

The Global Sportswear & Outdoor Sector Review

NIKE • adidas • Ralph Lauren • PVH • Under Armour • Deckers • Crocs • Columbia • Wolverine World Wide • V.F. Corporation

Over the past seven years this sector grew its revenue and lost its shareholders money. The median company returned minus thirty-eight per cent. The spread between the best and the worst runs to three hundred and forty-five points.

The reason is one line of the income statement. Revenue added twenty-seven points of return on average and margin took away thirty-two. Net debt cost another eighteen. Buybacks and dividends handed back twenty-seven, and were not enough.

What separated the two ends of that spread was not the market's opinion. Deckers returned three hundred and nine per cent on a multiple that went slightly against it. Ralph Lauren returned a hundred and eighty-nine as the only company here where every lever pulled the same way. The companies at the other end lost margin faster than any buyback could carry.

The outside world now sets a meaningful part of the answer. Nine of the ten have finally put a currency figure on their tariff bill, and it runs from a tenth to two fifths of a year's operating profit. None of them publishes the exchange rates behind its own currency-adjusted guidance.

General commentary on a sector. Not investment research, not a recommendation, and not an offer or solicitation. Full notice in the appendix.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Washington now sets the gross margin in this sector

what the outside world is doing, and who is exposed

CHAPTER TWO

The sector grew its way to a lower margin, and borrowed to do it

seven years of shareholder return, taken apart

CHAPTER THREE

Growth and margin are worth the same here, and only two companies took both

operations

CHAPTER FOUR

The balance sheet was worth twice the buyback, and the sector spent its attention on the buyback

capital allocation

CHAPTER FIVE

What you buy and sell decides which margin and growth you get to have

the perimeter

CHAPTER SIX

The multiple is worth sixty-two points, and three companies show what earns it

what the market decides it is worth

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fresh guidance no longer moves the shares. Its direction still does

the record of 186 results days

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tariffs will be raised on every call this round, and the questions have already moved there

the coming round, and what it will be about

Washington now sets the gross margin in this sector, and nine of the ten have finally put a price on it

Between April 2025 and February 2026 trade policy did what a decade of investor questions had not. It forced nine of these ten companies to publish a hard currency figure for a force acting on their profits from outside the business. Tariffs are now raised by management on every earnings call in the set, against fifteen per cent of calls in 2024, and at eighteen times the intensity per ten thousand words. What changed is not the weather. It is that the weather acquired a price.

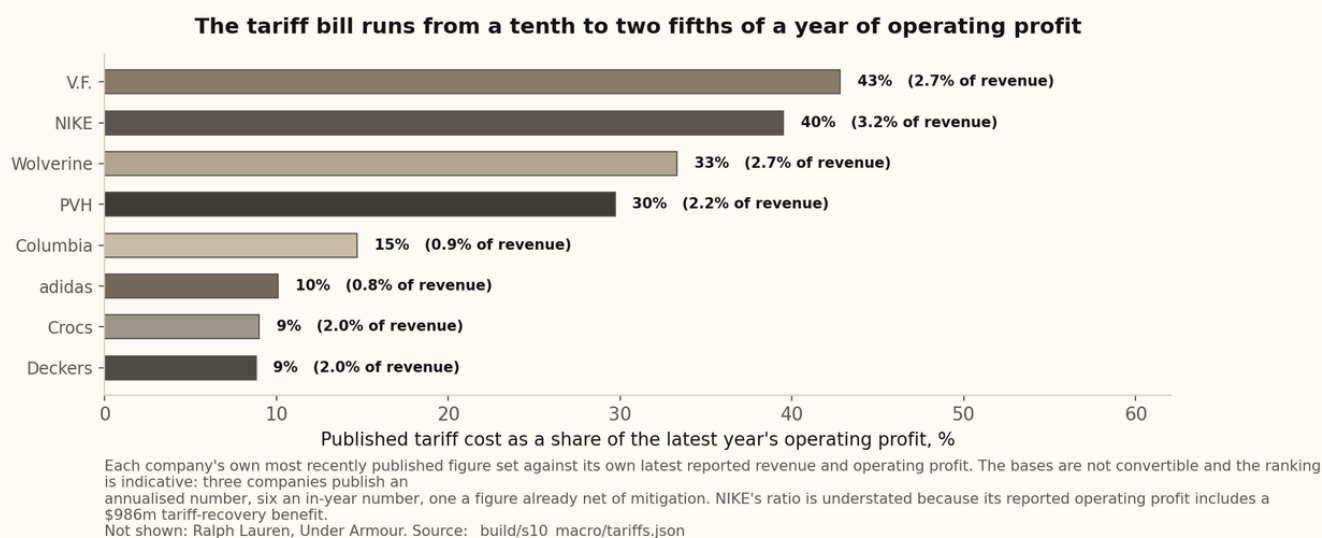
The tariff bill is worth a tenth of profit at Deckers and two-fifths at V.F. and NIKE

The number that matters is the dollar set against the profit it is taken from. Each company below appears on its own most recent published tariff figure, in the unit it chose, divided by its own latest reported revenue and operating profit.

COMPANY	PUBLISHED TARIFF FIGURE	BASIS	ASSUMED RATE	SHARE OF REVENUE	SHARE OF OPERATING PROFIT
V.F. (VFC)	\$250m to \$270m	annualised, unmitigated	10% incremental	2.7%	42.8%
NIKE (NKE)	\$1,500m	annualised, gross	10% to end July, then 15%	3.2%	39.5%
Wolverine (WWW)	\$50m	2026, unmitigated	10% to July, then IEEPA	2.7%	33.3%
PVH	\$195m	2026, gross	15% blended	2.2%	29.7%
Columbia (COLM)	just over \$30m	2025, unmitigated	10% universal, Section 122	0.9%	14.7%
adidas (ADS.DE)	EUR 200m	2026, after mitigation	10%, then 15%	0.8%	10.1%
Crocs (CROX)	\$80m	annualised, unmitigated	not disclosed	2.0%	9.0%
Deckers (DECK)	\$110m	FY2026, unmitigated	10%	2.0%	8.8%
Under Armour (UA)	\$100m	FY2026, additional cost	10%	2.0%	not meaningful
Ralph Lauren (RL)	none published	not disclosed	10% prevailing, forward open	not disclosed	not disclosed

Three qualifications belong on the page rather than under it. The bases are not convertible: NIKE, Crocs and V.F. publish an annualised figure and the rest an in-year one. Every figure is gross or unmitigated except adidas, which publishes the residue after mitigation. Under Armour reported an operating loss of \$35m in the year to March 2026, so the ratio has no denominator. The ranking is a guide to relative exposure, not a league table.

Two denominators deserve a second look. NIKE's reported operating profit of \$3,800m includes a one-off benefit of \$986m from the recovery of tariffs already paid, so the underlying ratio is nearer fifty-three per cent than forty. And Columbia shows how much the assumed rate matters. Its 2025 unmitigated cost of just over \$30m is 14.7 per cent of operating profit. In October 2025, before the Supreme Court ruling cut the rate, the same company put the annualised figure at approximately \$160 million, which on the same denominator is seventy-eight per cent of a year's operating profit.



The good disclosure is the disclosure that was revised

What separates the useful from the merely numeric is whether the figure moved when the policy moved. Seven of the nine restated inside one fiscal year. Deckers went from \$150m unmitigated with \$75m to \$95m of mitigation in October 2025 to \$110m unmitigated and roughly \$25m net in January 2026, then reconciled the outturn at about eighty basis points of gross margin in May. NIKE moved the other way.

"with the new rates in effect today, we now estimate the gross incremental cost to NIKE on an annualized basis to be approximately \$1.5 billion, up from the \$1 billion we shared ninety days ago." Matt Friend, EVP and Chief Financial Officer, NIKE, Q1 FY2026 earnings call, 30 September 2025

Wolverine went from \$65m to \$60m to \$50m across 2026. Crocs cut \$90m to \$80m. V.F. raised \$150m to a range of \$250m to \$270m. Columbia cut its 2026 headwind from three hundred to two hundred basis points after the court ruled. PVH held its 15 per cent blended rate unchanged for three quarters and added a separately sized \$100m refund benefit.

The named mitigation levers are price, sourcing shift, vendor negotiation and absorption, and only Columbia lists them together.

"Our goal is to offset higher tariffs over time through a combination of actions, including price increases, vendor negotiations, SG&A expense efficiencies and other mitigation tactics." Jim Swanson, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Columbia Sportswear, Q2 2025 earnings call, 1 August 2025

Deckers splits its mitigation between two of them, "including benefits from select strategic and staggered pricing increases as well as partial cost sharing with factory partners". PVH is alone in putting a percentage on the whole effort, sixty per cent for 2026 and above seventy-five per cent on exit.

Ralph Lauren is the exception and the absence is reportable. For eight consecutive quarters its finance chief has named tariffs as the company's largest exogenous pressure without publishing a dollar or a basis point, gross or net.

"while tariff remains our biggest pressure point for the fiscal year, we're confident that we can more than offset that headwind and deliver year-over-year gross profit expansion." Justin Picicci, Chief Financial Officer, Ralph Lauren, Q1 FY2026 earnings call, 7 August 2025

The sector left China years ago and only three companies will show you the map

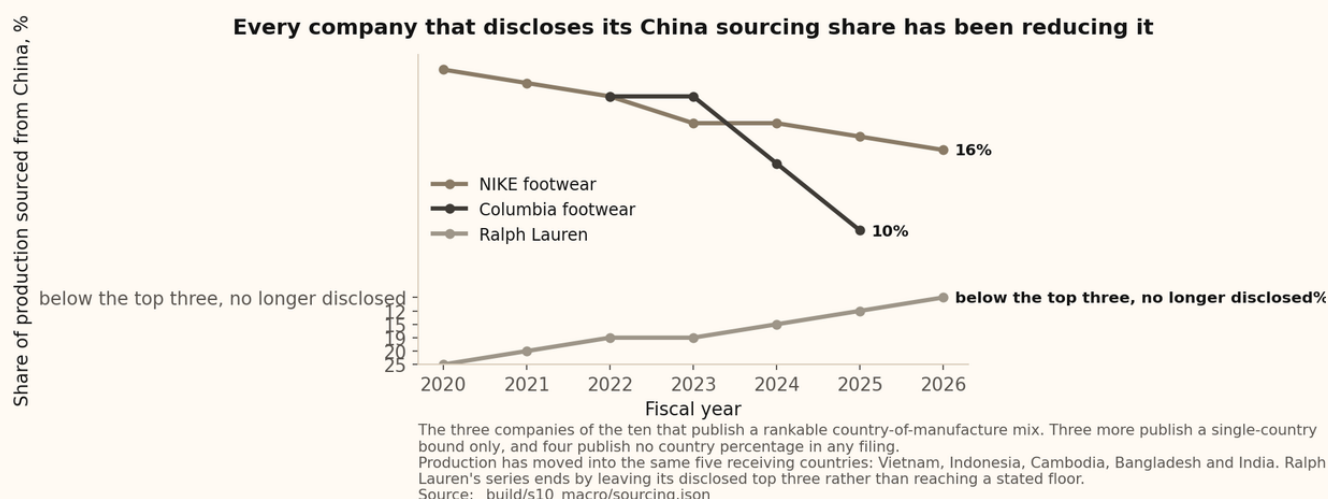
Three of the ten publish a country mix an outsider can rank. Three more publish a bound on a single country and nothing else. Four publish no country percentage at all.

COMPANY	WHAT IS DISCLOSED	LATEST COUNTRY MIX	CHINA, FIVE-YEAR TRAVEL
NIKE	full mix, footwear and apparel	Vietnam 52%, Indonesia 27%, China 16% (footwear)	footwear 22% to 16%, apparel 19% to 12%
Ralph Lauren	full mix, by dollar value	Vietnam 21%, Cambodia 16%, India 11%	25% to 12%, then out of the top three
Columbia	full mix, apparel and footwear split	apparel Vietnam 35% and Bangladesh 30%, footwear Vietnam 80% and China 10%	footwear 20% to 10%
Deckers	single-country bound	Vietnam and Indonesia predominantly	under 5% for China or any other country
V.F.	single-country bound, US-bound goods only	85% Southeast Asia and the Americas	under 2% of US products
Crocs	brand-level Vietnam share only	Crocs Brand Vietnam 45%, HEYDUDE 44%	not disclosed for either brand
Under Armour	four countries combined	65% across Jordan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia	never disclosed alone
PVH	country count only	approximately 30 countries	never disclosed
Wolverine	region only in the filing	Asia Pacific, predominantly	mid-teens to under 10%, on calls only
adidas	no filing disclosure	not published	around 3% of US footwear, on calls only

The direction of travel is unanimous where it can be seen. Every company that has ever disclosed a China share has cut it, and the receiving countries are the same five: Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Bangladesh and India. Ralph Lauren's series ends by vanishing. China appeared in its disclosed top three every year from fiscal 2019 to fiscal 2025 and dropped out in fiscal 2026, which is informative about direction and useless for measurement.

"The Company sources a substantial majority of its products from third-party manufacturers in foreign countries, predominantly in the Asia Pacific region." Wolverine World Wide, Form 10-K for 2025, filed 27 February 2026

That sentence would be equally true of any of the ten. Wolverine's actual number, mid-teens falling to under ten per cent of US-bound product during 2025, exists only in an earnings-call answer.



China stopped being the growth story and at half the sector it stopped being a number

China supply and the China consumer are different exposures and the second is disclosed worse. Five of the ten size China as a market. Two give a growth rate without a base. Three give nothing.

COMPANY	CHINA REVENUE	SHARE OF GROUP	GROWTH IN THE LATEST YEAR
NIKE	\$5,847m (Greater China)	12.6%	down 11% reported, down 13% currency-neutral
adidas	approximately EUR 3.6bn	14.7%	up 13% currency-neutral
Ralph Lauren	approximately \$730m implied	9% (company-stated)	above 30% for three quarters, above 50% in Q4
PVH	approximately \$537m implied	6% of revenue, 20% of profit	high single digit in constant currency, Q1 2026
Crocs	approximately \$323m implied	8% (company-stated)	up 30% on top of 64%
V.F.	not sized	Greater China named, not measured	down 2%, including 2% of currency
Columbia	not sized	inside a segment at 18% of group	mid single digit to high teens by quarter
Under Armour	not sized	Asia Pacific 14.5% of group	not disclosed
Deckers	not sized	reports only United States and Non-US	not disclosed
Wolverine	exited	sold its China joint ventures in 2024	not applicable

NIKE has the largest China business in the set and the only one shrinking, with segment profit down from \$2,309m two years ago to \$1,278m, and it attributes the decline to the market rather than to itself.

"a trend of declining store traffic, elevated promotional activity and higher levels of inventory across the marketplace are negatively impacting revenues and overall profitability" NIKE, Inc., Form 10-K for fiscal 2026, filed 15 July 2026

PVH publishes the one figure nobody else does, China's share of profit as well as revenue.

"Approximately 6 % and 20% of our revenue and income before interest and taxes (excluding goodwill and other intangible asset impairment charges recorded in 2025), respectively, were generated in China in each of 2024 and 2025." PVH Corp., Form 10-K for 2025, filed 31 March 2026

Six per cent of revenue carrying twenty per cent of profit is a different risk from six per cent of revenue, and it appears in PVH's filing only because the company was placed on China's List of Unreliable Entities. Nobody else has been asked the question and nobody else answers it. Meanwhile the subject is leaving the room. Management raised China on every call in 2022 and on 72 per cent in 2026. Analysts asked about it on 70 per cent of 2019 calls and 28 per cent of 2026 calls.

Currency moved more money than tariffs at NIKE, adidas and PVH

Between forty-two and fifty-seven per cent of each company's revenue is earned outside the United States, and in the most recent year currency moved more money than tariffs at three of them.

COMPANY	CURRENCY ON REVENUE	CURRENCY ON PROFIT	NON-US REVENUE
NIKE	+\$1,023m	+\$184m, pre-tax income	54.6%
adidas	around EUR 1,000m headwind	EUR 200m guided against 2026 EBIT	around 67%
PVH	+\$250m	+\$25m, net income	EMEA is the largest segment
Ralph Lauren	+\$201.9m	+\$81.8m, operating income	57%
Wolverine	+\$14.0m	not disclosed	52.2%
Crocs	+\$9.4m	not disclosed	48.6%
V.F.	3% of revenue, no dollar figure	not disclosed	49.7%
Under Armour	45 basis points of gross margin	not disclosed	42.7%
Columbia	not disclosed	not disclosed	41.7%
Deckers	not disclosed	not disclosed	41.7%

NIKE's currency benefit of \$1,023m on revenue exceeds the combined full-year operating profit of Columbia, Wolverine and Under Armour. PVH's group revenue rose \$297m in 2025 of which \$251m was translation, and its EMEA segment rose \$210m including a \$249m currency benefit, meaning EMEA declined before currency. Four companies publish the effect on a profit line. Two publish nothing, and Deckers reports geography only as United States against Non-US, the coarsest split in the set.

"And as I just mentioned, the 5 percentage points has a negative FX of around EUR 1 billion." Bjorn Gulden, Chief Executive Officer, adidas AG, FY2025 full year results call, 4 March 2026

Freight stopped being a number in 2023 and has not become one again

Freight was raised by management on 93 per cent of calls in 2023 and on 32 per cent in 2026, and the intensity fell from 10.3 mentions per ten thousand words in 2022 to 1.8. Analyst questions on it fell from 46 per cent of calls to 8. It returned in 2026 as a named driver, tied to oil and to shipping disruption in the Middle East, at Deckers, Wolverine, V.F. and adidas. Not one attaches a number.

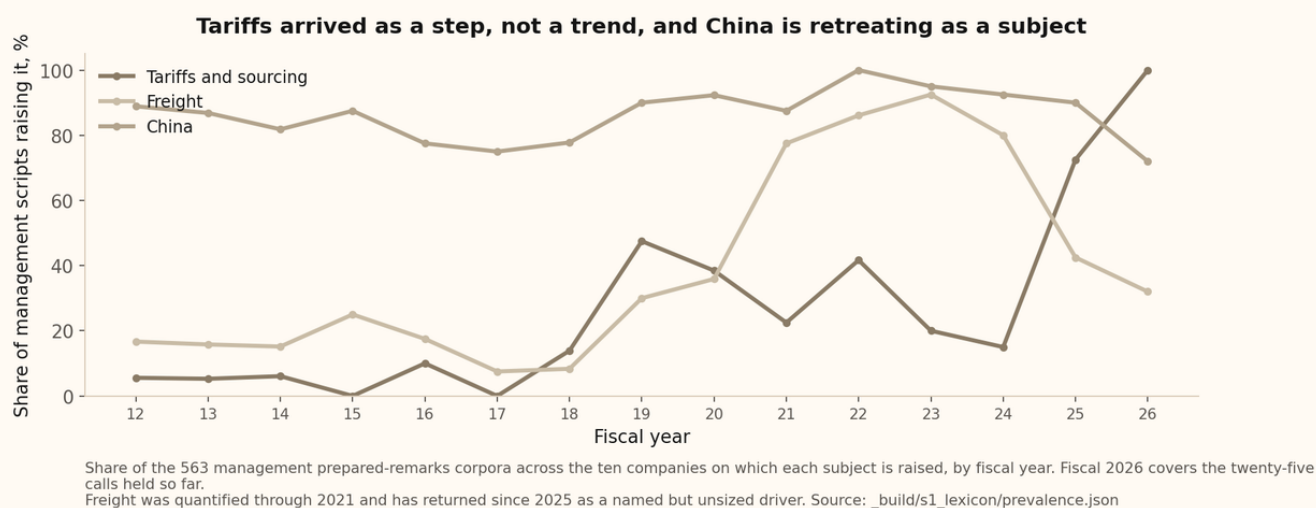
"The recent increase in oil prices is translating into higher freight costs, which are reflected in our revised gross margin outlook." Taryn Miller, Chief Financial Officer, Wolverine World Wide, Q1 2026 earnings call, 14 May 2026

Compare that with the same subject when it was managed rather than mentioned. In November 2021 adidas told the market that "freight costs in 2021 will be almost 200 million euro higher than initially planned". No company in this set has put a euro or a dollar on freight since. Input costs are in the same condition. Deckers names sheepskin and a sugarcane-derived compound, Columbia names the China share of its raw materials, adidas states that it does not hedge raw materials, and none sizes the exposure.

On the consumer the ten are uniformly cautious. NIKE is "not expecting the environment to improve meaningfully over the next 6 months". Deckers guided its second half against "a more cautious consumer as the full impact of tariffs and price increases will be felt here in the U.S." Columbia reported that retailers "remain cautious as tariff-induced price increases are just now beginning to hit the marketplace". Full-price selling and promotional intensity now appear in almost every management script, at half again the intensity of 2024.

The channel witness, which is not pooled with the ten and speaks only for itself, confirms the promotional weather and reports better trade through it, with first-quarter comparable sales up six per cent on both ticket and transactions.

"it was more promotional out there than we had anticipated, and I think the team did a fabulous job managing our margin rates" Edward Stack, Executive Chairman, DICK'S Sporting Goods, Q4 2025 earnings call, 12 March 2026



The pattern across all five forces is one thing. This sector will quantify what a government has already charged it and will not quantify what it has to forecast. Nine companies priced the tariff because a customs invoice arrived. Nobody has priced the freight, the cotton or the consumer, because nobody has to.

The sector grew its way to a lower margin, and borrowed to do it

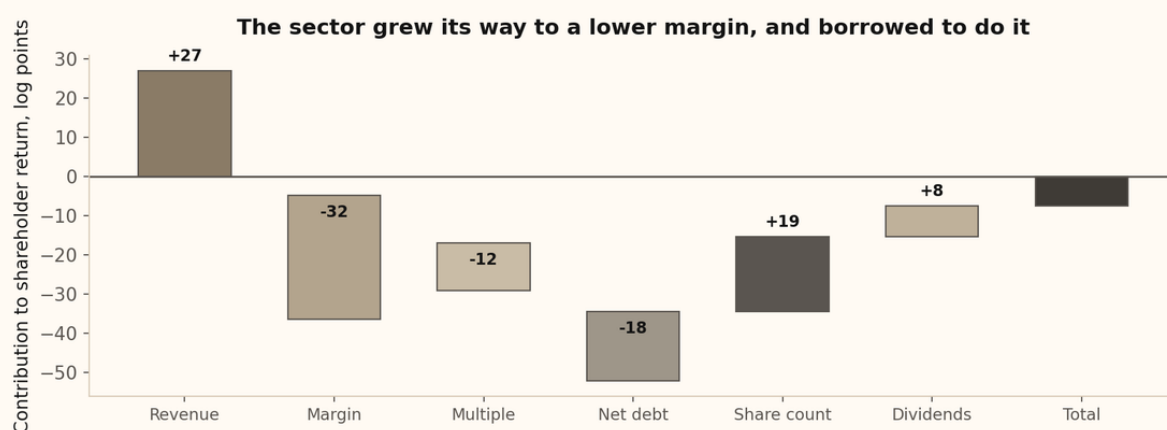
Nine of the ten companies in this review can have their shareholder return taken apart and put back together. Doing so answers the question every other chapter is really about: over the past seven years, where did the money come from, and where did it go?

The method is arithmetic rather than judgement. A share is worth what the business earns, multiplied by what the market will pay for those earnings, less what the company owes, divided by the number of shares. So a shareholder's return has to come from one of six places: revenue growth, margin, the multiple, net debt, the share count, or dividends. Each company's six contributions are computed from its own filed accounts and its own share price, and for every one of the nine they sum exactly to the return that was delivered, with nothing left over.

The window runs from each company's last financial year before the pandemic to its latest reported year, which is seven years for most of them. Starting after the pandemic would flatter almost everyone in this sector, because it would measure the recovery from a trough rather than the period as a whole.

Under Armour cannot be decomposed. Its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation are negative at both ends of the window, so no multiple exists to measure. That is stated rather than worked around.

The sector's return, and the shape of it



Average contribution across the nine companies whose return can be decomposed, from each one's last pre-pandemic financial year to its latest reported year, seven years for most.

Under Armour cannot be decomposed on this basis because its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation are negative at both ends of the window, so no multiple exists.

Each company reconciles exactly: the six contributions sum to its own price return, with no residual. Source: `_build/s11_tsr/bridge.json`

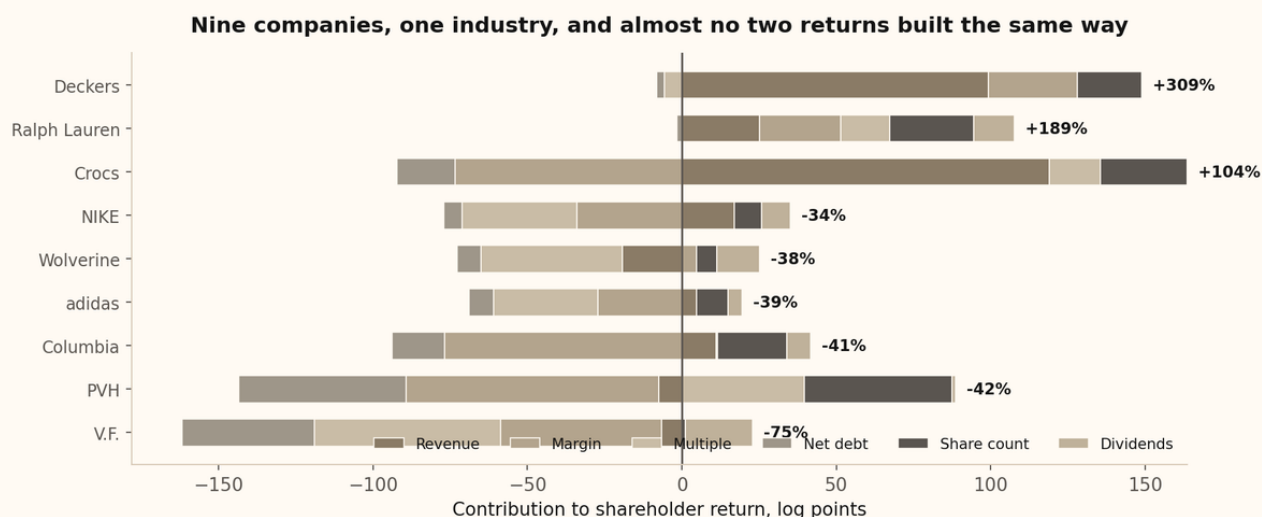
Averaged across the nine, revenue added twenty-seven points of return over the seven years. Margin took away thirty-two. The multiple took away twelve more, net debt seventeen, and buybacks and dividends together added twenty-seven back. The median company finished thirty-eight per cent below where it started.

That is an unusual shape for a consumer sector and it repays a moment's attention. These companies did grow. Revenue was a positive contributor for six of the nine. What happened is that the growth arrived at a lower margin than the business it displaced, and the balance sheet financed the gap. Net debt is a

negative contributor at eight of the nine, and at two of them it costs more than forty points of return on its own.

The buyback is the only lever the sector pulled hard and consistently. It added nineteen points on average and was positive at every single company. It was not enough.

Nine returns, built nine different ways



Total shareholder return in the label, dividend-adjusted, from each company's last pre-pandemic financial year to its latest reported year. Bars show where that return came from and sum exactly to it. Deckers earned its return with no help from the multiple. Ralph Lauren is the only company in the sector where every lever contributed positively. PVH retired 32.6 per cent of its shares and still finished behind, because margin fell further than the buyback could carry. Source: `_build/s11_tsr/bridge.json`

	WINDOW	RETURN	REVENUE	MARGIN	MULTIPLE	NET DEBT	SHARES	DIVIDENDS
Deckers	FY2019–FY2026	+309%	+99	+29	-6	-2	+21	0
Ralph Lauren	FY2019–FY2026	+189%	+25	+26	+16	-2	+27	+13
Crocs	FY2019–FY2025	+104%	+119	-73	+17	-19	+28	0
NIKE	FY2019–FY2026	-34%	+17	-34	-37	-6	+9	+9
Wolverine	FY2019–FY2025	-38%	-19	+5	-46	-8	+7	+14
adidas	FY2019–FY2025	-39%	+5	-27	-34	-8	+10	+4
Columbia	FY2019–FY2025	-41%	+11	-77	+1	-17	+22	+8
PVH	FY2018–FY2025	-42%	-8	-82	+40	-54	+48	+1
V.F. Corporation	FY2019–FY2026	-75%	-7	-52	-60	-43	+1	+22

Contributions in log points, which is what makes them add up. Each row sums to that company's own price return, and dividends carry it to the total return shown.

Four things in that table are worth a board's time.

Deckers earned all of it. Ninety-nine points of revenue and twenty-nine of margin, against a multiple that went slightly the wrong way. It is the only company here whose return required no help at all from the market's opinion of it. Its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation multiple was 10.3 times before the pandemic and 9.7 times now.

Ralph Lauren is the only company in the sector where every lever contributed positively. Revenue, margin, multiple, share count and dividends all pushed the same way, and net debt cost it two points. That is a harder thing to do than any single large move, and it is a different achievement from the one it is usually credited with. Read over five years from the pandemic trough its return looks like a re-rating. Read over the full seven years it is not. The multiple contributes sixteen points of a hundred and eighty-nine.

PVH shows the limit of the buyback. It retired a third of its shares, worth forty-eight points of return, more than any other company here. It re-rated, worth another forty. And it still finished forty-two per cent down, because margin cost it eighty-two points and net debt fifty-four. No capital-allocation programme available to a listed company can outrun a margin decline of that size.

Crocs and Columbia are the same story at different volumes. Crocs added a hundred and nineteen points of revenue, the most in the sector, and gave back seventy-three on margin. Columbia added eleven and gave back seventy-seven. Growth in this sector has not been reliably profitable.

What the multiple did, and did not, do

The multiple is the lever managements have least control over and talk about most.

	MULTIPLE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC	LATEST	CHANGE
PVH	8.8x	13.1x	+49%
Crocs	21.7x	25.6x	+18%
Ralph Lauren	13.0x	15.2x	+17%
Columbia	12.7x	12.8x	+1%
Deckers	10.3x	9.7x	-5%
adidas	15.4x	11.0x	-29%
NIKE	22.3x	15.3x	-31%
Wolverine	17.9x	11.3x	-37%
V.F. Corporation	25.2x	13.8x	-45%

Enterprise value over earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, computed on the same basis for all nine.

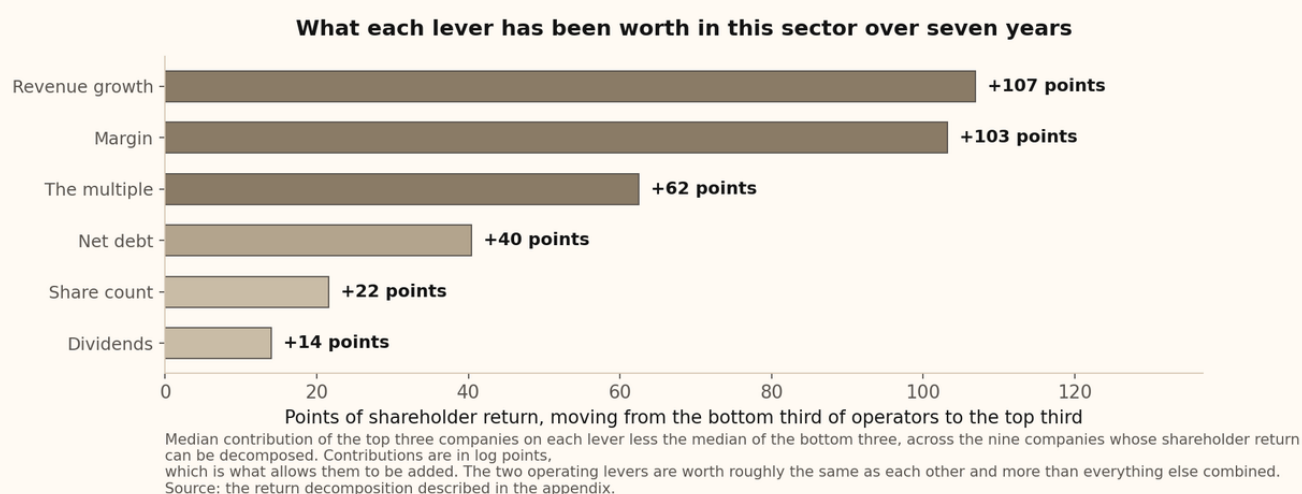
The three companies that entered this period on the highest multiples, V.F. at twenty-five times, NIKE at twenty-two and Crocs at twenty-two, have had three different outcomes, so a high starting multiple was not on its own a sentence. What the table does show is that the two largest re-ratings in the sector, PVH and Crocs, both went to companies whose operating performance over the same window was poor. The market was not paying for what had happened. It was paying for what it expected next, and the chapters that follow are largely about whether it should.

The uncomfortable line in the table is the one that did not move. Columbia's multiple is where it was seven years ago, its revenue grew eleven points, and its shareholders are down forty-one per cent. Nothing dramatic happened to that company. Its margin simply fell for long enough.

What each lever has been worth

The decomposition also answers the question a board can act on, which is not how the sector did but how much each lever is worth having.

Take each of the six contributions, rank the nine companies on it, and measure the distance between the median of the top three and the median of the bottom three. That distance is what separating yourself from the field on one lever has been worth here over seven years.



LEVER	WORTH, IN POINTS OF RETURN	FURTHEST AHEAD	FURTHEST BEHIND
Revenue growth	+107	Crocs, +119	Wolverine, -19
Margin	+103	Deckers, +29	PVH, -82
The multiple	+62	PVH, +40	V.F. Corporation, -60
Net debt	+40	Ralph Lauren, -2	PVH, -54
Share count	+22	PVH, +48	V.F. Corporation, +1
Dividends	+14	V.F. Corporation, +22	Deckers, 0

Three things follow, and the rest of this issue is built on them.

The two operating levers are worth more than everything else combined. Revenue and margin carry two hundred and ten points between them, against a hundred and thirty-eight for the multiple, the balance sheet, the buyback and the dividend together. In a sector whose quarterly conversation is dominated by guidance, capital returns and what the shares are worth, the money has been in the business.

The balance sheet is worth close to twice the buyback. Forty points against twenty-two. Every one of these companies runs a repurchase programme and reports its share count each quarter. Net debt has moved as a consequence of leases, acquisitions and working capital, and it has cost the sector more than the buyback has returned.

The same company appears at both ends. PVH is furthest ahead on the multiple and on the share count, and furthest behind on margin and on net debt. Whatever else that says, it says these levers are independent of one another, and that being excellent at one does not carry a company.

What this chapter sets up

The four chapters that follow take the levers in order of what they are worth. Each asks the same four questions. What has this lever paid here? Who captured it, and what did they actually do? Who did not, and what was different? And what does that leave on the table.

Each is built on what these ten companies have done rather than on what they said they would do.

Growth and margin are worth the same here, and only two companies took both

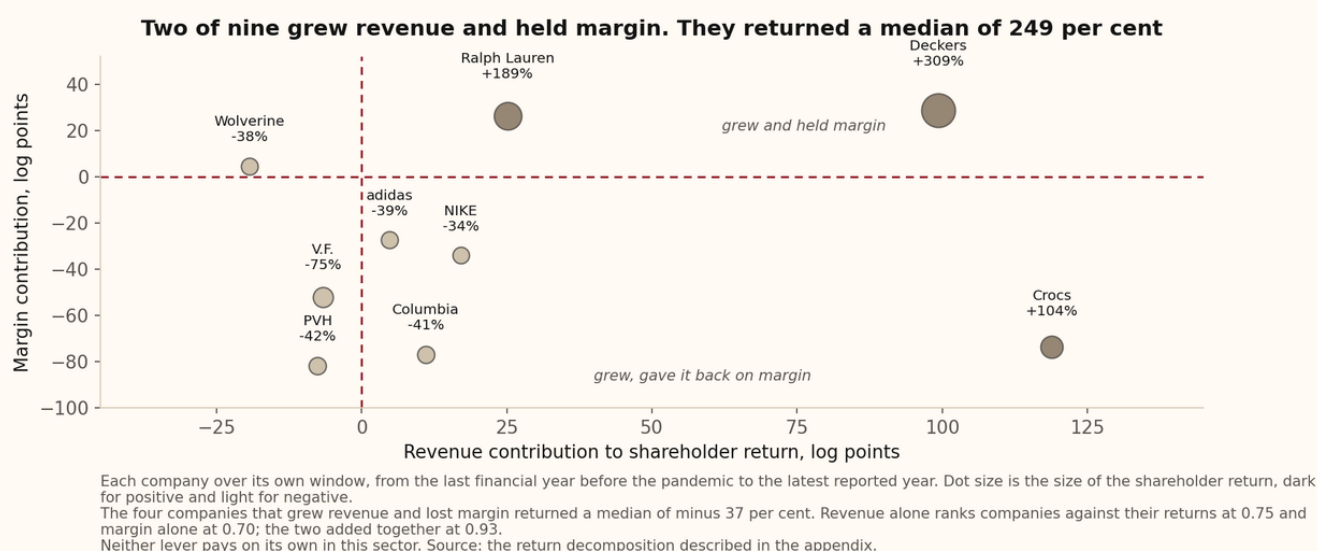
The decomposition in Chapter Two hands the operating lever two of its six columns, and between them revenue and margin carry the widest range in the table. Averaged across the nine companies that can be decomposed, revenue added twenty-seven log points of return over seven years and margin took away thirty-two. Deckers earned a hundred and twenty-eight of its three hundred and nine points inside those two columns, ninety-nine of revenue and twenty-nine of margin, against a multiple that moved six points the wrong way. Columbia gave back seventy-seven points on margin alone. Crocs added a hundred and nineteen points of revenue, the most in the sector, and returned seventy-three at the margin line.

The two operating levers are worth more than everything else combined

Revenue growth has been worth a hundred and seven points of shareholder return in this sector and margin a hundred and three. Together that is two hundred and ten points, against a hundred and thirty-eight for the multiple, the balance sheet, the buyback and the dividend put together.

The two are worth almost exactly the same, and that rules out the trade every management team here has been tempted to make. Growing at a lower margin is not a way of buying return. It is a way of paying for one lever with the other.

The evidence is in how few companies managed both.



Two of the nine grew revenue and held margin across the seven years. Deckers and Ralph Lauren returned a median of two hundred and forty-nine per cent. Four grew revenue and gave it back on margin, and returned a median of minus thirty-seven per cent. Crocs is the clearest case: it added a hundred and nineteen points of revenue, more than any company here, and finished at a hundred and four per cent because margin took away seventy-three.

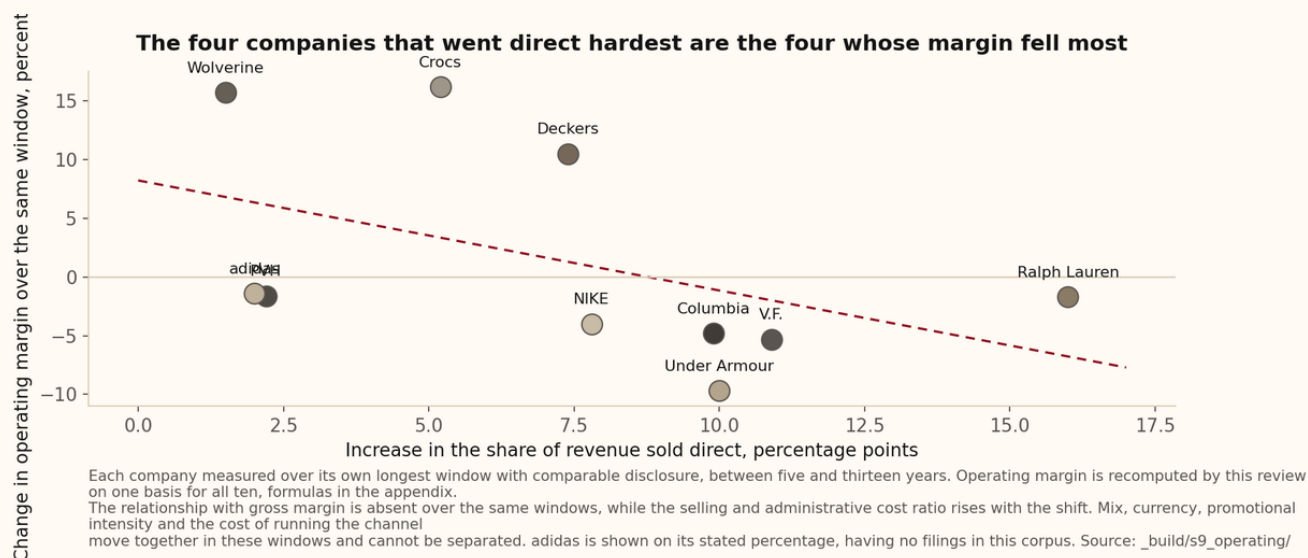
Rank the nine on revenue alone and the ordering matches their returns at 0.75, where one would be a perfect match. On margin alone it matches at 0.70. On the two added together, 0.93. Neither lever tells you much on its own. Together they tell you nearly everything.

What follows is what the two companies that managed both actually did, and what the seven that did not were doing instead.

The four companies that went direct hardest are the four whose operating margin fell most

Every figure below is taken from the companies' own income statements as filed, with no add-back in either direction, and each channel percentage is divided by the revenue in the same table so that numerator and denominator carry the same perimeter. adidas files no American annual report for most of the period, appears on its own stated numbers, and sits outside every comparison drawn across the group. Nine of the ten publish enough channel detail to set the size of their own stores and websites beside the margins of the same years. Sort them by how much revenue moved into that channel and the four largest movers are the four largest losers of operating margin.

COMPANY	WINDOW	OWN CHANNEL, START TO END	CHANGE, POINTS	GROSS MARGIN, POINTS	OPERATING MARGIN, POINTS	SELLING AND ADMINISTRATIVE COST RATIO, POINTS
Ralph Lauren	FY2013– FY2026	52.2 → 68.2	+16.0	+10.0	-1.7	+11.1
V.F.	FY2019– FY2026	32.9 → 43.9	+10.9	-0.0	-5.3	+5.8
Under Armour	CY2016– FY2026	31.3 → 41.4	+10.0	-0.7	-9.7	+9.0
Columbia	CY2016– CY2025	37.7 → 47.6	+9.9	+3.5	-4.8	+7.9
NIKE	FY2019– FY2026	31.5 → 39.2	+7.8	-1.8	-4.0	+2.3
Deckers	FY2015– FY2026	34.0 → 41.4	+7.4	+7.8	+10.5	-3.9
Crocs	CY2018– CY2025	46.9 → 52.1	+5.2	+5.5	+16.2	-6.9
PVH	FY2016– FY2025	43.8 → 46.1	+2.2	+4.4	-1.6	+6.0
Wolverine	CY2020– CY2025	23.9 → 25.4	+1.5	+5.9	+15.7	+3.2
adidas, company-stated share	CY2021– CY2025	38.0 → 40.0	+2.0	-3.6	-1.4	+2.2



The ranking does not depend on the endpoints. It holds on each company's own longest window, on the shorter windows where all nine share an identical channel accounting basis, and after removing each company's own average. Gross margin shows no such pattern. The cost ratio moves with the shift in every version, and it rose for each of the four heaviest movers, by 11.1, 5.8, 9.0 and 7.9 points. Ralph Lauren added ten points of gross margin over thirteen years and finished with a lower operating margin than it began. The sector's finance chiefs described that arithmetic at both ends of the decade.

"Operating overhead grew 10% for the quarter, due largely to growth in our higher gross margin, higher cost DTC business, as well as continued investments to support growth initiatives such as digital" Donald W. Blair, Chief Financial Officer, NIKE, Q2 FY2013 earnings call, 20 December 2012

"over-proportionate growth in DTC in Q1 was 18% contributed significantly to the operating overhead increase, which is largely compensated for the higher gross margins" Harm Ohlmeyer, Chief Financial Officer, adidas AG, Q1 2019 earnings call, 3 May 2019

Channel mix, currency, promotional intensity and the cost of running the channel move together here and cannot be isolated from what these companies publish. What the record separates is direction. The gross margin benefit is real, and it has been spent on the cost of owning the customer. The two companies whose operating margin expanded most, Crocs by 16.2 points and Deckers by 10.5, are the only two whose cost ratio fell, and they rank seventh and sixth of nine on channel shift. V.F.'s chief executive told the fourth-quarter fiscal 2026 call: "we took down the value channel pretty significantly over the last year. We've done some editing -- we may have overcorrected there a little bit".

What that ranking cannot do is establish which way the causation runs. Nine companies measured over different windows, with different brands, geographies and starting positions, will not separate one effect from another. Three readings fit the same data. Building a direct channel may cost margin. A weakening wholesale order book may push a company into its own stores, in which case the channel shift is the symptom rather than the cause. Or the cost may be transitional, front-loaded into the build and recovered later, which the windows here are too short to settle. What the evidence supports is the narrower statement, and it is worth having: over these windows, moving revenue into the company's own channels has not reliably produced a better operating margin.

Deckers rationed the demand it had created

Deckers acquired Hoka One One in September 2012 with no transaction call and no disclosed price. The goodwill it carries for the purchase is \$7,889 thousand, unchanged in every annual report from fiscal 2018 to fiscal 2026. Against it sits a brand that recorded net sales of \$93.1m in fiscal 2017, \$571.2m in fiscal 2021 and \$2,587.3m in fiscal 2026, the last carrying \$911.0m of segment income from operations.

What management did once the demand arrived is the part the decomposition rewards. On 25 May 2023, with HOKA at \$1.41bn, David Powers set the frame: "At the current scale north of \$1.4 billion, our focus is to protect the HOKA brand's premium positioning and maintain a pull model." On the same call Steve Fasching built the fiscal 2024 guidance on a 20 per cent HOKA increase "with wholesale growth assuming no net new doors added globally". Growth of a fifth, and not one additional door. HOKA reached DICK'S Sporting Goods, the largest American sporting-goods retailer, a decade after Deckers bought it, and arrived there as an allocation question rather than a volume one. Group revenue rose 73 per cent over the five fiscal years to March 2026 and operating margin rose 5.3 points to 23.2 per cent.

NIKE spent four years leaving wholesale and eighteen months walking back

At NIKE's investor day in New York on 25 October 2017, Lindsay Drucker Mann of Goldman Sachs asked what would become of the accounts the company had just told the room it would shrink: "what happens to the 60% today that are undifferentiated? Is there sort of an orderly wind down process because that going out of business or whatever dynamic could be disruptive to you guys?" Elliott Hill, then president of geographies and integrated marketplace, answered her: "And I think there will be an orderly fashion in that undifferentiated. It's not like we're going to go and just close every one."

What followed was neither orderly nor partial. By 22 September 2020 the chief financial officer, Matt Friend, described Consumer Direct Acceleration as "exiting undifferentiated wholesale distribution and focusing on our direct business and our strategic partners", and in December he undertook to "more aggressively accelerate change with larger undifferentiated accounts" on top of the roughly 30 per cent of North American undifferentiated accounts already removed over three years.

Hill returned as chief executive on 14 October 2024 and named the cause on his first full results call: "My last observation, prioritizing NIKE digital revenue has impacted the health of our marketplaces. We will build back an integrated marketplace." On the fourth-quarter call in June 2026 he reported that "For the fiscal year, wholesale revenue grew 4%, led by double-digit growth in North America", alongside more than 15,000 refreshed wholesale spaces. The channel records the round trip from outside, naming NIKE forty-three times on DICK'S earnings calls in fiscal 2012, twenty-one times in fiscal 2018, once in fiscal 2023 and twenty times in fiscal 2025. Revenue contributed seventeen points across the seven years and margin took away thirty-four.

adidas closed 2023 nine hundred and sixty-eight million euros above its own opening guidance

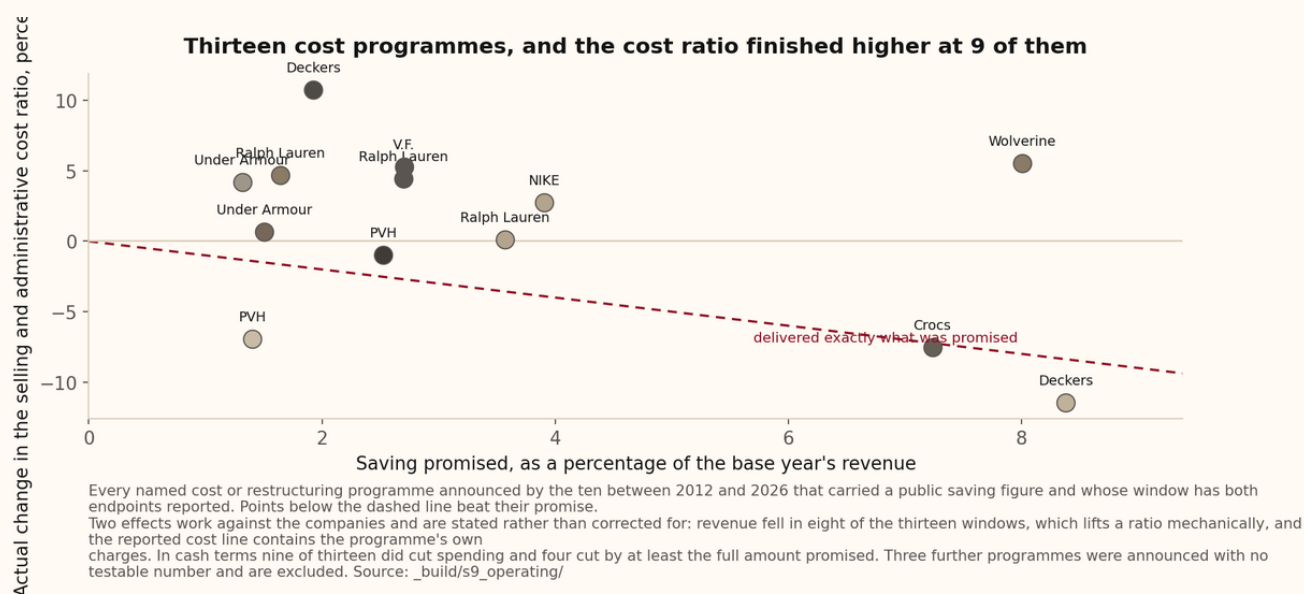
adidas terminated the Yeezy partnership on 25 October 2022, kept the design rights and the finished goods, and chose on the decision date to complete production already under way. Bjorn Gulden explained why on 8 March 2023: "in the interest of 10,000 people that were working in the factories, adidas decided to continue to produce all the components, and then ship them to different destination." That left roughly €400m of stock on the balance sheet which could not be sold for

reputational reasons and could not be destroyed for environmental ones. Gulden put the problem back to the analyst who raised it: "I ask you, so if you can't sell and you can't destroy, what's your option?"

The company sold it and donated against it. The 2024 annual report records that "In total, selling of the remaining Yeezy products generated revenues of around € 650 million in 2024 (2023: around € 750 million)." Gulden walked the arithmetic on 2 February 2024: "we started with a minus EUR700 million then we sold off Yeezy. That generated a profit of EUR150 million, and because we sold inventory, we didn't have to write-off EUR100 million inventory. So we then had a guidance of EUR450 million." The year closed at a €268m operating profit, nine hundred and sixty-eight million euros above the opening guidance, and group operating profit then reached €1.337bn in 2024 and €1.971bn in 2025.

Thirteen cost programmes reached the year management named and the cost ratio finished higher

Fifteen named cost, restructuring or profit improvement programmes put a figure and a completion date on the record, and thirteen have reached the year management named. The median promise was worth 2.7 per cent of the revenue of the year before the announcement. The median outcome was a cost ratio 2.75 percentage points higher at the end of the window than at the start, and the ratio fell at all in four of the thirteen.

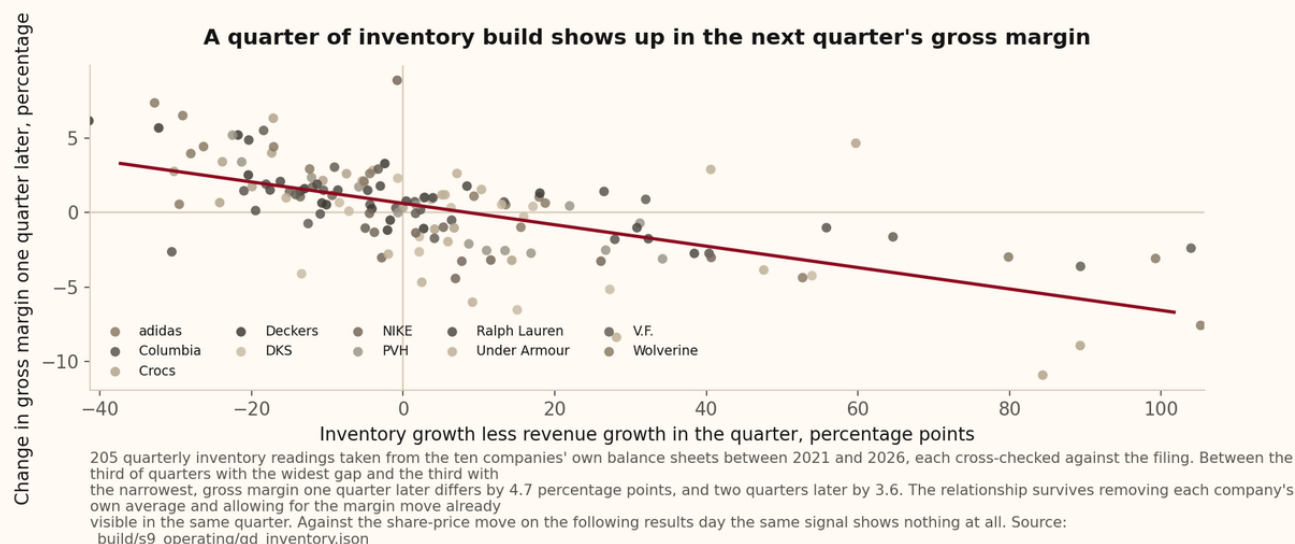


In dollars the picture is better and belongs beside it. Absolute spending fell in nine of the thirteen and by at least the full amount promised in four. Ralph Lauren's Way Forward Plan took out \$288m against a \$200m promise, PVH's 2020 to 2021 streamlining \$456m against \$250m, Under Armour's fiscal 2025 plan \$99m against \$75m, and Wolverine's Profit Improvement Office \$216m against \$215m. Each cleared its promise in cash while its cost ratio rose, because revenue fell over the window in eight of the thirteen and because the reported cost line carries the programme's own restructuring charges and any impairment booked to operating expense.

The inventory gap forecasts 4.7 points of the next quarter's gross margin

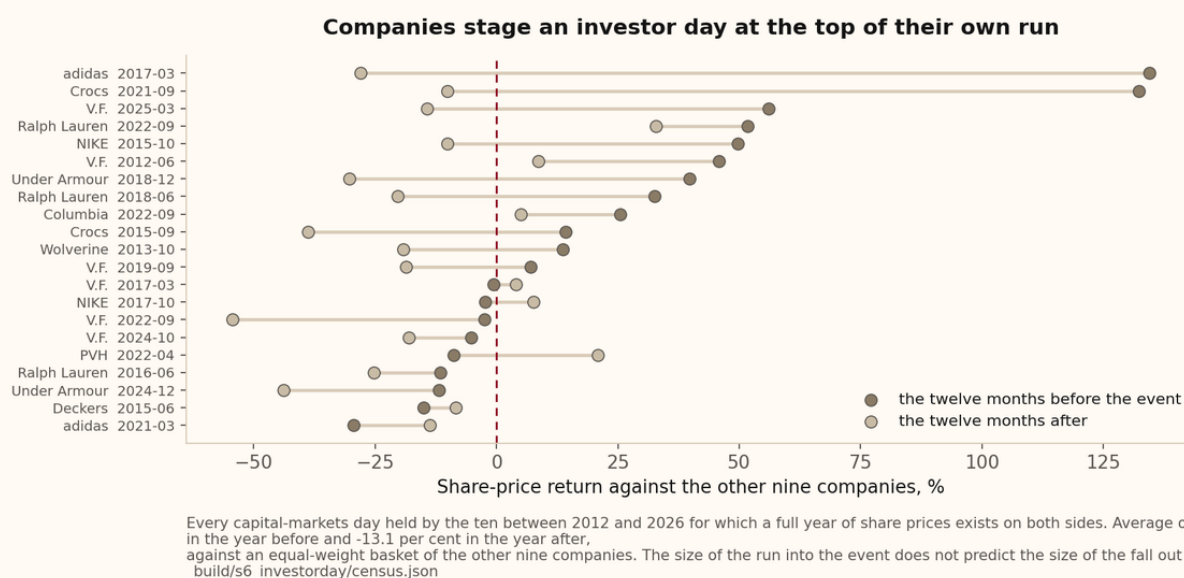
Take the gap between how fast inventory is growing and how fast revenue is growing. It is public on the day the quarter is reported, which makes what it predicts about later quarters genuinely out of

sample. Behind it sit 205 quarterly readings, each cross-checked against a second source, none disagreeing by more than one per cent. The third of company-quarters in which inventory outran revenue by most went on to report a gross margin averaging 2.0 points lower a quarter later. The third in which inventory grew slowest went on to report one averaging 2.7 points higher. That is a spread of 4.7 percentage points of gross margin from a number published a quarter earlier, and 3.6 points two quarters out. It survives allowing for the margin move already visible when the gap was disclosed and removing every company's own average. It is a planning instrument for a finance director rather than a trading signal.



The capital-markets day is staged at the top of the operating run

Since 2012 the ten have held twenty-five investor days, twenty-one of which can be measured against market prices. In the twelve months before one, the host's shares beat the rest of the group by 22.0 per cent more than that company's own long-run average against the same group, positive at sixteen of the twenty-one events. In the twelve months after, the same companies came in 15.3 per cent below their own average, negative at fifteen of the twenty for which a full year has since passed. adidas arrived at its 14 March 2017 event 134.5 per cent ahead and gave back 28.0 per cent. A plan is easier to put on a stage when the current business is doing the talking, which is also why six of the ten have gone 3.8 years or more since their last event and three announced events were never held.



What this leaves on the table

Three practices separate the companies that held margin from those that did not, and none of them requires a new strategy.

The first is refusing distribution. Deckers is the only company in this set to have guided publicly to growth with no net new doors, and it converted demand into price rather than volume. The four companies that moved fastest into their own channels are the four whose margin fell furthest, and while these windows cannot establish which way that runs, no company here has yet shown the opposite.

The second is treating the inventory-to-revenue gap as a forward measure rather than a backward one. It carries 4.7 points of the next quarter's gross margin and 3.6 points of the quarter after, and it is visible in a company's own balance sheet a full quarter before it reaches the income statement.

The third is arithmetic. A cost programme promising a saving worth 2.7 per cent of revenue is worth roughly a fifth of what a single point of gross margin is worth to the same company. Nine of the thirteen programmes did cut spending in cash, and the cost ratio still finished higher at nine of them, because revenue fell underneath. Cost work does not defend a margin that volume is taking away.

The balance sheet was worth twice the buyback, and the sector spent its attention on the buyback

Of the six columns in Chapter Two, two are pure capital allocation. The share count contributed an average of nineteen points of return across the nine companies that can be decomposed and was positive at every one of them, which no other lever in the table manages. Dividends added a further eight. Against that, net debt subtracted an average of eighteen and was negative at eight of the nine, costing more than forty points at two of them.

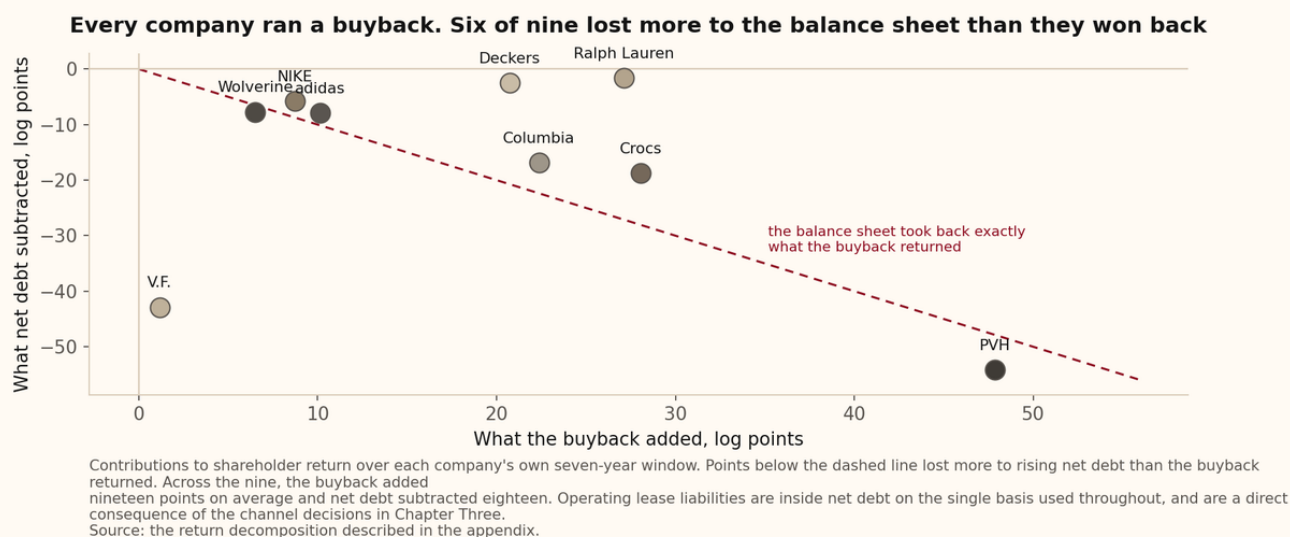
That is the shape of the sector's capital allocation in three numbers. It bought back stock consistently, paid dividends steadily, and financed both from a balance sheet that took back more than twice what the dividend returned. This chapter is about how the same instrument, applied with the same competence, produced opposite results.

That nineteen points is an average across the nine companies whose return can be decomposed, and the individual contributions range from a single point at V.F. to forty-eight at PVH. Under Armour is not in the count, its earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation being negative at both ends of the window.

Forty points against twenty-two

Two levers sit inside capital allocation and they are not the same size. Over the seven years, moving from the bottom third of this sector to the top third on net debt was worth forty points of shareholder return. Doing the same on the share count was worth twenty-two.

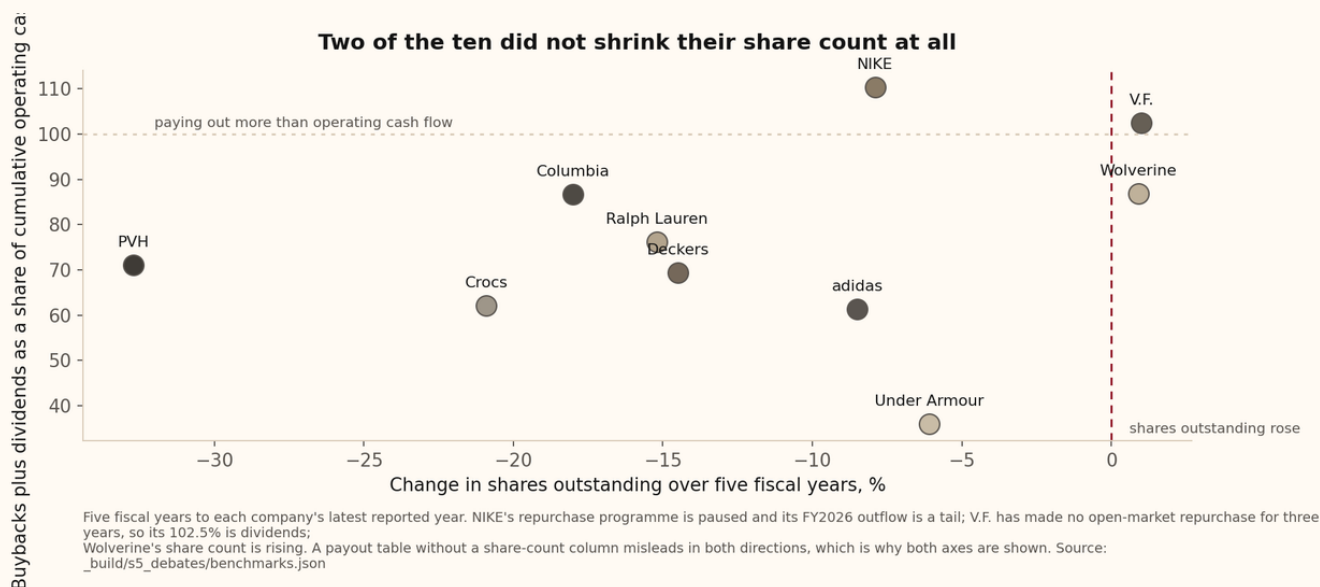
The attention has run the other way. Every one of these companies operates a repurchase programme, reports its share count each quarter and is asked about it on the call. Net debt has moved as a by-product of leases, acquisitions and working capital, and across the window it subtracted eighteen points on average while the buyback added nineteen. The sector bought back its own shares and financed almost the same amount straight back out through the balance sheet.



Six of the nine lost more to rising net debt than their buyback returned. Ralph Lauren is the exception at both ends, with the second-largest buyback contribution in the sector at twenty-seven points and a net debt cost of two. PVH is the mirror image, and the sharpest lesson here.

A large part of the debt these companies now carry is not borrowing in the ordinary sense. Operating lease liabilities sit inside net debt on the single basis used throughout this review, and at four of the ten they are more than half the numerator. Those leases are the accounting consequence of the store decisions in the previous chapter, which makes the two levers connected: a company moving into its own channels takes on balance sheet at the same moment it takes on margin risk.

Two of the ten have not shrunk their share count in five years



COMPANY	FIVE-YEAR CHANGE IN DILUTED SHARES	BUYBACKS AND DIVIDENDS AS % OF CUMULATIVE OPERATING CASH FLOW
PVH	-32.7%	71.1%
Crocs	-20.9%	62.2%
Columbia	-18.0%	86.7%
Ralph Lauren	-15.2%	76.2%
Deckers	-14.5%	69.4%
adidas	-8.5%	61.3%
NIKE	-7.9%	110.3%
Under Armour	-6.1%	36.0%
Wolverine	+0.9%	86.8%
V.F. Corporation	+1.0%	102.5%

Two of the ten paid out more than they generated in operating cash flow over the period, and in both cases the composition explains it. NIKE's repurchase programme is paused, and its fiscal 2026 outflow of \$146m is the remnant of a programme that ran at scale earlier in the window. V.F. has made no open-market repurchase for three years, and dividends alone account for 87.3 of its 102.5 percentage points. Wolverine's count is rising.

An earnings-per-share growth table built across these ten without the share-count column beside it would mislead in both directions at once, which is why the two are printed together.

PVH retired a third of its equity and finished the seven years two-fifths down

Between March 2022 and March 2026 PVH reduced its shares outstanding from 68.0m to 45.8m, a reduction of 32.6 per cent and the largest in the review by a wide margin. It spent \$2.45bn on repurchases across five financial years. The programme was deliberate, escalating and well communicated. In August 2023 the company raised planned buybacks from \$200m to up to \$400m for the year, then in November to approximately \$550m. On 2 April 2024 the chief executive, Stefan Larsson, reported the cumulative effect: "Over the last two years, we have repurchased nearly \$1 billion of our stock representing approximately 17% of our outstanding shares." Two years later, on 1 April 2026, he reported that PVH "returned over \$560 million of capital to shareholders through our share repurchases, representing 15% of our shares outstanding". Seventeen per cent, and then fifteen per cent of what was left.

Chapter Two prices that execution exactly. The share count contributed forty-eight points of return to PVH, more than to any other company in the sector, and the multiple another forty. The company still finished the seven years forty-two per cent down, because margin cost it eighty-two points and net debt fifty-four. Per-share arithmetic works only when the numerator holds. PVH's revenue was \$8.950bn in fiscal 2025 against \$9.155bn in fiscal 2021, a decline of 2.2 per cent, and operating margin fell 9.2 points over the same five years, from 11.7 to 2.6 per cent, the last year carrying \$480m of goodwill and intangible impairment charges taken in the first quarter of 2025, of which \$418m fully impaired the goodwill of the Asia-Pacific segment and \$8m the Americas.

Set that against the same instrument used elsewhere. Ralph Lauren spent \$2.54bn over the five years to March 2026 and cut its diluted share count 16.2 per cent while earnings per share rose 87 per cent, and its share count contributed twenty-seven points of a total return of a hundred and eighty-nine. Deckers spent \$2.76bn and cut 12.6 per cent on rising earnings, worth twenty-one points of three hundred and nine. Crocs spent \$2.37bn, cut 14.9 per cent and took twenty-eight points, which is the reason its return is positive at all. NIKE spent \$16.88bn, by far the largest sum in the sector, and cut only 7.9 per cent, because the shares were repurchased at prices the market did not sustain. V.F. spent nothing in the open market for three years and took one point. Under Armour repurchased no stock at all until fiscal 2023.

There is no ranking in that list and the two extremes make the point without one. Buying back a third of a company is not, by itself, a return. It is a lever applied to whatever the operating business delivers, and it magnifies a decline as faithfully as it magnifies growth. PVH's owners now hold roughly two shares where they once held three, in a business earning less than it did five years ago. Ralph Lauren's owners hold roughly six where they held seven, in a business earning 57 per cent more.

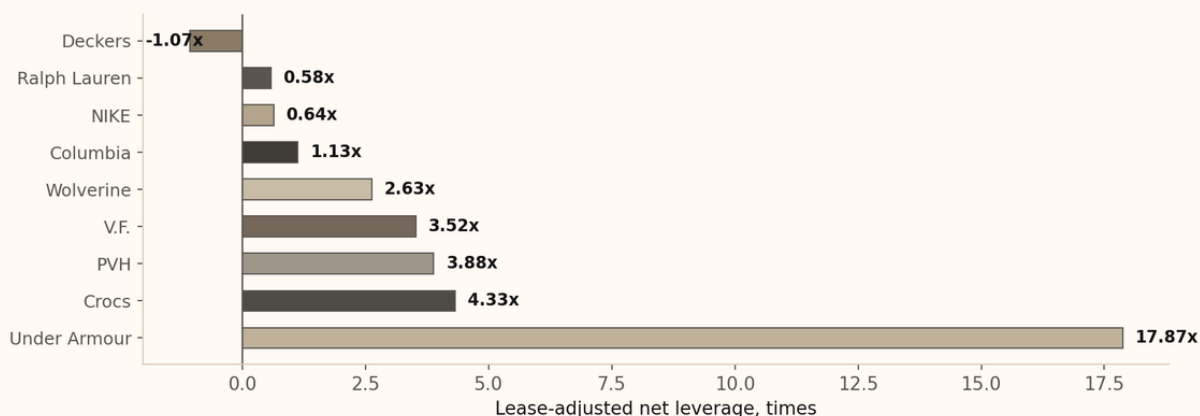
The reading for a board is that a repurchase should be underwritten to the same test as an acquisition, which is whether the earnings behind each retired share are more likely to rise than fall over the holding period. PVH executed its programme faultlessly and the answer still came out the other way.

Net debt took back more than twice what the dividend returned

The balance sheet is the quietest of the six columns and the second most destructive. It subtracted an average of eighteen points against the eight the dividend added, and only Deckers, which carries net cash, escaped it. The two largest costs, fifty-four points at PVH and forty-three at V.F., sit at the two companies that also carry the sector's heaviest lease-adjusted leverage.

Because the ten define leverage in at least as many ways as there are companies, and because these are lease-heavy businesses, the table below is recomputed on one basis applied to all ten, with the formulas in the appendix. Where an input genuinely does not exist, the cell reads NOT COMPUTABLE rather than borrowing a company's own definition.

Leverage on one basis for everyone, not on ten different company definitions



(Total debt including operating lease liabilities, less cash and equivalents) divided by (EBITDA plus fixed operating lease expense from the ASC 842 lease-cost table). Latest reported fiscal year for each company. Under Armour's 17.87x is a negative EBIT denominator carrying a restructuring charge. Crocs is 4.33x with the HEYDUDE impairment and 1.37x without it, on the identical basis. adidas is NOT COMPUTABLE: IFRS 16 capitalises all leases, so no operating-lease-expense line exists to add back. Source: [_build/s5_debates/](#)

COMPANY	DEBT EXCLUDING LEASES	LEASE LIABILITIES	LESS CASH	NUMERATOR	EBITDA	LEASE EXPENSE	DENOMINATOR	LEASE-ADJUSTED NET LEVERAGE
Deckers	0	375	1,907	-1,532	1,341	89	1,430	-1.07x
Ralph Lauren	1,451	1,538	1,988	1,001	1,411	306	1,717	0.58x
NIKE	7,942	3,091	7,563	3,470	4,697	693	5,390	0.64x
Columbia	478	389	442	425	269	108	377	1.13x
Wolverine	622	140	206	556	180	31	211	2.63x
V.F. Corporation	3,530	1,453	824	4,159	770	411	1,182	3.52x
PVH	2,304	1,994	702	3,597	503	424	926	3.88x
Crocs	1,231	383	130	1,483	239	104	343	4.33x
Under Armour	1,190	749	309	1,630	-61	152	91	17.87x
adidas	2,641	2,913	1,617	3,937	3,102	NOT COMPUTABLE	NOT COMPUTABLE	NOT COMPUTABLE

In millions of each company's reporting currency. adidas in euros, the other nine in dollars.

Three cells have to be read with their cause attached. Under Armour's 17.87x is the arithmetic of a negative earnings figure in the denominator, carrying a restructuring charge raised to approximately \$305m in May 2026. It is not a statement about the company's debt, which is \$1,190m before leases against \$309m of cash. Crocs is 4.33x with the HEYDUDE impairment inside the denominator and 1.37x without it, on the identical basis. adidas reports under IFRS 16, which capitalises every lease, so there is no operating lease expense inside its operating profit to add back and the American add-back has no adidas

equivalent. Its numerator is computable at €3,937m and is shown. Its denominator is not, and no company-defined substitute has been put in its place.

The lease liabilities column is the one a board should read twice. At PVH the leases are 46 per cent of the numerator, at adidas 52 per cent and at Ralph Lauren more than the drawn debt. Those obligations were created by the same channel decisions Chapter Three measures at the margin line, which is why the operating lever and the balance-sheet lever cannot be governed separately in this sector.

Capital allocation is the demand this sector concedes most readily

Sixteen episodes of external shareholder pressure sit on the public record at these ten companies between January 2012 and July 2026. Across the five episodes in which a named holder made discrete demands, twenty-one demands were put and 64 per cent were conceded. Capital allocation was the most conceded category of the seven, at 88 per cent, and every concession in it came inside a negotiated package rather than after a contest.

The clearest instance is Deckers, which concluded a strategic review on 26 October 2017 with a \$400m buyback while a dissident position was live. The pattern that follows from it is worth a board's attention. When an outside holder arrives in this sector, the demand most likely to be met is the one the company can grant without changing what it sells, where it sells it, or what it costs to make. Chapter Two shows that this is also the demand least likely to change the answer.

Outside shareholders push hardest on this lever, and win

Capital allocation is not only the lever managements pull most readily. It is the one outside shareholders most reliably extract when they arrive.

Named holders obtain two-thirds of what they ask for, and most of it on capital allocation

Across five episodes, named holders made 21 discrete demands, of which 64 per cent were conceded.

DEMAND	MADE	CONCEDED	PARTLY	REJECTED	OVERTAKEN
Board seats	4	3	0	1	0
Capital allocation	4	3	1	0	0
Portfolio and divestiture	3	2	0	1	0
Cost and margin	3	1	1	0	1
Governance	3	1	1	1	0
Strategy	2	1	0	1	0
Management change	2	1	0	0	1
Total	21	12	3	4	2

Capital allocation is the most conceded category at 88 per cent, and every concession in it came inside a negotiated package rather than after a contest. The voting base, acting without a named holder, made ten further demands and had 45 per cent met. Only one shareholder proposal in fifteen years carried a

majority of the votes cast at any of the ten, V.F.'s 2012 resolution to declassify the board, at 63.1 per cent, implemented in stages that ran until 2025.

Pay is the one demand this sector reliably concedes

Wolverine World Wide is the only one of the ten to have lost a say-on-pay vote. At the meeting of 21 April 2016 the advisory resolution drew 25,023,293 votes for against 59,734,719 against, support of 29.5 per cent. No holder claimed it, no Schedule 13D was filed and no letter is on the record. The programme was rebuilt before the next meeting and support returned to 97.5 per cent.

"Most notable were the significant changes made to our executive compensation program in advance of our annual meeting last year." Wolverine World Wide, Inc. DEF 14A, 27 March 2018

The shape repeats without a campaign attached. V.F. moved from 61.5 per cent in 2022 to 96.0 by 2025, NIKE from 54.0 per cent in 2020 to 93.6 in 2025. In none of the three does the ledger carry a named holder behind the result.

Control decides where pressure can win. It does not decide where it arrives

Four of the ten are founder or family controlled. Every campaign that sought board change went to a company where the vote could be won, three times out of three. Four of the six companies where an outside holder could in principle carry a vote drew nothing at all on the record searched.

PVH shows the limit. It has no controller, no second class of stock and a largest holder at 14.6 per cent, which makes it one of the most contestable registers in the group. In fifteen years it has drawn no Schedule 13D, no contested solicitation, no shareholder proposal reaching a ballot, no say-on-pay result below 92.1 per cent and no director below 92.4 per cent. Crocs has drawn nothing since Blackstone exited in 2019. At adidas, where no Schedule 13D regime applies and no activist filing, letter or contest has been identified, Nassef Sawiris was elected Chairman of the Supervisory Board at the annual meeting of 7 May 2026, which is a governance fact rather than a campaign.

The largest outside position in the sector is filed as an investment

Fairfax Financial Holdings and its affiliates reported 41,958,923 Under Armour Class A shares, 22.2 per cent of that class, on a Schedule 13D with an event date of 30 December 2025, rising to 45,300,872 shares, 24.0 per cent of the class, on Amendment No. 1 with an event date of 13 May 2026. The Schedule 13D states that the shares were acquired for investment purposes and records no present intention to effect any of the transactions specified in Item 4. Item 4 was not amended when the position rose from 22.2 to 24.0 per cent. Under Armour's fiscal 2026 proxy records the holding as 20.3 per cent of the Class A and Class B stock combined and 8.5 per cent of total voting power, against 64.6 per cent of total voting power held through the Class B stock by Kevin A. Plank. It is the largest outside economic position any single non-index holder holds in these ten companies.

What this leaves on the table

Nothing here argues for stopping a buyback. The point is proportion. A company that adds two points to its repurchase and loses four to its lease obligations has gone backwards while reporting a smaller share count.

Net debt in this sector is largely a decision about property and about what gets bought. It is settled in the room where the channel strategy and the acquisition are decided rather than in the treasury, and on the evidence of seven years it deserves roughly twice the attention the repurchase receives.

Where outside shareholders have arrived, this is the lever they have taken. Named holders won eighty-eight per cent of what they asked for on capital allocation, the highest concession rate of any category of demand. A board that has not put a number on its own balance sheet has left the most winnable argument in the sector available to somebody else.

What you buy and sell decides which margin and growth you get to have

In a sector built on one asset, capital allocation is an argument about payout. In a sector built on brands it is an argument about which brands to own, and these ten have that argument continuously. Perimeter is not one of the six columns in Chapter Two. It is the decision that sets several of them at once, because buying or selling a brand moves revenue, margin and net debt in the same instant.

Between 1 January 2012 and 28 July 2026 the ten announced sixty-four brand acquisitions, disposals, discontinuations and major restructurings. Thirty were disposals, seventeen acquisitions, thirteen restructurings and four discontinuations. Fifty-seven carry a date good enough to test the share price against, of which twenty-eight are the date of announcement or approval and the rest the date of completion.

COMPANY	BRAND DEALS ANNOUNCED	OF WHICH MEASURABLE
V.F. Corporation	13	13
Wolverine World Wide	10	9
PVH	9	8
Under Armour	9	9
Ralph Lauren	8	7
NIKE	5	4
adidas	3	2
Deckers	3	2
Columbia	2	1
Crocs	2	2

A brand transaction never appears as its own line in a shareholder return

There is no perimeter column in the decomposition, and that is not an omission. Buying or selling a brand creates no value at the moment it happens. It changes what the company's revenue growth, its margin and its multiple are going to be for years afterwards, and those are the columns it turns up in.

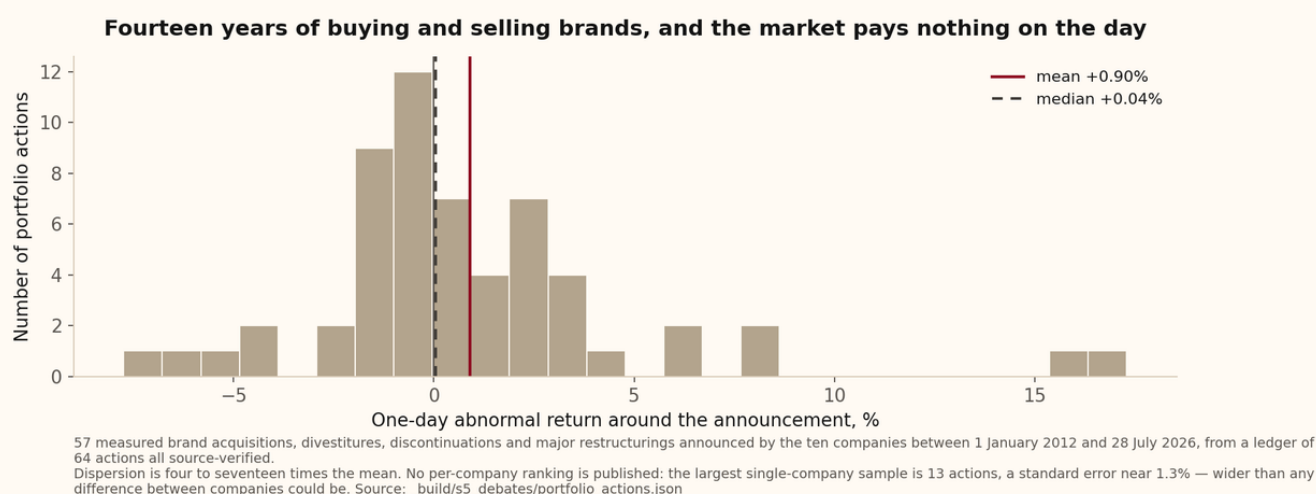
That single fact explains what otherwise looks like a contradiction. Across fifty-seven measurable transactions in fourteen years the announcement day carries no verdict at all, and yet the perimeter decisions of the past decade explain a large part of a three-hundred-and-forty-five-point spread. Both are true, because the day of the press release is the one moment at which nobody, the buyer included, yet knows which of the three columns the deal will land in.

The useful question is not what a deal was worth on the day. It is which transactions changed a company's margin and growth, and what those had in common.

The announcement day settles nothing that can be measured

Across the fifty-seven measurable actions, the middle outcome on the first day was a move of plus 0.04 per cent against the peer group and the average was plus 0.90 per cent. Individual outcomes were scattered about 4.2 per cent either side of that average. Over a full week the middle outcome was minus 0.78 per cent and the average plus 0.59 per cent, with a scatter of 10.1 per cent.

Both averages are positive and neither can be separated from zero on fifty-seven observations. The range the one-day average could plausibly occupy runs from minus 0.2 per cent to plus 2.0 per cent, and the one-week range from minus 2.1 to plus 3.2. That is wide enough to contain a modest real effect in either direction, so the finding here is the absence of a reliable verdict rather than a demonstration that the announcement is worth nothing.



Both averages are smaller than the day-to-day movement in these shares, so neither can be read as the market paying for the transaction. The scatter around them is four to seventeen times their own size. On the one-week figure the evidence is consistent with anything between a loss of 2.1 per cent and a gain of 3.2 per cent, wide enough to contain a modest real effect in either direction. Nor is this an artefact of dating some deals from completion. Take only the twenty-eight dated at announcement or approval and the first-day middle outcome rises to plus 0.41 per cent while the one-week middle outcome falls to minus 1.22 per cent.

No ranking of the ten as acquirers or sellers appears here, because the busiest has thirteen actions on the record and an average built on thirteen observations could be out by roughly 1.3 per cent either way, wider than any difference likely to exist between them. Four of the largest observations fall on days that carried other news, including both V.F. Supreme events and Under Armour's UNLESS Collective acquisition, which landed on a results day. They are reported rather than removed. The same silence attaches to every other corporate event measured in this review, and it is stated once here because this is the largest sample in which it can be seen.

Both facts are true, and the reason is the time it takes for a brand to prove itself

The silence on the day and the size of the perimeter effect over seven years are not in tension. On the morning of a press release the only things known are the price and the plan. What is not known is whether the acquired brand will earn its cost of capital, whether the sold brand was carrying the group's margin or dragging on it, and what the buyer will do with the proceeds. Each resolves over three to five years, inside the operating and balance-sheet columns of Chapter Two. The three

cases below took four, four and three years, and each moved its company's return by more than any single day's reaction to any deal in the ledger.

V.F. paid \$2.1bn for Supreme, sold it for \$1.5bn, and the shares rose on both days

V.F. announced the acquisition of Supreme on 9 November 2020 and closed it on 28 December. Scott Roe, then chief financial officer, gave the terms on 27 January 2021: "As announced on December 28, we closed the acquisition for an aggregate purchase price of approximately \$2.1 billion, subject to the customary adjustments." On the same call the chief executive, Steve Rendle, set the ambition: "We are confident that the Supreme transaction will serve as a spark for another layer of transformative growth and value creation for VF and our stakeholders." The guidance attached was at least \$500m of revenue in fiscal 2022. The cash flow statement records \$2.0bn paid, net of cash received.

The reversal took four years. In fiscal 2023 V.F. wrote down the Supreme reporting unit goodwill and trademark by \$735.0m before tax, which the annual report states "reduced earnings per share by \$1.72". On 16 July 2024 the company agreed a sale to EssilorLuxottica at a base price of \$1.500bn and closed on 1 October. The fiscal 2025 accounts record proceeds of \$1.506bn, "net of cash sold, resulting in a final after-tax loss on sale of \$126.6 million", and a total charge through discontinued operations that year of \$259.0m. Bracken Darrell, by then chief executive, described the decision on 6 August 2024: "We announced the sales of Supreme for \$1.5 billion 3 weeks ago. To be clear, I love the Supreme Brand and I love the Supreme team."

Both events produced a move of plus 8.2 per cent against a basket of the other nine, and plus 16.0 and plus 30.5 per cent respectively over the week. The same asset, bought and sold, produced the two largest positive one-day reactions in V.F.'s fourteen-year portfolio record.

Supreme is the sharpest instance of a continuous programme. V.F. bought Williamson-Dickie in October 2017 at a price recorded at \$800.7m, sold the Occupational Workwear business in June 2021 for \$616.9m of net proceeds, and sold the Dickies brand itself on 12 November 2025, receiving "proceeds of \$600.5 million, net of cash sold" and booking a pre-tax gain of \$127.2m. Paul Vogel, chief financial officer, framed the last of those on the second-quarter fiscal 2026 call: "While we are big fans of Dickies, we believe this divestiture will help further accelerate the transformation of V.F. back to being a growth company while also further enabling us to pay down our debt." Long-term debt came down \$2.2bn over two financial years, funded by the two sales. The seven-year decomposition still reads minus seventy-five per cent, with margin taking fifty-two points, the multiple sixty and net debt forty-three.

Crocs bought a brand the size of itself and wrote off \$738m of it

Crocs announced the acquisition of HEYDUDE on 22 December 2021 and closed it on 17 February 2022, paying \$2.3bn for what the annual report describes as "acquired 100% of the equity of a privately-owned casual footwear brand business", allocating approximately \$710.0m to goodwill and \$1,780.0m to intangibles. Crocs was then a \$2.3bn-revenue company earning a 29.5 per cent operating margin, buying an asset roughly equal to its own annual sales.

The promise was dated and specific. On the fourth-quarter call of 16 February 2022, days before closing, Andrew Rees told investors: "We're excited about the potential of HEYDUDE and incredibly confident in our ability to build a \$1 billion brand by 2024." HEYDUDE revenue was \$949.4m in 2023, its peak, then \$824.1m in 2024 and \$714.8m in 2025. In the second quarter of 2025 Crocs recorded non-cash impairment charges of \$430.0m against the HEYDUDE trademark and \$307.0m against the reporting unit

goodwill, \$738.1m of impairments for the year in total. Susan L. Healy, chief financial officer, gave the cause on 7 August 2025: "This impairment comes as a result of a longer-than-expected time line to stabilize the HEYDUDE Brand and return it to growth, due in part to a weaker U.S. consumer and the disproportionate impact of tariffs on HEYDUDE product." Because the impairments are not deductible, the effective tax rate for 2025 was 211.3 per cent on pre-tax income of \$73.0m, and the group reported a net loss of \$81m on record revenue.

Group revenue rose 74.7 per cent, from \$2.313bn in 2021 to \$4.041bn in 2025, while group income from operations fell from \$683.1m to \$149.5m and the operating margin from 29.5 to 3.7 per cent. Excluding the impairment, the Crocs brand alone earned \$1,111.7m of segment operating income in 2025, more than the entire group made in 2021. The acquired brand lost \$668.9m at the segment line in the same year. Chapter Two records the result as a hundred and nineteen points of revenue against seventy-three points of margin, the widest such gap in the sector.

Wolverine sold four businesses, shrank by a third, and raised gross margin 7.1 points

Wolverine reversed a decade of buying. It sold the Champion footwear trademarks for the United States and Canada in June 2022, Keds in February 2023, the United States and Asian performance leathers businesses in August and December 2023, forty per cent of the Saucony intellectual property in China and Hong Kong into a joint venture in December 2023, and the global Sperry business on 10 January 2024. Group revenue fell from \$2.685bn in 2022 to \$1.755bn in 2024, a contraction of 35 per cent.

The financial result was the opposite of the revenue line. Gross margin rose from 39.9 per cent in 2022 to 44.5 in 2024 and 47.0 in 2025, an improvement of 7.1 points and the largest in the review, and operating margin moved from minus 7.7 per cent to plus 8.2. Chris Hufnagel, promoted to president and chief executive in 2023, set out the sequence in advance and delivered it in that order. On 8 May 2024 he said: "We've said consistently that we believe our turnaround will be led by margin improvement, which we're seeing today, followed by our planned inflection to growth in the second half of the year." On 19 February 2025 he described the mechanism: "We reshaped and simplified our portfolio of brands to better align with long-term macro consumer trends and we developed stronger capabilities to underpin our new brand-building model." The growth then arrived where the portfolio had been pointed. On 26 February 2026 he reported that "Merrell drove high single-digit growth for the year, while Saucony posted a record year with a 30% increase compared to 2024".

Over the seven-year window of Chapter Two, Wolverine returned minus thirty-eight per cent, with revenue costing nineteen points and the multiple forty-six. Measured from 29 December 2023, the point at which the disposals were largely complete and the margin work was visible, the return is plus a hundred and seventeen per cent. The disposals were not distress sales dressed as strategy. They were executed while the company still had the option to hold, and the proceeds went to debt, which reached its lowest level since the second quarter of 2021.

The heaviest disposal programme in the sector ran with no outside holder present

Wolverine executed more portfolio actions than any of the ten except V.F., with no Schedule 13D, no letter and no contest against it on the record searched. V.F., the only one of the ten to settle with an activist, executed nine of its own before the campaign arrived. Three dated brand actions in the ledger fell inside a window when a documented outside position was publicly live at the same company, and extending that window to twenty-four months adds one more. No entry in the ledger is attributed by any company, in any filing or release read for this review, to shareholder pressure.

Who forces a perimeter decision, and what the market pays them for it

The transactions above were almost all management's own initiative. The exceptions, and the single contested election in this sector's fifteen-year record, are worth setting out because they show what outside pressure can and cannot move.

One proxy contest in fifteen years, decided by about eleven per cent of the shares present

Across the nine American registrants there is exactly one contested election in the period, Marcato Capital Management at Deckers Outdoor, voted at the annual meeting of 14 December 2017. Every contested-solicitation filing made by or against any of the ten in fifteen years belongs to that single episode.

With 28,358,796 shares present of 32,036,625 outstanding, the strongest dissident nominee drew 12,346,523 votes for and the weakest company nominee she was contesting drew 15,450,485. The margin was 3,103,962 shares, about 10.9 per cent of the shares present, after the dissident slate had been cut from ten names to three and the proxy adviser had recommended for all three.

On the same ballot the dissident's proposal to repeal every bylaw the board had adopted without shareholder approval since 24 May 2016 drew 14,343,525 votes for against 13,801,508 against, and is recorded as not approved, because the standard was a majority of shares outstanding rather than of shares voted. That distinction, rather than the director vote, is the most portable governance fact here.

The pivot of that contest was the credit agreement rather than the register

The decisive fight was over change-of-control acceleration. The dissident asked the board on 3 October 2017 to approve its nominees as continuing directors so their election would not trigger it, the board declined on 18 October 2017, and the dissident filed in the Delaware Court of Chancery on 23 October 2017. Those court papers are pleadings and not findings, and no judgment or dismissal has been located. The company set out the mechanism itself:

"The replacement of a majority of the members of our Board in a proxy contest could have consequences under our material agreements, including constituting an event of default under our credit agreement and permitting the accelerated vesting of certain equity awards granted to our employees." Deckers Outdoor Corporation, Form 10-Q, 9 November 2017

That provision operates at all ten regardless of who owns the shares, and it is the only mechanism here available to a company with one class of stock and a ten per cent largest holder. This review takes no position on its merits.

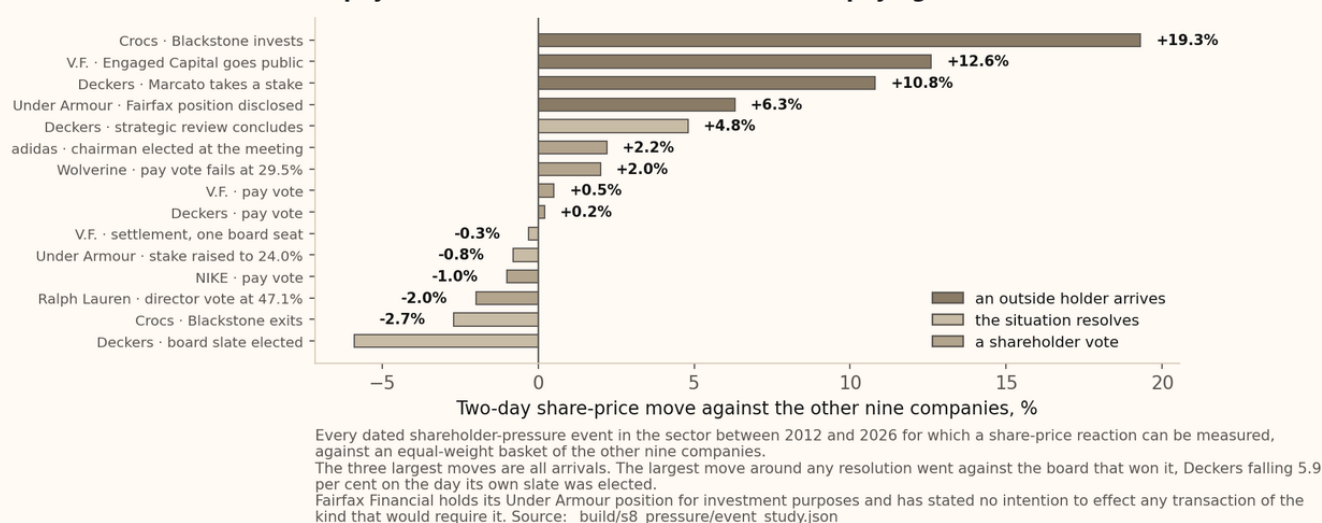
The market pays when an outside holder arrives and does not pay again at the resolution

Measured against the other nine as a basket, three events in fifteen years produced a reaction larger than ordinary trading in these names, and all three were the arrival of an outside holder.

EVENT	DATE	TWO-DAY MOVE AGAINST THE PEER BASKET
Crocs, Blackstone package announced	30 Dec 2013	+19.3%
V.F., Engaged Capital position becomes public	17 Oct 2023	+12.6%

EVENT	DATE	TWO-DAY MOVE AGAINST THE PEER BASKET
Deckers, Marcato Schedule 13D	8 Feb 2017	+10.8%
Under Armour, Fairfax Schedule 13D	5 Jan 2026	+6.3%
Deckers, strategic review concluded with a \$400m buyback	26 Oct 2017	+4.8%
adidas, AGM elects new Supervisory Board chairman	7 May 2026	+2.2%
V.F., settlement with Engaged Capital	13 Feb 2024	-0.3%
Under Armour, Schedule 13D amended to 24.0%	15 May 2026	-0.8%
Deckers, annual meeting, board slate elected	14 Dec 2017	-5.9%

The market pays when a holder arrives and does not pay again when the matter is settled



The smallest of the three arrivals is nearly twice the largest move around any resolution. That largest resolution move went against the board that won it, Deckers falling 5.9 per cent against the group over the two days around the meeting at which its own directors were elected. The V.F. settlement moved the shares by three-tenths of a point.

The heaviest disposal programme in the sector ran with no outside holder present

Three of the dated brand actions in Chapter Seven's ledger fell inside a window when a documented outside position was publicly live at the same company, and extending that window to twenty-four months from the start of a campaign adds one more. No entry in the ledger is attributed by any company, in any filing or release read for this review, to shareholder pressure, and calendar proximity is not causation.

The company that sold the most brands is the one nobody approached. Wolverine executed more portfolio actions than any of the ten except V.F., with no Schedule 13D, no letter and no contest against it on the record searched. V.F., the only one of the ten to settle with an activist, executed nine of its own before the campaign arrived.

What separates a disposal that paid from one that did not

Three transactions in this sector changed the shape of a company. Wolverine sold four businesses, shrank revenue by a third and raised gross margin 7.1 points. Crocs bought a brand close to its own

size and absorbed everything the core brand earned. V.F. bought and sold the same asset inside four years for a loss of six hundred million dollars.

What the one that worked had, and the others did not, was a margin arithmetic stated in advance. Wolverine was selling businesses that earned less than the ones it kept, and the gross margin line moved in the year the disposals closed. Neither acquisition carried a published statement of what the acquired brand would do to group margin, and in both cases group margin is where the answer eventually appeared.

The practical test, on fifty-seven transactions, is whether a board can say before signing which of the three columns the deal is expected to move, by how much, and by when. It is the same test the plans in the next chapter fail. The sector's record on brand transactions is considerably better than its record on the promises it makes about them.

The multiple is worth sixty-two points, and three companies show what earns it

The multiple is the one column in Chapter Two management does not set directly. It took away an average of twelve points of return across the nine decomposable companies, and its range is the widest in the table after margin. Enterprise value against earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation rose 49 per cent at PVH over the window, from 8.8 times to 13.1, 18 per cent at Crocs from 21.7 to 25.6, 17 per cent at Ralph Lauren from 13.0 to 15.2 and 1 per cent at Columbia from 12.7 to 12.8. It fell 5 per cent at Deckers, from 10.3 to 9.7, on the way to the sector's largest return, 29 per cent at adidas from 15.4 to 11.0, 31 per cent at NIKE from 22.3 to 15.3, 37 per cent at Wolverine from 17.9 to 11.3 and 45 per cent at V.F. from 25.2 to 13.8.

Those movements are usually explained by cycle, sentiment or category. A simpler reading is available. What the market prices is the probability that a plan put in front of it will be delivered, and this sector has fourteen years of evidence on that question.

Sixty-two points, and the cheapest lever to move

Separating yourself from the field on the multiple has been worth sixty-two points of shareholder return here. Less than either operating lever, and more than the balance sheet, the buyback and the dividend.

It is also the only lever on the list that costs nothing to pull. Growing revenue takes years and holding margin takes discipline. What the market will pay for a given stream of earnings is decided by whether it believes the company's account of what happens next, and the evidence in this chapter is that the sector has spent fourteen years teaching it not to.

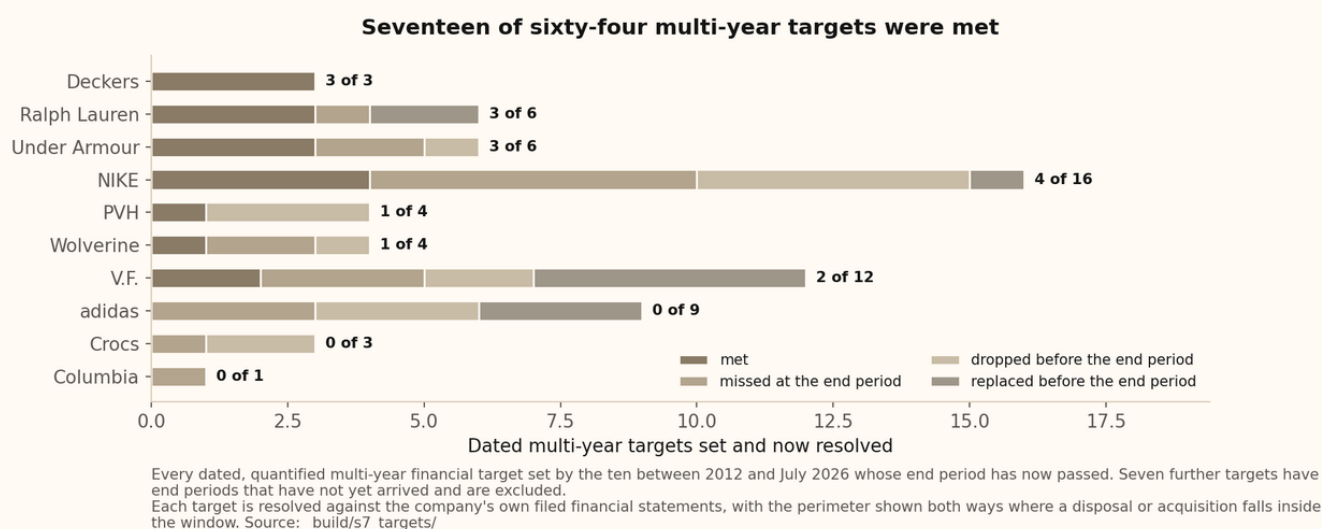
Three of the ten publish a dated multi-year target, the external assumption underneath it, and a sensitivity that lets a reader convert a different view of the world into a cash number. adidas, Deckers and V.F. Corporation. The rest of this chapter is about why the other seven have made the market's job impossible, and what that has cost them.

Seventeen of sixty-four resolved targets were hit

The ten have put seventy-one dated, quantified, multi-year targets into public since 2012, each carrying a number, a named end period, a verbatim quotation and a source. Sixty-four have resolved and seven have end periods still ahead. Seventeen were hit, nineteen were missed at their end period, seventeen were abandoned before it and eleven were superseded by a different number for the same measure. Twenty-eight of the sixty-four therefore left the record without ever being marked, against seventeen that were met.

COMPANY	TARGETS RESOLVED	HIT	HIT RATE
Deckers	3	3	100%
Ralph Lauren	6	3	50%
Under Armour	6	3	50%
NIKE	16	4	25%

COMPANY	TARGETS RESOLVED	HIT	HIT RATE
PVH	4	1	25%
Wolverine World Wide	4	1	25%
V.F. Corporation	12	2	17%
adidas	9	0	0%
Crocs	3	0	0%
Columbia Sportswear	1	0	0%



NIKE and V.F. account for twenty-eight of the sixty-four resolutions, so their rates rest on more evidence than anyone else's. Columbia accounts for one, and the number behind it could not be recovered. Its three-year growth rate, set at the September 2022 investor day, survives only as a chief financial officer's concession four months later that "While our initial 2023 outlook is below the three-year growth CAGR we outlined at the Investor Day". Net sales then fell from \$3.464bn in 2022 to \$3.397bn in 2025. Read that table against the multiple movements above. The two highest hit rates, Deckers and Ralph Lauren, belong to the only two companies whose return required no rescue from another lever, and the lowest, V.F. at two of twelve, carries the sector's largest de-rating.

No earnings target has been met in fourteen years

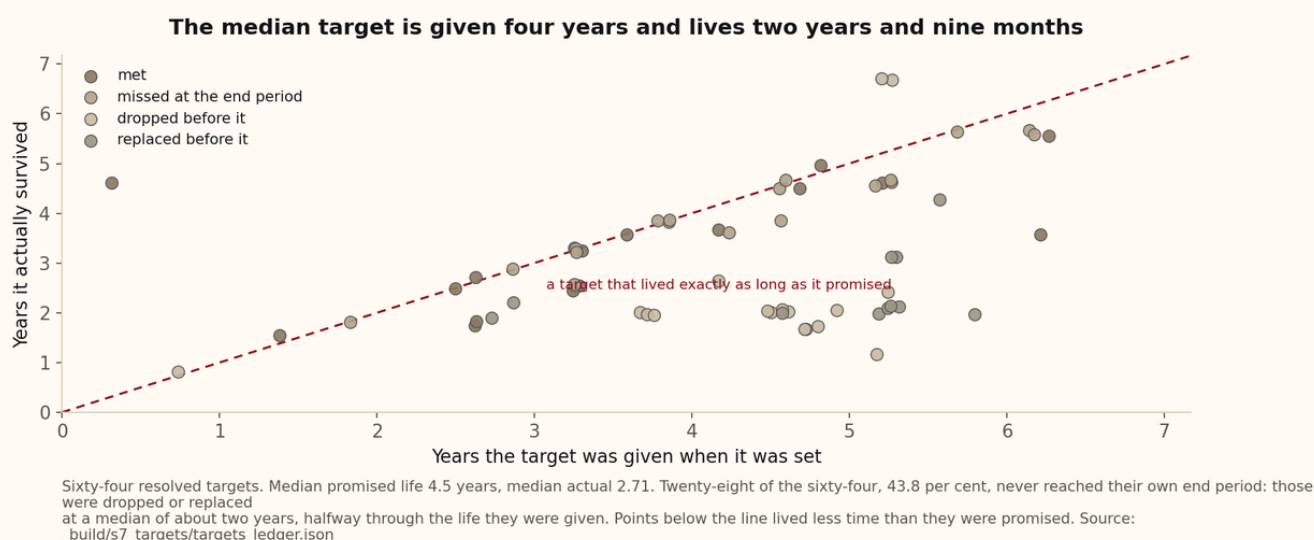
WHAT THE TARGET MEASURED	HIT	RESOLVED
Cost programmes	1	1
Cash and returns	3	7
Mix and penetration	2	5
Margin	5	18
Revenue	6	24
Earnings	0	8

Three earnings targets were missed at the end period: NIKE's mid-teens earnings-per-share growth to fiscal 2020, which produced a compound decline of 2.9 per cent a year, the same goal reset to fiscal

2023, which produced 4.3 per cent from the fiscal 2017 base, and Under Armour's \$800m of 2018 operating income. Four were superseded, all at adidas and V.F., and one abandoned. The reason is arithmetic. An earnings target is a margin target multiplied by a revenue target and levered by the share count and the tax rate, so it compounds the error in both inputs, and here both are missed more often than met. A cash or a mix target, where the record is five of twelve, is the more testable commitment. The one resolved cost programme was hit, PVH's savings of over \$100m a year by the end of 2023, with three live: NIKE's up to \$2bn, PVH's \$200m to \$300m and Columbia's \$125m to \$150m. A cost target is the only number here that sits inside management's own income statement.

The median target lasts two years and nine months against a stated four

Measured from the day a target was set to the day it was hit, missed, abandoned or superseded, the median life is 2.71 years against a median stated horizon of 4.0 years. The whole of that gap comes from the twenty-eight targets, 43.8 per cent of the population, killed before their own end year arrived, at a median of about two years. Those that ran their course lasted 3.82 years when missed and 3.29 when hit, against 2.00 for the abandoned and 2.09 for the superseded. A board should underwrite a target to the day it will be resolved rather than the day it points at.



What changes after a first setback is not the horizon but the specificity. Split all seventy-one targets by whether they were set before or after that company's first missed, abandoned or superseded target, and the median stated horizon is 4.0 years on both sides. Beforehand, eighteen of thirty-three named an absolute level. Afterwards, twelve of thirty-four did. The commitment migrates from fifty billion dollars of revenue by fiscal 2020 and \$7.5bn by 2018 towards high single-digit revenue growth and mid-teens operating margin, which are numbers a company can meet at several different sizes. NIKE, adidas, Ralph Lauren, Under Armour and V.F. all made that move.

COMPANY	TARGET	SET	END PERIOD	DELIVERED	SHORTFALL
Under Armour	\$800m of operating income	16 Sep 2015	2018	\$159m as reported	-80.1%
V.F. Corporation	more than \$8bn of cumulative free cash flow	25 Sep 2019	FY2024	\$2.0bn	-75%
NIKE	owned digital at 40% of NIKE Brand revenue	24 Jun 2021	FY2025	c.21%	-48% of the target level

COMPANY	TARGET	SET	END PERIOD	DELIVERED	SHORTFALL
Wolverine World Wide	\$4.1bn of revenue	Jun 2013	2018	\$2.239bn	-45.4%
Crocs	\$5bn of Crocs brand revenue	14 Sep 2021	2026	\$3.3bn in 2025	c.-34%

Where a disposal sits between a target and its outcome, both figures are shown. Adding back roughly \$0.4bn of Stride Rite sales gives Wolverine about \$2.6bn for 2018, 36.6 per cent short rather than 45.4. PVH's \$12.5bn for 2025 delivered \$8.95bn reported, or about \$10.0bn adding back the Heritage Brands and Russia exits, 21 per cent short rather than 28.4. Crocs disclosed the Russia exit and currency as roughly \$200m of its own shortfall, and adidas disclosed the pandemic as the cause of its 2020 miss, although its 2019 revenue of EUR 23.640bn was already 5.4 per cent below the bottom of the range with a year still to run. Under Armour's \$800m, named by Chip Molloy on 25 October 2016 as one of the "goals of achieving \$7.5 billion of revenues and \$800 million of operating income by 2018", resolved at \$159m. () V.F.'s cash goal delivered about \$2.0bn of operating cash flow less capital expenditure across fiscal 2020 to fiscal 2024.

One company has marked its own homework. At its September 2025 investor day Ralph Lauren published a scorecard of the plan set in September 2022, against five commitments, four met and one near. Justin Picicci confirmed the margin leg on 22 May 2025: "we're really pleased with where we came in this year and how we over-delivered on our three-year commitment into our 15% operating margin target in 2022 rates at the end of fiscal 2025." No other company of the ten has done it.

Six of the ten have published nothing dated beyond the coming year

A plan can be tested from outside only if the company has published three things: a dated target more than a year away, the assumption about the outside world it rests on, and a figure telling a reader who takes a different view of that assumption what the difference is worth in cash.

Three of ten publish everything an outsider needs to test the plan

	A dated multi-year financial target	The external assumption behind it, published	A per-unit sensitivity an outsider can stress
Deckers	Yes	Yes	Yes
V.F.	Yes	Yes	Yes
adidas	Yes	Partial	Yes
NIKE	No	Yes	Yes
PVH	No	Yes	Yes
Columbia	No	Yes	Yes
Wolverine	No	Yes	Yes
Ralph Lauren	Yes	Partial	No
Under Armour	No	Partial	Yes
Crocs	No	Partial	Yes

Evidence as published to 28 July 2026 across annual reports, quarterly filings, investor decks and earnings calls of the ten companies. Six of the ten publish no dated multi-year financial target at all, so for those the second and third tests have nothing to attach to. Every verdict is supported by a verbatim quotation with its source in `_build/s4_testability/`.

Deckers, V.F., adidas and Ralph Lauren publish a dated multi-year target. NIKE, PVH, Under Armour, Crocs, Columbia and Wolverine do not. That list includes the largest company in the sector, whose next multi-year framework has been deferred to an investor day set for 16 and 17 November 2026, and PVH, whose 2025 targets reached their year without being met and have not been replaced. In all six cases the

second and third tests have nothing to attach to. All ten guide the current year and most guide the current quarter, so what is missing is horizon rather than candour. On the third test nine of the ten pass, and every one of those passes is the tariff disclosure Chapter One sets out. Three companies clear all three tests: adidas, Deckers and V.F.

Not one company publishes the exchange rates behind its own currency-adjusted guidance

Five of the ten publish a group growth rate stated as though exchange rates had not moved. Producing that figure requires choosing a set of rates, and none of the ten publishes the rates it chose. A reader who holds a different view of the dollar therefore cannot rebuild the guidance, or tell whether the same measure quoted in two consecutive quarters was built on the same basis. The other five publish no group figure at all. The only currency figure with a number attached anywhere in the ten sets of filings sits in the hedging book rather than the trading business, and the filings say it largely cancels out. Ralph Lauren's annual report for the year ended 28 March 2026 states that a ten per cent move in the dollar against the currencies in its hedge portfolio would change the fair value of that portfolio by approximately \$141 million, and then adds: "This hypothetical net change in fair value should ultimately be largely offset by the net change in the related underlying hedged items." That tells a reader what the hedges are worth rather than what a weaker dollar would do to sales or to margin.

Analysts follow a target as far out as it runs and will not forecast profit without one

The natural assumption is that the sell-side stops forecasting before a company's own plan runs out. It does the opposite. Nineteen houses publish 2028 estimates for adidas, whose target year is 2028, thirteen publish fiscal 2028 for Ralph Lauren, sixteen publish fiscal 2028 for V.F., and five reach Deckers' fiscal 2030 framework. The gap sits in the profit line. Deckers' fiscal 2030 earnings target is modelled by three analysts, and V.F.'s ten per cent margin target by three. Under Armour has eleven analysts publishing a fiscal 2029 revenue line and exactly one publishing a fiscal 2029 earnings line. Wolverine has eight publishing 2027 and 2028 revenue against a company horizon that stops in 2026. Crocs thins earliest, from ten analysts on 2027 to four on 2028. The market will build a revenue line as far out as anyone asks for one, and will not build an earnings line without a dated company number to anchor it to.

The market pays when an outside holder arrives and does not pay again when the matter resolves

Of the sixteen episodes of external shareholder pressure on the record since 2012, three produced a reaction larger than ordinary trading in these names, and all three were the arrival of an outside holder: Crocs up 19.3 per cent against the peer basket on the Blackstone package of 30 December 2013, V.F. up 12.6 per cent when Engaged Capital became public on 17 October 2023, and Deckers up 10.8 per cent on the Marcato Schedule 13D of 8 February 2017. The V.F. settlement of 13 February 2024 moved the shares three-tenths of a point, and Deckers fell 5.9 per cent around the meeting at which its own directors were elected.

Abandonments are priced the same way. Across seven dated abandonments the average two-day move against the peer group was minus 0.84 per cent, with a spread of 9.32 points around it, and two of the three largest moves were upward. Crocs gained 9.3 per cent on 15 February 2024, when Andrew Rees

said: "So I don't think that it's realistic to achieve the \$5 billion by 2026." adidas gained 7.1 per cent on 9 November 2022, the day its 2025 plan was set aside. NIKE's fiscal 2025 goal bullets, among them "Gross margin rate in the high 40s by fiscal 2025;", simply left the annual report filed on 20 July 2023, three weeks after the goal had been reaffirmed on the fourth-quarter call, and the two-day move was plus 1.25 per cent.

A market that pays on arrival, ignores the settlement and prices an abandoned plan as good news had already stopped counting the plan. That is what the multiple column in Chapter Two measures, and it is the one lever here a management team can move only by resolving the targets it has already set.

Three things that are cheap to fix

Nothing here argues that a company should promise more. The record says the opposite, and a sector that has met seventeen of sixty-four targets does not need a sixty-fifth. What it needs is for the ones it does publish to be checkable, which is a disclosure decision rather than a strategic one.

Publish a date. Six of the ten have nothing dated beyond the coming year, so an analyst building a profit line past next December works without an anchor and mostly declines to. Eleven analysts publish a fiscal 2029 revenue line for Under Armour, and one publishes a profit line.

Publish the assumption underneath it. Nine of the ten now put a currency figure on their tariff bill because policy compelled it, and every one of them found it possible. Not one publishes the exchange rates behind its own constant-currency guidance, which is a smaller disclosure covering a larger uncertainty.

Publish a sensitivity. V.F. has stated roughly fifteen million dollars of tariff cost per percentage point of rate, which lets any reader who disagrees with the rate rebuild the number themselves. It is one sentence in a results presentation.

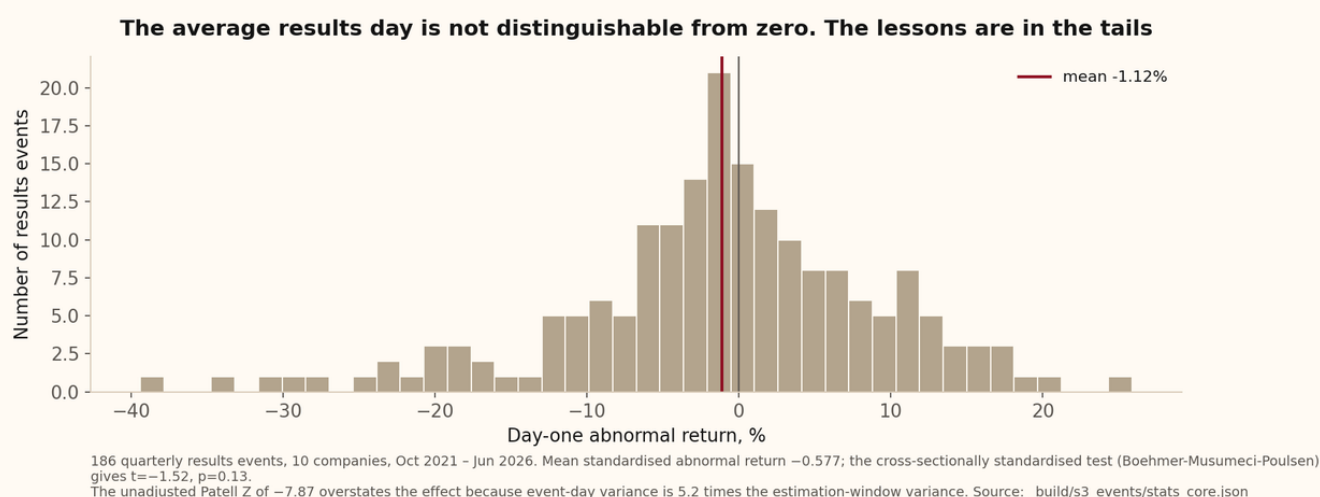
A company doing all three asks to be measured on its own terms rather than on the sector's record. On the evidence of the past seven years, the sector's record is the more expensive of the two.

Fresh guidance no longer moves the shares. Its direction still does

The ten companies in this review reported quarterly results 186 times between October 2021 and June 2026. What happened to their shares on those days, measured against the rest of the group so that a sector-wide move does not count as company news, is the best available evidence on what this market is actually paying for.

Most results days are not events

The typical results day in this sector produces a share-price move of about minus 0.7 per cent against the peer group, which is indistinguishable from no move at all. The distribution is wide and the weight of it sits in the middle.



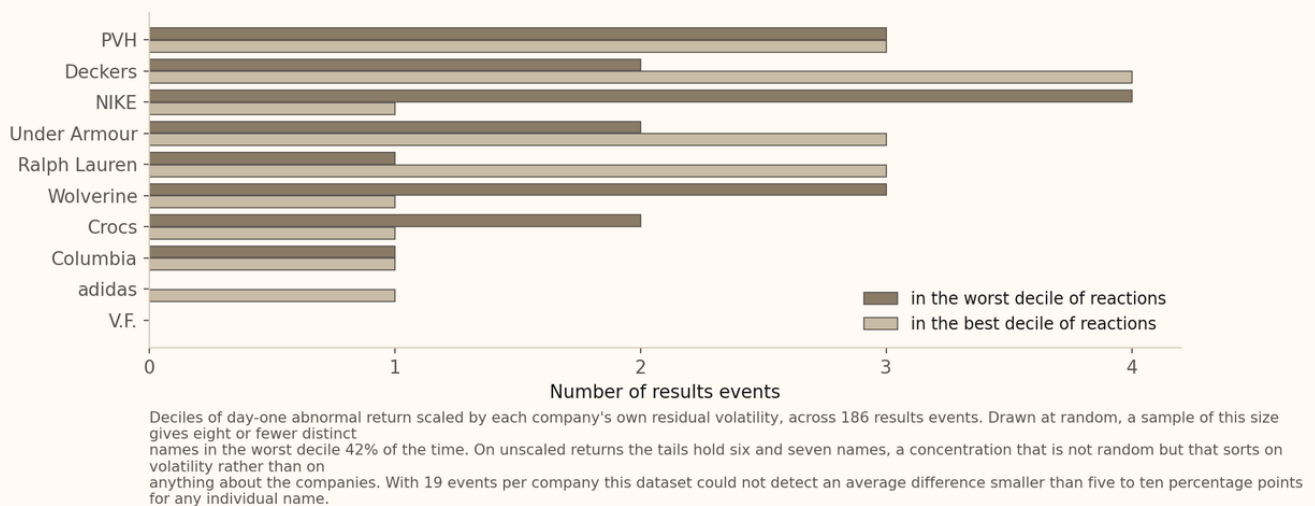
That is worth registering because it contradicts the working assumption behind most investor-relations effort in this sector, which is that a good quarter is rewarded and a poor one punished roughly in proportion. It is not. The interesting days are the eighteen best and the eighteen worst, and on the eighteen worst the average company lost twenty-two per cent against its peers in a single session.

One qualification cuts the other way and belongs here rather than in a footnote. These ten report in overlapping windows, and four in five of the 186 results days fall within a week of another covered company's. Group the events by month instead of treating each as independent and the average does become distinguishable from zero. The effect is small on either treatment, and nothing in this chapter turns on it.

The extremes are a sector phenomenon, not a company one

Eight of the ten have had at least one results day in the sector's worst eighteen. Nine of the ten have had at least one in the best eighteen. Neither is remarkable: shuffle the same 186 days at random and you would see eight or fewer companies in the worst eighteen roughly two times in five.

Eight of ten companies appear in the worst decile, nine of ten in the best



Scale the moves by each company's own normal daily volatility, as this chapter does throughout, and that is the picture. Leave them unscaled and the extremes look more concentrated, at six companies rather than eight. The four companies missing from the unscaled list are the four least volatile in the group, which is a fact about their share registers rather than about their results.

This review publishes no ranking of the ten by results-day performance, and readers should be wary of any they are shown elsewhere. With nineteen results days per company, a real difference in average reaction would have to exceed five to ten percentage points before this evidence could see it. That is a limit on what can be known, not a finding that the ten behave alike.

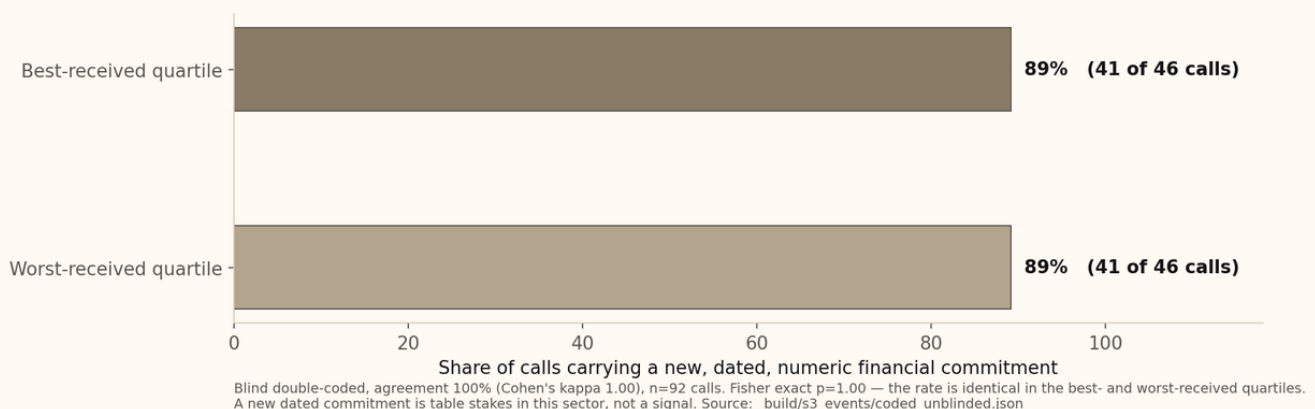
Every company commits, and the market cannot tell them apart

The ninety-two results days at the two extremes were read blind. Company names, brand names, years and months were stripped from the transcripts before reading, no share-price information was available to the readers, and two people read the same ninety-two independently.

Asked whether management had put a new, dated, numeric commitment about a future period on the table that day, the two readers agreed on every single call.

Eighty-nine per cent of the best-received calls carried one. So did eighty-nine per cent of the worst. Forty-one of forty-six in each group.

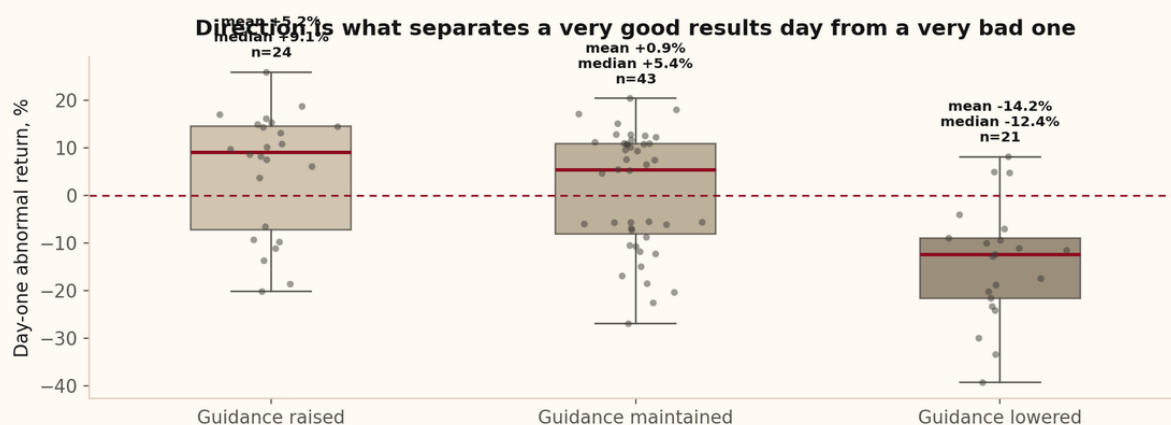
The sector commits on almost every call, and the market does not distinguish



The practical consequence for anyone preparing a results presentation is direct. Issuing a fresh number is not what earns the reaction, because every competitor issues one too, and the market long ago stopped treating it as news. A sample of ninety-two would not detect a difference between the two groups smaller than about thirteen percentage points, so this does not prove the effect is exactly zero. It does rule out the large effect the practice assumes.

What the market does react to

The difference between a very good results day and a very bad one is whether the outlook went up or down. Among the best-received calls, thirty-eight per cent raised guidance and seven per cent cut it. Among the worst, sixteen per cent raised and forty-one per cent cut. Of everything read blind, this is the only variable that survives a strict test.



The 92 results events in the best and worst quartiles of market reaction, 10 companies, Oct 2021 - Jun 2026. Guidance direction double-coded blind, Cohen's kappa 0.95. Contingency test across the two tails $p=0.0009$, the only coded variable clearing correction. These are tail events by construction. Assigning the same labels at random across the same 92 calls already produces +3.6% and -10.9%, so roughly two thirds of the gap is selection. Within each tail the coding no longer separates cleanly ($p=0.05$ and $p=0.10$). The magnitudes are not an estimate of what a raise or a cut is worth. Source: `_build/s3_events/`

The moves attached to each are plus 5.2 per cent where the outlook was raised, on twenty-four calls, plus 0.9 per cent where it was held, on forty-three, and minus 14.2 per cent where it was cut, on twenty-one.

Those figures are not the price of a raise or a cut, and it matters that they are not read that way. These ninety-two calls are the extremes by construction, raises cluster at the good end and cuts at the bad end, and shuffling the labels at random across the same ninety-two calls already produces plus 3.6 and minus 10.9. Two-thirds of the gap is that selection. What remains is about a point and a half on the upside and three and a half on the downside. The direction is what separates a very good day from a very bad one. This evidence cannot put a price on either.

Delivery does not compensate. The tone management struck at the opening of each call was read on the same blind basis, and the two readers again agreed on every one. Eighty per cent of the best-received calls opened confidently. So did sixty-seven per cent of the worst.

Beating consensus matters, but only when the beat or miss is large

Across all 186 results days, both the earnings surprise and the revenue surprise against consensus track the share-price reaction, at one day, three days and a week.

Look only at the middle half of the distribution, the ninety-four ordinary results days, and that relationship vanishes completely. At one day the correlation is minus 0.02 for earnings and minus 0.04 for revenue. Nothing appears at any horizon.

So consensus matters at the extremes and nowhere else. A large miss is punished in proportion. A small one is not visible in the share price at all, and a company that spends the quarter managing toward a penny is managing toward something the market does not appear to read.

Between the earnings line and the revenue line, this evidence cannot say which the market weights more heavily. They are close on every measure and the difference between them does not hold up to testing.

The unadjusted averages, arranged by what each company beat and what it missed, are worth setting beside that:

RESULT AGAINST CONSENSUS	RESULTS DAYS	MOVE AGAINST PEERS, DAY ONE	DAYS ONE TO THREE	WEEK ONE
Beat on earnings and revenue	121	+0.23%	-0.22%	+0.25%
Beat on earnings, missed on revenue	33	-2.80%	-2.26%	-2.59%
Missed on earnings, beat on revenue	15	-2.87%	-4.08%	-4.14%
Missed on both	15	-4.37%	-8.48%	-8.70%

An earnings beat delivered on a revenue miss has fared about as badly as an outright earnings miss. On thirty-three and fifteen observations the difference is not something to trade on, and it is not claimed here as a finding. It is printed because a finance director planning how to present a quarter will recognise the shape of it.

Quantifying a problem is not the same as being rewarded for it

The blind readers were also asked whether management had attached a hard number to something outside the company's control that day: a tariff, an exchange rate, freight, duty, an input cost. They agreed on all but two of the ninety-two calls.

Eighty-two per cent of the worst-received calls carried such a number. Sixty per cent of the best-received did.

The association runs opposite to the instinct that quantified disclosure earns credit on its own account. The plain reading is that these companies reach for a hard external number when they are explaining a shortfall, so the number arrives attached to bad news rather than as an act of transparency in its own right. This is a pattern rather than a result that survives strict testing, and it is offered as one. It should still temper any expectation that publishing a tariff figure will, by itself, be read as a virtue.

Tariffs will be raised on every call this round, and the questions have already moved there

The next round of results begins the day after this issue is dated and runs to late October. What follows is what the record says the round will be about, measured from what these managements have been raising and what their analysts have been asking.

The round, and what the market already expects

COMPANY	REPORTS	CONSENSUS EARNINGS PER SHARE	CONSENSUS REVENUE
V.F. Corporation	29 July	−\$0.22	\$1.64bn
adidas	30 July	€2.38	€6.57bn
Crocs	30 July	\$4.30	\$1.15bn
Columbia	30 July	−\$0.41	\$0.61bn
Wolverine World Wide	about 5 August	\$0.38	\$0.50bn
Ralph Lauren	about 6 August	\$4.26	\$1.86bn
Under Armour	about 7 August	\$0.017	\$1.11bn
PVH	about 25 August	\$3.09	\$2.09bn
NIKE	29 September	\$0.44	\$11.38bn
Deckers	22 October	\$1.81	\$1.51bn

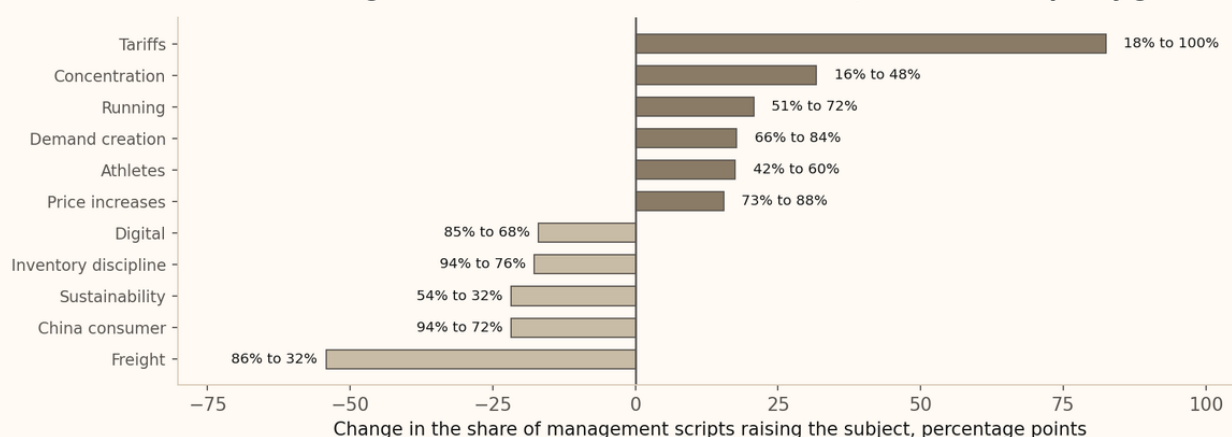
Dates carried in the reporting data are exact. The rest are estimated from each company's own median gap over its last eight quarters and are approximate.

The round is spread across three months, which is normal here and is the reason to distrust any commentary that treats a fiscal quarter as a single sector event. By the time NIKE reports, seven of the ten will already have set the tone. Two of the ten are loss-making at the consensus line this quarter, which matters given the earlier finding that the market prices the size of a miss only at the extremes.

The newness factor

Subjects in this sector do not appear and disappear so much as intensify and fade. Comparing the share of management scripts raising each subject in fiscal 2023 and 2024 against fiscal 2026 so far gives the direction of travel into the coming round.

What managements will talk about more this round, and what has quietly gone



Share of management prepared-remarks corpora raising each subject, average of fiscal 2023 and 2024 against fiscal 2026 to date, across the ten companies. Fiscal 2026 covers the twenty-five calls held so far.
Not one of the thirty-nine subjects tracked is genuinely new: everything rising was already present and has intensified. Source: the language layer, described in the appendix.

RISING	FY23-24	FY26	FALLING	FY23-24	FY26
Tariffs	18%	100%	Freight	86%	32%
Customer concentration	16%	48%	China consumer	94%	72%
Running	51%	72%	Sustainability	54%	32%
Demand creation	66%	84%	Inventory discipline	94%	76%
Athletes	42%	60%	Digital	85%	68%
Price increases	73%	88%			

Not one of the thirty-nine subjects tracked here is genuinely new. Everything rising was already in the vocabulary and has become louder, which is worth knowing before a first-time mention gets read as a change of strategy.

Four of the rises belong together and amount to one decision. Running, athletes, demand creation and collaborations are all the language of brand investment, and they are rising together at a moment when the sector's operating margin has fallen for seven years. Managements are spending more of their prepared time on the thing that costs money to do.

Two of the falls are more telling than any of the rises. Freight has dropped fifty-four points and is now named on a third of calls without being sized on any of them, having been quantified routinely until 2021. Sustainability has fallen twenty-two points, from a majority subject to a minority one, in a sector where it was a standing item five years ago.

The one to watch is customer concentration, up thirty-two points to nearly half of all calls. That is these companies talking more often about how much of their business sits with a small number of retail customers, and it is the subject that has moved furthest without drawing a matching number of questions.

The questions have already moved to tariffs

The analysts got there ahead of the round. Measured as a share of all question turns, on the same comparison:

WHAT ANALYSTS ARE PUSHING	FY23-24	FY26	CHANGE
Tariffs	1.08%	11.23%	+10.14pp
North America	7.18%	13.04%	+5.86pp
The shift to selling direct	9.16%	14.86%	+5.70pp
The wholesale order book	4.10%	8.70%	+4.60pp
Price increases	2.29%	6.88%	+4.59pp
Full-price selling	6.20%	9.06%	+2.86pp

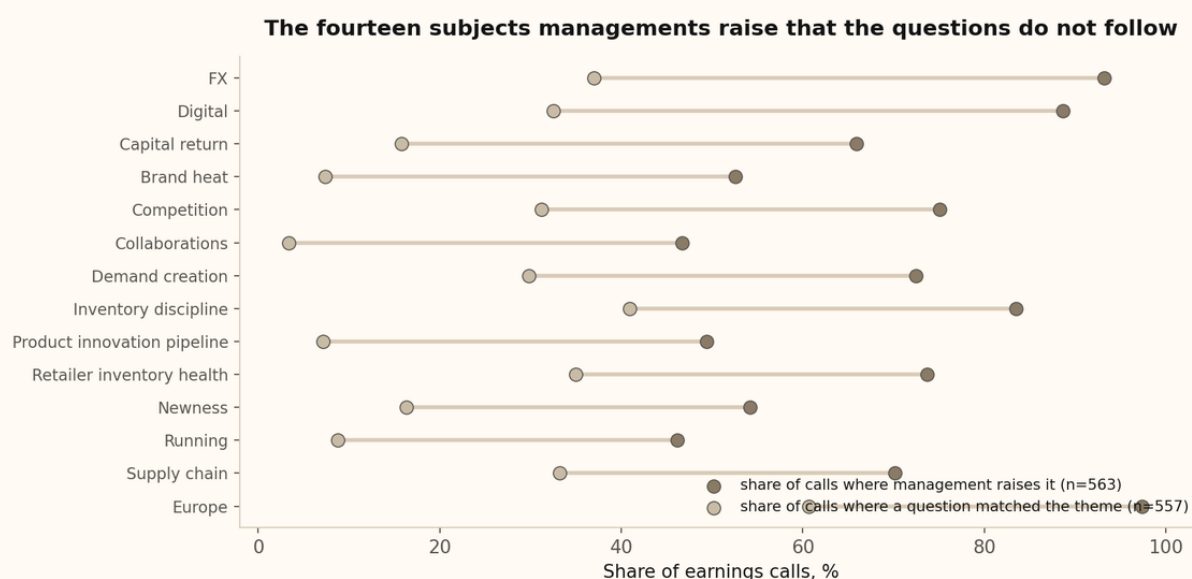
One question turn in nine now touches tariffs, against one in a hundred two years ago. That is the fastest movement of any subject in the fifteen-year record, on either side of the call.

The other five rises are one line of questioning rather than five. North America, the direct shift, the order book, price increases and full-price selling are all versions of a single question about whether the domestic consumer will absorb higher prices through whichever channel a company has chosen to reach them. A management team that has prepared five separate answers has prepared for the same question five times.

The gap between the two scripts is wide and has not closed

Five hundred and sixty-three calls contain 2.37 million words of prepared management remarks and 644,538 words of analyst questions across 11,809 question turns. Managements speak roughly 3.7 words for every one an analyst speaks, and the two sides do not spend them on the same things.

Membership and loyalty programmes are raised in prepared remarks on 37.3 per cent of calls. Across all 11,809 question turns in fifteen years, eighteen touched the subject. Marketplace management, the language of controlling how product reaches the consumer, is raised on 23.6 per cent of calls and has drawn twelve questions. Collaborations and product drops are raised on 46.7 per cent and have drawn twenty-one.



563 management prepared-remarks corpora and 557 analyst Q&A corpora across ten companies, FY2012-FY2026. Two separate corpora with separate denominators: management 2,370,642 words, analyst 644,538 words. Absence is stated as "no question matched our patterns", which is what is measured. 39 themes, each pattern precision-audited on at least 10 sampled quotes; mean precision 0.968. Source: `_build/s1_lexicon/`

What is measured is whether a question used the language that defines each subject. Analysts may raise these things privately or in written work. On the public record of these calls, several of the subjects managements spend the most prepared time on draw almost no questions.

One change in analyst behaviour will affect how the coming round feels. Of the question turns running to twenty-five words or more, a third match none of the thirty-nine subjects: they are arithmetic, bridging a guidance range or reconciling a segment. Counted across every turn, that share ran above fifty per cent in every year from 2012 to 2021 and has fallen to 29.0 per cent across the twenty-five calls held so far in fiscal 2026. Analysts are spending a rising share of a fixed budget on the business rather than on the model, and a management team that has planned for a modelling call may not get one.

Four or five subjects are all that distinguish any one company

Set each company's management vocabulary against the sector average across all thirty-nine subjects and the ten sit between 0.954 and 0.979, where 1.000 would be an exact match. The ordering between them is not worth reading. Where each departs from the average is.



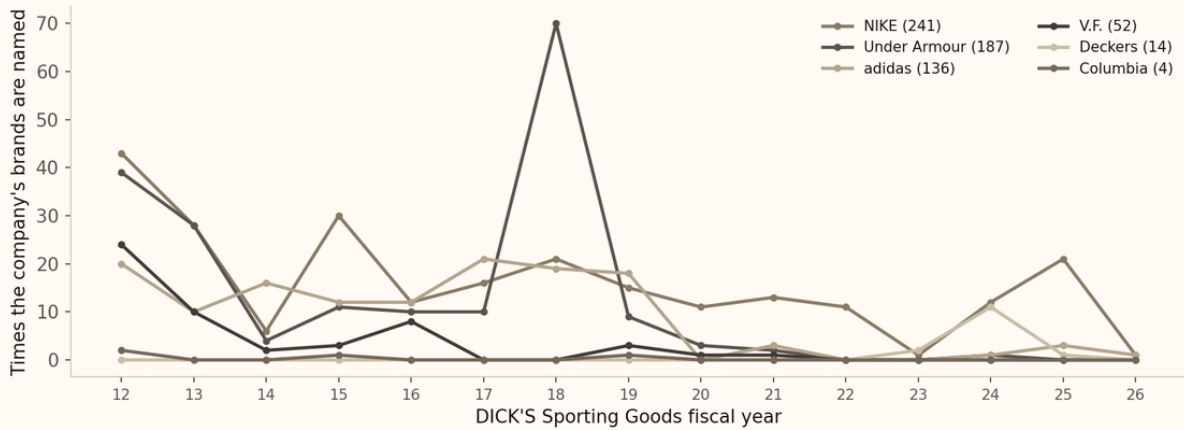
NIKE shows the largest departure of any company on any subject, running sixty-five points above the sector average on marketplace management and thirty-eight below on outdoor. Under Armour runs thirty-eight above on the off-price channel and fifty-two below on capital returns, the sharpest avoidance in the set. Ralph Lauren is twenty-nine above on capital returns and forty-seven below on running. V.F. is twenty-nine above on outdoor and twenty-nine below on athletes.

A management team hoping its call sounds different from its competitors' is relying on four or five subjects to do that work against a shared background of thirty-nine. That is a narrower margin than most investor-relations plans assume.

The third party who will also be speaking

DICK'S Sporting Goods reports inside this window and names its suppliers on its own calls, which makes it the one voice in the round with no reason to flatter anybody.

What the largest US sporting-goods retailer says out loud about its suppliers



Counts of each company's brand names spoken on DICK'S Sporting Goods' own 53 earnings calls, FY2012-FY2026, across management remarks, executive answers and analyst questions. Case-sensitive proper-noun matching. Named zero times in fifteen years: Ralph Lauren, PVH, Crocs, Wolverine. Four brand tokens (Arrow, Bates, Heritage Brands, Rugby) are ordinary words on a retailer's call and were excluded rather than counted wrongly. Source: [_build/s1_lexicon/channel_witness.json](#)

Across fifty-three of its earnings calls since fiscal 2012 it has named NIKE's brands 241 times, Under Armour's 187, adidas' 136, V.F.'s 52, Deckers' 14 and Columbia's 4. Ralph Lauren, PVH, Crocs and Wolverine have never been named. That describes which brands sit in this particular US channel rather than anything about their quality, and it is a partial view, because a brand may be growing quickly in channels this retailer does not serve.

Two of the series move, and both are worth watching in the coming round. Under Armour was named seventy times in fiscal 2018, once in fiscal 2024, and not at all in the two years since. HOKA was named nothing at all through fiscal 2022, and then two, eleven and one time in the three years that followed.

One page each, on one basis

State of the world as at 28 July 2026. Ten pages, one per company, identical in structure, metric basis and footnotes. Nothing on these pages is a rating, a price target, a per-share value or a view on value. No company-defined metric is used as an input to any figure in a scorecard.

Scorecard basis, applied identically to all ten. Revenue and reported growth are as filed, in the company's own reporting currency, with no FX conversion. Gross margin is gross profit over revenue. Operating margin is recomputed EBIT over revenue, where recomputed EBIT is pre-tax income plus interest expense less interest income, so that every impairment, restructuring charge and disposal gain sits above the line for every company. The inventory-to-sales growth gap is year-on-year closing-inventory growth less year-on-year revenue growth, in percentage points. Lease-adjusted net leverage is interest-bearing debt plus operating lease liabilities less cash and equivalents, over EBITDA plus fixed operating lease expense. The five-year share-count change measures diluted weighted-average shares over the five fiscal years ending with the latest reported year. Payout is cumulative buybacks plus cumulative common dividends over cumulative operating cash flow across those same five years. Analyst counts are distinct named analysts asking questions on that company's own earnings calls across the corpus period, fiscal 2012 to fiscal 2026, with the top-five share measured on question turns.

Footnote A, applied wherever it recurs. adidas reports under IFRS 16, which capitalises all leases. There is no operating lease expense line inside operating profit to add back, because the cost already sits below EBITDA as right-of-use depreciation and lease interest. The US GAAP ASC 842 add-back has no adidas analogue, and adidas has no 10-K or 10-Q filing set in this corpus. The denominator of the lease-adjusted leverage ratio, and therefore the ratio, is left as NOT COMPUTABLE rather than mixed across two accounting bases. adidas's numerator is fully computable and is stated on its page.

Footnote B, applied wherever it recurs. One data patch is used anywhere in this document. The FY2026 cash-flow record for NIKE is empty in the vendor feed, so depreciation and amortisation, repurchases and dividends are taken directly from the FY2026 10-K consolidated statement of cash flows. No other figure is patched.

Footnote C, applied wherever it recurs. Every quotation is verbatim from the named speaker on the named event, verified by exact string match against the source file given. Where a company's published constant-currency rate is mentioned it is reproduced, not recomputed, because none of the ten publishes the exchange rates behind it.

NIKE, Inc. (NKE)

The world's largest designer and marketer of athletic footwear, apparel and equipment, selling the NIKE, Jordan and Converse brands through wholesale partners and its own stores and digital channels.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2026, ended 31 May 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$46,398m, +0.2%
Gross margin	42.9%
Operating margin (recomputed)	8.5%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	0.0pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	0.64x
Five-year share-count change	-7.9%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	110.3%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	46 analysts, 54.2%

NIKE is the only one of the ten to state the policy rate embedded inside its own guidance and then the money that rate produces. Matthew Friend, EVP and Chief Financial Officer, on the Q4 FY2026 call of 30 June 2026: "Our tariff forecast is based on incremental tariff rates of 10% continuing through the end of July and then increasing to 15% thereafter." The chain behind that assumption was published and then revised when policy moved, from approximately \$1.0bn of annualised gross incremental cost disclosed in June 2025 to approximately \$1.5bn disclosed on 30 September 2025, and from 75 basis points to 120 basis points of fiscal 2026 gross margin. The outturn showed the order of magnitude was right, with a one-time benefit of \$986m recognised on recovery claims. An outsider who takes a different view of the rate can rebuild the bill from public disclosure alone.

What NIKE has not published is a dated multi-year target. The published financial horizon on 28 July 2026 runs three quarters, to the second quarter of fiscal 2027. Elliott Hill, President and Chief Executive Officer, same call: "Most importantly, we look forward to sharing the next phase of our growth strategy at our Investor Day on November 16 and 17." Reported growth of 0.2% compares with the company's own published constant-currency rate of minus 2.0%. Currency is directional, with no forward rate assumptions published. Twenty-four analysts publish a fiscal 2028 revenue estimate and four publish fiscal 2029, so the sell-side horizon runs longer than the company's own. Repurchases have been paused, with no shares bought in the quarter ended 31 May 2026, against a five-year payout of 110.3% of operating cash flow.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 20 December 2021 and 30 June 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 3.3% and the median minus 3.7%, with twelve of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 21.6% on 27 June 2024 and the best plus 12.8% on 26 June 2025. Across 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012, the NIKE brand is named 240 times in 46 of them, more than any other brand here, and Converse is not named on any. The Chair, the Chief Executive and the Lead Independent Director are three separate people.

What we look forward to. First, the investor day management has itself described as the occasion for the next phase of the growth strategy (Elliott Hill, Q4 FY2026 call, 30 June 2026). Second, the published earnings framework the company has said it reiterates excluding the benefit from tariff recovery, and the

incremental tariff rates it has stated sit inside it (Matthew Friend, same call). Third, the next phase of the growth strategy under the incoming chief financial officer, David M. Denton, appointed 23 June 2026 and effective 17 August 2026.

adidas AG (ADS.DE)

A German sportswear group designing and marketing footwear, apparel and accessories under the adidas brand, reporting in euros under IFRS and listed on XETRA.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2025, ended 31 December 2025
Revenue and reported growth	EUR 24,811m, +4.8%
Gross margin	47.1%
Operating margin (recomputed)	8.0%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	+12.6pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	NOT COMPUTABLE (footnote A)
Five-year share-count change	-8.5%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	61.3%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	56 analysts, 29.4%

adidas states its plan and the items running against it in absolute euros rather than only in percentages. Bjorn Gulden, Chief Executive Officer, on the FY2025 results call of 4 March 2026: "We will continue to add around EUR 2 billion on the top line, and that would then cause with everything that we are aware of around 10% EBIT in '27." The drags are sized on the same basis. Harm Ohlmeyer, Chief Financial Officer, same call: "we have EUR 200 million in tariffs that we have in the gross margin, and it's EUR 100 million more in '25." Around them sit EUR 200m of non-mitigated tariffs and roughly EUR 200m of currency against 2026 EBIT, EUR 800m to EUR 900m of currency against 2026 reported sales, and a tariff refund claim of roughly EUR 300m excluded from guidance. Nineteen analysts publish a 2028 revenue estimate.

The exchange rates behind those figures are not published, which is true of all ten companies here. Two scorecard cells need their cause stated. Reported growth of 4.8% compares with the company's own published currency-neutral rate of 10.0%, and the 2024 base carried roughly EUR 650m of Yeezy revenue and approximately EUR 200m of Yeezy operating profit against nil in 2025. The inventory-to-sales growth gap of plus 12.6 percentage points is the largest of the ten in the latest year. Lease-adjusted net leverage is not computable on the single basis used here (footnote A). The numerator is computable at EUR 3,937m and EBITDA on the same basis is EUR 3,102m.

The results-day record is seventeen events between 9 March 2022 and 29 April 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is plus 0.3% and the median minus 0.4%, with nine of seventeen negative, the largest single move minus 11.8% on 30 July 2025 and the best plus 10.9% on 9 March 2022. Fifty-six distinct analysts have asked questions across 45 calls, and the five heaviest voices hold 29.4% of turns. Across the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012, adidas brands are named 136 times, of which 61 are TaylorMade and Reebok, divested in 2017 and 2022 respectively, and the adidas brand itself is named 71 times in 27 of them. adidas operates a two-tier board, so the Chief Executive chairs the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board has its own separate chairman. Nassef Sawiris, whose vehicle holds roughly 6% of the shares, chairs the Supervisory Board.

What we look forward to. First, the 2028 leg of the published plan, being the annual addition to sales and the EBIT margin management has stated and re-affirmed (Bjorn Gulden, FY2025 results call, 4 March 2026, re-affirmed 29 April 2026). Second, the tariff refund claim of as much as EUR 400m that

management has sized and stated is excluded from guidance. Third, the EUR 1bn buyback launched on 29 January 2026, of which 1,316,082 shares had been purchased for EUR 201m as at 19 February 2026.

Ralph Lauren Corporation (RL)

An American designer and marketer of premium lifestyle apparel, accessories, home and fragrance products, selling through its own stores and digital commerce and through wholesale partners.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2026, ended 28 March 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$8,114m, +14.6%
Gross margin	69.9%
Operating margin (recomputed)	14.5%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	-7.8pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	0.58x
Five-year share-count change	-15.2%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	76.2%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	53 analysts, 42.9%

Ralph Lauren runs the tidiest reconciliation in this sector between a dated plan and each quarter's guidance. At its investor day of 16 September 2025 it published three fiscal 2028 targets: a mid-single-digit revenue compound annual growth rate in constant currency, operating profit growth exceeding top-line growth, and at least \$2bn of cumulative excess free cash flow returned to shareholders. Patrice Louvet, President and Chief Executive Officer, on the Q4 FY2026 call of 21 May 2026: "our company outlook is right on track with our 3-year targets". Justin Picicci, Chief Financial Officer, same call: "Our fiscal '27 outlook is aligned with our Next Great Chapter: Drive targets." Thirteen analysts publish a fiscal 2028 revenue estimate.

Two things an outsider cannot do with what is published. The first is size tariffs. Management has named tariffs as the company's largest exogenous pressure across eight consecutive quarters without publishing the dollar or basis-point size of it, gross or net, and the forward assumption carries no number, being rates rising above the current 10% level once the relief window expires. The second is re-run currency, quantified as an effect, at 150 to 200 basis points of revenue and 30 to 50 basis points of margin, without the rates behind it. Reported growth of 14.6% compares with the company's own published constant-currency rate of 11.8%. The one formally correct sensitivity in the FY2026 10-K measures the derivative portfolio, and the filing states the change should ultimately be largely offset by the underlying hedged items. Of the plan's three legs only the cash-return leg is absolute.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 2 November 2021 and 21 May 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is plus 1.8% and the median plus 0.6%, with seven of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 11.2% on 2 November 2021 and the best plus 14.5% on 8 February 2024. Fifty-three distinct analysts have asked questions across 60 calls, and none of the six Ralph Lauren brands tested is named on any of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. The diluted share count has fallen from 66.5m in fiscal 2024 to 62.3m, so no per-share series across those years is clean. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate roles, the Chair is executive, and the board maintains a Lead Independent Director. Ralph Lauren and entities controlled by the Lauren family hold all 21,881,276 Class B shares, carrying ten votes each and approximately 85% of total voting power at 28 March 2026.

What we look forward to. First, the fiscal 2028 legs of Next Great Chapter: Drive as published, and in particular the cumulative cash-return commitment. Second, the quarterly reconciliation management has chosen to give, having said the fiscal 2027 outlook is aligned with those targets (Justin Picicci, Q4 FY2026 call, 21 May 2026). Third, the buyback the board authorised on 15 May 2025, of which approximately \$1.352bn of the additional \$1.500bn remained available at 28 March 2026.

PVH Corp. (PVH)

An American apparel group that designs and markets the Calvin Klein and TOMMY HILFINGER brands worldwide through wholesale, its own stores and digital commerce, and licensing.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2025, ended 1 February 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$8,950m, +3.4%
Gross margin	57.5%
Operating margin (recomputed)	2.6%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	+1.5pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	3.88x
Five-year share-count change	-32.7%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	71.1%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	43 analysts, 49.1%

PVH publishes its tariff exposure as a chain, from an assumed rate to dollars to basis points. Melissa Stone, Chief Financial Officer on an interim basis, on the Q1 2026 call of 4 June 2026: "our assumption of a full year blended rate of approximately 15% is unchanged, as is our expectation of an approximately \$195 million gross tariff cost". The same sentence puts the margin effect at approximately 215 basis points. Mitigation is quantified at approximately 60% for the full year, and a refund benefit of approximately \$100m to EBIT was added to the outlook in the same quarter. Melissa Stone, Q4 2025 call, 1 April 2026: "exiting the year with over 75% mitigation on an annualized basis heading into 2027". Because the \$195m is bound to a stated rate, the exposure reprices at roughly \$13m per point of blended tariff.

Behind that arithmetic there is no dated multi-year target. The investor day of 13 April 2022 published revenue of \$12.5bn, an operating margin of 15% and free cash flow above \$1bn, all by 2025. No replacement has been published. Two scorecard cells need their cause stated. The recomputed operating margin of 2.6% carries \$479.5m of goodwill and other intangible asset impairment taken in the first quarter of 2025, which sits above the line on the stated basis. Reported growth of 3.4% includes \$251m of currency translation, and the G-III licence in-sourcing running through 2026 converts royalty revenue into wholesale revenue on a rolling basis.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 1 December 2021 and 3 June 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 3.0% and the median minus 3.7%, with twelve of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 23.4% on 3 June 2026 and the best plus 17.1% on 27 March 2023. Forty-three distinct analysts have asked questions across 57 calls, and no PVH brand tested is named on any of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. The diluted share count has fallen 32.7% over five years, the largest reduction of the ten. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate and the Chair is independent and non-executive. The finance seat is held on an interim basis on 28 July 2026, with Alexis Rollier, appointed on 14 July 2026, joining in early September 2026.

What we look forward to. First, the mitigation path the company has published for the full year and on an annualised basis heading into 2027 (Melissa Stone, Q4 2025 call, 1 April 2026). Second, the refund benefit management has sized and placed inside the current outlook, and the full-year blended tariff rate the company has published alongside its gross tariff cost (Melissa Stone, Q1 2026 call, 4 June 2026). Third, the repurchase programme, under which \$1.212bn remained available at 1 February 2026 against a

cumulative authorisation running to 30 July 2028, and against which the company has guided to at least \$300m of repurchases in 2026.

Under Armour, Inc. (UA)

An American designer and marketer of performance footwear, apparel and accessories under the Under Armour brand, selling through wholesale partners and its own stores and digital channels.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2026, ended 31 March 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$4,966m, -3.9%
Gross margin	45.5%
Operating margin (recomputed)	-3.4%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	+0.6pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	17.87x
Five-year share-count change	-6.1%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	36.0%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	50 analysts, 30.4%

Under Armour sizes its exogenous items in dollars in both directions, at approximately \$100m of additional tariff-related costs in 2025 and then the recovery. Reza Taleghani, EVP and Chief Financial Officer, Q4 FY2026 call, 12 May 2026: "This assumes approximately \$70 million of benefit from the refund of IEEPA tariffs expensed through the P&L in fiscal '26". The quarterly gross margin bridge is given at roughly 260 basis points of tariff pressure, with the rate assumption named at 10% held flat for the rest of fiscal 2027. Reza Taleghani, same call: "we expect adjusted operating income for fiscal '27 to be in the range of \$140 million to \$160 million".

What is not published is a plan for those numbers to feed into. There is no dated multi-year revenue, margin, earnings, cash flow or return target, and the investor meeting of 12 December 2024, the first in six years, introduced none. Currency is bundled with channel mix inside the bridge and cannot be separated. Two scorecard cells need their cause stated. The recomputed operating margin of minus 3.4% and the lease-adjusted leverage of 17.87 times share one cause. The 2025 restructuring plan, raised to approximately \$305m on 11 May 2026, sits above the line on the stated basis, putting fiscal 2026 recomputed EBIT at minus \$171m.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 2 November 2021 and 12 May 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 0.8% and the median plus 0.3%, with nine of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 27.0% on 6 May 2022 and the best plus 16.1% on 6 February 2026. Fifty distinct analysts have asked questions across 57 calls, and across the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012 the Under Armour brand is named 181 times in 27 of them, the second-highest count here. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate roles and the Chair is independent, Dr Mohamed A. El-Erian having served as Chair since April 2024. Kevin Plank holds all 34,450,000 Class B shares, carrying ten votes each and 64.6% of total voting power. Fairfax Financial Holdings and V. Prem Watsa report 45,300,872 Class A shares, 24.0% of that class, on a Schedule 13D amended 15 May 2026.

What we look forward to. First, the fiscal 2027 adjusted operating income range the company has published, and the tariff rate assumption stated to sit inside it (Reza Taleghani, Q4 FY2026 call, 12 May 2026). Second, the completion of the 2025 restructuring plan as approved by the board. Third, the three-

year \$500m Class C repurchase authorisation running to May 2027, of which approximately \$385m remained available at 31 March 2026.

Deckers Outdoor Corporation (DECK)

An American footwear and apparel company whose principal brands are HOKA and UGG, sold through wholesale partners and its own stores and digital commerce.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2026, ended 31 March 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$5,454m, +9.4%
Gross margin	56.1%
Operating margin (recomputed)	23.2%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	-11.1pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	-1.07x
Five-year share-count change	-14.5%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	69.4%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	42 analysts, 43.3%

Deckers lengthened its published horizon in the quarter in which several peers shortened theirs, introducing a framework reaching to fiscal 2030 on the Q4 FY2026 call of 21 May 2026. Stefano Caroti, President and Chief Executive Officer: "we remain highly confident in our brand portfolio's ability to deliver high single-digit revenue growth on a consolidated company basis for our fiscal year 2030". The tariff disclosure behind it is published gross, mitigated and net, and was revised twice inside one fiscal year, from approximately \$150m unmitigated with \$75m to \$95m of mitigation on 23 October 2025 to approximately \$110m unmitigated and approximately \$25m net on 29 January 2026. Steve Fasching, Chief Financial Officer, same call: "The net headwind of tariffs in the fiscal year accounted for approximately 80 basis points of decline year-over-year".

Three things an outsider cannot do with what is published. Reported growth of 9.4% compares with the company's own published constant-currency rate of 9.0%, and currency is not quantified forward. Freight and input costs are named as fiscal 2027 gross margin drivers without being sized, and the FY2026 10-K names the sheepskin and sugarcane-derived EVA exposure and then declines to size it. Total marketing spend is not disclosed, only the year-on-year change of \$63.6m in fiscal 2026, so the level is not comparable with the eight peers that publish one. Every number in the fiscal 2030 framework is a growth adjective rather than an absolute, and the fiscal 2030 earnings leg is modelled by three analysts. The Other brands line is not organic, with Sanuk sold on 15 August 2024, Koolaburra wound down at the end of fiscal 2025 and AHNU closed on 1 October 2025.

The results-day record is seventeen events between 19 May 2022 and 21 May 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is plus 2.5% and the median plus 4.7%, with six of seventeen negative, the largest single move minus 20.4% on 22 May 2025 and the best plus 18.7% on 26 October 2023. Forty-two distinct analysts have asked questions across 56 calls, and HOKA is named 14 times in 7 of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012 while UGG is not named on any. The leverage cell reads minus 1.07 times because the company holds \$1,907m of cash against \$375m of lease liabilities and no borrowings. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate roles and the Chair is independent, appointed on 22 May 2025.

What we look forward to. First, the fiscal 2028 to 2030 framework introduced on 21 May 2026, and in particular the low double-digit annual earnings per share growth for fiscal 2028 to 2030 the company has

published. Second, the fiscal 2027 gross margin guidance of 56.5% and the freight, input-cost and 10% tariff assumptions management has stated sit inside it (Steve Fasching, Q4 FY2026 call, 21 May 2026). Third, the open-ended repurchase programme, of which approximately \$1.43bn remained available at 1 May 2026. Deckers reported first-quarter fiscal 2027 results on 23 July 2026 and updated its full-year fiscal 2027 outlook on the same day, so the figures on this page reflect the fiscal 2026 year-end position.

Crocs, Inc. (CROX)

An American footwear company selling casual and outdoor footwear and personalisation accessories under the Crocs and HEYDUDE brands, through wholesale partners and its own stores and digital commerce.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2025, ended 31 December 2025
Revenue and reported growth	\$4,041m, -1.5%
Gross margin	57.0%
Operating margin (recomputed)	3.9%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	+5.0pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	4.33x
Five-year share-count change	-20.9%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	62.2%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	41 analysts, 57.8%

Crocs sizes its tariff exposure in dollars and revises it when the rate changes. Patraic Reagan, Chief Financial Officer, Q4 2025 call, 12 February 2026: "Based on current tariff rates and sourcing mix, we now see an unmitigated tariff headwind of approximately \$80 million on an annualized basis, which is down from our previously provided figure of \$90 million." That figure carries a quarterly path, at approximately 100 basis points in the first quarter, closer to 200 in the second and approximately 80 for the full year. The refund position is disclosed and excluded from guidance. Patraic Reagan, Q1 2026 call, 30 April 2026: "we continue to expect adjusted operating margin to expand modestly from the 22.3% level we reported in fiscal year 2025."

Beyond the current year there is no published horizon. Crocs has no dated multi-year revenue, margin, earnings, cash flow or return target, and no investor day in the four years reviewed here. The assumption behind the tariff number is referenced rather than enumerated, since the sourcing mix is not disclosed and the blend behind the blended rate is not given. Reported growth of minus 1.5% compares with the company's own published constant-currency rate of minus 1.7%. Currency is specified by date rather than level. Two scorecard cells need their cause stated. The recomputed operating margin of 3.9% and the leverage of 4.33 times both carry the \$738.1m HEYDUDE goodwill and indefinite-lived intangible impairment recorded in 2025, of which \$307.0m was goodwill, which sits above the line on the stated basis. Excluding that charge on the identical basis the ratio would read 1.37 times. Both are stated here.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 21 October 2021 and 30 April 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 1.7% and the median minus 0.6%, with ten of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 33.5% on 7 August 2025 and the best plus 20.4% on 13 February 2025. Forty-one distinct analysts have asked questions across 55 calls, and coverage thins early, from ten publishing a 2027 revenue estimate to four publishing 2028. No Crocs brand tested is named on any of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. The finance seat has changed twice in thirteen months, the present Chief Financial Officer having been appointed effective 22 September 2025. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate and the Chair is independent.

What we look forward to. First, the modest expansion in adjusted operating margin management has restated as its expectation (Patraic Reagan, Q1 2026 call, 30 April 2026). Second, the tariff refunds Crocs

has said it is well positioned to collect, and the path of the unmitigated annualised headwind as rates move. Third, the repurchase authorisation increased by \$1.0bn on 10 February 2025, of which approximately \$746.8m remained available at 31 December 2025.

Columbia Sportswear Company (COLM)

An American outdoor and active lifestyle company selling apparel, footwear, accessories and equipment under the Columbia, SOREL, prAna and Mountain Hardwear brands, through wholesale, distributors and its own stores and digital commerce.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2025, ended 31 December 2025
Revenue and reported growth	\$3,397m, +0.8%
Gross margin	50.2%
Operating margin (recomputed)	6.2%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	-1.0pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	1.13x
Five-year share-count change	-18.0%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	86.7%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	50 analysts, 40.6%

Columbia alone of the ten presents the tariff burden as an accumulating quantity rather than a single-year event. Jim Swanson, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Q4 2025 call, 3 February 2026: "the unmitigated tariff cost we incurred in '25, of just over \$30 million and an incremental 300 bps. Those are stacking. So effectively on a two-year basis, the impact of these unmitigated tariffs is about 400 basis points." The assumption is named down to the statute, rate and expiry, a 10% universal tariff under Section 122 expiring in July, and the margin effect was restated from 300 basis points to 200 when that changed. Timothy P. Boyle, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Q1 2026 call, 30 April 2026: "We have filed all of the documents required to get the tariffs back, but we clearly haven't contemplated those in our plans for '26."

Beyond the current year there is no financial destination. Columbia publishes no dated multi-year revenue, margin, earnings, cash flow or return target. The ACCELERATE Growth Strategy carries no financial target, and on slide 5 of the company's May 2026 investor deck the pillar headed long-term financial performance is supported by profitable growth since the 1998 flotation rather than a forward number. Constant-currency growth is published at segment level only, so there is no group rate to set against the reported 0.8%, and freight and input costs are not quantified. Seven analysts publish a 2027 revenue estimate and three publish 2028. Payout has run at 86.7% of five years of operating cash flow, against a recomputed operating margin down from 11.4% three years ago.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 28 October 2021 and 30 April 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 1.1% and the median minus 2.2%, with eleven of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 12.4% on 31 July 2025 and the best plus 10.9% on 3 February 2026. Fifty distinct analysts have asked questions across 57 calls, and the Columbia brand is named four times in three of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. Columbia does not separate the Chair and the Chief Executive. Both are held by Timothy P. Boyle, Chief Executive since 1988 and Chairman since January 2020, and the board maintains a Lead Independent Director for that reason. Free float is approximately 41.8%.

What we look forward to. First, the current-year operating margin guidance of 6.7% to 7.5% the company has published, the high single-digit price increases it has stated for spring and fall 2026, and the

assumption behind them of new tariffs at or near IEEPA rates once the current relief expires, which management has set out in full (Jim Swanson, Q1 2026 call, 30 April 2026). Second, the approximately \$80m of IEEPA tariffs paid, approximately \$55m of it through cost of sales, which management has said is not contemplated in the 2026 plan (Timothy P. Boyle, Q1 2026 call, 30 April 2026). Third, the repurchase authorisation, of which \$426.5m remained available at 31 December 2025.

Wolverine World Wide, Inc. (WWW)

An American footwear and apparel company whose brands include Merrell, Saucony, Sweaty Betty, Chaco, Wolverine and Cat Footwear, sold through wholesale partners, licensees, distributors and its own stores and digital commerce.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2025, ended 3 January 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$1,874m, +6.8%
Gross margin	47.0%
Operating margin (recomputed)	8.2%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	+7.2pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	2.63x
Five-year share-count change	+0.9%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	86.8%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	39 analysts, 47.0%

Wolverine publishes the only genuine conditional sensitivity in this sector. Taryn L. Miller, Chief Financial Officer, Q4 2025 call, 26 February 2026: "If the recently announced 15% tariff rate were to be implemented and remain in place through the end of 2026, we estimate it would reduce the 2026 tariff impact by approximately \$5 million–\$7 million relative to our current guidance." Every other quantified tariff figure across these ten is a point estimate at one rate. This one gives the slope, and it was validated when the estimate fell from approximately \$60m to approximately \$50m. Around it sit a quarterly path of approximately 310 basis points, \$36m of IEEPA tariffs paid and excluded from guidance, and freight linked to the oil price.

Beyond 2026 nothing is published. Wolverine has no dated multi-year target and no investor day in the period reviewed here, and its horizon is anchored to bookings in hand. Christopher E. Hufnagel, President and Chief Executive Officer, same call: "we have well-defined plans in motion to again deliver mid-single-digit top-line growth, supported by our current order book, while continuing to expand profitability in the year ahead." Eight analysts nonetheless publish 2027 and 2028 revenue estimates. Currency is the one gap, the effect given at \$14.0m with no rate assumption. Reported growth of 6.8% needs two adjustments: fiscal 2025 was a 53-week year against 52 weeks in 2024 and 2023, and three brand disposals between February 2023 and January 2024 were not treated as discontinued operations. Total marketing spend is not disclosed, the only advertising figure in the FY2025 10-K being \$4.4m of licence-mandated outlay.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 10 November 2021 and 14 May 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 3.1% and the median minus 1.6%, with ten of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 39.4% on 9 November 2022 and the best plus 25.9% on 7 November 2024. Gross margin has moved from 38.9% two years earlier to 47.0% and inventory turns from 2.45 times to 3.86 times. Thirty-nine distinct analysts have asked questions across 57 calls, and no Wolverine brand is named on any of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. The diluted share count is rising, so a payout of 86.8% of five years of operating cash flow does not shrink it. The Chair and the Chief Executive are separate and the Chairman is independent.

What we look forward to. First, the top-line growth and profitability expansion the company has said its plans are in motion to deliver in the year ahead (Christopher E. Hufnagel, Q4 2025 call, 26 February 2026).

Second, the unmitigated 2026 tariff estimate and the IEEPA tariffs paid that management has stated are excluded from guidance (Taryn L. Miller, Q1 2026 call, 14 May 2026). Third, the three-year \$150.0m repurchase authorisation of 7 March 2024, against which \$135.5m remained available at the most recent disclosed date.

V.F. Corporation (VFC)

An American apparel and footwear group whose brands include Vans, The North Face and Timberland, sold through wholesale partners and its own stores and digital commerce.

Latest fiscal year and period end	FY2026, ended 28 March 2026
Revenue and reported growth	\$9,605m, +1.1%
Gross margin	54.8%
Operating margin (recomputed)	5.1%
Inventory-to-sales growth gap	-16.8pp
Lease-adjusted net leverage	3.52x
Five-year share-count change	+1.0%
Payout as % of cumulative operating cash flow	102.5%
Distinct analysts asking questions, top-five share of turns	51 analysts, 40.8%

V.F. is the one company of the ten whose plan and exogenous ledger are visibly wired together. Abhishek Dalmia, Chief Transformation Officer, Q4 FY2026 call, 20 May 2026: "Gross margin of at least 55% and exit run rate operating margin of 10% in FY '28". A leverage target of 2.5 times or less lands with them, all set on 30 October 2024. The exposure running against them is rate-linked, at approximately \$150m annualised unmitigated at a 10% incremental rate, with a net gross profit effect of \$60m to \$70m in fiscal 2026. Paul Vogel, EVP and Chief Financial Officer, same call: "we expect to have sort of a full year impact of tariffs of an incremental \$70 million to \$80 million for the year". Because the \$150m is tied to a stated rate, the exposure scales at roughly \$15m per point.

Three qualifications belong with those figures. The fiscal 2028 operating margin target has moved in meaning, management having clarified on the same call that the 10% is an exit run rate rather than a full-year figure, and three analysts publish a fiscal 2029 earnings estimate. The portfolio changes are accounted for two ways. Supreme, closed on 1 October 2024, is in discontinued operations with prior periods restated, while Dickies, closed on 12 November 2025, is in continuing operations with priors not restated and removed \$217.1m of revenue. Reported growth of 1.1% and the recomputed operating margin of 5.1% both carry the \$127.2m pre-tax gain on the Dickies sale, which sits above the line on the stated basis. Currency is a three-point effect on revenue with no group rate published.

The results-day record is nineteen events between 22 October 2021 and 20 May 2026. The mean one-day abnormal return is minus 2.3% and the median minus 0.7%, with thirteen of nineteen negative, the largest single move minus 12.8% on 21 May 2025 and the best plus 7.4% on 30 July 2025. Fifty-one distinct analysts have asked questions across 56 calls, and The North Face is named 52 times in 17 of the 53 DICK'S Sporting Goods earnings calls since fiscal 2012. Lease-adjusted net leverage reads 3.52 times on the basis used here against the 3.1 times the company states on its own definition, a definitional difference. The repurchase programme authorised in 2017 is dormant, with no open-market purchases in fiscal 2024, 2025 or 2026, so a payout of 102.5% of operating cash flow is dividends.

What we look forward to. First, the fiscal 2028 targets the company has published and restated (Abhishek Dalmia, Q4 FY2026 call, 20 May 2026). Second, the fiscal 2027 tariff assumption that management has stated sits inside the plan (Paul Vogel, same call). Third, the continued reduction in long-term debt, which the company has disclosed at \$2.2bn over two fiscal years, against that published leverage target.

Basis, sources and method

Scope

This issue covers ten companies: NIKE, adidas, Ralph Lauren, PVH Corp, Under Armour, Deckers Brands, Crocs, Columbia Sportswear, Wolverine World Wide and V.F. Corporation. DICK'S Sporting Goods appears throughout as a channel witness and is never pooled with the ten. It closed the Foot Locker acquisition in September 2025.

Fashion is not one sector for this purpose. Luxury, mass fast-fashion retail and branded sportswear have different economics, different benchmarks and analyst rosters that barely overlap. Global sportswear and outdoor is treated as one segment and luxury is not covered here.

Corpus

The analysis rests on 4,227 documents held locally for the eleven companies: 645 earnings-call transcripts, 557 filing extracts, 611 investor-relations decks, 231 capital-markets-day decks, 730 news items, 712 financial-statement layers, 402 sell-side records, 160 report extracts, 139 governance, capital-return, credit and environmental files, and 40 supporting files. Transcripts run from fiscal 2012 to fiscal 2026.

The canonical archive holds 9,977 files for these eleven companies. The difference is almost entirely raw filing source: 5,424 unparsed HTML and text versions of filings whose extracted text is already held in full. A further 321 sell-side and report files could not be transferred before the archive connection expired, and the sell-side layer is a sampled layer by design rather than an exhaustive one.

adidas carries a materially thinner evidence base than the other nine and the difference is disclosed rather than smoothed. It is the only non-SEC filer in the set. There is no 10-K or 10-Q series for it in this corpus, only IFRS annual and quarterly reports. Its news layer is empty, so the absence of an item cannot be read as the absence of an event. Its transcript base is 45 calls against 53 to 60 for the others. The German voting-rights notification regime was not systematically reviewed.

Data faults found and handled

Three faults in the source data were material enough that leaving them unhandled would have produced wrong results.

Twelve transcripts filed under the adidas ticker are earnings calls of Alliance Data Systems and Bread Financial, a ticker collision in the vendor feed. They were identified, quarantined and excluded from every count. adidas' price, financial-statement and consensus data were separately verified as genuine adidas AG on XETRA in euros.

Every transcript labelled fiscal 2023 carries a corrupted date field pointing to a year between 2008 and 2017. The content is correct. All time analysis uses the fiscal-year label rather than that field.

Three reported-earnings dates in the vendor feed could not be reconciled to a call: two are fiscal period ends rather than release dates and one has no transcript in the corpus. All three were identified by cross-checking every event date against the transcript date, and all three were dropped.

The cross-check also revealed a reporting-convention difference that would otherwise have mis-timed a whole company's events: PVH releases results after the close and holds its call the following morning, so its market reaction begins one session later than a same-day-call company's. Anchoring is set per company from that cross-check and stated for each.

Event study

186 quarterly results events across the ten companies from October 2021 to June 2026, dated from the reported-earnings series and cross-checked against transcript dates. Day zero is the last close strictly before the release on the company's own exchange calendar. Prices are dividend-adjusted daily closes on primary listings in local currency, with a single measurement cut-off of 15 July 2026 applied to all ten.

Abnormal returns come from a market model estimated over 120 trading days ending twelve days before each event, against an equal-weight basket of the other nine companies with the subject excluded. Self-inclusion would mechanically shrink the largest constituents' abnormal returns toward zero. No single name exceeds twelve per cent of any benchmark.

adidas is measured on its own XETRA calendar in euros against a benchmark composed of nine US-listed names, which is a cross-market comparison and is a genuine limitation. Every pooled result in Chapter One was recomputed with adidas excluded and none changes materially.

Returns are standardised by each company's own residual volatility before pooling, and raw abnormal returns are reported alongside standardised ones throughout. Every statement in this document about which companies appear in which tail is made on the standardised basis and says so.

All four horizons are reported side by side. Between nine and seventeen per cent of events change sign between horizons and roughly a third of quartile membership is horizon-dependent, so a finding that exists at one horizon only is stated as exactly that.

Two significance tests are printed for every pooled result. The unadjusted test assumes event-day variance equals estimation-window variance. In this dataset it does not: the cross-sectional standard deviation of standardised abnormal returns is 5.2 at day one, so the unadjusted statistic overstates significance by a wide margin. The cross-sectionally standardised test is treated as the honest one and the unadjusted figure is shown beside it.

Counting only the event study, twenty-two tests were run. Counting every inference drawn anywhere in this document, including the coded-variable contingency tests, the tail-membership tests, the guidance magnitudes, the four-box table, the volatility checks, the placebo and the portfolio ledger, the true count is forty-eight. Under Bonferroni correction at forty-eight the threshold is 0.00104. Three of the six consensus-surprise relationships clear it: earnings surprise at three days, revenue surprise at three days and revenue surprise at one week. The other three sit between 0.00104 and 0.0023 and are reported as patterns rather than as results. The pooled negative mean does not clear either threshold.

Treating the ten companies as ten clusters rather than 186 independent observations weakens all six surprise relationships further, and none clears 0.0023 on that basis. This is disclosed. No argument in this document depends on it. Failure to reject a null is not evidence for it.

A placebo test was run before any result was accepted: the identical machinery applied to 599 randomly chosen non-event dates for the same companies over the same period returns a mean standardised abnormal return of -0.039 at day one, not distinguishable from zero at any horizon.

Blind coding

The ninety-two calls in the best and worst quartiles of day-one reaction were read and coded on five variables. Two independent readers coded all ninety-two records without access to each other's work. Where they disagreed the cell was left empty rather than forced, which affected seven records.

Agreement, measured as Cohen's kappa: driver family 0.91, new dated commitment 1.00, external variable quantified 0.95, guidance direction 0.95, opening tone 1.00.

The coded sample is the two tails and nothing else. Nothing coded here can be generalised to the middle half of the distribution, and no sentence in this document does so.

Five contingency tests were run on the coded variables. At a corrected threshold of 0.01, guidance direction clears. Driver family and quantified external variable are reported as patterns and labelled as such.

Benchmarks

Every comparative metric is recomputed from raw statement fields on one stated basis and applied identically to all ten. No company-defined metric is used as an input to any comparative table.

Return on invested capital applies a single flat twenty-five per cent tax rate to all ten. Lease-adjusted net leverage is total debt including operating lease liabilities less cash and equivalents, divided by earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation plus the fixed operating lease cost line from each filing's lease-cost table, with variable and short-term lease costs excluded for everyone.

Where an input genuinely does not exist the cell reads NOT COMPUTABLE and the reason is given. This applies to adidas' leverage denominator, because IFRS 16 capitalises all leases and no operating lease expense line exists inside operating profit to add back. Its numerator is computable and is published.

Direct-to-consumer mix and marketing spend are published only for the companies that disclose them, on each company's own definition, and are not offered as a ranking. Deckers and Wolverine do not disclose total marketing spend and no estimate has been substituted.

One data patch is documented. NIKE's fiscal 2026 cash-flow record is empty in the vendor feed. Depreciation and amortisation of \$747m, repurchases of \$146m and dividends of \$2,407m are taken from its fiscal 2026 annual report. No other cell is patched.

Language layer

Thirty-nine themes were built as phrase and pattern sets and applied separately to two corpora with separate denominators: 2,370,642 words of management prepared remarks across 563 calls, and 644,538 words of analyst questions across 11,809 turns on 557 calls. No percentage in Chapter Three crosses the two.

Every pattern was precision-audited on a minimum of ten randomly sampled matched quotations that were read individually. Patterns scoring below 0.70 precision were rewritten and re-sampled with a fresh seed. Three failed on the first pass: an outdoor-category pattern at 0.500 that was matching warm-weather footwear, an inventory pattern at 0.583 that was matching product-success language, and an environmental pattern at 0.583 that was matching ordinary business language about sustainable profitable growth and about the retail climate. Mean precision across the thirty-nine themes in the final set is 0.968 and the minimum is 0.750.

Analyst layer

Analysts were identified from operator introductions and firm-tagged speaker labels, which is what excludes executives and investor-relations staff, and cross-checked by excluding any speaker who also appears in the prepared remarks of the same call. Name variants were normalised. Firm attribution is taken from the transcript's own tag at the date of the call.

Analysts are named only in recognition. No characterisation of any named house's rating actions appears anywhere in this document.

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Every figure here is derived from information the ten companies have themselves published, or from market prices, and the sources are set out in this appendix. Where a figure is recomputed by BoardBrain rather than taken as reported, that is stated. Where an association is not established as a cause, it is labelled as an association. Where the evidence cannot settle a question, the review says so.

Company evidence stops at each company's own most recent results, which fall on different dates and are listed at the front. Market data stops on 15 July 2026. Nothing has been updated for events after those dates and no undertaking is given to update it.

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What this document does not contain

No ratings, no price targets, no per-share or percentage-of-market-capitalisation figures for any company, and no comparative valuation language. Those are recommendations in substance whatever the disclaimer says, and they would change who may lawfully receive this document.

Timing

The state of the world in this document is 28 July 2026. One company reported after the corpus cut-off and before publication: Deckers released first-quarter fiscal 2027 results on 23 July 2026, raising its fiscal 2027 earnings guidance and its gross margin outlook. Its page reflects the position as at the fiscal 2026 year end and does not incorporate that release. Four further companies report within days of this date, so the as-at date should be read strictly.

Reproduction

Every figure in this document traces to a saved artifact. Event-level records, per-company benchmark rows, the theme lexicon with its precision scores, the analyst registry, the portfolio-actions ledger, the blind coding records and both coders' independent codings are all retained. Every quotation in this document was verified against the corpus by exact string match before publication.

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Ivan Bascle, Founder and Chief Executive, BoardBrain

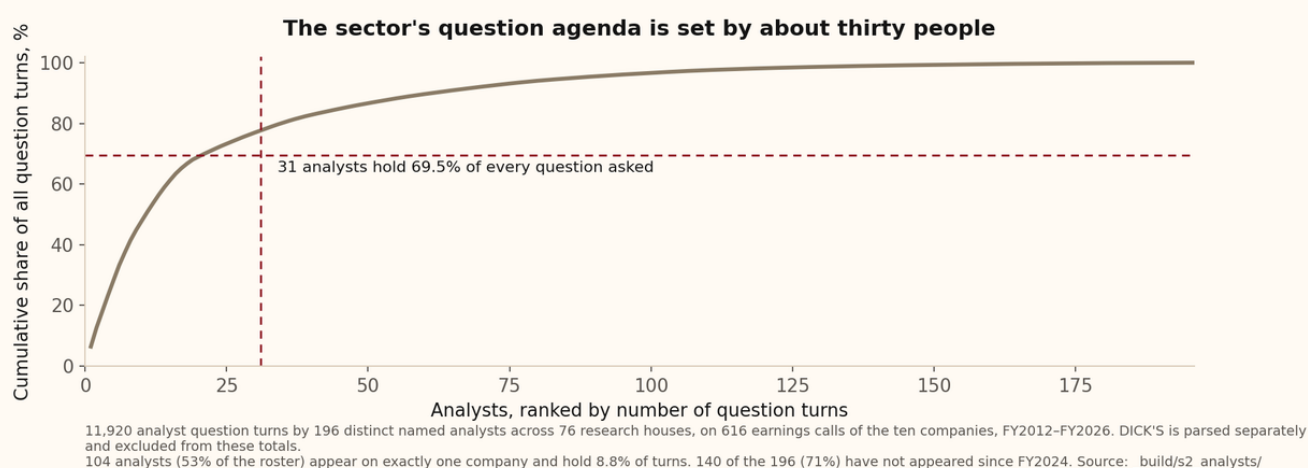
For the company-specific work behind any single name in this review, BoardBrain publishes a separate deep-dive.

The analyst roster

Between fiscal 2012 and fiscal 2026 the ten companies held 560 earnings calls, on which 196 named analysts from 75 research houses asked 11,920 questions. DICK'S Sporting Goods is parsed separately throughout and neither its calls nor its analysts are counted here. Both the concentration and the composition of that group are unlike what most investor-relations plans assume.

Sixteen per cent of the roster asks seven questions in ten

Thirty-one analysts, sixteen per cent of the names on the record, account for 69.5 per cent of every question asked. At the other end, 104 analysts, fifty-three per cent of the roster, appear on exactly one company and hold 8.8 per cent of the turns between them.



The list also dates quickly. One hundred and forty of the 196, seventy-one per cent, have not appeared on any of these calls since fiscal 2024, and between them they hold 42.7 per cent of the historical question record. A coverage list built from a multi-year archive rather than from the past two years will be roughly half populated by people who have moved on.

The busiest questioners are mostly not at the global banks

Fifty-six per cent of all 11,920 question turns carry a firm tag that is not a global bank. Six of the ten highest-volume questioners in this sector have never carried a global-bank tag in the whole window.

ANALYST	QUESTION TURNS	COMPANIES COVERED	COVERAGE WINDOW	FIRM AT THE DATE, FIRST TO LAST
Jim Duffy	767	7	FY2012– FY2025	then Stifel throughout
Sam Poser	741	6	FY2012– FY2026	then Sterne Agee, then Susquehanna, latterly Williams Trading
Bob Drbul	631	8	FY2012– FY2026	then Barclays, then Nomura, then Guggenheim, latterly BTIG

ANALYST	QUESTION TURNS	COMPANIES COVERED	COVERAGE WINDOW	FIRM AT THE DATE, FIRST TO LAST
Erinn Murphy	623	9	FY2012– FY2022	then Piper Jaffray, latterly Piper Sandler
Mitch Kummetz	603	7	FY2012– FY2026	then Robert W. Baird, then Pivotal Research, latterly Seaport Research
Jonathan Komp	593	8	FY2015– FY2026	then Robert W. Baird throughout
Laurent Vasilescu	502	7	FY2013– FY2026	then Macquarie, latterly BNP Paribas Exane
Michael Binetti	478	5	FY2012– FY2026	then UBS, then Credit Suisse, latterly Evercore ISI
Omar Saad	406	8	FY2012– FY2023	then ISI Group, latterly Evercore ISI
Camilo Lyon	362	4	FY2012– FY2022	then Canaccord Genuity, latterly BTIG

Each firm is shown as the transcript tagged it on the day of the call, not as a current-employer lookup would show it, and anyone who moved during the window carries the sequence of firms rather than being assigned to one. The names are listed in recognition of the volume of their public questions and nothing else.

The sector has three audiences rather than one

The 196 do not form one community. Grouped by which companies they actually question, they fall into three sets with very little traffic between them.

The adidas roster stands almost entirely apart. Forty-five of the fifty-six analysts who question adidas question adidas and nothing else among the ten, and between them they hold 73.2 per cent of its question turns. Eleven bridge to a US name. Its ranked members hold 459 turns in total.

The US branded-apparel roster, centred on PVH, V.F., Ralph Lauren, NIKE and Under Armour, has twenty-five ranked members holding 3,579 turns. The US footwear and outdoor roster, centred on Crocs, Deckers, Wolverine and Columbia, has thirty-seven ranked members holding 7,039 turns.

Rankings are published within a group only. A comparison across them would mean nothing, and an analyst missing from one table appears in another. Nothing here should be read as an implication that anyone follows anyone.

Counting who raised a subject first mostly counts who talks most

An analyst can be scored on how often they were first to put a theme to a company. Done raw, that produces a convincing-looking table which is largely measuring something else.

Of the 390 company-and-theme pairs, 360 have a visible first mention, and only 128 of those, thirty-six per cent, can be attributed to anybody. The record opens in fiscal 2012, so a theme first appearing in a company's earliest eight quarters may well have been raised before the record begins.

A raw count of firsts also tracks sheer question volume at 0.748, on a scale where one would mean the two lists are identical. Roughly fifty-six per cent of the movement in it is shared with how often a person speaks, so as a ranking it would mostly be a ranking of who talks most and it is not published.

The measure used instead compares an analyst's firsts against how many would be expected given how many of the relevant calls they were on. On that basis the link with question volume falls to 0.227, weak enough to be what chance alone would throw up, and the picture changes. In the US footwear and outdoor roster the leader is Jonathan Komp, at 2.44 times expectation on five attributable firsts, followed by Erinn Murphy at 1.52 on ten. In the US branded-apparel roster the leader is Robert Ohmes at 1.44 on three, followed by Omar Saad at 1.33 on ten and Michael Binetti at 1.24 on seven. Within the adidas roster no analyst reaches more than one attributable first, which follows from that roster's smaller sample rather than saying anything about its members.

Two of the sector's highest-volume questioners come out at or below expectation once presence is allowed for. Speaking often and shaping what gets asked are different things, and this document does not treat them as one.

Only eighteen analysts are present on enough of the relevant calls for the adjusted measure to be computed at all, and no analyst appears in any ranking on fewer than twenty-five question turns. A figure built on seven questions is noise and is not published.