

WHEN ORGANIZATIONS PRIORITIZE DELIVERY

OVER THE IDEA OF PROVIDING
REAL VALUE



OKR
COHORT

In our work as co-founders of OKR Cohort, Denise Kanfield and I work with businesses around the world, of every size and across all industries, to address challenges that lead to chaos and confusion instead of harmony and growth. Today, I'm sharing how we help these businesses make a shift that leads to a greater customer experience and improved customer service.

What Denise and I so often see challenging organizations today is that their customers aren't receiving products that truly deliver value. We see that organizations are prioritizing *delivery* of new features, products, and services over the *value* those new things provide to the customer. Organizations are only focused on getting new features, products, and services out to market rather than listening to and understanding their customers' needs.

When an organizations' customers aren't receiving the products or services they expect, it has a variety of implications. First, they aren't receiving them in a timely manner. Whether it's because it was communicated to them incorrectly by a sales rep or they thought something was going to be released at a certain time based on previous conversations they feel like the company is not keeping promises. Secondly, the wrong thing is being delivered. In the customers' eyes, they see the delivery of new features, products, and services that they can't use for their own purpose as a delivery of the wrong thing. The company thinks it's delivering the right thing while the customer feels like they're not being heard.. In some cases, customers see new features that they can't use as bloating the product or decreasing the overall value because it causes them more work. They've got to learn a new thing that isn't delivering the value that they were hoping to get.

THIS CHALLENGE LEADS TO COMPLETE CUSTOMER DISSATISFACTION AND LACK OF TRUST

This leads to complete customer dissatisfaction and lack of trust with the organization. As you may be able to imagine, this leads to customers canceling products and services or leaving the organization entirely. The bleeding of customers is noticed in the market and the word gets out. That makes it harder to sign on new customers. When this occurs, it affects the organization's customer-facing employees. The sales teams end up getting discouraged and leaving the organization because the products and services they thought they sold weren't being delivered to their customers. Sales teams have tight relationships with their customers. So overall this leads to lack of trust within the organization. The sales teams don't believe what they're being told about products and services that will be delivered. This creates a ripple effect that spreads a lack confidence, like a roadmap that sales teams must deal with. Since they are out there on the front line, they feel like it's their personal reputation on the line, not just the company reputation. They feel like their personal reputation is being damaged because they are the face of the organization. It was their word that got the customer to sign up and when they are unable to deliver the value that customer is looking for, they feel like they're personally letting people down.

LEADERS BECOME FIREFIGHTERS INSTEAD OF LEADERS

Leaders get caught up in this dissatisfaction. Leaders and managers within organizations are suddenly pulled into the firefight to keep customers from leaving. They end up going on sales calls to justify issues or decisions being made and to help close tougher deals or promise future deliveries instead of being inside the organization helping their employees.

There's an avalanche of a lack of confidence starting from the outside and infiltrating the inner workings of the organization that impacts both employees and leaders and causes them to leave the organization along with the customer.

LOVE BLOOMS WHEN ORGANIZATIONS DELIVER THE VALUE CUSTOMERS CRAVE

There is no question that customers literally fall in love with organizations that deliver the value they crave. And why wouldn't they. They receive products and services that truly add value to their organization. They feel that their voice is heard and embedded by the organization throughout the development process. There is an enhanced customer experience and loyalty that your organization builds with the customer and you know you have won because customers are referring others to your organization and you're bringing on new customers. There is a similar mirror effect that takes place within the organization itself.

What Denise and I typically see when organizations turn things around through the use of OKRs is that the whole environment changes. Work is fun again. Employees are happy, as they feel fully and completely connected to the customer needs. They know the organization is delivering what was promised, and when that happens you just feel better about everything that you're doing. The organization can pursue new customers and develop new relationships. They have more bandwidth because they're spending time with the customers on the relationship and on delivering what was promised instead of putting out fires. Employees have improved efficiency and effectiveness across the board. When employees are happy, when they're doing what they love and are excited about what they're doing, they have more energy for everything else. This contributes to an increased level of personal satisfaction within the organization.

Of course, this turn for the better impacts leadership as well. Leaders are freed up and they can focus on their people, both on development and relationships with their employees instead of having to try to smooth out disgruntled customers. We've heard so many times that relationship is key both with customers and employees. By now just about everyone has heard that people don't quit companies, they quit people. In my experience, that appears to be true. People crave leadership and the relationship with managers is crucial. Employees want growth and development which can only happen when leaders can focus on leading instead of putting out fires. When leaders are helping their employees grow personally and professionally, that makes them feel happy and they stay longer, which in effect contributes to the continuity of leadership that can really help an organization grow. You have to avoid the high costs of turnover that can come when people are dissatisfied. When work is fun, people stick around longer, and you see growth happening within your organization.

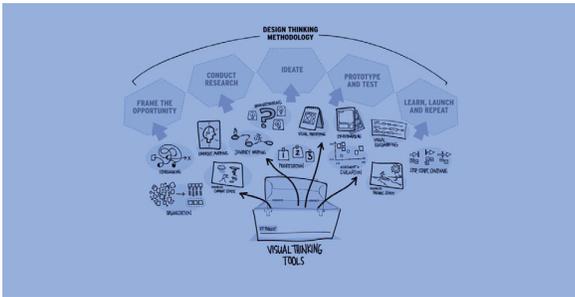
HOW OKRS HELP ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS ON OUTCOMES INSTEAD OF ACTIVITIES

Business leaders hire us to help them shift the focus of their organization to delivering value to customers. This happens when they quit looking only at activities and **learn to focus on outcomes**. It ensures that they are getting the right things done and that their people are talking results. Companies are literally craving this focus on outcomes and we help them deliver that through OKRs.

OKR stands for Objective and Key Results which is our popular goal-setting framework that helps organizations align their work with their overall strategy. In a customer-centric organization the focus of OKRs would be ensuring that the needs and wants of the customers are being met.

SEVEN STEPS TO MAKE YOUR ORGANIZATION CUSTOMER CENTRIC THROUGH OKRS

We usually recommend following OKRs' seven steps to make the shift to a customer-centric organization.



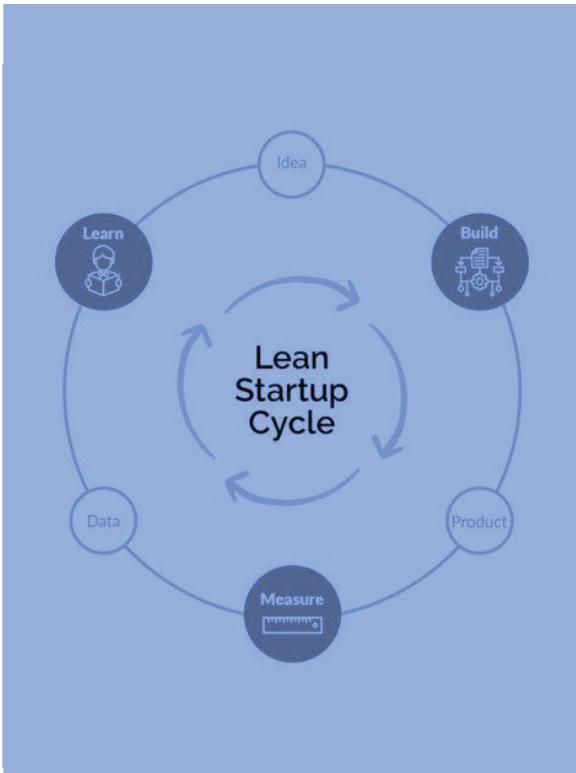
Step One: Start by identifying the specific customer needs and pain points that your organization is looking to address. Apply some design thinking methodology and customer data on those needs and pain points



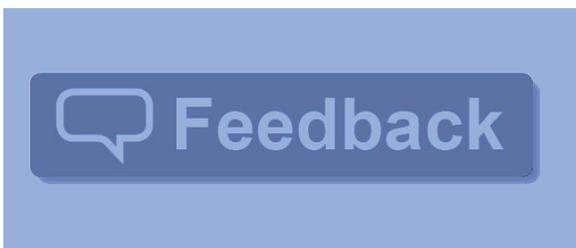
Step Two: Use those insights to set clear and measurable OKRs that align with your organization's overall strategy and goals



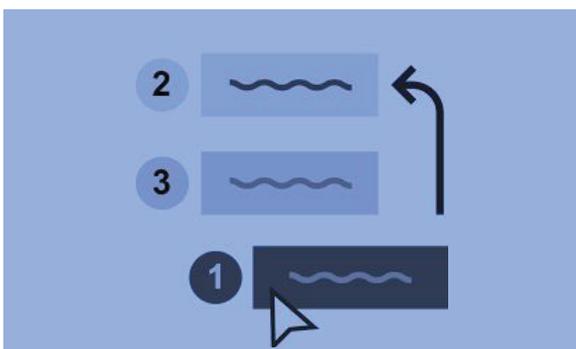
Step Three: Develop customer-based key results that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant to customer needs. These must be time bound so you can test and learn at that time to help track progress towards achieving your customer-centric goals.



Step Four: Using a Lean Startup approach, you would quickly develop and test solutions to address your customer needs through build, measure, and learn steps. With our test and learn approach, you would build the product, measure the impact and learn to ideate on the product. These are the three steps that we usually take within the Lean Startup. This can involve creating a **minimum viable product (MVP)**, which offers the core features and functionality needed to solve the customer problem and then iterating based on feedback from real users.



Step Five: Engage with customers throughout the incremental development process to gather feedback and insights and use this information to refine and improve your MVP.



Step Six: Prioritize customer feedback and input when setting and revising your OKRs. This can help ensure that your objectives and key results are aligned with the needs and preferences of your target audience.



Step Seven: Use data analytics to measure and track the success of your MVP and the progress of your OKRs. This can help you identify areas for improvement and make adjustments as needed.

To further enhance those seven steps always encourage collaboration and cross functional teamwork to ensure that everyone in the organization is working towards the same objective and key results. It is very important to communicate your OKRs and progress regularly to keep everyone in the organization informed and aligned.

In addition, it's important to hold regular check-ins to review progress, celebrate success, and address any challenges or obstacles. Encourage a culture of continuous learning and Improvement and use customer feedback and data to inform decisions and drive innovation. Be flexible and willing to adopt your OKRs and product delivery as needed based on your customer feedback and changing market conditions. Use OKRs to help drive Innovation and create a customer-centric culture within the organization and set ambitious but achievable objectives and strive for progress and Improvement rather than perfection.

Finally, you should continuously measure and track the success of your OKRs and MVP and use that information to drive ongoing improvements as you strive towards your customers' goals.

HOW ONE ORGANIZATION APPLIED THE SEVEN-STEP PROCESS

One large organization that Denise worked with used the exact seven-step process I outlined above to identify and vet a new product offering. Denise helped the organization put together a cross-functional team of eight people. They took some people from sales, some people from product development, and some from technology. They brought together eight people forming a small team that could do something quickly. Mind you, this was an organization that would usually shift a whole part of the organization, hundreds of people to do something like this and that would take years. First this small 8-member team set the OKRs so that they could define the success criteria they were looking for in a minimum viable product (MVP). The team established a design/thinking workshop going where they vetted what the customer wanted. The team brainstormed ideas and identified the most viable idea. Working in one-week sprints the team defined what they were going to accomplish. Then they did the work by holding a stand-up every day to make sure everybody was on track and remove blockers as they came up. At the end of the week, they brought in customers and salespeople to share the progress and immediately get their feedback.

The weekly feedback was critical to make small shifts as the project progressed. At the end of that 12-week period there was a demonstratable product with a business model that the team was able to share with customers. They were able to get feedback from their customers immediately. What the team determined was that the business model wasn't going to work. So, in as little as 12 weeks that organization was able to say no to a new idea and move on.

In many organizations, Denise and I work with, we see that their biggest problem is they never say no. They try so many things that they get distracted. In this case the team was clearly able to see that the product would not be successful. They made an informed decision, then in good conscience were able to let that idea go and pivot to the next idea. They didn't waste years on that situation. They were finished in three months. OKRs helped not just to get to that decision but to show that the organization was willing to work in a new way and try new things. That was immensely helpful for that organization.

LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION TO GET YOUR ORGANIZATIONS DELIVERING THE VALUE CUSTOMERS CRAVE

If you're looking to make a change in your organization and get focused on the customer and the outcomes that you deliver, the best way to engage with us is just to go to our website at:

okrcohort.com

Grab some time on our calendars and we can have a conversation to learn about your specific challenge and help you understand how OKRs can solve that issue. Every situation is different, and each organization has a unique twist to the challenges they're facing. So, reach out to us and let's talk.

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.