

OKR COHORT HELPS ORGANIZATIONS

GET FOCUSED ON “THE RIGHT STUFF”



OKR
COHORT

In working with companies around the world of every size and in every industry, Denise Kanfield and I, through OKR Cohort, are discovering that the delivery of companies' high value products and services is too slow for customers' expectations. Organizations are missing the mark. They are not able to keep up with customer demands. This is a huge problem that exists in companies both large and small!

This inability to deliver products and services in a timely manner presents a challenge for company leaders, employees, and customers. It's a top-down challenge because leaders typically assume someone else is doing the work and nothing is getting done. Alternatively, and more frequently, the timeline is substantially delayed due to lack of transparency and/or poor communication. Employees have a misunderstanding of the tasks and specific requirements necessary to deliver the value of their product and service in a timely manner and are disconnected from the big picture.

FROM THE CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE

When you look at this disconnect from the customer's point of view, it's easy to understand their unhappiness because they're not receiving the promised product/service in a timely matter. Consequently, the organizations' customers become more and more dissatisfied over time.

DISSATISFACTION RIPPLES OUT THROUGH ORGANIZATIONS

This challenge dramatically and negatively impacts the health of entire organizations. The first thing Denise and I see is the frustration that grows for leaders as they become more reactive instead of proactive. Leaders are then drawn into spending their time in the business rather than on the business. The reactionary approach starts to impact morale in the organizational culture as leaders become micromanagers. The leadership's trust in their employees' ability to deliver is eroded. Leaders become completely overwhelmed because their company is experiencing a lack of credibility in the marketplace. They feel weight on their shoulders as the inability to deliver and the dissatisfaction is reinforced from the C-suite and board. At the end of the day, these leaders and managers are worried about losing their jobs.

EMPLOYEES LOSE TRUST IN THE LEADERSHIP

From the employee's perspective in these dysfunctional organizations, a sense of overall job dissatisfaction develops due to lack of engagement. Many employees merely give up and do the bare minimum which amplifies the issue. This problem has become so widespread that there's a term for it which we've discussed in previous articles. It's known as "quiet quitting." Once employees lose trust in the organization's leadership, they either engage in quiet quitting or start looking for other jobs, which leads to massive turnover. This further contributes to the initial problem of an inability to deliver products and services in a timely manner.

CUSTOMER TRUST IS HARD TO REBUILD

Many companies lose sight of or forget how much their customers plan and rely on what they are promised. Your team tells your customer “We're going to deliver this product/service.” Whatever the customer has ordered presumably will have value to them and help them. However, when that delivery doesn't happen, or it doesn't happen when promised, that, understandably leads to a complete erosion of trust.

Customer trust is so hard to build back. A broken promise doesn't just impact that individual customer but has a massive ripple effect that leads to that customer leaving negative reviews and ultimately impacts a company's credibility. If your customers are unhappy, you can be sure they're telling people they're unhappy. It's like that old hair commercial where you tell two people, and those two people tell two more people. Unlike in the commercial where they are spreading positive news, these customers are spreading negative information about the company. And, unlike when that commercial aired, the news is spreading on the Internet.

When customers are unhappy, the market hears that the company is not doing what it says it's going to do. The company starts to lose previously loyal, recurring customers. And while it's difficult to know how many, they also lose potential new customers. That absolutely impacts an organization's ability to expand, the ability to hit revenue targets, and the ability to go out in the market and be seen and trusted as a leader.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A COMPANY IS FOCUSED ON “THE RIGHT STUFF”

Life is very different for companies when they deliver what they say they're going to deliver in a timely manner. When a company is doing all the right stuff, everyone feels it from the top down, knows it, and is engaged in doing all the right things at the right time.

When this challenge is solved, leaders are so much happier and can put their total focus on the right things. They are then able to spend their time on the business ensuring the value of base products and services, building strategies, and helping others prepare to implement those strategies versus being in the business of “micromanaging.” In this type of environment, leaders communicate the strategy, they provide clarity and direction for the delivery of the right products and services. They are proactive in their approach to business operations and enable employees to determine how things get accomplished instead of dictating. They are also in touch with and aware of customer and market perceptions, so they have a full understanding of customer needs and market demands, giving them the ability to deliver on time.

EMPLOYEES ARE CORRECTLY ALIGNED AND EXECUTING EFFICIENTLY

From the employee perspective, their efforts would be in alignment with the correct strategy and customer needs. In a company that functions well and is focused on the right things, employees know how they contribute to the value of the company and the companies' customers. They would know the timeline as well as the importance of hitting that milestone because in this well-run

organization the plan is transparent and well known throughout the organization. Employees are engaged, empowered, and efficient. They feel trusted and have mutual trust in the leaders and the organization.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION BECOMES THE GREATEST DELIVERABLE

Timely delivery of products and services builds trust and satisfaction among any company's customers. That trust grows exponentially building the greatest value a company can have: Complete customer satisfaction. Customers want to continue to work with companies that deliver valuable products. This is what we see time and time again when working with our clients. We see our clients develop clear communication back and forth with their customers, both from the sales perspective, but also from the product and customer success groups.

The feeling of satisfaction grows as a company's customers see that their wishes and desires -- what they've shared with the sales team or the organization over time -- are being fulfilled. And of course, they share that information with peers in their industry about how well such-and-such organization delivers. The customer values accelerated delivery, values the products that the company provides. This positive perspective creates a ripple effect that creates credibility with them as a renewing customer, as well as with potential new customers.

HOW OKR COHORT HELPS ORGANIZATIONS ACCELERATE DELIVERABLES

The key word in any business relationship is trust. Business leaders trust Denise and I to come in and help them solve this problem. While they are initially looking to us to help

them accelerate delivery of valuable products and services to their customers, what they don't realize is that is accomplished only by shifting the focus of their organization from activities to outcomes, and by embedding purpose in the work of both leaders and employees. When employees and leaders are both focused on the right things, we help get them talking about overall results instead of day-to-day tasks. Denise and I are consistently helping our clients focus on the right thing through the OKR framework.

OBJECTIVE AND KEY RESULTS

OKR is a lightweight goal setting framework that bridges strategy to execution. OKRs create transparency and alignment across large and small organizations and help deliver the right products and services on time.

The challenge of meeting deliverables is one of the main reasons organizations adopt OKRs and why they hire Denise and I to help guide them to establish the framework. To utilize the OKR framework effectively, we need to follow the entire OKR cycle that starts with the setting of a company's objectives and key results. We help our clients create alignment among their employees, teams, and partners and share those objectives and key results. We then help guide the planning and execution of work that specifically supports the designated OKRs. And we help them continuously reflect on outcomes and pivot as needed.

6 STEPS TO CREATE HIGH QUALITY ALIGNED OKRS

One of the most important things Denise and I do is work with the leadership teams to co-create high quality and aligned OKRs for their companies. We follow six steps in this co-creation process.

1. First, we start with alignment of the organizations' vision, mission, and strategic intent.
2. Next, we help leadership understand and define collective goals or business outcomes.
3. This is followed with bringing their point of view and agreement to the top 5 strategic teams.
4. We then have these teams define objectives together to support organizational strategic outcomes.
5. And we then focus on identifying key results that show the impact and measure of success on achieving those outcomes.
6. Lastly, we guide them to identify the work or initiatives that could be done in partnership or individually while prioritizing high impact work that leads to quick wins on delivering value.

This process is a collective effort which reduces silos, duplication of efforts, and misalignment among leadership. It leads to value being delivered faster and more efficiently to their company's customers.

OKRS WORK FOR LARGE AND SMALL ORGANIZATIONS

One of the larger organizations I worked with had nearly 20,000 employees. They had been using OKRs for a year, but they had not seen any significant improvements on delivering the right value. I noticed that they were struggling to keep up with the customer needs and market demands. I noticed their OKRs were created in a vacuum by the leaders and expected their teams to deliver against those OKRs instead of engaging their teams to contribute and define them collectively. As soon as we recommended a change to this process and they started including the right partners and key members to collaborate on the creation of the OKRs, they saw a significant Improvement.

Efficiency and productivity on delivering the right value that complemented business outcomes improved as well as greater alignment on collective priorities based on the customer needs.

BEING MINDSET DRIVEN LEADS TO “THE RIGHT STUFF”

There may be some things a company can implement after reading this article. However, if it was easy, companies would already be doing it instead of dealing with the challenges we help our clients solve. It's up to leaders to make an important choice. The question is, do you want to continue to be complacent and deal with the delays and wrong deliveries and customers being distrustful of your organization? Or do you want to start digging in and take action to accelerate your time to market?

If you're ready to dig in, Denise and I are ready to help you. I encourage you to schedule a consultation with us or our team at okrcohort.com/connect. Let's take some time to understand the impact slow delivery is having on your organization so we can help you see how OKRs and using this light goal-setting framework can improve what you're doing by aligning your strategy into your day-to-day work.

We see the impact on every organization we work with when OKRs are collaboratively created, and the focus is brought to the right thing.

We've worked with organizations with as few as 28 people and organizations with more than 20,000 people. If you want to see that same accelerated time to market improvement and efficiency, please click on the link below, grab some time on our calendar so we can start discussing how we could help you solve your specific issues.

[OKRCOHORT.COM/CONNECT](https://okrcohort.com/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

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.