



# How to Run an OKRs Pilot

How to successfully introduce OKRs  
to your organization

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>3</b>
Few words about Gtmhub	
About this eBook	
<b>OKRs are simple, but not easy</b>	<b>4</b>
So, what is so hard about OKRs?	
<b>Change management crash course</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Defining your pilot</b>	<b>7</b>
Why are we implementing OKRs?	
Why are we running the pilot project?	
What is the desired outcome?	
<b>Planning the pilot</b>	<b>10</b>
Define the objectives of the pilot	
Using OKRs to define pilot objectives	
Common objectives of an OKR pilot	
Length of the pilot	
Choose the testing group	
<b>Tactical</b>	<b>16</b>
Designating OKR Sponsor & OKR Champion	
Defining planning periods (planning sessions)	
Setting up cadence	
<b>Avoiding common mistakes</b>	<b>19</b>
Outcome vs Output	
Too many OKRs	
Quantitative objectives	

# Preface

As OKRs go mainstream and large organizations start adopting the methodology, the question is no longer “What are OKRs?”. Today the question is “How do we adopt OKRs?”.

To do anything at scale is complex and to simplify it, enterprises instinctively turn to pilot projects. While pilot projects, regardless of their field, share many common characteristics - designing a pilot project takes experience, domain expertise and time.

This ebook will help you precisely with that: **designing and running a successful OKRs pilot within your organization.**

## Few words about Gtmhub

At **Gtmhub** we have helped over 400 organizations to date to adopt OKRs (Objectives & Key Results) methodology. We have worked with organizations with only a few employees and global enterprises with over 100,000 employees.

In this eBook, we have gathered and condensed everything we have learned about introducing OKRs in large organizations through pilot projects.

## About this eBook

Using the Gtmhub OKRs platform is not required to benefit from this ebook, but if you do use it - we place occasional sidebars which describe how to achieve a given task with Gtmhub.

# OKRs are simple, but not easy

Objectives & Key Results is one of the most straightforward management methodologies. In a way, it is this simplicity that made them so popular and widespread.

Just like losing weight - make sure you consume fewer calories than you burn - the concept is elementary. However, losing weight is notoriously hard to do, so much so that almost 30% of the world population is either obese or overweight. Same can be said about OKRs.

The simplicity of OKRs comes from the fact that there are only a few rules that define the methodology: we set qualitative objectives, which describe our intent and aspiration; for each objective, we define three to five quantitative key results, which we use to measure success. That about sums it up. For a slightly more elaborate explanation read our post [OKRs – everything you need to know](#).

## So, what is so hard about OKRs?

The first and foremost challenge stems from the fact that OKRs are about changing the mindset of an organization from **output to outcomes, shifting the focus from completing tasks to achieving results**. This may be one of the reasons you are adopting OKRs; however, changing the way people think is an immense task. Most people in an organization are used to completing tasks. With OKRs, you are asking them to start thinking in terms of accomplishing results, and this is not going to be easy.

Secondly, it is a process change. Working with OKRs represents something else, something new, one more thing to do. So, not only are you asking your organization to change the way it thinks, but you are also asking people to do something new.

Without appropriate planning, including processes, tools, and training, the reaction from your employees to the introduction of OKRs may range from mild annoyance to openly displayed contempt.

Finally, the relative simplicity of OKRs leaves much to interpretation. Best case, this means you have the freedom to shape the process to your unique needs; worst case, you end up in a mess of dozens of subjective, ad hoc, and hard to manage OKRs interpretations.

Every organization that adopts OKRs faces these challenges, and at scale (thousands of people) they become an order of magnitude harder and more complex.

In this ebook, we will provide solutions and blueprints for solving OKRs at scale.

# Change management crash course

Change management, especially at large organizations, is nothing new - as a matter of fact, this is how anything gets done. While there are many approaches when it comes to OKRs, we have found that the **Model for Managing Complex Change** devised by Mary Lippitt from the Enterprise Group is particularly useful.

The model represents any change as a matrix of five different components. To successfully introduce change, all five elements must be present. To illustrate the importance of each of them, the model also defines different types of failures depending on which component is missing.

## Model for Managing Complex Change



The five elements of change:

- **Vision** - why are you doing this?
- **Skills** - do you have the necessary skills within the organization to successfully implement the change?
- **Incentives** - what is in it for people that you expect to participate?
- **Resources** - do you have necessary resources, tools, budget and time?
- **Action plan** - do you have the program to execute?

Answering these questions is imperative not only before you start implementing OKRs, but even before you start defining your pilot.

To help you with this, we will provide possible answers a large, matrix-based organization may have.

### **Vision**

We are implementing OKRs to drive alignment within our matrix-based organization. As a result, we are expecting increased performance across the board and significant improvement in success rates of our projects - both in terms of completion, as well as being on time and within the budget.

### **Skills**

As an organization, we do not have the necessary skills to implement OKRs. We have a half-dozen champions, many of which have practiced OKRs in their previous jobs. We will acquire the necessary skills by hiring consultants and organizing company-wide training.

### **Incentives**

The teams and employees will have the ability to understand the direction of the organization and align themselves to achieve the best outcomes and be more successful. The increased efficiency and transparency will remove frustration, favoritism and provide a level playing field based on meritocracy.

### **Resources**

To provide the best possible logistics to our team, we will purchase Gtmhub OKRs Platform, together with the Customer Success package. Gtmhub will allow us to focus solely on our OKRs, without worrying about the mechanics of the process.

### **Action Plan**

We will present the action plan, based on the advice and templates in this ebook, to every team member. A dedicated team of OKR Champions will execute and monitor the action plan.

The actual answers will depend on the type of organization and the challenges you are aiming to solve, but having meaningful, authentic and clear answers to these points is a must.

# Defining your pilot

While we have not run any scientific research on this, in our experience the primary reason for OKR pilots to fail is failing to define the pilot itself.

There are four main questions one needs to ask and answer, before ever starting the OKRs pilot project.

1. **Why are we implementing OKRs?**
2. **Why are we running the pilot project?**
3. **How are we going to run the pilot?**
4. **What is the desired outcome?**

There are any number of right answers to each of these questions – and it is worth both time and effort to provide the right answers for your organization.

## Why are we implementing OKRs?

Knowing why your organization wants to implement OKRs is fundamentally important; the answer to this question will inform all of your other actions and decisions.

Let us first start with some bad reasons for implementing OKRs:

- Google is doing it
- Everyone is doing it
- Your boss read “Measure What Matters” while flying to Europe

While you may have come across OKRs because you read a book or someone told you about them, you have to answer what is the fundamental reason to do so.

OKRs promise three basic ideas:

- **Transparency** - know what is happening
- **Focus** - work on what is most important
- **Alignment** - work with others towards what is important

In addition to those three, we think that simply achieving better results - as an organization, as a team, or as an individual - is the best reason to implement OKRs.

Building on the broad promises of OKRs and making them more specific will make it easier to shape your process, measure the outcomes and ultimately be successful.

For example, many large organizations are drowning themselves in “update meetings,” which is a symptom of a lack of transparency. One of our customers has calculated that just by “industrializing” the process and putting OKRs in a system where everyone can access them and track their progress, they can save 200,000 staff hours of unnecessary meetings per year.

Another example, when it comes to lack of focus, is a high rate of unfinished projects - as the organization always tends to chase the next shiny thing. In that case, a reason for adopting OKRs would be to improve the focus of the organization and increase the project completion, on-time and on-budget ratios.

When it comes to alignment, the symptoms one may want to focus on are often massive bureaucracy, lengthy and expensive initiatives, and general rigidity.

To summarize - hype is not a good reason to implement OKRs. Focus on the core benefits of OKRs and make them specific to your organization, to maximize the success of OKRs.

## Why are we running the pilot project?

There are many reasons why an organization may run a pilot project, and they all boil down to minimizing risk. With that in mind, it is important to articulate what risk is to be minimize and reconcile that with the desired outcome - as those two are often at odds.

For example, if our desired outcome is to achieve alignment - then having one person in the pilot group would be quite absurd. It would be equally silly to have 50,000 people in the pilot group, so these questions will necessarily have nuanced answers.

What we have seen to work best is to design pilots in stages, each design to prove or test one particular aspect:

- **Conceptual fit** - Do OKRs fit in the culture and way of work of the organization?
- **Leadership Engagement** - Is organizational leadership engaged with the methodology?
- **Broad Engagement** - Are people in non-leadership positions, including the individual contributors, involved with the practice?
- **Technology fit** - Is the process supported by technology which allows people to focus on their objectives? Does it work for distributed teams, remote workers and across time zones?
- **Scale** - Is the process, logistics, and technology able to support OKRs at massive scale?



The final thought on the pilot projects is that they are expensive in absolute terms. In our experience, pilots make sense for medium to large enterprises, because they are a relatively cheap alternative to full-scale deployment. These organizations will usually deploy several people or a small team to manage the whole project.

In the case of smaller organizations, up to 300 employees - pilots tend to be expensive, have artificial boundaries and in general create more problems than they solve.

## What is the desired outcome?

The single most important thing we need to figure out before we can go into planning the pilot is what is it that we want to achieve with the pilot? Different organizations will have different ambitions, but most of those will fit into one of the following:

- Prove that OKRs work. You will typically focus on one or more of the core promises of OKRs
  - Better alignment
  - Increased transparency
  - Improved engagement
  - Laser focus in execution
- Prove that OKRs can work in our organization
- Prove that OKRs can work at scale
- If you are using the software to manage OKRs, then your pilot will also extend to the particular platform you have chosen

# Planning the pilot

Any given pilot project will have several components to it. The most important component is the objective of the pilot - what is it that we are trying to prove or disprove.

In addition to the objective, one also needs to define what will be the length of the project as well as who will participate in the pilot.

In this section, we will address various components of planning the pilot project, give examples from practice and also touch on some of the more tactical aspects of planning the pilot.

## Define the objectives of the pilot

The single purpose of running a pilot process is to prove or disprove something on a smaller scale, in a controlled environment, and with minimal risk.

So, with that in mind, the most important part of any pilot project is to define how success looks like; what needs to happen for the pilot to be declared a success. At the end of the pilot, there should be no ambiguity in regard to whether the pilot was successful or not.

Interestingly, we have found in practice, that OKRs are ideally suited for defining pilot projects.

## Using OKRs to define pilot objectives

When we define OKR, we state:

- What is our objective?
- How are we going to measure success?
- What is the time period in which we want to achieve that objective?
- Who owns the objective?

These characteristics of OKRs lend themselves perfectly for defining a pilot project. We can also use multiple OKRs to test several aspects of our pilot project.

To demonstrate this, let us examine the following example:

- **Objective:** Improve organizational focus
    - Key result 1:** Reduce the number of in-progress projects to 12
    - Key result 2:** Complete 60% of projects on time
    - Key result 3:** Complete 75% of projects on or below budget
- Timeline:** 12 months
- Owner:** Helen Smith, VP Operations

While this is just an example and every organization will define these OKRs based on the

reasons for implementing OKRs in the first place, it is a pretty simple and concise way of defining a pilot project.

## Common objectives of an OKR pilot

Even though you may define your pilot in any number of dimensions, through our experience, we have found that six distinct categories will almost always be part of the pilot success criteria.

Depending on the size of your organization and other peculiarities you may focus on some of the areas more than the others.

- **Onboarding** - can we get people to use OKRs in the first place?
- **Activity** - how active and engaged with the process people will be?
- **Alignment** - are we more aligned as an organization with OKRs?
- **Transparency** - have we improved transparency between different silos, employees and teams?
- **Focus** - are we more focused on what is important with OKRs?
- **Attainment** - are we achieving our objectives now that we are using OKRs?

Measuring success within these categories is not trivial, so we will now dig deeper into each one of those and provide sample OKRs that other organizations have successfully used.

### Onboarding

It was Plato that said that “A good start is half the battle.”

While it may sound trivial, the very first thing we should test when piloting OKRs is that we can even kick it off. Organizations are inert and the larger they get, the harder it is to change anything. A false start is where countless projects die. To avoid this, the pilot should have clearly defined objectives around onboarding and launch of the process.

A sample pilot OKR for this category could look like this:

- Objective: **Successfully launch OKRs**
  - Key result 1: **All 50 people have defined at least one OKR**
    - everyone is onboard
  - Key result 2: **There is 0 objectives without key results**
    - you'd be surprised how often this happens. Objective without key result, obviously, is useless
  - Key result 3: **We have defined at least 150 key results**
    - make sure there is a 3 to 1 ratio between key results and objectives; otherwise we are masquerading KPIs as OKRs

This OKR, as well as others in the pilot, should be owned by one of the OKR champions.

## Activity

All too often, OKRs die in organizations after a week or two - once the initial enthusiasm has subdued. Wearing off from the initial activity has nothing to do with OKRs; this is the fundamental problem of any change management.

Measuring activity is the key to determine if OKRs were successfully adopted. To drive activity, you will need patience and persistence on behalf of OKR Champion, as well as deliberation and leadership from OKR Sponsor (we define those two roles later in this playbook).

A sample pilot OKR for this category could look like this:

- Objective: **Organization is highly engaged with OKRs**

Key result 1: **There are zero key results without progress**

- 0% attainment on a key result is, almost as a rule, a sign of disengagement, rather than an inability to achieve the result

Key result 2: **There are 1,800 updates on key results**

- 150 KR x 12 weeks in a quarter
- this applies only if you are managing OKRs with a tool other than Gtmhub, which automatically updates progress of key results

Key result 3: **There are 6 check-in meetings discussing OKRs**

- best practice is two discuss OKRs every week or every other week

Depending on if you are using software to manage OKRs, you could also define activity key results around comments, likes, upvotes, badges and so on.

## Alignment

Alignment is somewhat tricky to measure, but at the same time - critically important. Alignment is usually measured through a set of proxy metrics, but before we go into this, we should define what enterprise alignment is.

**Harvard Business Review defines enterprise alignment** as making sure that strategies, organizational capabilities, resources and management systems support enterprise purpose.

One proxy for alignment is the percentage of objectives that support other objectives; this is not necessarily an exercise in cascading goals. The idea here is that if a large number of objectives exist on their own, like islands, this is a symptom of misalignment.

Another proxy is to focus on the attainment of the top-level goals and compare it to the aggregated achievement of the sub-objectives. If the attainment of the top-level objectives differs very much from the aggregated attainment of all sub-goals (regardless in which direction), this is a clear sign that the supposedly supporting objectives do not influence the top-level objective - or in a word - are misaligned.

An excellent way to measure improvements in alignment is to focus on the symptoms of misalignment. These symptoms will differ from organization to organization, but often they will fall under the common umbrella of bureaucracy. For example, having too many meetings is often a symptom of misalignment, as people struggle to figure out what is going on and how they can help best. In the same vein of thought, some of the critical workflows may be overly complicated and long lasting; perhaps, hiring a new person or getting a new piece of equipment takes months, as half a dozen of isolated silos need to work together, but are severely misaligned. Picking some of these very particular problems which are to be solved is often an excellent proxy to measure improvements in alignment.

A sample pilot OKR for this category could look like this:

- Objective: **Save time wasted in update meetings**
  - Key result 1: **Reduce the number of meetings by 25%**
  - Key result 2: **Reduce average meeting time from 60 min to 30 min**
  - Key result 3: **Reduce the average number of meeting attendees from 7 to 3**

The above OKR presumes that because you would have OKRs to isolate problem areas quickly, you would be able to focus on those and would be able to skip meetings where everything is going according to the plan.

The exact OKR to measure alignment would very much depend on the fundamental reason why you want to be more aligned. Many times, measuring alignment is as simple as measuring attainment of the mission critical objectives.

In the end, one adopts OKRs to achieve objectives. The simplest and most accurate way of measuring that you are successful with OKRs is to track the overall attainment of your OKRs. It is a tautology, but it doesn't matter if your pilot has "succeeded" and no objectives were achieved. As the old joke goes: "Surgery was successful; the patient is dead."

Before we go into explaining how to measure attainment during the pilot, it is worth explaining the difference between **committed** and **aspirational** OKRs. Committed OKRs are the ones you are looking to achieve at 100% (similar to good old- fashioned targets), whereas aspirational OKRs you want to make ambitious and aim at 70% achievement.

With that out of the way, let us provide a simple pilot OKR for attainment.

- Objective: **Kill it with OKRs**
  - Key result 1: **Overall attainment of OKRs at 70%**
  - Key result 2: **Committed OKRs at 100% achievement**
  - Key result 3: **Zero OKRs below 10% attainment**
  - Key result 4: **75% of OKRs over 50% attainment**

“Kill it with OKRs” is the definition of a meta-objective, where the achievement of other objectives drives the accomplishment of this particular OKR. A neat thing about this objective is that you really need one driven person to own it and you will almost surely see the success with your OKRs process.

## Length of the pilot

Once we have chosen the objectives of our pilot, the next thing is to decide on the length of the pilot. The time period over which the pilot project will last will in many ways depend on what we want to prove with the pilot project.

For example, if the only thing we want to test is that people can come up with sensible OKRs, a two-week period may be more than enough. However, a real-world pilot project will usually have to prove much more than a simple comprehension of the methodology.

In general, a rule of a thumb is that for a smaller organization (up to 500 people) pilot should last between three and six months, and real results will be visible after the sixth month.

For larger organizations, because of the scale and complexity that comes with it, the pilot project should last one year. The caveat with larger organizations is that the pilot project should be progressive, meaning that with every quarter scale of the project should be increased. The quarters will be set up as milestones of a sort, and

by the twelfth month, the organization should be ready to deploy OKRs across the board.

When planning the one-year pilot project, OKRs used to measure the success of the pilot should also be quarterly to gauge progress and intervene where necessary.

## Choose the testing group

When defining the pilot, one of the necessary decisions is who will participate in the pilot. By the very definition of the pilot, it will be a subset of the entire organization - but deciding which subset is not straightforward.

A vast majority of our customers starts with the idea of piloting OKRs with executives or top management only. Top management is an understandable starting point; however, we strongly advise against it.

Piloting OKRs with top-management is akin to testing a drug for Alzheimer's on a group of healthy teenagers; they didn't have the symptoms before the drug and won't have the symptoms after they take it.

OKRs bring four promises: alignment, focus, transparency, and engagement. Top-management, however, is typically a group of people that meets often; hence they are aligned. They have access to virtually all of the information; therefore, transparency is not the issue. Their performance is often incentivized through equity, options, and bonuses - so engagement is also rarely an issue. Finally, while one could imagine that some within the group may not be focused, due to their seniority and experience, this also does not tend to be an issue.

Bottom line: while at least some of the top-management should participate in the pilot, limiting the pilot to this group will skew the results, as the statistical sample will be extremely biased.

The next question is the size of the testing group - or how many people will participate in the pilot. On occasion, we have met with organizations that wish to test OKRs with a handful of people. While this idea is also understandable, we need to go back to the core ideas of OKRs. It will be tough to see the benefits of alignment between four people - we need some scale to understand the benefits. Same applies to transparency. In a way, OKRs are a methodology to manage large organizations with agility - and to successfully test the method - we need a statistically unbiased model of a large organization.

To run a meaningful pilot project, one should have a testing group of anywhere between 50 and 500 people. In addition to the number, one should also try to include people from various levels and departments from the organization. What we have seen to work the best is to add top-management horizontally and then choose one or two functions vertically (e.g., IT). This setup allows you to test the alignment, focus, engagement, and transparency while still limiting the cost and complexity of the pilot project.

# Tactical

Once you have defined the pilot project, it's time to move from theory onto the practice. In this section, we will outline the best practices which you should employ to maximize the success of your OKRs Pilot project.

## Designating OKR Sponsor & OKR Champion

For OKRs to succeed, there are two key roles in the process: OKR Sponsor and OKR Champion. Depending on the size of the organization, there could be multiple people in either of these roles.

Before you start with OKRs, it is critically important that you have designated both - OKR Sponsor and OKR Champion.

OKR Sponsor is typically an executive, often a CEO or COO. This is the person that lends its authority and credibility to OKRs. As you will face many challenges along the way, it is important that there is the political will to power through those. It is highly unlikely that OKRs will start and succeed as a grassroots movement; as a matter of fact, so unlikely, that at Gtmhub we refuse to engage with prospects if there is no OKR Sponsor.

The role of the OKR Sponsor is not operational. There are no specific tasks that this person should do - aside from being invested in OKRs.

OKR Champion, on the other hand, is a highly operational role. OKR Champion is the person that makes sure the OKRs process is established, that OKRs are present, that progress is being tracked and so on. The role of OKR Champion is very similar to the role of **Scrum Master** in Software Development.

The typical responsibilities of OKR Champion will include:

- Being the internal OKRs expert
- Making sure process is being followed; that OKRs are defined and progress is tracked
- Facilitating the decision making around the process: how many OKRs? Who owns the OKRs? How often are OKRs planned?
- Optimizing the process, by removing bottlenecks, choosing the software to track and manage OKRs and so on

## Defining planning periods (planning sessions)

One of the first decisions you will have to make will be around the planning period. The planning period is nothing more than a timeframe in which objectives are to be achieved.



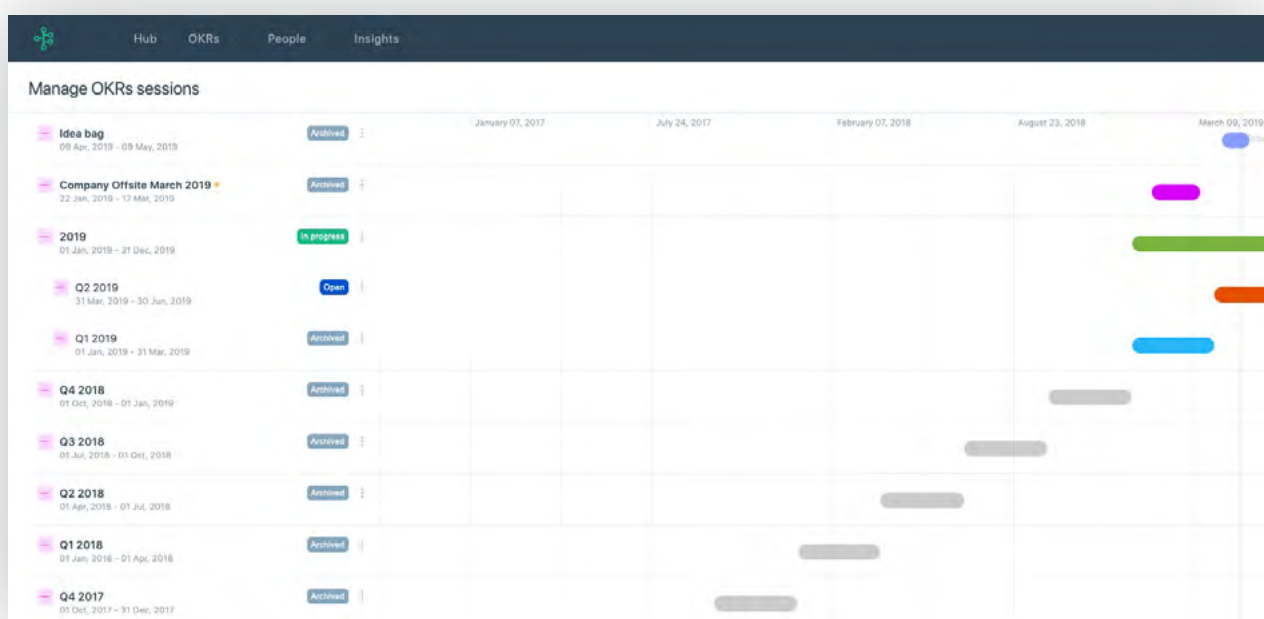
The most common time-frame used is a calendar quarter. Most organizations will have OKRs for Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4.

We have seen organizations experiment with shorter periods, like a month, or more extended periods like six months - but we strongly encourage to at least start with quarters and only change the planning period once there is an overwhelmingly strong reason to do so.

The exception to this rule of thumb is top-level organizational OKRs. These tend to be more strategic and most of the time are something that, indeed, should be accomplished within a year. In that case, the organization will set its OKRs for the year, while divisions, departments, teams, and individuals will support those strategic objectives through more tactical quarterly OKRs.

## How Gtmhub helps?

**Gtmhub supports multiple planning sessions which seamlessly enable the use case of annual and quarterly planning sessions.**



## Setting up cadence

Once you have settled on the length of your OKRs planning period, the next thing is to decide how often will you and your team discuss OKRs.

For example, if you are planning your OKRs in quarters, it is a common practice to go over the progress once a week or once every two weeks. Omitting the regular check-ins is one of the

surest ways to fail with OKRs, as very soon the team will forget about their objectives.

Even though you will find your rhythm after a while, we suggest starting with bi-weekly meetings; and ideally not make them on Friday afternoon when everyone is tired and looking forward to the weekend. Tuesday or Wednesday tends to work best.

As for the format of the meeting, we always recommend being conscious of people's time and attention. At most, it should be a one-hour meeting and preferably even shorter. During this meeting, what we have seen work best is to focus on problematic OKRs and those that are going well, while ignoring all the ones that are in the middle. The logic is that you want to see what can be done about failing objectives and learn or double-down on the ones going well.

The number of people included in the meeting can vary, but if you cannot fit everyone within an hour, then it's a good time to split people into separate groups.

Finally, the best practice is that all OKRs are updated before the meeting - as we often see the first 10-15 minutes of the check-in meetings being wasted with people updating their progress.

## How Gtmhub helps?

**Gtmhub lets you define cadence for a planning session. This functionality will set reminders to update OKRs, reports and other useful information on specified deadlines.**

**Reports and notifications**

**Report cadence**  
Frequency of reports, and retrospective meetings

Weekly

**KR update deadline**  
When to send automated email reminders that KR updates are due

Do not send aggregated report

Monday 13 46

**Time zone**  
Select a UTC time zone for the account

UTC+2 - Bulgaria, Israel, Greece, Finland

**Personal and team reports**  
When to send reports with progress updates

Do not send personal and team reports

Monday 16 21

**Report settings**  
What should get in the report

Do not list KRs in 'Key Results in danger'  
Do not list KRs in 'Key Results in danger' for objectives with confidence level recently updated

Exclude KRs with confidence level updated  
Exclude KRs where confidence level was updated during the last cadence

Include open sessions

Include employees without objectives

Include sessions without KRs

Include teams without objectives

Save Cancel

# Avoiding common mistakes

## Outcome vs Output

By far, the most common and also most fatal mistake, when adopting OKRs is a failure to think in terms of results.

Most people are used to think in terms of “what they need to do” as opposed to “what they need to achieve”. When people just start with OKRs, one can often see objectives such as “start a new marketing campaign”, “implement feature X” or “design a new sales pipeline”. Those are however only means to an end.

There are numerous issues with this mistake, but most importantly - you are missing the whole point of OKRs. OKRs are not about doing stuff but achieving results.

The way to fix this mistake is to keep asking “why?” until the desired outcome reveals itself.

Let’s take “start a new marketing campaign” as an example. One should ask “why do I want to start a new marketing campaign?” Perhaps it is to “get more inbound leads”. That is already a much better objective. We could ask “why?” again. The answer could be to “to increase the top of the funnel” - again a good objective. We should stop at the result, which is within our sphere of influence, as in the end... most objectives will be reduced either to “increase revenue” or “increase profit”. So, if marketing person is defining OKR, they have little to no influence on sales - and they should limit themselves to funnel or pipeline.

The true magic of OKRs kicks in once we start thinking in terms of outcomes. Perhaps there is a quicker, cheaper or generally better way to widen the top of the funnel (hiring a marketing agency?) - but to think broader we necessarily have to focus on results, as if we think in terms of tasks things get very binary - we either do it or not.

## Too many OKRs

When organizations first embrace OKRs, a typical mistake is to define too many of them.

One of the key promises of OKRs is the idea of focus. The way OKRs deliver this is by typically limiting the number of OKRs a person or team can own to 3 per quarter. OKRs don’t have some magical power to focus people; the way one achieves focus with OKRs is by simply limiting the number of OKRs.

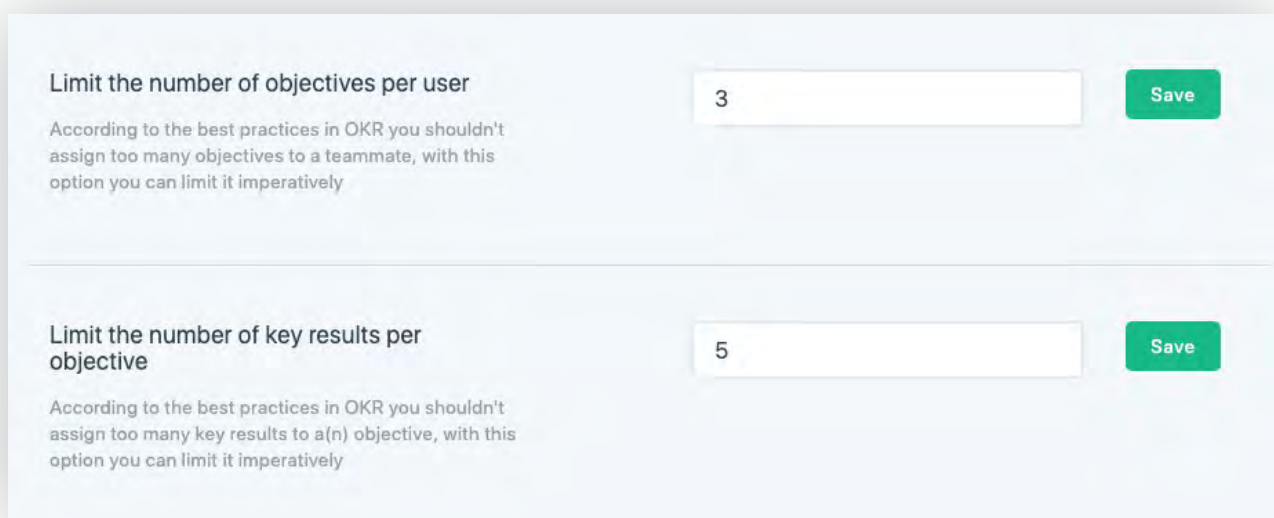
When defining your first OKRs, just as weight lifters say - if it doesn’t hurt you are not doing it

right. Just as deciding which objectives to pursue, equally important is to choose what goals should be left for the next quarter.

Finally, while three objectives per owner (team or an individual) typically work best - for the first quarter, we often suggest to organizations to drive this point even more aggressively by limiting the number of objectives to one.

## How Gtmhub helps?

**Gtmhub lets you define cadence for a planning session. This functionality will set reminders to update OKRs, reports and other useful information on specified deadlines.**



The screenshot shows two settings panels. The first panel is titled "Limit the number of objectives per user" and has a text input field containing the number "3" and a green "Save" button. Below the input field is a note: "According to the best practices in OKR you shouldn't assign too many objectives to a teammate, with this option you can limit it imperatively". The second panel is titled "Limit the number of key results per objective" and has a text input field containing the number "5" and a green "Save" button. Below the input field is a note: "According to the best practices in OKR you shouldn't assign too many key results to a(n) objective, with this option you can limit it imperatively".

## Quantitative objectives

Often people that are used to KPIs and targets (think sales) will define their objectives too narrowly using the numbers.

Example #1: Reduce churn by 1%

Example #2: Reduce cyclomatic complexity to 10

Example #3: Increase revenue to \$35m

There are three reasons why this is a mistake and why you should avoid this:

1. It lacks context
2. It does not communicate the problem/solution
3. It makes it hard or impossible to define key results

## Lacking context

When we use a number in the objective, we make it hard to understand why is this significant. Let's take the first example; it is unclear why we want to reduce churn by 1%. What is the significance of this reduction? How ambitious is it?

A better way would be to rewrite the first example in the following way:

- Objective: Create lifelong customers
- Key result 1: Reduce churn by 1%
- Key result 2: ...

By saying that we want to create lifelong customers, we provide the context of what we want to achieve - and reducing churn is just one measurement of success.

## Not communicating problem and solution

Keep in mind that OKRs are about aligning the entire organization - and most people are not familiar with your particular domain; many even don't know if the higher number is better or worse. Most importantly, they may struggle understanding what is it that you are even trying to do.

Let's take the second example: Reduce cyclomatic complexity to 10. In software development, cyclomatic complexity is a measurement which tells us how complex given code is. The more complex the code is (higher number), the harder it is to maintain it and onboard new developers.

To fix this, we could rewrite this objective as follows:

- Objective: Decrease the cost of code maintenance
  - Key result 1: Reduce cyclomatic complexity to 10
  - Key result 2: Critical bugs fixed in less than 24 hours
  - Key result 3: ...

## Hard to define key results

Using numbers in the objective makes it very hard to come up with meaningful key results. While this is a technicality, it can create frustration.

If we take a look at the third example: Increase revenue to \$35m - it is almost impossible to come up with a key result for this objective - the only thing we can do is to repeat the same target as a key result. Instead, we would be better off rewriting this key result to provide more context:

- Objective: Hit Q2 growth targets
  - Key result 1: Increase revenue to \$35m
  - Key result 2: Average discount below 20%
  - Key result 3: 80% of AEs hit their quotas

In conclusion, we see that breaking this seemingly trivial rule will bring us in a world of pain, and in many ways defeat the purpose of OKRs.

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