to halt annual pension increases until business performance improved and the scheme was in better financial health.

"This is known as 'conditional indexation' and could be a way to create the breathing space for businesses being pulled down by struggling pension schemes," said Jon Hatchett, head of corporate consulting with Hymans.

But Hymans calculated the measures would have a sizeable toll on members of the average UK DB scheme – who would see income cuts of £20,000 and £32,500 under a switch from RPI to CPI, or if schemes were allowed to apply statutory increases, respectively. Hymans added that temporarily halting inflation increases, could be a "better outcome" for members in the "average" UK DB scheme.



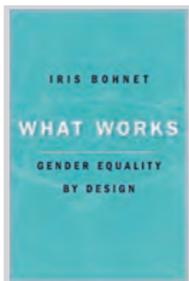
McKinsey & Company



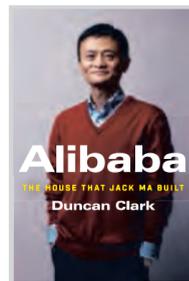
The Finalists

Business Book of the Year Award 2016

The Financial Times and McKinsey & Company are pleased to announce the shortlist for the Business Book of the Year Award 2016. This prestigious award aims to identify the book that provides the most compelling and enjoyable insight into modern business issues.



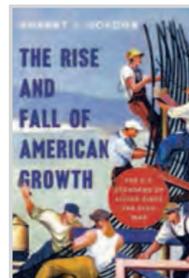
What Works: Gender Equality by Design
by *Iris Bohnet*
(The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press)



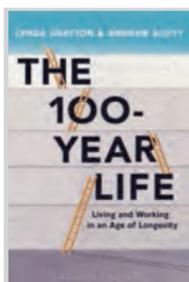
Alibaba: The House That Jack Ma Built
by *Duncan Clark*
(Harper 360/HarperCollins; Ecco Press/HarperCollins)



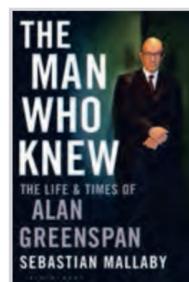
Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business
by *Rana Foroohar*
(Crown Publishing/Penguin Random House)



The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S. Standard of Living Since the Civil War
by *Robert J. Gordon*
(Princeton University Press)



The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity
by *Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott*
(Bloomsbury)



The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan
by *Sebastian Mallaby*
(Bloomsbury; Penguin Press)

The winner will be announced at an Award Dinner in London on 22 November. For further information on the Award, including details of the judging panel, please visit:

www.ft.com/bookaward



#BBYA16

MARKET DATA

FT500: THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPANIES

| 52 Week | | | | | | | 52 Week | | | | | | | 52 Week | | | | | | | 52 Week | | | | | | | 52 Week | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-----------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|--------|-------|--------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|----------|--------|--------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|------|-------|----------|
| Stock | Prices/Week | High | Low | Yld | P/E | MCap m | Stock | Prices/Week | High | Low | Yld | P/E | MCap m | Stock | Prices/Week | High | Low | Yld | P/E | MCap m | Stock | Prices/Week | High | Low | Yld | P/E | MCap m | Stock | Prices/Week | High | Low | Yld | P/E | MCap m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Australia (AS) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ANZ | 26.76 | -0.30 | 29.17 | 21.06 | 9.06 | 128.4 | Nokia | 5.10 | -0.05 | 7.17 | 4.48 | 3.09 | 138.0 | AT&T | 39.71 | -1.24 | 43.89 | 31.85 | 47.17 | 17.26 | 24,925.92 | Lilly (E) | 78.24 | 1.39 | 92.85 | 67.88 | 2.56 | 34.00 | 85,847.1 | Boehringer | 147.55 | -5.30 | 165.50 | 113.08 | 44.43 | 28,698.8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BHPBilliton | 20.78 | 0.94 | 25.77 | 14.06 | 9.86 | 2,557.0 | SampoA | 40.65 | - | 41.67 | 34.42 | 4.50 | 133.4 | Autodesk | 85.57 | 3.82 | 96.00 | 76.65 | 238.26 | 6,869.4 | Lockheed | 237.94 | -1.59 | 266.93 | 199.01 | 2.44 | 22.83 | 72,073.4 | Amgen | 171.77 | -5.19 | 183.65 | 162.23 | 6.66 | 23,320.5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CMW&L | 70.87 | -0.84 | 85.85 | 69.79 | 8.26 | 13.72 | 91,996.4 | | | | | | | BakerHuff | 45.14 | -0.64 | 58.27 | 37.98 | 13.7 | 7,026.1 | Lyondell | 76.19 | -3.53 | 98.25 | 69.10 | 11.45 | 8.25 | 31,673.85 | Merck | 42.74 | -0.96 | 59.99 | 29.24 | 3.01 | 11.73 | 22,534.2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSL | 101.39 | -5.91 | 121.25 | 67.88 | 1.99 | 28.76 | 35,029.91 | | | | | | | Bogen | 298.10 | -17.49 | 333.65 | 223.02 | - | 19.72 | 6,881.66 | MasterCard | 114.58 | -2.06 | 131.96 | 94.75 | 3.05 | 22.12 | 9,777.78 | McDonald's | 176.09 | -6.89 | 208.93 | 148.29 | 6.03 | 17.37 | 39,743.86 | Medtronic | 84.87 | -2.45 | 93.27 | 63.88 | 1.85 | 33.07 | 11,728.84 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| NasdaqA | 27.30 | 0.13 | 32.76 | 23.82 | 9.71 | 12.40 | 54,896.44 | | | | | | | BankAm | 49.93 | -1.19 | 49.49 | 32.18 | 7.04 | 5,242.9 | MorganSt | 65.99 | -2.31 | 68.69 | 50.81 | 2.12 | 23.85 | 34,198.49 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Oracle | 46.29 | -0.49 | 50.00 | 31.13 | 11.88 | 14.61 | 60,394.0 | Pfizer | 31.59 | -0.08 | 35.71 | 27.09 | 11.88 | 14.61 | 60,394.0 | UnitedHealth | 114.58 | -2.06 | 131.96 | 94.75 | 3.05 | 22.12 | 9,777.78 |
| Westpac | 29.54 | 0.04 | 33.74 | 27.57 | 8.45 | 12.98 | 74,811.19 | | | | | | | Beigeb | 51.91 | -0.31 | 58.27 | 38.51 | 1.07 | 16.09 | 21,120.87 | Johnson | 96.50 | -0.98 | 103.22 | 79.85 | 30.05 | 43.72 | 31,673.85 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | |
| Westpac | 22.85 | -1.06 | 29.20 | 23.50 | 7.51 | 31.06 | 22,114.82 | | | | | | | SwissCom | 195.20 | -2.00 | 200.00 | 150.80 | 5.92 | 11.56 | 2,801.74 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belgium (E) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ANH | 111.05 | -2.40 | 124.20 | 92.73 | 3.14 | 52,927.0 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KB Gro | 53.97 | -0.63 | 59.89 | 39.35 | 3.67 | 16.35 | 25,297.84 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brazil (RE) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ambv | 19.75 | -0.09 | 20.46 | 15.99 | 2.20 | 26.44 | 35,192.48 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brasils | 28.70 | -1.26 | 32.00 | 16.27 | 3.73 | 24,833.77 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cielo | 32.25 | -0.85 | 37.78 | 23.36 | 1.48 | 19.46 | 22,930.18 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ItaUnifin | 30.51 | -1.70 | 32.39 | 21.49 | 2.43 | 9.65 | 26,808.2 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Petrobras | 15.50 | -0.13 | 16.45 | 5.67 | - | - | 16,733.07 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vale | 16.86 | -1.38 | 21.29 | 11.80 | 1.86 | - | 34,567.34 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Canada (CS) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BCE | 60.94 | -0.92 | 63.41 | 52.38 | 4.35 | 14,907.61 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BKMont | 85.58 | -1.44 | 87.92 | 58.65 | 3.16 | 42,999.29 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BKvts | 69.76 | -0.73 | 70.80 | 51.10 | 4.06 | 12.39 | 6,657.53 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broadcom | 43.01 | -1.62 | 46.52 | 37.11 | 15.00 | 25.83 | 3,822.63 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Canada | 192.61 | -8.36 | 204.40 | 140.02 | 0.80 | 14.79 | 21,949.76 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CanNat | 102.84 | -0.46 | 104.97 | 82.18 | 4.52 | 10.02 | 31,201.9 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CanNat | 39.97 | -1.39 | 42.35 | 21.27 | 2.29 | 10.03 | 3,826.21 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CanNat | 81.14 | -3.95 | 85.99 | 66.62 | 1.68 | 18.02 | 48,156.46 | ASML | 119.85 | -0.02 | 163.83 | 12.34 | 6.73 | -7.65 | 39,849.08 | ABB | 21.87 | -0.07 | 22.17 | 15.94 | - | 28.56 | 4,959.33 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | Novartis | 62.49 | -0.49 | 64.00 | 47.29 | 2.69 | 41.56 | 12,729.86 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Enbridge | 56.11 | 4.86 | 59.19 | 40.03 | 3.40 | 41.76 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The Monday interview

Kazuo Hirai CEO, Sony

Moderniser reviving a venerable brand

Overcoming opposition from an old guard was a struggle at the 70-year-old electronics company, writes Madhumita Murgia

When Kazuo Hirai was a boy growing up in Toronto in the 1970s, he delivered newspapers to save up for a Sony cassette player. His love for the Japanese brand was inherited from two generations of Hirais: his father and grandfather, whose first colour television was Sony's original Trinitron.

In the Hirai household, consumer electronics were synonymous with Sony. Only their refrigerator was manufactured by Toshiba.

For the past 32 years, Mr Hirai has lived out his dream of working in music and gaming at Sony Corporation in Japan. He became president and chief executive in 2012, taking over from Sir Howard Stringer.

Mr Hirai, who is not an engineer, has had the unenviable job of overriding a powerful old guard at the deeply traditional 70-year-old electronics conglomerate

in order to sell off part of Sony's legacy gadgets business. He had inherited a company that had shed a fifth of its value since 2005 but his focus on streamlining lifted it out of years in the red to a rare profit in 2015-2016.

He has stemmed losses in its television and smartphone divisions, which has led Sony to pay him a \$5m annual salary, a record for the company. Next, his goal is to surprise customers by proving that Sony can still innovate.

Today, the slim, coiffed 55-year-old is in a jovial mood, having just announced two new smartphones, a line of high-end audio products including a gold-plated Walkman, and a smattering of smart gadgets such as intelligent robot assistant Xperia Agent and the Xperia Ear wearable to a packed auditorium at Berlin's IFA show.

His jocund, American "Alrighty!" is in stark contrast to the quiet courteousness of his Japanese colleagues — a product of his childhood years spent in New York, Toronto and San Francisco before settling down in Tokyo.

"I'm really happy we doubled down on innovation when times were tough a few years ago," he says. "We made a commitment that we weren't going to skimp on R&D and centres of innovation. We actually made more of an effort



to create those departments and now, coincidentally, products are coming out of those efforts."

The first of Sony's potential frontrunner innovations is the PlayStation VR which launches next month as a challenger to Facebook's Oculus Rift and HTC Vive. Some analysts are betting the \$399 Sony virtual reality headset could be a breakthrough device because of its compatibility with 40m PS4 games consoles — it will not require a \$1,000 gaming PC like its rivals.

Analysts at Nomura have estimated 700,000 PS VRs will be shipped in the first year, compared with 400,000-500,000 each for Vive and Rift units.

Mr Hirai joined Sony after college in

1984 in Tokyo as a junior music marketing executive. He never left. "I thought [being] in the record business was a nice combination of what I wanted to accomplish, to be in the creative industry but not part of the creative process," he says. After 10 years in music, launching the US careers of Japanese artists such as all-female funk metal group Super Junky Monkey and traditional drumming band Kodo, he went on to launch and build the PlayStation, and was promoted rapidly.

As chief, Mr Hirai's global outlook has clashed with the company's legacy employees. He sold off the Vaio laptop business, scaled back on smartphones and spun out television and audio into subsidiaries. In July, he agreed to sell its loss-making battery business to Apple supplier Murata Manufacturing, 25 years after Sony launched the first commercial lithium-ion battery.

"Sony is like a ship that is navigating through the stormy waters of the electronics business with a captain that is using the wrong sea chart," former chief financial officer Tamotsu Iba wrote in a letter in April 2015, adding a warning about the danger of sinking.

Mr Hirai has proved his detractors wrong, given last year's profit, but he must show the recovery is sustainable.

Dreamer, salaryman, leader: Mr Hirai joined Sony after college in 1984

Marco Urban

He is hoping PS VR has a market beyond gaming for Sony, especially in smartphones and entertainment. "We have the entire value chain of VR creation all the way to VR enjoyment, all the cameras, the editing equipment, the IP, all the way down to PS VR," he says.

Sony will launch "aggressively" into mobile games, a strategy vindicated by rival Nintendo's success with *Pokémon Go*, which made an estimated \$268m in revenues its first five weeks alone and has now had 500m downloads.

For Sony to dominate the gaming market, whether on mobile, consoles or VR, it has to succeed in China. After a 14-year ban on foreign consoles, in 2015 the Chinese government lifted

For Sony to dominate gaming, whether in mobile or VR, it must succeed in China

restrictions in the world's largest gaming market, with an estimated 130m PC gamers and almost 400m mobile gamers. The console market is wide open, but launching government-approved games that appeal to Chinese consumers has been a struggle for outsiders such as Sony and Microsoft.

"You have a lot of creative talent in China, and we want to make sure to support growth of the Chinese game development industry," he says. "Hopefully like Japan at some point in time, it [can] become an export industry."

Because of the sprawling reach of the Sony empire, Mr Hirai's biggest job will be to unite the disparate parts around a single aim: "Making sure the company was able to rally around the cause of *kando* [wow factor], the driving force that really changed the culture of the company, that would be a pretty good legacy," he says.

But for Sony to forge ahead, Mr Hirai is going to have to chart his own course, like Sony's co-founder and former CEO Akio Morita did in 1946. When he launched the genre-defining Walkman, he ignored criticism, saying: "We don't ask consumers what they want. They don't know. Instead we apply our brain power to what they need, and will want, and make sure we're there, ready."

Second opinion

The author

Osamu Katayama, author of *The Rules of Sony*, met several Sony presidents and says Mr Hirai is "totally different".

"He overthrew the old image of a Japanese CEO." Mr Katayama once asked Mr Hirai how he would describe himself. "He said, 'stubborn. I am a cheerful stubborn man.'" Sony's former executives have been critical, but Mr Katayama says Mr Hirai is unafraid.

"He doesn't care at all about those voices and critical articles. He said that he doesn't read those articles."

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