

Setting Goals That Matter

A guide to developing strong OKR's



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setting goals that matter*

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01 | Why Goal-Setting Fails

Most organisations confuse **activity** with **progress**. Teams ship features, hit delivery dates, and fill backlogs — but never ask whether any of it moved the needle.

The core problem: goals are set around **outputs** (what we'll build) **rather than outcomes** (what will change). This means teams can be 100% on plan and still deliver **zero business value**.

Common failure patterns:

- Targets handed down without context or buy-in
- Success defined as delivery, not impact
- No connection between team work and company strategy
- Goals set once a year and never revisited

OKRs exist to fix this — by forcing clarity on what outcome you're chasing, and making progress measurable before work begins.



02 | Activity vs Outcome

Understanding the distinction between **activity-focused** targets and **outcome thinking** is essential.

Outcome-driven objectives ensure that teams are aligned and motivated to achieve meaningful results.





03 | What are OKR's?

OKRs stand for **Objectives and Key Results**. Developed at Intel by Andy Grove and popularised by Google, they are the most widely adopted goal-setting framework in modern product organisations.

The core formula:

"I will [Objective] as measured by [Key Results]"

Objective: A qualitative, inspiring statement of direction. It answers "where do we want to go?" — memorable, ambitious, and time-bound.

Key Results: 2-5 quantitative measures that define what success looks like. They answer "how will we know we got there?"

Critical distinction: Key Results are not tasks. *"Launch new onboarding flow"* is a **task**. *"Increase 7-day activation rate from 42% to 65%"* is a **Key Result**.

OKRs work because they separate the **destination** (Objective) from the proof of **arrival** (Key Results) — and force that conversation to happen before work begins.



04/05 | Objectives and Key Results Anatomy

Clear Objectives

Objectives should be **specific and inspiring**, guiding teams toward common goals while providing a clear direction for efforts and motivation to achieve.

Measurable Key Results

Key Results must be **quantifiable**, defining success through metrics that accurately reflect progress toward objectives, thus enabling clear evaluation and accountability throughout the process.



04 | The Anatomy of Objectives

A good objective has three qualities: it is **ambitious**, **memorable**, and **directional**. If you can forget it by end of quarter, it wasn't strong enough.

Weak: "Improve the product"

Why it fails: vague, no direction, no inspiration

Weak: "Ship the new dashboard"

Why it fails: output-focused, not outcome-focused

Strong: "Become the platform teams trust to run their most critical workflows"

Why it works: directional, inspiring, outcome-focused, memorable

Strong: "Make activation so good that new users get value before they finish their first session"

Why it works: specific direction, emotionally resonant, measurable in principle

Rules of thumb:

- Write it so a new joiner understands the ambition immediately
- It should feel slightly uncomfortable — if it's easy, it's not an OKR
- One Objective per team per quarter. No more.





05 | The Anatomy of Key Results

Key Results are the quantitative proof that your Objective was achieved. The most common mistake is writing tasks disguised as Key Results.

Task (wrong): "Run 3 user research sessions"

Key Result (right): "Increase satisfaction score from 6.2 to 8.0 among enterprise users"

Task (wrong): "Redesign the checkout flow"

Key Result (right): "Reduce checkout abandonment from 34% to 18%"

The SMART test:

- **Specific:** does it describe exactly what changes?
- **Measurable:** is there a number attached?
- **Achievable:** is it a stretch, not a fantasy?
- **Relevant:** does it actually prove the Objective?
- **Time-bound:** is there a clear end date?

Avoid vanity metrics: page views, features shipped, meetings held. These look like progress but don't prove impact.

Aim for 2-4 Key Results per Objective. Too many dilutes focus.





06 | Key Results Vs Tasks

KRs vs Tasks

Key Results (KRs) are outcomes to achieve, while tasks are actions to complete. Focusing on KRs drives effectiveness, not just completion of tasks.

SMART Test

The SMART criteria ensure KRs are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, providing clarity and focus for successful goal attainment.

Metrics Comparison

Vanity metrics may look impressive but don't reflect true success. Outcome metrics measure real impact, aligning efforts directly with desired results.



07 | The OKR Hierarchy

OKRs work best when they cascade — but cascading is not the same as copying. Each layer should interpret the level above, not replicate it.

Company Level:

Objective: *"Become the market leader in mid-market SaaS by end of year"*

KRs: Grow ARR from £12M to £18M | NPS of 45+ | Churn below 8%

Product Level (interprets company OKR):

Objective: *"Make our product so intuitive that users succeed without needing support"*

KRs: Reduce support tickets per MAU by 40% | Feature adoption from 38% to 60%

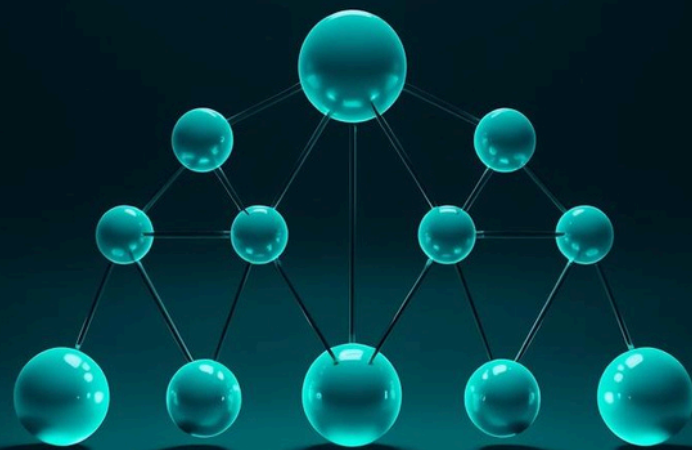
Team Level (interprets product OKR):

Objective: *"Nail the first-run experience so new users hit value in session one"*

KRs: 7-day activation from 42% to 65% | Time-to-first-value from 8 mins to 3 mins

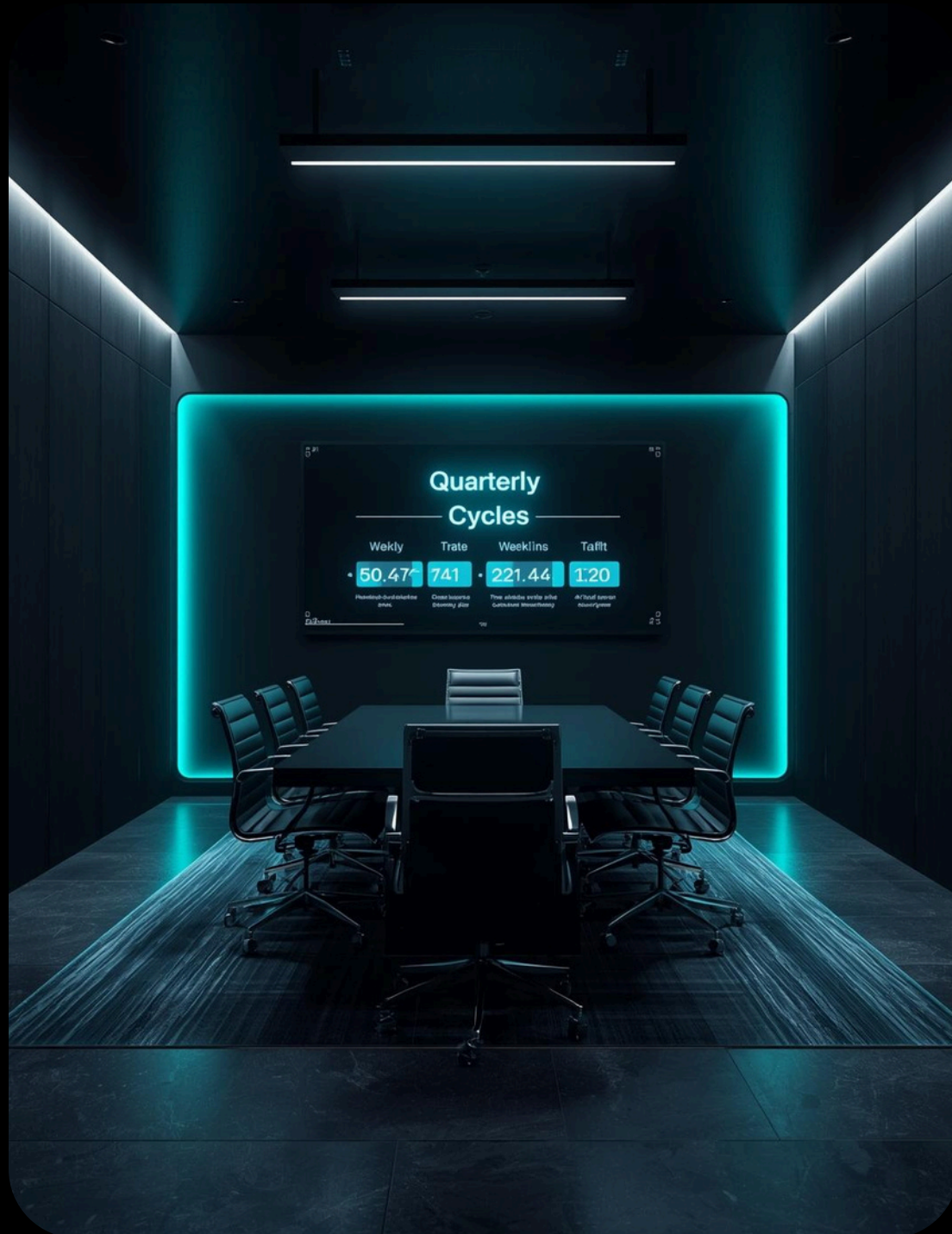
Key principles:

- Alignment flows down; accountability flows up
- Teams should have input into their OKRs, not just receive them
- Misalignment at company level cascades into wasted effort everywhere below





08 | Cadence & Rythtm



OKRs are not a set-and-forget exercise. The cadence is what gives them power.

Quarterly cycle:

- Week 1-2: Set OKRs collaboratively with the team
- Weeks 3-12: Weekly check-ins — rate confidence 0.0 to 1.0
- Week 13: Score, reflect, feed learnings into next quarter

Weekly check-ins answer three questions:

1. What is our current confidence score for each KR?
2. What's blocking us?
3. Do we need to adjust?

Scoring at quarter end:

The target is 0.7, not 1.0. Consistently hitting 1.0 means your OKRs weren't ambitious enough. Consistently hitting 0.3 means they were unrealistic.

0.7 = strong execution on a stretch goal. That's a win.

⚠ Common Mistake

Setting OKRs in week 1 and ignoring them until week 13. The weekly check-in rhythm is what separates OKRs that drive behaviour, from OKRs that die in a spreadsheet.