Baillie Gifford™

Sell discipline

May 2024

Investment Specialist Director Ben Drury explains what over 100 years of active management have taught us about the risks of being distracted by either volatility or the mundane.

Your capital is at risk.

Ben Drury: Sell discipline is that part of an investor's process which helps them to judge when to exit a holding. For instance, taking well-timed profits in an investment which has done well, or recognising when something may not be working out and recycling that capital elsewhere.

It all sounds very sensible, so sensible it could be easy to be seduced into thinking that such careful tinkering within a portfolio offers a reliable route to wealth creation. However, to us, there is a far more proven and reliable path to riches: the magic of compounding.

Active management, as we practice it here at Baillie Gifford, is a misnomer. The most successful active managers are, in fact, remarkably inactive. This reflects the fact that the biggest act of self-sabotage any investor can do to themselves is to interrupt the long-term compounding created by reinvesting the returns generated by exceptional companies.

As a result, the ability to withstand the temptation to sell such long-term winners, during the inevitable, but temporary, periods of pain or discomfort, is far more important. Almost every single one of the most successful investments we have made on our clients' behalf have included periods where the easiest thing to do would have been to move on. Periods where the share price had fallen significantly, the near-term outlook appeared deeply uncertain, and it felt profoundly contrarian to hold on to those companies.

It is during such times that the hardest, but ultimately most rewarding decision, is to do nothing. Rather than 'sell discipline', the culture and processes which underpin this approach are what we would call 'hold discipline'.

Naturally, the companies held in our client portfolios will evolve. Hold discipline is not the same as 'never selling anything' discipline. We will sell if new information emerges which undermines our original investment thesis, or when we think that valuations indicate that the growth potential has already been fully recognised.

We are also ever vigilant to another of the great risks to threaten an investor's returns – that of being distracted by the mundane. A healthy flow of potential new investment ideas is vital for ensuring that we are continually setting the bar high enough and reinvesting our clients' capital only in the most fertile opportunities.

However, given the very deliberate biases in our process towards patience and inactivity, there are many occasions when we are accused of being slow to act. We take this as a compliment. We believe the potential to accrue returns from focusing on the patient nurturing of long-term winners is far greater than those on offer from frenetic trading.

Risk factors

The views expressed should not be considered as advice or a recommendation to buy, sell or hold a particular investment. They reflect opinion and should not be taken as statements of fact nor should any reliance be placed on them when making investment decisions.

This communication was produced and approved in May 2024 and has not been updated subsequently. It represents views held at the time and may not reflect current thinking.

All investment strategies have the potential for profit and loss, your or your clients' capital may be at risk.

This communication contains information on investments which does not constitute independent research. Accordingly, it is not subject to the protections afforded to independent research, but is classified as advertising under Art 68 of the Financial Services Act ('FinSA') and Baillie Gifford and its staff may have dealt in the investments concerned.

All information is sourced from Baillie Gifford & Co and is current unless otherwise stated.

Important information

Baillie Gifford & Co and Baillie Gifford & Co Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Baillie Gifford & Co Limited is an Authorised Corporate Director of OEICs.

Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited provides investment management and advisory services to non-UK Professional/Institutional clients only. Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is wholly owned by Baillie Gifford & Co. Baillie Gifford & Co and Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited are authorised and regulated by the FCA in the UK.

Persons resident or domiciled outside the UK should consult with their professional advisers as to whether they require any governmental or other consents in order to enable them to invest, and with their tax advisers for advice relevant to their own particular circumstances.

Calton Square, 1 Greenside Row, Edinburgh EH1 3AN
Telephone +44 (0)131 275 2000 / bailliegifford.com

Financial intermediaries

This communication is suitable for use of financial intermediaries. Financial intermediaries are solely responsible for any further distribution and Baillie Gifford takes no responsibility for the reliance on this document by any other person who did not receive this document directly from Baillie Gifford.

Europe

Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited provides investment management and advisory services to European (excluding UK) clients. It was incorporated in Ireland in May 2018. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited is authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland as an AIFM under the AIFM Regulations and as a UCITS management company under the UCITS Regulation. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited is also authorised in accordance with Regulation 7 of the AIFM Regulations, to provide management of portfolios of investments, including Individual Portfolio Management ('IPM') and Non-Core Services. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited has been appointed as UCITS management company to the following UCITS umbrella company; Baillie Gifford Worldwide Funds plc. Through passporting it has established Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited (Frankfurt Branch) to market its investment management and advisory services and distribute Baillie Gifford Worldwide Funds plc in Germany. Similarly, it has established Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited (Amsterdam Branch) to market its investment management and advisory services and distribute Baillie Gifford Worldwide Funds plc in The Netherlands. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited also has a representative office in Zurich, Switzerland pursuant to Art. 58 of the Federal Act on Financial Institutions ("FinIA"). The representative office is authorised by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA). The representative office does not constitute a branch and therefore does not have authority to commit Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited, which is wholly owned by Baillie Gifford & Co. Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited and Baillie Gifford & Co are authorised and regulated in the UK by the Financial Conduct Authority.

China

Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Shanghai) Limited 柏基投资管理(上海)有限公司('BGIMS') is wholly owned by Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited and may provide investment research to the Baillie Gifford Group pursuant to applicable laws. BGIMS is incorporated in Shanghai in the People's Republic of China ('PRC') as a wholly foreign-owned limited liability company with a unified social credit code of 91310000MA1FL6KQ30. BGIMS is a registered Private Fund Manager with the Asset Management Association of China ('AMAC') and manages private security investment fund in the PRC, with a registration code of P1071226.

Baillie Gifford Overseas Investment Fund Management (Shanghai) Limited 柏基海外投资基金管理(上海)有限公司('BGQS') is a wholly owned subsidiary of BGIMS incorporated in Shanghai as a limited liability company with its unified social credit code of 91310000MA1FL7JFXQ. BGQS is a registered Private Fund Manager with AMAC with a registration code of P1071708.

Calton Square, 1 Greenside Row, Edinburgh EH1 3AN
Telephone +44 (0)131 275 2000 / bailliegifford.com

BGQS has been approved by Shanghai Municipal Financial Regulatory Bureau for the Qualified Domestic Limited Partners (QDLP) Pilot Program, under which it may raise funds from PRC investors for making overseas investments.

Hong Kong

Baillie Gifford Asia (Hong Kong) Limited 柏基亞洲(香港)有限公司 is wholly owned by Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited and holds a Type 1 and a Type 2 license from the Securities & Futures Commission of Hong Kong to market and distribute Baillie Gifford's range of collective investment schemes to professional investors in Hong Kong. Baillie Gifford Asia (Hong Kong) Limited 柏基亞洲(香港)有限公司 can be contacted at Suites 2713-2715, Two International Finance Centre, 8 Finance Street, Central, Hong Kong. Telephone +852 3756 5700.

South Korea

Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is licensed with the Financial Services Commission in South Korea as a cross border Discretionary Investment Manager and Non-discretionary Investment Adviser.

Japan

Mitsubishi UFJ Baillie Gifford Asset Management Limited ('MUBGAM') is a joint venture company between Mitsubishi UFJ Trust & Banking Corporation and Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited. MUBGAM is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Australia

Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited (ARBN 118 567 178) is registered as a foreign company under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and holds Foreign Australian Financial Services Licence No 528911. This material is provided to you on the basis that you are a "wholesale client" within the meaning of section 761G of the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) ("Corporations Act"). Please advise Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited immediately if you are not a wholesale client. In no circumstances may this material be made available to a "retail client" within the meaning of section 761G of the Corporations Act.

This material contains general information only. It does not take into account any person's objectives, financial situation or needs.

South Africa

Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is registered as a Foreign Financial Services Provider with the Financial Sector Conduct Authority in South Africa.

North America

Baillie Gifford International LLC is wholly owned by Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited; it was formed in Delaware in 2005 and is registered with the SEC. It is the legal entity through which Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited provides client service and marketing functions in North America. Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is registered with the SEC in the United States of America.

The Manager is not resident in Canada, its head office and principal place of business is in Edinburgh, Scotland. Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is regulated in Canada as a portfolio manager and exempt market dealer with the Ontario Securities Commission ('OSC'). Its portfolio manager licence is currently passported into Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland & Labrador whereas the exempt market dealer licence is passported across all Canadian provinces and territories. Baillie Gifford International LLC is regulated by the OSC as an exempt market and its licence is passported across all Canadian provinces and territories. Baillie Gifford Investment Management (Europe) Limited ('BGE') relies on the International Investment Fund Manager Exemption in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Israel

Baillie Gifford Overseas Limited is not licensed under Israel's Regulation of Investment Advising, Investment Marketing and Portfolio Management Law, 5755-1995 (the Advice Law) and does not carry insurance pursuant to the Advice Law. This material is only intended for those categories of Israeli residents who are qualified clients listed on the First Addendum to the Advice Law.

Calton Square, 1 Greenside Row, Edinburgh EH1 3AN
Telephone +44 (0)131 275 2000 / bailliegifford.com