Realizing Profit Potential:

Six Ways Assessments Can Work For You
When you assess the performance of business operations:

- Do you discover new potential?
- Do you understand how to implement improvements?
- Do you see the connection between operational improvements and overall profitability?
- Are you motivated to take action and confident in the results?

When you work with the experienced practitioners at Sinclair Group, the answers are “yes.”

Performance assessment is an indispensable management tool. Companies should regularly and rigorously evaluate business operations and their potential for improvement. Effective and objective review helps keep a business in shape, focused on its goals, and agile for change. With the help of experienced practitioners, who bring a “fresh set of eyes,” an assessment can create value in many specific ways:

- Reveal performance improvement and cost reduction opportunities.
- Integrate business processes and operations in pursuit of overall profitability.
- Confirm plans, such as for an acquisition, or enable management course corrections.
- Optimize labor spend, performance, and commitment.
- Energize a business to reach its full potential.

However, a wide range of activities, with widely varying results and value, go by the name “assessment.” An assessment can be time-consuming, labor-intensive, and mechanical – crunching tons of data but yielding little more than comparisons against industry averages. Or an assessment can be fast and efficient, comprehensive yet focused, innovative and insightful – articulating both performance potential and the actions needed to realize it. That kind of assessment demands deep and diverse experience. That’s the Sinclair Group way.

In this paper, we discuss six defining characteristics of a truly distinctive – and distinctively valuable – business assessment. It should enable a company to:

1. Focus on profit
2. Discover the possible
3. Face uncertainty
4. Adapt people systems
5. Compel action
6. Sustain results

We also present several case studies showing these characteristics at work. We hope the discussion enables you and your organization to make business assessment a more productive management tool.

What a Distinctively Valuable Assessment Can Do
When to Do an Assessment

There are several specific occasions that call for a close look at business operations, performance, and potential:

- Serious but incompletely diagnosed performance problems.
- Heavy pressure to reduce costs.
- Business rationalization and restructuring.
- Due diligence prior to a merger or acquisition.
- Following M&A when the business must deliver cost reduction and synergy.

Those are the usual occasions, each driven by a “burning platform” or significant restructuring, but an assessment can also prove extremely valuable in other circumstances:

- When the organization has reached a point of diminished returns on LEAN, Six Sigma, or other improvement initiatives. A fresh look can find new opportunities and rekindle energy and ambition for reaching the next level of performance.
- When management is eager to learn and ambitious to excel in terms of both cost structure and profit.

Periodic assessment of major operations, functions, and processes should be part of the regular management process, a means of staying agile and on top of the game.

The right assessment can help even very high performers raise the bar.
A comprehensive assessment should consider more than cost reduction, increased utilization, and operational performance improvement. It should also establish clear line-of-sight from operational improvements to overall business profitability.

Especially when the assessment is prompted by a pending acquisition or line-of-business expansion, the results should be expressed as a projected P&L incorporating conversion costs, ongoing total costs, future value of assets, and future revenue assumptions. This often requires looking at adjoining processes; for example, for manufacturing operations look also at supply chain and scheduling. It may also entail assessing the profitability of product mix and supply and sales contracts, scrutinizing headcount and labor costs, or segmenting customers to reveal profitability by tier.

More complete and objective assessment revealed that one of the smaller sites actually contributed two-thirds of the company’s profit. This quantitative insight enabled the company to share best practices and align future investment with profit potential.

Above all, focusing on profit starts with strategic business context and overall (not just local) objectives. A global manufacturer was under enormous pressure to take out cost to remain competitive. The VP of manufacturing commissioned an assessment to identify operational cost reductions in major production facilities. The results were impressive – nearly half a billion dollars in savings – but insufficient. The CEO needed double that number. It took an expanded assessment, with an eye toward rationalizing product lines and restructuring (not just improving) operations, to meet the strategic business objective. A tune-up won’t do when the engine needs an overhaul.

To focus on profit, an assessment must be comprehensive, holistic, and strategic. It must look not only at cost reduction, but also at overall cash position. It must seek not only operational excellence, but also the enhanced performance and competitiveness of the enterprise.

Sometimes profit potential is revealed by comparing sites and adopting a fresh perspective. A company had been analyzing results by business line across sites, which gave the sites (especially the largest one) opportunities to adjust their results through internal cross-charges and thus to cloud their relative performance.
An assessment can break the hold of “business as usual” and discover new performance potential. A manufacturer had paid little attention to its internal supply chain. Using a formal ordering system, each part of the operation issued orders to meet its own needs and reserves strategy. The assessment revealed that internal material logistics costs were five times those of finished goods. Yet the company had six “black belts” working on finished goods inventory movement and nobody focusing on the internal supply chain. Using readily available freight and cost data, Sinclair Group showed the company how to look across units, optimize the inside supply chain, and reduce internal inventory by 55%.

The most valuable assessment answers not just the question “How are we doing?” but also the question “How good can we be?” What dimensions of performance are most important to business success? Given current and potentially available resources, what’s the ultimate performance potential? The assessment should probe beyond the obvious. It should paint and quantify the picture of what’s possible. The results should include some surprises, some “ahas,” some breakthrough opportunities.

To discover the possible, an assessment must incorporate both conventional and unconventional benchmarking (see sidebar next page). That means exploring a variety of comparisons – peer enterprises, the industry at large, best-in-class within the industry, and best-in-class across industries. The most innovative ideas and opportunities often come from organizations tackling similar problems in different contexts. Airlines can hone their aircraft turnaround procedures by studying NASCAR pit crews.

To discover the possible, an assessment must also have sufficient scope to find opportunities at the intersections with related processes and operations, and to “redefine the box” if appropriate. Perhaps above all, it must be grounded in the subject company’s openness to learn, willingness to be surprised, and ambition to improve.
Conventional benchmarking compares a company’s performance and practices against industry averages or industry leaders. The results can be reassurance where the company is doing well, discovery of areas that can be improved, and ambition to make some improvements. But that’s only part of the story. Such benchmarking has three serious limitations:

1. The purpose can be subverted to protect the status quo. People sometimes benchmark defensively – to prove that their operations are “good enough,” and to avoid criticism and change. In extreme cases, they engineer their performance numbers to get the passing grades they need.

2. It can lead to wasted effort. If a given process scores 2.5 on a 5-point scale, should it be revamped in pursuit of a 4 or 5? That depends on how important the process is to business performance and profitability. Striving for best-in-class performance across the board is uneconomical and unnecessary.

3. It seldom produces real innovation or performance breakthroughs. Conventional benchmarking enables a business to “run with the pack,” not to outpace it or change its direction.

Here are five success factors for performance benchmarking:

1. Be driven by genuine curiosity and ambition, not defensiveness.

2. Compare not only results, but also the practices behind them (a company may be getting results through inefficient brute force).


4. Look outside the company’s industry and peer group to discover breakthrough practices and ambitions.

5. Learn how the company can leverage its strengths, not just shore up its weaknesses.

Benchmarking should be more than a measurement and number-crunching exercise. It requires experience and insight to determine what business objectives and processes to focus on, where to look for productive comparisons, and how to interpret and act upon the benchmark results.
Assessment in Action: Chemical Company Due Diligence and Turnaround

Its business undermined by production capacity coming online in Asia, a chemical company was in chapter 11 bankruptcy. An asset management company was the largest holder of its debt and considering whether to buy out the other creditors and attempt to turn the company around or make a profit from disposing its assets. The asset manager, aware of its limited experience in the industry, retained Sinclair Group to perform a comprehensive due diligence assessment of both assets and strategic options.

The chemical company consisted of three diverse businesses: a large Gulf Coast complex with a difficult labor situation, a specialty plant in another region of the United States, and a recently acquired and separately held business. This variety complicated the assessment and multiplied the possible options for action.

The assessment included:

- Review of the business plan, identifying weaknesses and adjusting market and production forecasts.
- Comprehensive operational and financial review of the three manufacturing sites, including performance, work practices, organization, leadership, energy management, and costs and cost structures.
- Profitability analysis of sales and joint venture contracts.
- Evaluation of procurement cost drivers, contracts, and practices.
- Labor negotiation options and strategies.
- Environmental risks and liabilities.

In the course of 1 month, Sinclair Group experts conducted the three-site assessment and formulated recommendations in several ways:

- Operational improvements roadmap that targeted $35M in annual savings.
- Financial estimates and likelihood of success analysis for a variety of site-specific options – mothballing, divestiture, re-startup, and turnaround.
- Overall recommended strategy to improve cash position by $100M.

The assessment communicated the facts about the current business condition, the upside potential of a turnaround, and the options and requirements for realizing that potential. The asset manager had the information, insight, and impetus to take a series of purposeful actions. It completed acquisition of the chemical company and then sold a unit to its employees. It renegotiated sales and procurement contracts and implemented enough of the roadmap to realize about one-third of the estimated savings. And it worked with the unions to adopt more flexible and work-centric organizational forms. The chemical company emerged from bankruptcy within a year.

An executive of the asset manager captured the value of the assessment: “You helped us envision the possible future and understand the path to get there. You persuaded us what can be done and gave us the will to do it.” Success, however, entailed more than meeting the strategic needs of the asset manager. Sinclair Group’s experienced advisors had to establish good rapport with executives of the chemical company, not only to make an accurate assessment, but also to enable those executives to understand and buy in to necessary changes.

The quality of that rapport was demonstrated about a year later when, during an economic downturn, the company needed to take out additional cost. So it turned to Sinclair Group for help in updating and implementing the rest of the roadmap. That was accomplished to the tune of an additional $22M in annualized savings, taking the total over the original estimate. And Sinclair Group continued to advise the company in key areas such as sales and procurement contracts.
The flip side of discovering the possible is being realistic about what’s attainable and the barriers to attaining it. A realistic assessment explores and quantifies downside uncertainty as well as upside potential. Uncertainty may arise from the complexity of the operation; the scope and complexity of proposed changes; the capabilities of facilities, technology, and people; and the cultural appetite and management commitment to change. And different types of changes have very different risk profiles; for example, changes to fixed assets generally entail more risk than adjustments to variable cost activities.

Sinclair Group assessments communicate uncertainty in terms of achieving profit potential. This financial result is expressed as a range, with greater certainty of achieving the low end than the high. The probability of achieving the financial goal is based on specific risk factors (e.g., labor relations, available expertise), timing, and investment of effort and funds. Meeting a stretch goal naturally entails more effort and greater uncertainty.

Sometimes uncertainty is best evaluated for different, specific courses of action: revamping product mix, combining facilities, divesting assets. Often uncertainty must be evaluated at the site level because sites may differ widely in terms of existing condition, needed improvement, and upside potential.

When risk and uncertainty are made visible, they can be mitigated. When barriers are recognized, they can be removed in time. When management understands the uncertainties, it can act with greater confidence.
**Assessment in Action:**

**Textile Manufacturer Due Diligence**

A major conglomerate was evaluating the acquisition of another company’s multi-national textile manufacturing business, and it engaged Sinclair Group as part of its due diligence process. The assessment covered manufacturing operations and assets at over two dozen sites, including evaluation of fixed costs, productivity, yield, energy, quality, maintenance, and capacity planning. The goal was not only to value the assets but also to uncover specific potential for operational and financial performance improvement.

The results of the assessment were summarized in three scenarios for performance expectations:

- **Base case** – if no changes are made.
- **Expected case** – if a basic and straightforward set of changes are made. This expected case was incorporated in the business plan.
- **Stretch case** – maximum potential if the acquiring company is willing to invest more time, capital, and commitment, and deal with greater uncertainty.

This analysis proved invaluable in dealing with the bankers financing the acquisition. It enabled the acquirer to make the business case, lower the risk premium, and lower the interest rate paid on the loans.

Operations performance improvement opportunities were identified and quantified, with unambiguous targets and scorecards. These totaled a $120M/year impact in the first year and another $100M/year starting in the second. After the acquisition closed, Sinclair Group enabled the realization of those improvements by implementing a Rapid Transformation® methodology at all sites, including:

- Understanding and buying into the business case for improvement.
- Technical design of improved business processes.
- Social design of an organization mutually committed to improvement and results.

Senior Sinclair Group advisors then monitored performance and coached site management for several months to ensure sustainability of progress. The combined operational improvements ultimately exceeded estimates and expectations of the business. The acquiring company has incorporated Sinclair Group performance models into its ongoing management process, and it regularly turns to Sinclair for due diligence and performance assessments.

There were two keys to success in this assessment:

1. **Experience and judgment.** It takes experienced practitioners to rapidly assess dozens of sites and to develop performance and financial scenarios. No amount of number crunching can make as convincing a case to the bankers.

2. **Attention to organization.** The assessment recognized that sustainable success depended on retention of key employees. Organizational improvements included sharing expertise through a Center of Excellence for work processes and practices, as well as eliminating low-value jobs and organizational layers.

The assessment also revealed an important lesson – even those with reputations for high performance have room to improve. The acquired business had a long-term commitment to Six Sigma and a reputation for safety performance (in fact, they consulted on it). Management was shocked to learn how much opportunity there was to improve safety, and that it was spending ten times what it needed to on safety compliance reporting. The business had become set in its ways and more elaborate in its processes even as it went through the motions of process monitoring and improvement. A rigorous assessment can uncover problems and opportunities in a business that thinks it’s doing well.
ADAPT PEOPLE SYSTEMS

The barriers to business change and performance improvement often center around talent, culture and leadership rather than technical systems. If you assess operations without considering the human factor, you’re only seeing half the picture, and you’re crippling your chances of achieving results.

An organizational assessment starts with the basics: headcount, skills, and staffing and scheduling procedures. It evaluates the quality and capability of people both to perform processes and to accomplish change. It looks at how the culture (the shared set of assumptions, beliefs, and values as manifested in perceptions, judgments and behaviors) supports or impedes operational excellence, business performance, and the agenda for change. And it considers the capability, commitment, and ambition of the organization’s leaders to drive necessary changes.

If the people systems issues are significant, a deeper dive assessment may be needed: What is the organization’s history in implementing change? What are the organizational climate and energy levels? How effective are training and development of key staff in key skills? What is the state of employee and labor relations? How adept is the organization at communication and information sharing? And how adept are the leaders at motivating and managing performance?

Excerpt from Organizational Scorecard
(1 – Major Opportunity, 5 – Strength)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Site Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well have changes been implemented and sustained?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the team inspire others to improve and include appropriate inputs in decision making?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is training available, relevant, accepted and beneficial to the employees?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do employees have information they need and do they have opportunity to give input when necessary?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do employees value their contributions and are they generally positive about ongoing activities?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes the most important adjustments must be made by an organization’s leaders – to their management and communication styles, and their willingness to pursue dramatic improvement. Those adjustments may be occasioned by an assessment, but they’re accomplished with the help of executive coaching.

Some managers shy away from addressing the organizational and cultural variables, the “soft stuff” that seems difficult to pin down. In fact, these variables are not soft at all. To succeed both with an assessment and with the business change beyond, you should be just as rigorous and analytical about people systems and cultural considerations as you are about process flow, cost, and other key variables.
Receptiveness to Change

Sometimes two sites in the same business provide an object lesson in motivation and receptivity. A large company had grown by acquisition and knew that its operations varied widely in performance and potential, so it commissioned a multi-site assessment.

One large site was a consistent money-maker, thanks in large part to the quality of its raw materials. It still had enormous room for improvement. However, its long-tenured management had the attitude, “We’re experts. You can’t tell us how to do things.” To maintain these appearances, they regularly gamed their benchmarks to put their performance in the top quartile (instead of the third). The culture was anti-change, and everyone got that message.

Another site knew it had weaknesses – starting with insufficient technical resources and engineering talent – and very much wanted to improve. Its management was experienced but new to the operation, and they brought lots of good ideas from other sites. But they couldn’t put all the pieces together into a comprehensive program of change, and they welcomed Sinclair Group as the means of doing so. The assessment both confirmed and deepened management’s understanding of the major problems in talent supply and plant reliability. It also brought the site’s management team together to better appreciate their mutual connections and to align around how to improve dramatically.
COMPEL ACTION

An assessment should do much more than just report findings and initiate discussion, much more than define performance gaps and leave the client trying to tackle too many things at once. Rather, an assessment should paint a compelling picture of future performance and outline a pragmatic path toward achieving it. Three things combine to make an assessment’s recommendations compelling:

- **Insight.** The assessment offers fresh and innovative perspectives on both the business today and its future potential. Management says, “We never looked at it this way before, but this makes excellent sense for our business.”

- **Focus.** The “what” is clear in the form of recommended initiatives. The “why” is quantified in terms of future performance. And the “how” is laid out as prioritized actions, metrics, and risk mitigation tactics.

- **Communication.** There will be lots of detailed analysis available behind the scenes, but recommendations are concise, expressed in the company’s language and context, and communicated in ways that connect with the company’s management and their priorities.

An action-oriented assessment is the first step on the path of productive change. The assessment process itself builds understanding, ambition and momentum. How? By engaging the client’s people, especially senior management. By being fast and efficient, reflecting the client’s sense of urgency. And by being customized to the client’s strategy, style, situation, and business need. An assessment should employ proven methods and templates that accelerate analysis as well as structure results. Cookie-cutter, rule-of-thumb recommendations don’t compel action.
Even action-oriented assessments can fail to look far enough ahead. They often put plenty of emphasis on “getting there,” but not enough on “living there” after the business changes have been accomplished. As a result, too many improvement initiatives seem to start off successfully, but in time momentum slows, people revert to old ways, and entropy returns. To succeed for the long term, an assessment must not only determine a successful implementation path, but also anticipate how people will work in new ways and what it will take to sustain the result.

The key to sustainability is people’s commitment to each other and to the goals of the enterprise. Commitment starts at the top and cascades throughout the organization (which is why leadership changes so often interrupt progress). But commitment must also be a grassroots movement, as individuals clarify their roles and responsibilities, recommit to the organization’s objectives, and embrace new values – for example, around safety procedures, cost management, or authentic communication. Building such commitment requires education and participation in the process of change.

To build momentum and encourage follow through, it helps to “work the perimeter” and socialize planned business changes across the organization, not just in the function that’s doing most of the changing. For example, a manufacturing operation’s leaders discussed their assessment’s recommendations with the supply chain, IT, HR, R&D, and marketing and sales units. This incorporated those units in the change process, enlisted their commitment and support, and helped prepare them to work with manufacturing in new ways.
A productive technical structure – of processes, capabilities, and work practices – needs the foundation of a productive social structure. And the most productive social structure – for both high performance and successful change – follows a model of mutual commitment where people:

- Are well-intentioned.
- Exercise discipline in processes and practices.
- Focus on value creation.
- Are self-accountable.
- Experience and embrace cooperative and continuous learning.
- Behave with positive regard, empathy, and authenticity, even when challenging one another.

The transition to a commitment model can be very challenging, especially in an organization with a history of command and control where people’s interests are compartmentalized. But the transition can – and often must – happen for business operations to change and then thrive. The transition process has three broad phases:

1. **Understanding** – through a comprehensive people systems and cultural assessment.
2. **Intervention** – through a combination of education, workshops, and coaching.
3. **Sustainability** – ongoing monitoring, feedback and reinforcement of Commitment Model behaviors.
Assessment in Action: Inspired Leadership and Dramatic Improvement

A global chemicals and plastics company, under new ownership, established for the first time an SVP of manufacturing to oversee and work across business units. This executive wanted not only to better understand the strengths, weaknesses, and performance potential of manufacturing sites, but also to rekindle the company’s appetite for operational improvement. He brought in Sinclair Group to assess operations at eight large sites in the U.S. and Europe, estimate their potential, and identify specific areas and actions for improvement.

The former owner was a conglomerate known for its management systems in general and its continuous improvement program in particular. However, those methods were geared for discrete, not process, manufacturing. Previous attempts to adopt best practices had fallen short because operations staff could understand the goals but not the “how” of attaining them. Under the former owner, there had also been a relentless command-and-control style of management that delivered promised results but impeded innovation and change. To unleash more of the company’s profit potential required both a fresh look at operations and a new style of management. New ownership opened up the opportunity for dramatic change with dramatic business impact.

The assessment laid out the opportunity to reduce cost by $120-180M, with $100M of that in the first year. Major sources of improvement included:

- Maintenance procedures and organization. A too-frequent turnaround cycle could be recalibrated and rescheduled.
- Better alignment between business and manufacturing technology leadership over priorities. An unnecessary upgrade to automation systems (that had been driven by the technology vendors) could be canceled.
- Major improvements to the cost reporting system. Simple activity-based costing (ABC) proxies provided for the first time line-of-sight at the product, customer, and shipment levels. This enabled reduction of manufacturing “break ins” of unprofitable batches, as well as better optimization of batch sizes and color progression.

Sinclair Group advisors also designed an operations effectiveness program encompassing a more structured approach to how work gets done, a more holistic view of the business organization and its capabilities, and a means of systematically driving out low-value work and applying the most effective methods to value-adding tasks.

Seizing the opportunities hinged on organizational actions. The SVP of manufacturing adjusted his personal management style with his direct reports and led adoption of Sinclair Group’s Commitment Model of open communication and mutual effort in pursuit of challenging goals. To encourage sustainability of effort and success, Sinclair Group provided executive coaching, training, and performance audits, as well as helping to establish a company-wide Center of Excellence in manufacturing leadership.

Results were impressive from the start. Cost performance in the first month was $8M better than the aggressive target set by management, and the company is on track to more than meet the full first-year cost-reduction target.

A manufacturing executive summarized:
“Plants have run well, the costs came out, and the level of pain has been surprisingly low.”

The company is a testament to the power of a rigorous business assessment in partnership with a leadership team highly motivated to improve both operations and profitability.
The kind of assessment we’ve just described demands one key ingredient above all — experience. Not just experience doing assessments, but experienced people who have served as practitioners, decision makers, executives and innovators in the industries they assess. People who have faced similar situations and decisions, who have taken actions and learned from the results and consequences. People with broad enough experience to look across processes, organizations, and industries to find new approaches to realizing performance and profit potential.

Rigorous methods, advanced analytics, and comprehensive benchmark databases all contribute significantly to a successful business assessment. They are necessary but not sufficient. It takes people with real experience and expertise to do these ten very important things:

1. Establish bearings and sense the client situation quickly, so the assessment proceeds without wasted effort.

2. View the client situation holistically and focus on overall performance, competitiveness, and profitability.

3. Develop rapport and carry on authentic conversations with client leaders and key players throughout the organization.

4. Recognize patterns, gaps, performance drivers, and opportunities — and know where to look in the first place.

5. Appreciate and articulate people systems issues and engage commitment.

6. Not only interpret data, but adjust for its quality and bring to bear judgment and insight beyond what the data says.

7. Look across processes and across industries to discover the possible and find the breakthroughs.

8. Specify barriers, quantify uncertainty, envision alternative scenarios for action, and triangulate onto the best solutions.

9. Communicate assessment results and recommendations compellingly and align the client management team around the performance goals.

10. Articulate the “how” and “why” as well as the “what,” including how to make results sustainable.

Experience provides the foundation for both insight and judgment. In an assessment, experience focuses the investigation, improves the analysis, broadens the perspective, accelerates the process, and maximizes the value and pragmatism of the results.

**Experience is the necessary catalyst in a world-class assessment.**

When you know what excellence looks like, you set the stage for remarkable results.
Progress is rapid, taking days or a few weeks, not months. You’re surprised that so much is revealed and recommended in so short a time.

Business isn’t interrupted. The on-site assessment activities are very hands-on – walking about and conversing with people. Yet the assessment doesn’t distract people or interrupt operations.

The process itself creates value. Your staff is learning through every interaction and eager to learn more. And the process reveals unanticipated insight, improvement opportunity, and business potential.

One can’t tell who’s who. Your staff and the assessment team are collaborating thoroughly in pursuit of common goals. There’s no secrecy or resistance – but rather mutual curiosity, active dialogue, transparency, and trust.

These four “litmus tests” indicate whether an assessment is proceeding effectively and likely to yield optimal outputs. Key to meeting the tests are the experience, respectfulness, and authenticity of the assessment team.

We hope this discussion has added to your insight into the purpose, process, and value of a comprehensive business assessment. We hope it has also given you a sense of who we are at Sinclair Group and how we work with clients to raise performance and profit. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the profit potential of your business.
Leveraging a vast network of accomplished professionals with 20-40 years of hands-on experience with some of the world’s most progressive companies, Sinclair Group partners with clients to develop and implement customized solutions to operations and business problems while integrating the technical and people elements that will ensure extraordinary financial results.