

The "Kill Your Darlings" Committee

The "Kill Your Darlings" Committee functions as a formalised internal disruption team tasked with identifying and challenging the organisation's most cherished assumptions, products, or processes. These committees create a structured, psychologically safe environment where sacred cows can be questioned and potentially sacrificed for future growth.

How to Establish Internal Disruption Teams

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Composition and Structure

- Cross-functional representation: Include members from different departments, levels, and tenure lengths to prevent organisational blind spots
- Rotating membership: Implement 6-12 month terms with staggered rotations to maintain institutional knowledge while bringing fresh perspectives
- Executive sponsorship: Assign a C-suite sponsor who provides air cover and ensures recommendations receive serious consideration
- Outside perspective: Include at least one external advisor (industry expert, customer, or partner) to challenge internal orthodoxy

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Operational Framework

- Regular cadence: Meet biweekly or monthly with dedicated time protected from other responsibilities
- Decision authority: Clearly define whether the committee makes recommendations or has decision-making power
- Resource allocation: Provide a designated budget for testing alternatives to current approaches
- Safe space protocols: Establish ground rules ensuring ideas can be challenged without personal repercussions

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Focus Areas

- Revenue concentration risks: Products/services generating disproportionate profits
- Assumption audits: Longstanding beliefs about customers, markets, or operations
- Strategic blind spots: Areas where competitors or new entrants could gain advantage
- Modernization opportunities: Legacy systems or processes maintained through organizational inertia

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Implementation Approach

- 90-day sprints: Structure work in focused periods with clear deliverables
- Learning orientation: Frame recommendations as experiments rather than final solutions
- Communication strategy: Develop messaging that positions self-disruption as strength, not weakness
- Escalation pathways: Create clear processes for elevating critical findings to leadership

The "Kill Your Darlings" Committee

Key Responsibilities:

- Identify potential disruption vectors to our core business model
- Challenge assumptions about customer needs and competitive advantages
- Develop and test alternative approaches to current revenue generators
- Recommend resource allocation shifts toward future-focused initiatives

Setting Appropriate Metrics for Self-Disruption Initiatives

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Process Metrics

- Ideas generated: Number of potential disruption opportunities identified
- Hypothesis testing rate: Speed of validating or disproving assumptions
- Resource reallocation: Percentage of budget shifted from legacy to future-focused initiatives
- Experimentation velocity: Number of low-cost tests conducted quarterly

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Outcome Metrics

- Cannibalization ratio: Percentage of new revenue that replaces existing streams (intentional cannibalization often indicates successful disruption)
- Future revenue portfolio: Percentage of projected 3-year revenue from new initiatives
- Capability building: Skills and technologies acquired through disruption efforts
- Vulnerability reduction: Decreased dependency on at-risk revenue streams

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Cultural Indicators

- Psychological safety index: Team members' comfort with challenging established norms
- Idea flow from frontline: Suggestions for disruption coming from throughout organization
- Failed initiative learning: Knowledge captured and applied from unsuccessful experiments
- Leadership language: Executive communications that acknowledge need for change

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Implementation Framework

- Stage-gate process: Clear criteria for advancing disruption initiatives from concept to implementation
- Funding transitions: Mechanism for increasing investment as initiatives demonstrate potential
- Integration planning: Process for incorporating successful disruptions into main operations
- Knowledge management: System for documenting learnings across all disruption efforts