



# Goals/OKR Cycle

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A guide to establish a quarterly rhythm for OKRs.

In this guide, we will cover:

- [Why OKRs Create Agility](#)
- [How to Create an OKR Cycle for Your Team](#)
- [Pro-Tips for Managing OKRs](#)
- [How to Report & Plan Simultaneously](#)
- [How to Run a Great Review](#)
- [A Canvas to Build Your Own OKRs](#)

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# Why OKRs

## Create Agility

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### The Agility of OKRs

The expectation to run teams and organizations in a more agile, fluid manner is continuing to grow and become the norm, not the rule. The best part of the growing popularity of OKRs (Objectives & Key Results) is how this practice creates agility because it's based on managing and planning in quarterly increments.

As we've noted in other guides, OKRs are all the rage, made popular by Google, as a methodology for goal setting and driving accountability throughout high-growth organizations. While you may not be using OKRs specifically, you can adopt the agile process of establishing a quarterly rhythm.

### A Quarterly Process

Driving agility comes from the management cycle of revising results and refreshing goals quarterly, with annual company-wide priorities backed by monthly progress reporting.

### What Increment is Best for You?

Our best practice is to fit the management rhythm with organizational pace and market demands. You'll know which one is right for you! Here are the most common options for the increments for which you can manage a plan:

- » **Weekly:** Starting with the shortest time period, weekly reviews shouldn't just be focused on OKRs. Instead, we recommend integrating a component of the OKR review process into your regularly scheduled weekly tactical meetings. These weekly tactical meetings cover the operational elements and weekly priorities of your team, their activities,

and what needs to be accomplished during the next 5-7 days.

- » **Monthly:** Monthly reviews are purpose-built sessions to review the performance of your OKRs and decide what are the critical actions you need address in the next 30 days.
- » **Quarterly:** Quarterly reviews are sessions designed to review your performance and articulate focus for the next 90 days. We consider quarterly strategy reviews table stakes when it comes to the OKR process. The absence of quarterly strategy reviews is a surefire way to lose focus on how your organization is trending towards its goals, quarterly, annually, and long-term.
- » **Annual:** Annual reviews are designed to look back on performance of your team during the past 12 months and articulate the bigger focus for the coming 12 months. This is the most traditional planning sequence. We still recommend leveraging this cycle, but it should be accompanied by another review sequence.

## Don't Over-Plan

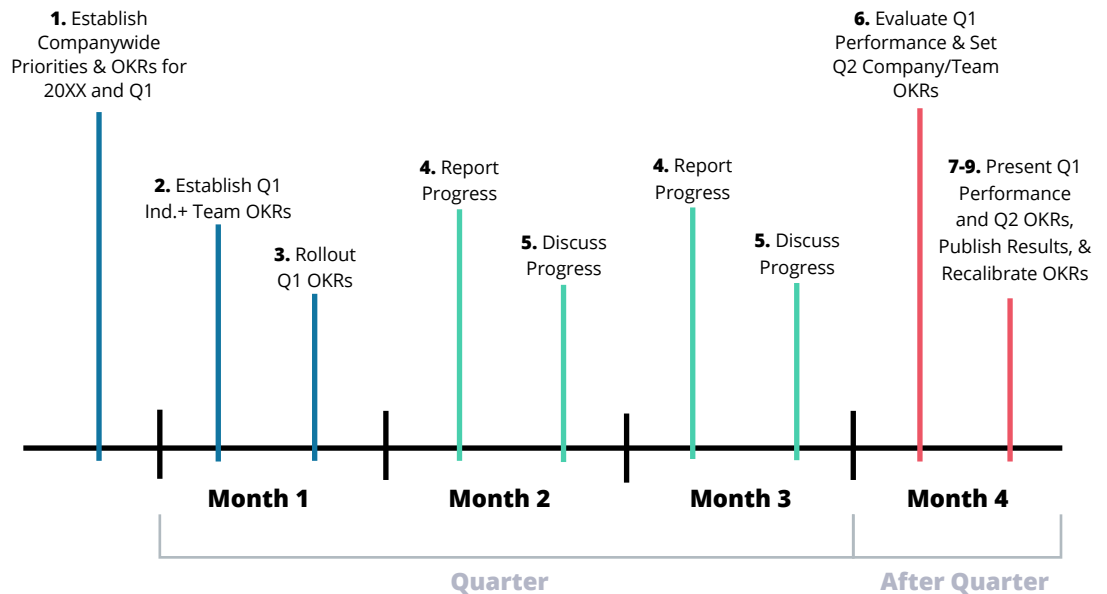
Once you've determined the increment for which you want to manage against your OKRs, you'll need to work with your Executive Team to set annual company-wide Goals/Objectives. Then, work with their teams to set quarterly Key Results/Deliverables. You can read about how to create OKRs [here!](#)

Measuring the performance of Key Results is [traditionally] assessed quarterly. The next quarter's Key Results should be set based on your previous performance and emerging themes.

The purpose behind this is to create agility and not "over-plan" work. Instead, you're planning and managing results quarterly, which helps create a more exciting and dynamic goal setting practice than setting annual goals you forget about.

# How to Create an OKR Cycle for Your Team

## A Typical OKR Cycle



Above is an illustration of a standard quarterly cycle. To make this work for you, here are a few questions to answer. Use your answers here and the worksheet on Page 11 to build a quarterly process that will fit your team.

1. What system or tool will you use to capture and manage OKRs?
2. Will monthly check-ins be conducted as part of 1:1s or included in your monthly staff meeting?
3. Will your Business Review be monthly or quarterly? Will it be part of an existing meeting or a new meeting?
4. Do you want to include dedicated time for strategic topics at your Monthly/Quarterly Business Review or will those be handled at different meetings?

# Step-by-Step OKR Cycle

	Milestone	Who?	How?	When?
<b>Kicking off the Year &amp; Q1</b>				
1.	Establish Company-wide Priorities & OKRs for 20XX and Q1	CEO & Leadership Team	Annual Leadership Team Offsite	No Later than 1 Month Before the New year
2.	Establish Team & Individual OKRs for Q1	Everyone	Regular Team Meetings & 1:1s	No Later than the 2nd Week of the Quarter
3.	Rollout Company-wide & Team Q1 OKRs	All Staff	Company-wide Meeting	No Later than the 3rd Week of the Quarter
<b>Managing Results Month 1-3</b>				
4.	Report on Progress of OKRs To-Date	Everyone	Individuals Update the OKR Tool	No Later than the end of the 1st week of the month
5.	Discuss OKR Progress	Individual Contributors w/ Managers	Team Meetings or 1:1s	No Later than the End of the 2nd Week of the Month
<b>Reviewing Q1 Performance &amp; Setting Q2 Goals</b>				
6.	Evaluate Q1 Performance & Set Q2 OKRs - Team & Individual Level	All Staff	Individuals update the OKR Tool & Review in Team Meeting or 1:1s	No Later than the 2nd Week of the Quarter
7.	Present Q1 Performance and Q2 OKRs - Company-wide & Team Level	All Staff	Quarterly Business Reviews (Exec & Team Level)	No Later than the 3rd Week of the Quarter
8.	Publish Quarterly Performance Results	CEO & Leadership Team	Communicate Results to Whole Organization & to Board if Appropriate	Right after the Quarterly Business Review
9.	Recalibrate Individual OKRs if Necessary	Individuals	Individuals Update the OKR Tool	No later than the 3rd week of the quarter

# 3 OKR Management Pro-Tips

We know the “pro” of this approach is building agility into your organization. The “con” is the process can buckle under its own weight if not managed simply and seamlessly. Here are a few tips:

- » **Rigorous Consistency:** Establish the cycle and dates for the year. Publish them and commit. Do not cancel meetings.
- » **Company-wide Visibility:** Not only do you want to discuss results at a team or company-wide meeting, you also want to publish results physically via dashboards or other reporting mechanisms.
- » **“Aspirational” Commitments:** As a team, you win and lose together. The act of making quarterly commitments (via setting individual OKRs) and reporting on them can feel punitive. Remember that achieving around 70% of key results is the idea. In other words, some “reds” and “yellows” are OK.

# How to Report on Performance & Plan Simultaneously

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## Report & Plan

The trickiest part of streamlining an OKR cycle is reporting on performance and establishing the next quarter's goals at one time. Here is how we think about this process to make this easy. For every key result, goal or initiative, think about the three "C's":

1. **Close Out:** Close out the key result by reporting on the actual progress or metric achieved at the end of the third month.
2. **Carry Forward:** Determine if this key result will continue into the next quarter. If so, extend the end date to the end of the third month and establish the desired target.
3. **Create New:** Determine if any new key results need to be established to achieve the objective. If so, write new key results; establish the target and set the end date for the end of the third month.

For whatever OKR software tool you are using, you need to output the Performance Report for the previous quarter and the Action Plan for the upcoming quarter.

### Refreshing OKRs Pro-Tip

While you are "refreshing" your goals and objectives every quarter, most of the time you will carry forward the objective and most of the key results (specifically quantifiable outcomes). What you will "refresh" is establishing the target for the next quarter and likely new key results that are efforts or initiatives.

# Running a Great Monthly/ Quarterly Business Review

## How to Run a Review

The heartbeat of a productive Goal/OKR Cycle is a Monthly or Quarterly Business or Strategy Review. There are many different ways to run this meeting, however here is a tried and true agenda to start with and evolve to your culture.

- » **Time Allocation:** Monthly for 60 mins or quarterly for 2 hours.
- » **Attendees:** Executive Team or Directs if running a team review.
- » **Preparation:** All Goals/OKRs have current performance data through the end of the quarter.
- » **Purpose:** To review company-wide performance goals/OKRs driving Strategic Priorities and calibrate focus for upcoming quarter. (NOTE: This meeting is NOT public shaming for non-performance. That is handled in 1:1s, of course.)

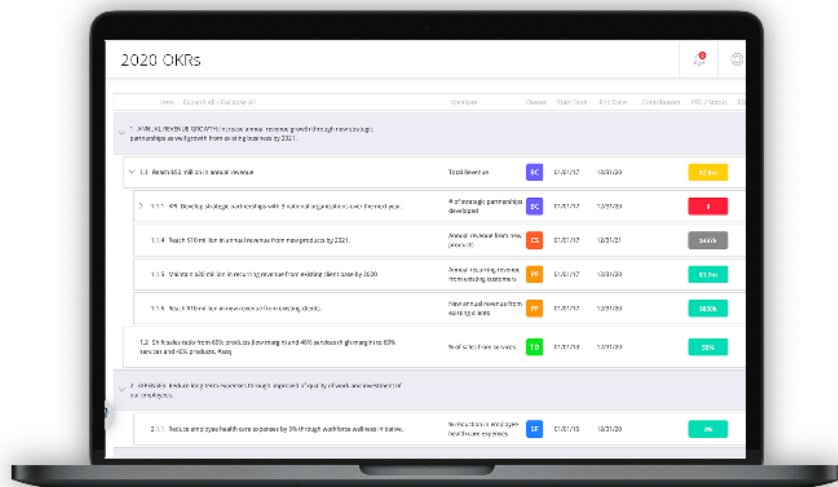
Lead	Agenda Item	Time
CEO/Leader	Setting the Stage	
Objective Owners	<p><b>Strategic Priority #1</b></p> <p><b>Objective #1 (objective owner reports as follows)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Overall progress of the objective</li> <li>» Progress for each key result &amp; next quarter commitments.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was achieved and why? What was not achieved and why?</li> <li>• What is the focus for upcoming quarter &amp; specific targets/deliverables?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>***Repeat for Each Objective.</b></p>	<p>2 mins per objective</p> <p>80% forward looking</p> <p>20% backward looking</p>



Objective Owners	<b>Strategic Priority #2-X</b> <i>***Repeat for each priority as noted above</i>	
Topic Owner	<b>Strategic Topic Deep Dive</b> Use this time for specific topics that have potential implications on shifting your strategy.	30 minutes (time permitting)
CEO/Leader	<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What did we learn from our implementation last quarter?</li> <li>» What changes/ adaptations will we make to our plan?</li> <li>» Recap company-wide goals/OKRs</li> </ul>	5 minutes

# Using the OnStrategy App to Manage OKRs

## The OnStrategy App for OKR Management



The OnStrategy Team built our application to holistically and easily manage organizational, team and individual performance. You can easily:

- » See a quick view of your team's performance.
- » Collect performance updates in 15 mins or less.
- » See company-wide performance and pre-built dashboard to run quarterly reviews.
- » Everyone sees how they contribute to the bigger picture.
- » Quickly refresh and reset OKRs quarterly.

[Click here to talk to a Senior Strategist to look under the hood!](#)

# OKR Cycle Canvas

Use the table below to articulate your OKR Cycle. Once you've completed the table, also fill out your management timeline below.

Org Name:

Dates:

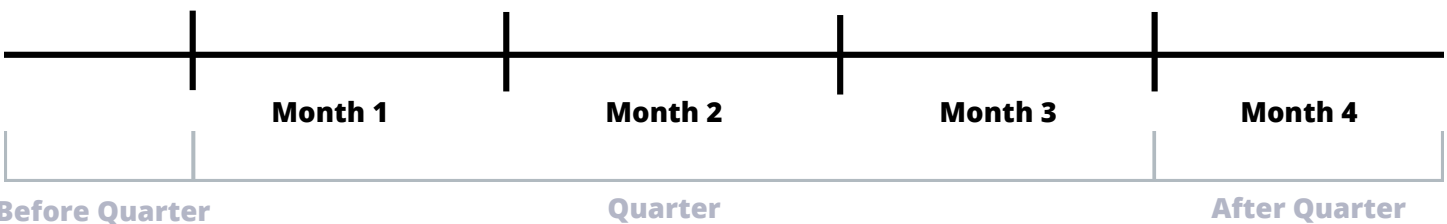
## 1 Our OKR Cycle

How will we commit to integrating OKRs into our regular business cycle?

	Milestone	Who?	How?	When?
<b>Kicking off the Year &amp; Q1</b>				
1.	Establish Company-wide Priorities & OKRs for 20XX and Q1			
2.	Establish Team & Individual OKRs for Q1			
3.	Rollout Company-wide & Team Q1 OKRs			
<b>Managing Results Month 1-3</b>				
4.	Report on Progress of OKRs To-Date			
5.	Discuss OKR Progress			
<b>Reviewing Q1 Performance &amp; Setting Q2 Goals</b>				
6.	Evaluate Q1 Performance & Set Q2 OKRs - Team & Individual Level			
7.	Present Q1 Performance and Q2 OKRs - Company-wide & Team Level			
8.	Publish Quarterly Performance Results			
9.	Recalibrate Individual OKRs if Necessary			

## 2 Our OKR Timeline

What does our quarterly OKR cycle look like?





Need help building your OKRs? Reach out to learn how a senior strategy expert can help!

Contact us at [Hello@OnStrategyHQ.com](mailto:Hello@OnStrategyHQ.com)

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