

STOP BURNOUT

FROM DRIVING YOUR EMPLOYEES AWAY



OKR
COHORT

By now, everyone has heard about it: The Great Resignation. Employees in every kind of business have decided not to return to their jobs after shutdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is one of the greatest challenges that businesses have faced in decades. As employees reconsider how they spend their time and reassess their values, millions have come to understand that time is a precious commodity -- many lost loved ones -- and now they realize they have been spending their time doing things that don't have value.

OKR (Objective and Key Results) is a strategy and alignment framework used to achieve an organization's desired outcomes through common goals, shared commitments, and clear accountability. As a Co-Founder of OKR Cohort, I am working with organizations around the country to help them understand what's behind The Great Resignation and how to implement ways to keep their people from leaving. And, equally important, moving forward, how to attract talented and purpose-seeking employees.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF NOT FEELING VALUED IN ORGANIZATIONS

Even before COVID-19, employees were expected by organizations to take on more work than ever before. Most people assumed the digital age would reduce workloads. In fact, the opposite was true. Many leaders expected and demanded more. Employees were experiencing burn-out and were overwhelmed, but it wasn't until COVID-19 brought everything to a screeching halt that many overworked employees could figure out what was happening. Prior to that time, they weren't truly aware of how their overburdened work life rippled into their personal lives.

LOST TIME, BURNOUT, LACK OF VALUE AND DIRECTION

With so much time at home during the complete COVID-19 shutdown, many people were able to re-evaluate how they were spending their time at work. One of the most valuable learnings I have discovered in my work with business leaders, employers, and employees, is that there is a great discrepancy between how much time is spent doing real work versus doing things that don't have value. For instance, so many hours of the day may be devoted to wondering if your boss is mad at you, or if you're doing the right thing, over-analyzing and second-guessing every move instead of doing anything that feels productive. This translates to lost time and stress which leads to mental and emotional fatigue. This kind of stress impacts every aspect of life including how you interact with family and connect with friends. The pandemic made millions of people realize they want to feel like their time is contributing greater value to their lives and the lives of others.

OKRS BRING MEANING AND VALUE TO THE WORKPLACE

Everyone wants to feel like they and the work they do is valued and has meaning. Everyone from vendors to clients to employees and customers want to feel they are valued by the organizations they are connected with. We all want to feel a sense of meaning and purpose. With OKRs, business owners, team leaders, and employees can participate in developing strategies that help people get the right things done. We get people delivering results by clarifying strategies that bring the right value to the organization.

A SIMPLE EXERCISE

Take a moment and try this simple exercise that shows how the OKR framework can help create clarity, generate alignment, and identify the right priorities. Throughout this exercise, we're going to be using the concept of planning a family or group vacation. Let's face it, we all know that can be a hectic process!

STEP 1: Envision where you want to go for vacation with family or friends within a one-year time frame. What would your objective be for planning and completing an enjoyable vacation? Let's say it would be to "create lifelong memories."

STEP 2: With that vision in mind, write down two ways you could measure success for the accomplishment of "creating lifelong memories." These will essentially be our key results. Two outcomes that will measure success might look like this:

1. Every vacation activity rated 4.5 of 5 as a memory maker
2. Less than 2 days transit time

Now, we have our objective and two key results!

3. Let's double-click one step further and analyze a few questions we should be asking ourselves in order to achieve those key results we just identified.
 - What are the critical activities that must be done?
 - What is the work that must happen?
 - What is the work I must do to make this true?

Well, in this example, here are the critical activities that must be done together:

1. Plan vacation together
2. Explores and agrees on transportation approach
3. Determine approach for decisions

Now, instead of me planning a vacation in the late hours of the night, we get to plan a vacation as a collaborative group! It's not someone's job to do that. It's now a group dynamic that gets to work together to design the vacation that will lead everyone towards those lifelong memories!

Also, we need to agree on the transportation approach as a unit. It's nice to say we only have two days in transit (our key result), but do we understand the financial implications of that? What are our options here and how do we trim down the trip's transportation to make this true?

And finally, how are we going to make decisions surrounding the various activities we pursue on the vacation? If we're going to "create lifelong memories," everyone should have some weight within this conversation.

With this simple exercise, you're able to see how clarity is introduced when we identify OKR's within a given circumstance. By working collaboratively to identify our overall objective and select several key results, we can pinpoint the main issues/questions that need to be addressed to achieve the overall goal.

HOW TO BEGIN IDENTIFYING OKRS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

In any organization, clarity and alignment on objectives and priorities can enable anyone within the organization to transparently communicate and achieve the desired outcomes...regardless of their specific department or team.

If individuals are receiving clear direction from their leaders, that' aligns with the organization's overall objective and key results, they feel empowered to perform at the highest level and make a real difference within their role. This empowerment is what directly addresses the issue of burnout!

If you're starting with the basics, you can utilize these four key points to help develop an effective OKR framework within your organization:

1. Make OKRs inspiring
2. Set objectives
3. Set measurable key results
4. Develop up to 5 OKRs for your organization

As you're setting your key results, ask yourself this question: How will we know we've met our objective? Well, you want to use measurable metrics that clearly explain and define what organizational success looks like. Here's a few additional pointers to keep in mind when developing your key results:

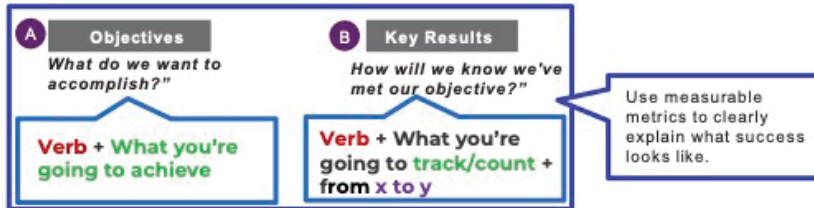
- Align OKRs to the overall organization's strategy
- Keep them easy to memorize
- No more than 3-5 Key Results
- Communicate & negotiate OKRs to partners to reduce delays/impacts and ensure success
- Ask yourself, will you succeed when all key results are met?

In utilizing these guardrails, business leaders can develop efficient and effective OKRs, which can shift the focus of their entire organization. These OKRs are quite powerful!

IN A NUTSHELL || OKRs

OKRs - Objectives & Key Results

Focus on outcomes



Keep in Mind

- Align OKRs to overall organization strategy
- Less is more; easy to memorize
- No more than 3-5 Key Results
- Communicate & negotiate OKRs to partners to reduce delays/impacts to ensure success
- Will you succeed when all Key Results are met?

Writing your OKRs

1. Make it inspiring
2. Set objectives
3. Set measurable Key Results
4. Up to 5 OKRs

RESULTS ALIGNED WITH VISION AND STRATEGY ESTABLISH CLARITY

When you break down your strategy into what needs to be achieved each year and each quarter, as well as help people align their work to the organization's overall strategy, employees begin to see their true purpose within the organization. They're also able to see their value within the organization and to the customer!

OKRs enable anyone to transparently align and achieve the desired outcomes. And as you now understand, OKRs are a framework that's implemented differently for each organization.

So now, it's time to make a choice. Are you ready to provide clarity and alignment about priorities so your employees can thrive or are you okay continuing to deal with the painful effects of losing your best people?

If this sounds like something your organization could benefit from, click on the link below to schedule a consultation with our team. Let's see how we can help your organization to keep your talented employees and prevent burnout from driving them away! Also checkout our podcast where my partner Nizar and I go in depth on this challenge and how to address it.

[OKRCOHORT.INSTITUTE/CONNECT/](https://okrcohort.institute/connect/)

Our team covered this very topic on a recent episode of our video and podcast series! If you'd like to learn more and enjoy an in-depth conversation surrounding this informative topic, head over to our YouTube channel or visit OKR Cohort on your favorite podcasting platform!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DENISE KANFIELD



Denise is a Business Agility Leadership Coach and OKRs Expert recognized for being an action-biased trail blazer to support leaders and teams through transformational change. She has expertise in training, organizational development, operations, and sales leadership which allow her to quickly understand and align her work to the company's strategy & roadmap for change. Denise thrives on coaching senior and executive leadership, bringing a 'meet you where you are' approach while using data and OKRs to drive meaningful results and lasting adoption.