CASE STUDY: MCCHRYSTAL GROUP SERVICES

Equipping a Global Technology Company with the Skills and Tools Needed to Identify and Evaluate Risks

Global Technology Company

McChrystal designed and implemented a Red Team Training Program within a global technology company to add rigor to product development processes, enable permanent Red Teaming capabilities, train employees on how to run their own red teams, and enhance organizational alignment around product prioritization.

As companies compete with peers to meet precise consumer needs, product development teams must rapidly pressure-test their product's assumptions and risks. Specifically, product managers, designers, legal teams, executives, and other relevant stakeholders, should expose new products to facilitated red team exercises that are designed to challenge assumptions and elevate otherwise-hidden risks. Such exercises result in a broader and more detailed understanding of the potential downsides of a product so that mitigation strategies can be developed before launch.

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> **[I learned] we are making a lot of assumptions about user behaviors and public perception and need to do more testing to properly plan and staff for launch and roll out.**
>
> Workshop Participant

Challenges

Failure to adequately scrutinize risk of new products

The product development teams of a global technology company were consistently being pressed by senior leaders to build and launch new products before they could adequately evaluate them for health, safety,, legal, and reputational risks. The teams sought the capacity to better pressure-test products, hear from relevant outside voices that had otherwise been neglected, and subsequently launch more resilient and successful products.

Existing product development and review processes failed to incorporate diverse perspectives

The development and review processes intentionally did not incorporate diverse opinions, check their assumptions about work processes and the status quo, etc. The suboptimal review processes made plans vulnerable to blind spots that would have risked successful execution.

Solutions

Designed and facilitated Red Team workshops to pressure test products

McChrystal designed and facilitated two red team workshops with 40 participants from across the organization to pressure-test the roll-out of new products. The facilitators ran exercises that featured randomized breakout teams, anonymity, written documentation and prioritization exercises that were designed to identify assumptions, vulnerabilities and untapped opportunities within the team.

Constructed internal website to share information on developing products

McChrystal developed the content and built an internal website to provide a roadmap and background resources to share information about developing products to the greater team, increasing situational awareness.

Fostered greater inclusion and diversity in the review process

McChrystal designed and conducted red teaming exercises that incorporated diverse perspectives to identify assumptions, weigh their criticality, and consider the best corresponding product adjustments. These exercises uncovered unnoticed blindspots, risks, and opportunities by incorporating the voices of otherwise-disregarded internal stakeholders and subject matter experts. Most importantly, these exercises determined precisely how the evaluated product or plan needed to be retained or reworked.

Conducted red team training sessions

McChrystal delivered three training sessions for 20 members of the product teams so they could create and lead their own red teams. Detailed how-to facilitation guides were provided alongside the training so that product teams had all the templates and instructions needed to ensure the success of their red teams.

Impact

Enhanced overall effectiveness and resilience of the company's product development process

Red teaming workshops and techniques equipped the team to think critically about consequential decisions related to product development.

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> **This session helped the team to mitigate risks related to creators, which was super helpful.**
>
> Workshop Participant

Improved methods to socialize products-in-development across the organization

The team's internal website increased situational awareness across the organization about developed products.

Bolster and scale nascent red team thinking "muscle" across the organization

After experiencing Red Team Exercises and undergoing the training sessions, the organization was well-prepared to pressure test new products across the organization. Specifically, McChrystal developed the "roadshow," a slide presentation conducted for all parts of the organization, that addressed all questions and generated interest in red teaming broadly.

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> **Thank you so much for facilitating this really helpful red team. I thought the breakout room facilitation was especially well done! Excited to see the report. Looking forward to working with you all for future red teams!**
>
> Workshop Participant

McChrystal Group