The OKR Cheat Sheet

What. How. Who. On one page.

richardrussell.co/okrs

The four parts

- **OKR Cycle:** a consistent time constraint. Usually a quarter.
- **Objectives:** one to three inspiring statements of what you'll achieve.
- **Key Results:** two to five unambiguous definitions of success for each Objective.
- **Owner:** one person for the Objective, or one per Key Result.

> We will [Objective], as measured by [Key Results], by doing [the plan], led by [owner].

An example

In Q4, we will **Scale up our sales machine**

As measured by	By doing	Led by
Webinar attendance: 10 → 100	Partner webinars	Mike
Qualified meetings: 2 → 5/mo	Call leads in a day	Joanne
Lead-to-sale: 15% → 30%	New sales playbook	Joanne
First self-service customer	Self-service trial	Sarah

Writing Objectives

We will [verb] [outcome].

Strong verbs: transform, become, create, exceed, achieve, reach, launch, make. The best outcomes matter to your customers and stakeholders. If it could apply to any company, it's too generic.

Test it: **why this, and why now?** The leader writes the Objectives. Take input, but don't hand over the decision.

Writing Key Results

- **Improvements:** Increase/decrease [metric] from [X] to [Y].
- **Quality control:** Maintain [metric] above/below [X].
- **Operationalisation:** Start measuring [metric].
- **Project milestones:** Deliver [critical milestone].
- **Investigation:** Test [hypothesis]. Success is knowing whether it's true.

Key Results must be unambiguous

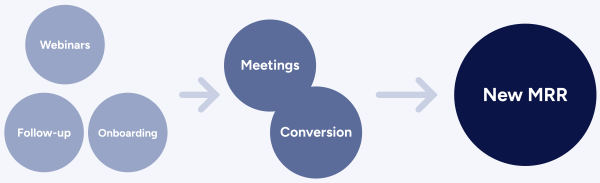
At the end of the quarter, anyone can say whether you hit it. If a metric could be read two ways, write down its definition.

Use metrics where you can, milestones sparingly. Rolling averages show sustained change: not "onboard 247 clients this quarter" but "increase the 7-day average from 13 to 25".

Example definition:

> "Average monthly webinar attendance" = the rolling average of total attendance at all sales webinars over the past four weeks, from the Zoom reports.

Inputs, outputs, outcomes



Inputs you control. Outcomes are what you're after. Use inputs when you know what works or the team needs direction. Use outcomes when you want the team to find the way, and treat targets as aspirations.

Fixing weak Key Results

Micromanagement ← **The sweet spot** → Vague vision peddling

Really a task? Ask:

- Why are we doing this task?
- How would we know if we were successful?
- How would we tell doing it well from doing it poorly?
- How will our customers measure our success?
- What else could we do, and what do they have in common?

Too vague? Ask:

- How are we creating this profit or benefit?
- What value are we creating that we're capturing?
- What is the input for this output?
- What makes our strategy different from others?
- How could we tell if a solution fits our strategy?

Six things to remember

1. **One owner each.** If everyone is responsible, no one is.
2. **Drafts until there's a credible plan.** The owner writes the plan first.
3. **Not for performance management.** They drive performance, not assess it.
4. **Not for everything.** Run repeatable work on its metrics.
5. **Share real results, not scores.** Celebrate, own the misses, move on.
6. **Don't overthink them.** Great OKRs matter less than you think.

Before and after

Start with strategy. OKRs turn a strategy into results; they can't create one. Fewer OKRs is better than more.

How ambitious? It depends on your culture. Where 70% feels like failure, set targets you can hit. Elsewhere, aim high and 70% is great. Make sure everyone knows which kind it is.

Then plan, and review weekly. Change the plan when you learn something.

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