



FIELD GUIDE / 15 MINUTES

How to sell OKRs internally

Build the case for focus, alignment, accountability and ambitious learning - without selling OKRs as a cure-all.

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Sell the outcome, not the acronym

Leaders do not need another framework. They need fewer competing priorities, clearer connections between teams and earlier evidence that an important bet is drifting.

Do not start with cadence, templates or terminology. Start with the cost of the current system.

OBSERVABLE COSTS

- Teams cannot name the top company priorities consistently.
- Roadmaps contain more commitments than available capacity.
- Dependencies surface after delivery has started.
- Status reporting describes activity, not movement in outcomes.
- Priorities change without a visible reason.

Choose two or three signals you can show. Evidence makes a stronger case than saying 'we need more alignment.'

Four outcomes worth buying

01 Focus and commitment

Make the few priorities that deserve protected capacity explicit - and give teams permission to say no.

02 Alignment and connection

Connect visible team goals to shared outcomes and expose the coordination that those outcomes require.

03 Tracking and accountability

Use regular evidence to surface drift early enough to change the plan, without turning check-ins into blame.

04 Stretch and learning

Create room for ambitious experiments while separating aspirational targets from performance promises.

Which of these outcomes solves a problem your leaders already recognize? Start there.

Diagnose before you pitch

Describe the problem as observable behavior. Do not diagnose the organization with a framework it has not chosen.

1. What recurring priority or coordination problem can you show?

2. What does that problem cost in time, trust, quality or opportunity?

3. Which behavior should change if an OKR pilot is useful?

4. What evidence would show that the behavior improved?

Build the case in five moves

01 Current cost

We are seeing these two recurring problems...

02 Desired behavior

We need clearer trade-offs and earlier evidence of drift...

03 Why OKRs may help

A few visible outcomes and regular check-ins could create those behaviors...

04 Bounded pilot

Let us test one area for one cycle, without linking OKRs to compensation...

05 Decision rule

At the end, we will inspect these signals and decide whether to adapt, stop or expand...

Frame OKRs as a test of better management behavior, not as a fashionable destination.

Prepare for the obvious objections

This is another layer of process.

It will be if OKRs sit on top of every existing priority. The pilot must replace or simplify part of the current goal conversation.

Goals change too often here.

Make assumptions and confidence visible. A changed decision can be healthy when the evidence and trade-off are explained.

People will game the numbers.

Keep learning goals separate from performance judgment. Combine metrics with qualitative evidence and never turn one KR into the whole story.

We already have KPIs.

Keep them. KPIs monitor system health. OKRs highlight the limited outcomes that need meaningful change now.

What is the strongest objection in your organization?

Make a smaller ask

Do not ask the whole company to adopt a belief. Ask for one cycle, one strategic area and a decision based on evidence.

Strategic area

Pilot owner

Cycle and review date

Existing process this pilot replaces or simplifies

SUCCESS SIGNALS

- Leaders made clearer priority trade-offs.
- Teams could connect their work to shared outcomes.
- Check-ins surfaced risk early enough to change a decision.
- Ambition increased without punitive target management.

A pitch you can use

We do not need OKRs because other companies use them. We need a better way to make a few strategic priorities explicit, connect teams around outcomes and learn earlier when our bets are wrong. I propose a one-cycle pilot in one area, with no link to compensation. We will judge it by whether it improves trade-offs, coordination, learning and ambition - then decide whether to stop, adapt or expand.

Your decision request

Further reading

John Doerr, [Five Benefits of OKRs](#)

Use the benefits as a diagnostic lens, not as proof that OKRs are automatically right for your organization.