

ALIGN YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STRATEGY,

ELIMINATE SILOS, AND STOP
DUPLICATING WORK



OKR
COHORT

In many of today's organizations, the left-hand simply doesn't know what the right-hand is doing. There is duplication of efforts across different parts of the organization, while everyone thinks different work is being done. Meanwhile, leaders have high expectations and are relying on a variety of items to be addressed across the board.

It turns out that employees are delivering work without understanding the purpose behind what they are doing. This happens in all sizes of organizations, large and small, because communication of strategy is done without clarity and purpose. Strategy is basically delivered to different parts of the organization through the telephone game. Everyone continues to think they are accomplishing what the leadership has set out to do.

WITHOUT CLEAR COMMUNICATION CHAOS REIGNS

Strategies are made at the top of most organizations, but they aren't translated fully or clearly to the team leaders and members throughout the organization. Senior leaders and board members often share their interpreted version or partial views of the strategy instead of the full picture to their employees. This leads to gaps in objectives and no measurable ways of defining whether anyone is going in the right direction. As a result, similar work starts being done in different parts of the organization. The leaders think they've communicated direction well, but the reality is they have not.

LACK OF VALUE ERODES SHAREHOLDER CONFIDENCE

Organizations can get excited because there's higher market demand coming at a faster pace. They may think they're being innovative and moving faster to meet this increased demand. Sure, they may be agile, but the reality is they're going slower. As it turns out, businesses often end up delivering the wrong things at the wrong time. Over time, customers might get what they want one month, but then it could be months later before they get what they want again. Sure, a variety of products/services are being delivered in this time, but the organization is often lacking consistency in delivery and struggling to keep up with the customers' demands! This isn't adding value to the product/service they provide and the customers' relationship with the organization takes a hit.

If businesses are not providing true value to their customers, that eventually means a lack of growth for shareholders over time. Shareholders are looking to businesses for growth quarter over quarter. For that to happen, businesses need to be delivering value. If value isn't being delivered and the business isn't growing, shareholders no longer want to invest.

Even more importantly, if shareholders are losing confidence and customers are unhappy, businesses start to lose credibility in the market. Problems continue to arise with existing customers, and it gets more and more difficult to get and keep new customers. See the ripple effect here?

INEFFICIENCY LEADS TO EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT

We see it happening every day. Business is not delivering the right things. Customers aren't getting what they need. Business owners get frustrated that business isn't growing at the pace they thought it would. This leads to massive number of employees leaving organizations and the inefficiencies eventually can lead to bankruptcy or major losses to the business.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN THE LEFT-HAND KNOWS WHAT THE RIGHT-HAND IS DOING

My business partner, Denise, and I see this kind of disconnect in businesses every day and we've seen what the positive effects are when businesses implement OKRs according to their specific needs. Their problems have a way to be solved using OKRs! Priorities should, can, and must be aligned. Full elimination of duplicated efforts creates greater productivity. This ensures that existing customers are satisfied. New customers are happy. Investors are happy. Everyone is thriving. Businesses start to experience a growing customer base. Leaders and shareholders and employees thrive and feel purposeful. That sounds pretty nice, right?

HOW OKR HELPS BUSINESSES

OKR stands for Objective and Key Results, it is a strategic framework that is a bridge connecting strategy to execution. Leaders hire us to help shift the focus of their organizations from activities to outcomes. We embed purpose in their work and help them focus on the right things to get people talking results. Bottom line: we help organizations get the right s**t done!

REAL STRATEGIES AND REAL SOLUTIONS BUSINESS OWNERS CAN IMPLEMENT TODAY

If you want to implement change in your organization today, there are five key points that can redirect the focus of your organization. And if sustained, they can lead you out of chaos and into clarity and success.

1. Create clear outcomes in the form of objective and key results that align with your organizations strategies. Define them in measurable ways so that you'll know they can be achieved and you'll recognize when they are achieved.
2. Understand the work that is required to achieve the outcomes.
3. Prioritize what matters by focusing on values and impacts that have been made. This means you need to learn to make tough decisions to prioritize and deprioritize work more effectively.
4. Have cadences and ceremonies to refine the OKRs and focus on alignment and collaboration. Keep narrowing down your objectives as they become clearer to you. You'll achieve more effective planning through monthly and quarterly outcome check-ins. It's very important not to skip this.
5. Maintain focus and continuous improvement through retrospectives; monitor OKRS regularly and adjust based on what is discovered. If something doesn't feel aligned, redefine the objective.

Remember also that a business doesn't function well with silos. Every business has a vertical tier and a horizontal tier. OKRs must be aligned in both directions. You'll see what I mean below when I give the example of how OKRs work with a football team.

THE DANGERS OF DUPLICATING WORK AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DE-DUPING WORK

If work is being duplicated throughout your organization, you want to bring that to a complete stop immediately! It's a waste of time and valuable resources. To achieve that, you must create and communicate clear Objectives and Key Results that are in alignment both vertically and horizontally. You want to make sure that everyone in the organization is engaged and knows what's going on throughout the organization. This is critical to employees. You need to make sure the right people are doing the right work and that work is contributing to the achievement of the objectives set both vertically and horizontally.

HOW OKRS ALIGN HORIZONTALLY AND VERTICALLY FOR A FOOTBALL TEAM

When I work with businesses of any size, I love sharing the example referenced in John Doerr's book, Measure what Matters, of how Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) work to shift the focus of a football team from activities to outcomes. This example makes it easy for corporate leaders to apply the OKR framework to their organizations.

LET'S KICK OFF

At the top of the team, you have the General Manager. Let's say that the General Manager's objective is for the team to become a top NFL team. Now, let's say that two measurable key results are:

- 1. To win a Super Bowl**
- 2. To fill the stands to 95% capacity**

As we move down vertically within the organization, you'll find two horizontal entities. One is the Head Coach, whose primary objective is very clear. The Coach, needs his team to win the Lombardy Trophy. The key results that would successfully lead to the achievement of this objective could be:

- 1. To have his team master 400-yard passing per game**
- 2. To become the highest-rated team across various defensive statistics**
- 3. To average 25-yard punt returns throughout the year**

Notice the aspirational quality of both the General Manager and the Head Coach's objectives. OKRs are meant to be aspirational. They are meant to get the team excited and working to the very best of their abilities to help the team achieve the objective.

Next, on the horizontal plane, you have the Public Relations team. Here, the objective would be to make sure everyone knows and loves the team. The key results for achieving that objective could be:

- 1. To fill stadiums to 95% capacity**
- 2. Get 3 top players to want to sign with the team**
- 3. Make sure the team has positive mentions by 100% of the top sports reporters**

ALIGNMENT UP, DOWN, AND ACROSS

Notice that the objective of the Head Coach mirrors one of the key results of the General Manager. Likewise, one of the key results of the Public Relations Manager aligns with one of the key results of the General Manager. There is alignment both horizontally and vertically.

Take another step down horizontally, under the Head Coach, and there are three separate teams: Defense, Offense and Special Teams. Each team has its own OKRs. Each player on each team will know exactly what to focus on when the objectives and key results are in alignment.

The Defense's objective is simply to: Stop the other team at all costs. To achieve this their key results will be:

- 1. To make sure the other team gets less than 170 yards in passing**
- 2. That they get less than 3 yards per rush**

These are very aggressive and aspirational results, which will have the team practicing different things in different ways!

For the Offense, the objective is to be the top scoring team. To achieve this, they have measurable key results of:

- 1. Achieving 75% completion of passes**
- 2. To achieve 400-yards of passing in each game**

Special Teams are the game changers. They mix things up across the boards. Their objectives are:

- 1. To achieve an average of 25-yard punt returns**
- 2. To achieve an average of 70-yards on kick returns**

These are nearly impossible, yet they are highly aspirational, and move the team toward both the General Manager and the Head Coach's overall objectives and goals.

COMPLETE THE ALIGNMENT

Moving horizontally across the board, under Public Relations, you have two more separate teams: the News Staff and the Scouting Department. If you're succeeding at any of the objectives set by the Coach and Public Relations, the news team can more easily achieve their own objectives. They'll have great water cooler topics to feed the press, with the greater potential of getting three Sunday featured items in the sports sections. Meanwhile, if everyone is aligned and things are moving toward the achievement of all the goals and objectives, the Scouting Department's objectives will be easier to achieve as well. They can highlight the team's brightest, most colorful players, which will help them attract the top three draft picks.



OKRS MUST BE ALIVE AND ALIGNED WITH EVERY PART OF AN ORGANIZATION

In the example of the football team, it's easy to see the impact OKRs have when they align all the way up and down and across the board. Each team's activities are focused on singular objectives and contribute to the overall objective of the General Manager. There is no doubt about who should be doing what. The left-hand and the right-hand are doing what they do best!

Businesses can implement OKRs at any time. However, business leaders have an important choice that must be made before beginning this process.

Is your organization okay with continuing to operate as you have been? Or, are you ready to grow the business further and streamline operations to start delivering real value to your customers, your shareholders, and your employees?

WE'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR CLIENTS

One organization we have worked with is a startup, that is responsible for creation, improvement and support for open-source software in open protocols for decentralized data storage, they have seen startling results. After working with us for a short time, they plan to double their employees this year!

They were experiencing duplication of work and, in the decentralized web community, they simply could not afford to be duplicating efforts across various areas of their company. In an offsite meeting, each team shared their OKRs and arrived at objectives across the board, both horizontally and vertically. They were able to tweak and leverage their OKRs and leverage them every day which showed a continual decrease in duplication of work. We worked through their struggles and they're seeing the results pay off!

If you want to experience the kind of growth and excitement that makes everyone thrive and feel alive throughout your business, go to our website and schedule a free consultation with us. Let's discuss how OKRs will enhance your business for the better!

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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

NIZAR KHOJA



Nizar is considered a thinker, leader, coach and is curious about New Ways of Working, Remote Work, and Digital Enablement! He is passionate about finding ways to make organizations awesome through a culture of efficiency, empowerment, engagement and empathy. Nizar has extensive experience working in different setups and industries (from start-up to large organizations) that enable him to understand how to impact change that could be sustained within specific organizations. He is a firm believer in creating a culture of purposeful and high performing teams to focus on continuous value delivery. Nizar has leveraged Business Agility as a catalyst to serve organizations' purpose and align to work (Outcomes to Output)...agility techniques and framework required to be appropriate for each organizations and group needs.