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How to implement OKRs successfully:

Identifying the factors that matter

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How to implement OKRs successfully: Identifying the factors that matter

*“Good ideas with great execution are how you
make magic. And that’s where OKRs come in.”*

Larry Page, Google co-founder

A master thesis

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Preface

Objectives and key results (OKRs) is a strategy execution framework. Our decision to focus on OKRs in our master thesis stems from our personal experiences using this framework. The authors have firsthand knowledge of the challenges that come with using OKRs, but we've also seen how powerful they can be when working towards significant goals. This mix of challenges and successes sparked our curiosity, leading us to delve deeper into the academic research surrounding OKRs. Through our project thesis in the fall of 2023 we found that the research on OKRs were more scarce than we believed, which heightened our interest to work with the subject. The project thesis findings also became the foundation for this master thesis.

Our interest was further driven by the widespread use of OKRs in many of today's rapidly growing technology companies. Famous for using OKRs are companies like Google, Amazon and Spotify. Seeing how these successful companies implement OKRs has made the framework the current go-to strategy execution tool for startups and scaleup. This real-world application of OKRs in influential tech companies adds a practical dimension to our study, making it not just a theoretical exploration but also an investigation into a tool that shapes real business decisions.

This combination of personal experience and the observable impact of OKRs in the tech industry has guided us to undertake this study. Our goal is to build relevant research behind the framework, to enable more businesses to succeed as well and enhance the academic literature on OKRs.

The authors would like to thank their advisor, Dag Håkon Haneberg for his contributions and guidance throughout the master writing. They also want to thank all who participated in the study and shared their perspectives on OKRs. The process has been enjoyable, intriguing, and tiring. The authors are excited about the results from the thesis, and the factors found. Hopefully it strengthens the academic research on OKRs and helps companies succeed with implementing OKRs.

Abstract

Objectives and key results (OKRs) has become a widespread strategy execution framework embraced by thousands of large and small organizations around the world (Niven & Lamorte, 2016, p. 6). Inspired by successful companies like Google, who embraced the framework in 1999, the framework is considered to be the best option of turning strategy into tangible actions. Despite the massive embrace of the framework, the academic research on OKRs is scarce. Silva & Souza (2023, p. 432) recently performed a literature review on OKRs, and concluded that “Some research questions, such as lessons learned and difficulties in implementation, still need more answers. Also missing are details on how OKR is implemented”.

To contribute to the academic research behind OKRs, as well as help more startups and scaleups succeed with the framework the authors formulated the research question:

What are the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups?

To find answers to the research questions the authors found researching real tech scaleups which had implemented OKRs earlier to be most relevant. To perform the case study, they decided to utilize Merriam's framework for collective case study research. Using semi-structured interviews the authors interviewed 10 participants who had either been in charge of implementing OKRs themselves, or been affected by its implementation into their company. By first analyzing each case by itself, then moving onto cross-case analysis the authors were able to identify multiple factors which could affect successful implementation of OKRs.

The factors found to be most important when implementing OKRs are “Adjusting the framework to fit their organization”, where several experienced that the way Doerr (2018) describes in his book “Measure what matters” didn’t work very well in their own company. Further, “Educating the organization in the framework” proved to be of great importance, as well as “Engaging the entire organization” and having “Management as OKR champions”. The findings were discussed in three parts: before implementation, during implementation, and following implementation. Lastly the authors concluded by answering the research question and highlighting questions that still need further research.

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1. Introduction

Porter (1996) defined strategy as the creation of a unique and valuable position. The strategy provides a description of where you want to go as a company, but how do you translate this future desired state into something that an organization can use to prioritize, motivate and align its work in its day-to-day operations? The challenge of turning strategy into tangible actions has been raised from researchers as early as 1973 by Cohen and Cyert, all the way to recent times from researchers as Kaplan and Norton (2013). Srivastava (2014, p. 370) found one of the most important reasons behind the gap; managers lack strategy executional frameworks that turn strategy into tangible actions.

In more recent times Objectives and key results (OKRs) has become a widespread strategy execution framework embraced by thousands of large and small organizations around the world (Niven & Lamorte, 2016, p. 6). The framework has been actively used by some of the world's most successful technology startups, including Google, Disney, Samsung and Amazon (Hennigan, 2023). This has inspired a large body of startups to also implement OKRs into their business. OKRs are used as a tool to translate the company's strategy into objectives that provide direction and key results one can use to pace oneself in that direction. The purpose of implementing OKRs is therefore to tackle one of the problems businesses face; to execute on its strategy. And execution is, not only by the previously mentioned scholars, but also by many famous entrepreneurs, seen as the hardest and most important aspect of building a successful business:

"To me, ideas are worth nothing unless executed..."

Execution is worth millions."

Steve Jobs, Apple co-founder (Wolmer, 2019)

However, from the current academic literature on OKRs (Silva & Souza, 2023, p.432), the author's own experiences, and public media (Raketa, 2023) the implementation and use of OKRs is varying in success. As OKRs is such a prevalent tool in today's technology startups and scaleups the authors deemed more explorative research on the topic to be of significant industry relevance. As described by Silva & Souza (2023, p. 432) the existing OKR literature has a bigger focus on the effects of OKRs on the business, than on how the business can use OKRs better. Silva & Souza conclude their literature review with "Some research questions,

such as lessons learned and difficulties in implementation, still need more answers. Also missing are details on how OKR is implemented” (2023, p. 432). This highlights the need for a study that focuses specifically on the implementation of OKRs.

From massive companies like Google to small startups, the array of users utilizing OKRs is vast (Doerr, 2018; p. 3). The current literature on OKRs focuses on a more general context, not distinguishing between different organizational sizes and how this might affect its use and effects (Silva & Souza, 2023, p. 427). However, OKRs were both created in and have been mostly used by quickly growing technology companies (Doerr, 2018; Grove, 1983), making these companies of particular interest to investigate further. Scaleups are companies that have moved beyond the startup phase and are experiencing rapid growth in size. In their growth, the companies are experiencing massive change and are subjects of Brooks law, where each new person added enhances the complexity and overhead communication needed (Brooks , 1995, p. 23). When a scaleup then doubles their size in a year, they can experience troubles in communication and internal systems. These unique characteristics of scaleups makes their need for alignment increase significantly (Tippman et al., 2023, p. 4). OKRs, with its rigorous system to set company-wide goals, share responsibility, and hold people accountable helps the scaleups with exactly that; aligning the company towards the same direction. This might also explain OKRs large presence amongst scaleups.

Based on that line of thought, the authors deemed it necessary to research scaleups specifically. The authors utilize the definition of Autio (2016, p. 8) of a scaleup as a new, entrepreneurial firm that is strongly growth oriented and has attracted €1 Million or more of venture capital funding. This limitation of scope is motivated by a desire to highlight the particular difficulties scaleups encounter, rather than making generalizations about companies at large, to make the findings more accurate. Based on these findings and the current identified gap on implementing OKRs in the literature, the research question of this master thesis is:

What are the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups?

The research question will be investigated by performing a qualitative study, focusing on extracting and ranking the critical success factors in the implementation phase of OKRs in the specific context of scaleups. To find answers that are generalizable for other scaleups, the authors concluded that it was necessary to research multiple scaleups and their implementation

of OKRs. To do a multiple case study, the authors deemed Merriam's case study method (2009) to be the most suited methodology, as her framework has the structured process of Yin, combined with the explorative possibilities of Stake (Harrison et al., 2017, p.9) . With Merriam's framework the first step is to understand the foundation of the research question. Through chapter 2 the authors did this by explaining the fundamental literature and theory that the OKR framework is built upon. These more fundamental and established theories have more empirical backing and add depth to the analysis.

With a solid theoretical framework the next step was to design the research method, which could provide answers to the research question. Merriam's case study method for multiple case studies was chosen. The process is explained in chapter 3. With the fundament in place, and a study design based on Merriam, the authors began conducting research with selected cases and interviewees. Merriam describes several ways to analyze the interviews, but the authors found open coding combined with member checking, and cross-comparing the results to be an proficient way to find answers toward the research question. From the approved open coding the authors could summarize the results in chapter 4. At the end of the Results chapter the authors summarized the mentioned factors in a matrix which facilitated the process of identifying factors that were important across the different cases. The matrix set the stage for an engaging discussion in chapter 5 about the successfactors to implement OKRs.

2. Theory

The theory section begins by introducing Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1991) which serves as a conceptual base in the study, due to the limited current research on OKRs. Next, the theoretical framework that OKRs were based upon, namely Management By Objectives (MBO) is introduced (Drucker, 1954). Further, it will explain how Grove (1983), the inventor of OKRs, described OKRs as a successful MBO system. Lastly, it will highlight how Doerr started the popularization of OKRs (Wodtke, 2016, p. 12) by introducing it to the Google Co-Founders in 1999, before finishing with a description of the current OKR literature.

2.1 Goal setting theory

In 1968 Locke was the first to comprehensively articulate Goal Setting Theory in his book "Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives" (Locke, 1968). The theory suggests that having clear and challenging goals, along with receiving appropriate feedback, is crucial for improving task performance. It demonstrates that hard goals produce a higher level of performance (output) than easy goals (Locke, 1968, p. 162) and that specific, hard goals produce higher output than "do your best" goals (Locke, 1968, p. 169). Locke later, in collaboration with Gary Latham, developed his theory inductively within organizational psychology over a 25-year period, based on some 400 laboratory and field studies (Locke & Latham, 2006, p. 265). This formed the basis for refining the key principles of the theory.

2.1.1 Specificity of goals

Locke & Latham (1991, p. 213) describe how goal content can vary on a continuum from vague ("work on this task") to specific ("try for a score of 62 correct on this task within the next 30 minutes"). Comparing specific and difficult goals with "do your best" goals has been a primary focus of study in goal setting research. Locke & Latham (1991, p. 215) conclude that maximum effort is not aroused under a "do your best" goal. They argue that the ambiguity of a "do your best" goal gives people the benefit of the doubt when evaluating their performance. A specific, hard goal allows effective self-regulation and removes interpretation from evaluating performance excellence.

Another finding related to the specificity of goal content is that it affects the variability of performance (Locke et al., 1989). The effect is that, assuming performance is controllable,

people with very specific goals show less variation in performance than people with vague goals. The reasoning follows an argument that vague goals allow many possible outcomes as compared with specific goals. For example, the goal to “take a walk” is compatible with a walk of 10 feet or 10 miles, whereas a goal of “walk one mile” is explicit for the goal setter (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 216).

2.1.2 Goal difficulty

Locke & Latham (1991, p. 214) describe how goals can be easy, moderate, difficult or impossible and that it pertains to the relationship between a person and a goal. They refer to 400 studies examining the relationship between goal attributes and task performance and state that it has been consistently found that performance is a linear function of goal difficulty (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 214). Figure X describes how performance on the vertical axis, on average, increases with higher goal difficulty.

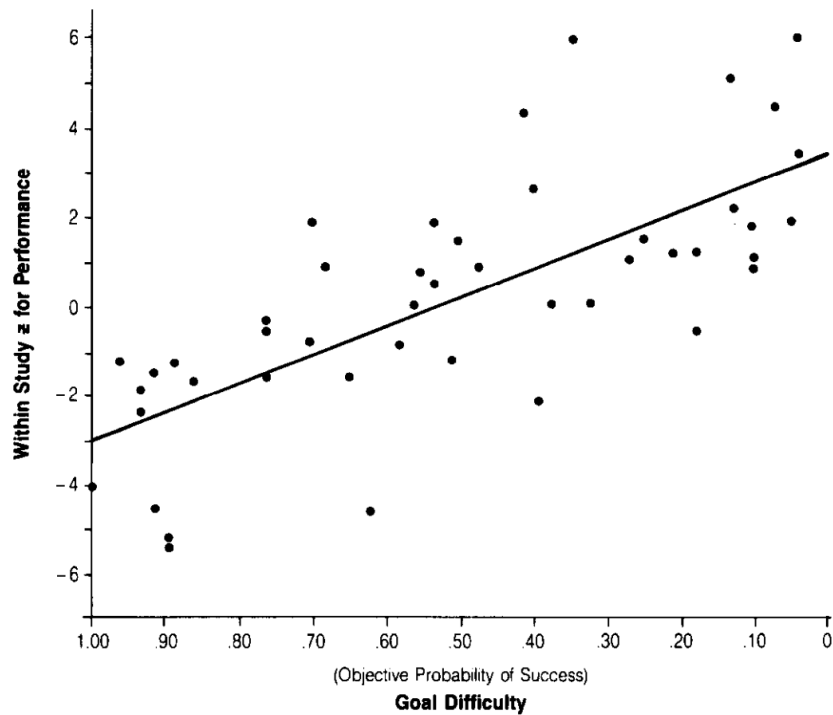


Figure 1: The relationship between performance and goal difficulty (Locke & Latham, 1968)

Goal setting theory predicts that, given sufficient ability, a drop in performance at high goal difficulty levels only occurs if there is a large decrease in goal commitment and that performance levels out when the limits of the person's ability are reached (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 215).

2.1.3 Commitment to goals

Locke & Latham (1991, p. 217) defines commitment as the degree to which the individual is attached to the goal, considers it significant or important, is determined to reach it, and keeps it in the face of setbacks and obstacles. Figure Y demonstrates how goal commitment can both be a direct causal factor or moderator of performance. When goals are high, high commitment leads to better performance than low commitment (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 217). The moderator effect is shown by how there is a strong link between high commitment and performance for high goals, while when commitment is low, people do not perform in line with their goals (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 218).

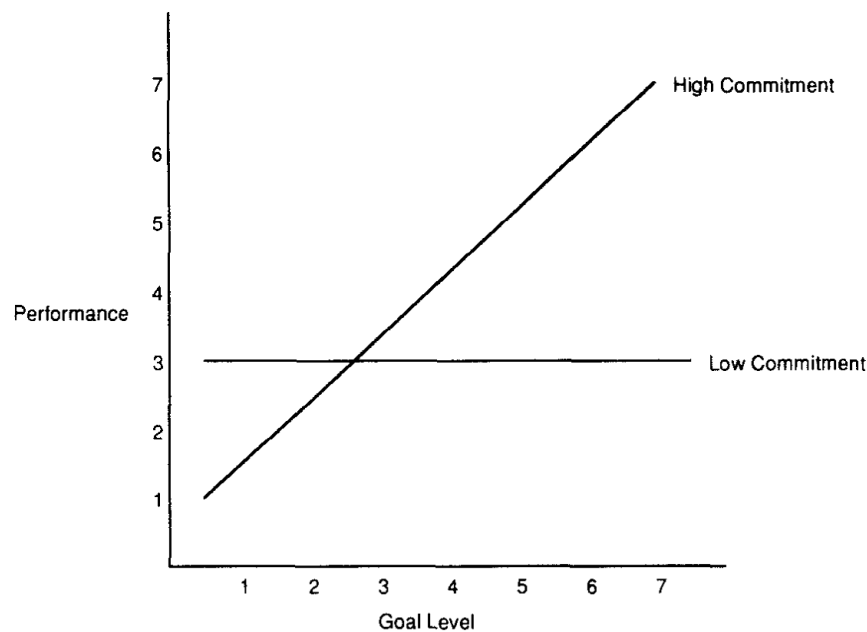


Figure 2: Main and interaction effect of goal difficulty and commitment (Locke & Latham, 1991)

2.1.4 The relationship between feedback and goals

Locke & Latham (1991, p. 225) finds that feedback alone does not affect performance. They do however identify the mediator effect of goals on feedback as a motivator. And vice versa they identify how feedback moderates the effect of goals on performance, as goal setting has limited effect without feedback. The study of the relationship between feedback and objectives, as emphasized by Locke & Latham (1991), and the subsequent impact of associated theories on performance offers a fundamental understanding that is applicable to the implementation of OKRs in companies.

To summarize, Goal Setting Theory provides a theoretical framework for describing attributes of goals that lead to higher performance. This could be an important part, but not a full answer to Srivastava's (2014, p. 370) identified need for a strategy executional framework to turn strategy into tangible actions. Another part of the answer could be Management by Objectives (MBO), which builds upon similar principles as Goal Setting Theory, but focuses on how to use these principles in a practical management context.

2.2 Management by Objectives

The OKR framework is derived from the concept of Management By Objectives (MBO) that was introduced by Drucker (1954). With MBOs the manager and the subordinate work out an objective and the deadline together (Thomson, 1998, p. 1). Thereafter the manager holds the subordinate accountable to reach the goal. Thomson (1998, p. 2) explains that organizations who don't use the MBO approach usually set goals and objectives in a top down manner, where objectives are passed down from one managerial level to the next. MBO contrasts this by introducing an element of dialogue into the process of propagating plans and objectives through the organizational levels. The subordinate is held accountable to the specific goals that are set in dialogue with its manager and a review of the accomplishment of these goals is used for performance review (Thomson, 1988, p. 2). Mitchell and Dosset (1978) demonstrated that participative goal setting led to higher performance in their study of 76 engineers/scientists and their 38 managers.

Drucker's concept of MBO was implemented in several firms, but implementations varied widely in form, often straying far afield from Drucker's original intentions for the model (Niven & Lamorte, 2016, p. 3). The most common mistake was transforming what was intended to be a highly collaborative and participative event into a top-down bureaucratic exercise. Furthermore, the integrity of the model was damaged by it being implemented as a static exercise, often only iterating on an annual basis with a "set it and forget it" pattern.

These issues in implementing the model could suggest the need to further develop the model into a framework with some adjustments - like Andy Grove did when he introduced OKRs.

2.3 OKRs

The OKR framework was defined by Andy Grove, the President and CEO of Intel and first published in his management book, *High Output Management* in 1983 (Grove, 1983). The term 'OKRs' was introduced later by Doerr (2018, p. 4), but he attributes the definition of the framework to Grove. Grove described what is now known as OKRs as characteristics of a successful MBO system (Grove, 1983, p. 105) and it provides some further guidelines, but also some differences from Drucker's original description of a MBO system. The first thing he highlights is the need for an MBO system to set objectives for a relatively short period and suggest quarterly or perhaps even monthly. Secondly, he describes how a MBO system should provide focus, and that this can only be achieved if the number of objectives is small (Grove, 1983, p. 106). Further, he also commented on how ambitious one should set one's goals by introducing the concept of stretch goals (Grove, 1983, p.143). His view was that objectives should be so ambitious that even with great effort, there is only a 50-50 chance of making them. He reasoned for this view by arguing that output tends to be greater when everybody strives for a level of achievement beyond their grasp. Finally, he gives guidelines for the time period a successful MBO system should focus on, recommending that if plans are set on a yearly basis, the time frame should be at least quarterly (Grove, 1983, p. 104).

His description of a successful MBO framework is in line with Drucker's original model of MBOs and gives guidelines on how to avoid common mistakes when implementing them. Grove (1983, p. 106) also introduces some guidelines that are not in line with the original model of Drucker. While Drucker's MBO system is used for performance reviews, Grove is clear that it is: "...not a legal document upon which to base a performance review, but should be viewed as just one input used to determine how well an individual is doing." (Grove, 1983, p. 106).

2.4 Use of OKRs

OKRs was later brought into other companies than Intel. John Doerr, having learned about OKRs from his time at Intel, famously introduced OKRs to the Google Co-Founders in 1999 (Wodtke, 2016, p. 12). Doerr went on to invest in and advise in companies like LinkedIn, GoPro, Spotify, Oracle, Twitter, etc., and spread the OKR methodology to many of the 2000s most successful technology companies. The success of these companies using OKRs has led many tech companies to become curious about this strategy execution framework.

2.4 1 Extending the OKR framework

Niven and Lamorte (2016, p. 32) describe some characteristics of good objectives as inspiring, achievable, accomplished within a given quarter, value the organizational needs, and have a qualitative character (i.e. no numbers must be involved). This adds some dimensions to the definition provided by Grove as it also emphasizes the importance of inspiring, yet achievable objectives to provide motivation to workers.

Grove described key results as milestones on the way to reach the objective. Again, later research from Niven and Lamorte (2016, p. 48) can add some details to characteristics of good key results. They suggest that good key results are quantifiable, challenging and specific. They should further be easily measurable and have a clear target value, such that one can at the end of the OKR period objectively determine whether the key result was achieved or not.

The objectives and key results should also be connected across the organizational hierarchy to create alignment. Building on Rompho's (2023, p.2) description of the cascading nature of goals with MBOs, Grove (1983, p. 108) describes that if a manager meets his objectives, the supervisor will meet his.

As for how OKRs should be implemented, the literature is scarce. Troian et al. (2022, p. 4) did a literature review on OKRs, and explained that the implementation process of OKRs could be viewed in four phases. First the company has to establish objectives for the entire company, and set some deadlines for when they are to be achieved. Second phase is to identify the key results for each objective, to measure if they're going to achieve the key result and thus the objective. Third is to start the OKR sprint. The fourth step is to give feedback continuously on both goals and performance. However, as seen in the growing body of research, implementing OKRs isn't quite that simple.

2.4.2 Benefits and challenges of using OKRs

Steiber & Alänge (2013) points to how the OKR system still is important at Google. By providing both alignment and focus in a system characterized by a lot of free will, OKRs is an important part of Google's innovative capabilities. A separate study by Rompho (2023, p. 7) highlights how alignment can be improved with OKRs by providing clearer and more specific priority goals.

Also building on the successful case of Google, Johnson & Senges (2010) investigate the role of OKRs in how programmers, Google's core employees, are onboarded and settled into Google. They describe how Googelers are expected to set measurable objectives and assess if they achieved these at the end of the quarter. An important nuance that is added by this research is the fact that new hires are advised that on average, one should only reach about 70 percent of the key results set. This aligns with how Niven and Lamorte (2016) describe good key results as challenging, and provide further nuance to how Grove (1983) described how to set stretch goals.

There is a growing body of research conducted on OKRs. Stray et al. (2022, p. 109) researched how agile teams make OKRs work. One of their conclusions was that "implementing OKRs was hard" (Stray, 2022, p.109). In a similar study by Stray et al. (2023, p. 9) on OKRs and communication, the same difficulty was identified and included in the conclusion. There also has been some, but limited, research on potential challenges in implementing OKRs. Rompho (2023, p. 6) points to how it can be challenging for employees to understand the use and concept of OKRs, especially when organizations use OKRs and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) simultaneously. This was experienced to lead to confusion and a less successful implementation.

While there is a growing body of research related to OKRs, there are still significant gaps and a recent literature review by Silva & Souza (2023) concludes further research is needed to better understand the benefits and challenges in implementing OKRs. Goal Setting Theory will serve as the conceptual base in this study as an approach to connect these streams of research and expand the theoretical basis behind OKRs.

3. Method

The previous chapter focused on the theoretical framework of OKRs in organizations, highlighting their development, use and importance. This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to dive deeper into the research question, to identify successfactors to implement OKRs. The method used plays a crucial role in directing the research process and influencing how data is gathered, analyzed, and interpreted. As such, the method chosen can affect the results of the study. Therefore the purpose of the methodological framework is to provide the most appropriate way forward to find answers for the problem statement (Merriam,

2009, p. 55). Based on findings that there currently lacked research on OKR implementation (Silva & Souza, 2023, p. 427) the authors articulated the research question: “*What are the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups?*”. With this as the outset, the authors looked for the method that could best assist them in identifying the success factors and build on the foundation they already had.

3.1 The fundamentals of the study

Silva & Souza (2023, p. 427) identified through a recent literature review that there is an absence of details on the implementation of OKRs. To identify some of those details, and lay the groundwork for further research, the authors concluded that an explorative study was necessary. When doing in-depth study of bounded systems, case study is particularly appropriate (Merriam, 2009, p. 266). A case study in qualitative research is an in-depth exploration of a specific, real-world context or situations (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Based on these thoughts, the authors looked for a methodological framework that could guide the exploration through case studies.

The authors considered various scholarly perspectives on case studies, including Yin (2014), Stake (1995), and Merriam (2009). Yin's approach, as outlined by Harrison et al. (2017, p. 9), emphasizes the importance of objectivity and the use of diverse methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of reality, especially relevant for the authors to create a replicable approach. On the other hand Stake's approach focuses on the discovery of experiences within their context, highlighting the researcher's role in interpretive understanding (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 11). This perspective aligns well when exploring new areas, such as the task to identify OKR implementation details. Merriam's method, situated pragmatically between Yin and Stake, offers the necessary structure combined with flexibility, enabling a thorough and adaptable exploration in a field with limited prior research (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 12). The authors saw the benefit of that, and chose Merriam's method for its ability to balance Yin's systematic rigor with Stake's emphasis on contextual understanding, providing a well-rounded framework for investigating OKR implementation in scaleups.

3.2 Case study design

In order to answer the research question the authors conducted a qualitative research design built on Merriam's case study method. Her frameworks, which builds on choosing the right

design, cases, participants, as well as utilizing methods as semi-structured interviews, open coding and member checks helps researchers discover new information about an area of study, while maintaining a structured approach (Brown, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017, p.11). As the authors already had done the first steps of Merriam's methodology in chapter 1 and 2, they moved on to case study design.

3.2.1 Selecting the right case study design

Choosing the appropriate case study design is essential for effectively addressing the research question. The design selected should be in line with the research question, study objectives, and the specific context under investigation. According to Merriam (2009, p. 48) there are three different approaches to conducting case studies: Intrinsic case study, looking at one special case, instrumental case study, looking at a special problem in a case, and collective case study, looking at multiple cases to understand an issue and draw some wider lines. In order to investigate the implementation of OKRs in scaleups, the researchers chose the collective case study technique. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth review of several companies, resulting in a more diverse and comprehensive view on different factors of OKR implementation. By depending on only one case the authors would be at risk of identifying factors which are case specific. By looking at multiple cases in different scenarios the authors could mitigate this risk. Further, choosing a collective case study would also increase the validity and generalizability of the findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 50), an important goal for the researchers. Through leveraging more cases the authors could uncover recurring patterns and key factors that contribute to the successful implementation of OKRs. Lastly, to produce conclusions that can be used more broadly, the authors would have to choose cases which were both comparable and sufficiently distinct (Merriam, 2009, p. 82).

3.2.2 Selecting the right cases

To find the right cases the researchers first have to establish the criteria of cases that can provide relevant data (Merriam, 2009, p. 81). The selection of scaleups for this study was guided by specific criteria to ensure that the cases were relevant and could provide valuable insights into the implementation of OKRs. The primary criteria included:

1. Used OKRs: It's essential that the case already had tried to implement OKRs.
2. Funding Received: To distinguish scaleups from other startups the author set a threshold that the companies had to have raised at least 1 million USD in funding.

3. Recently a scaleup: Became a scaleup in the last 10 years.
4. Leadership Involvement: The authors need to be able to interview some of the management team who were involved in implementing OKRs.

3.2.3 Selecting interview participants

The final criteria for choosing cases was essential in the research. If the authors didn't get a hold of enough interviewees involved with the implementation of OKRs, the data would not be sufficient to extrapolate quality results. The relevant participants were therefore often top leaders or founders. The sampling of participants was done in several ways. First, the authors leveraged their own professional network of founders and managers in companies fitting the criterias. This approach is common and known as network sampling (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). Further, they also leveraged typical and unique sampling, getting a hold of some of the largest scaleups and some on the more average size in the Norwegian scaleup scenery. This was done through LinkedIn, where they sent requests to founders and managers they didn't know, but which fit the criterias. The final sampling approach used was snowballing. The authors finished the interviews with the founders and top leaders by asking if any of their employees could participate in the study. This was an attempt to get a degree of triangulation, a common approach by qualitative researchers (Merriam, 2009, p. 216).

Based on these criterias the authors managed to find 10 participants. Below is a short description of their role and their adhering company.

#	Role	Company
P1	CEO & founder	Founded an AI company that helps the fishing industry. Has raised around 40 million NOK in funding and has about 40 employees.
P2	CPO & Co-founder	Founded an AI fintech company. Has raised 150 million NOK in funding and has about 45 employees.
P3	CCO & Co-founder	Founded a two sided platform. Has raised 2 750 million NOK in funding and has about 200 employees.
P4	VP Engineering & Co-founder	Founded an IOT company. Has raised around 150 million NOK in funding and has about 80 employees.
P5	Associate	Associate at an investment company that has implemented OKRs in several of their investments. Recently led the implementation of OKRs in a scaleup that has raised around 300

		million NOK and has about 90 employees.
P6	CEO & Co-founder	Founded a two-sided platform. Has raised about 80 million NOK and had about 25 employees.
P7	CEO & Co-founder	Founded a B2B SaaS. Has raised about 1 750 million NOK and has about 220 employees.
P8	Tech Lead	Works in P7s company as a Tech Lead and has worked in the company for 6 years.
P9	Head of Operations	Head of operations for a software company that builds systems for enterprises. Has raised 60 million NOK and has about 50 employees.
P10	Head of R&D	One of the first employees in a B2B SaaS company that has raised almost 30 million NOK and has about 25 employees.

Table 1: Participants description and their context

3.3 Data collection methods

For the purpose of answering the research question, interviews were the only method used for data collection. Building on Merriam’s method, interviewing is often the best way to collect data from the past, especially when it’s hard to replicate (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). This choice matched the qualitative nature of the research and the collective case study design, aiming to thoroughly explore the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in the process. Although there are other methods for collecting qualitative data, interviews were considered the most effective approach for several reasons. Interviews give direct access to the personal experiences, thoughts, and insights of co-founders and managers who are leading the way in implementing OKRs. They also allow for the extraction of insights from multiple cases. They provide a straightforward and adaptable method to collect data from different scaleups, making it easier to compare and analyze their experiences. Other alternatives were also explored to achieve some degree of triangulation. Merriam (2009, p. 38) describes alternatives such as observations, which may offer a basic understanding of how OKRs are incorporated into daily operations, but the authors deemed it to be hard to grasp the strategic reasoning behind their implementation. Another more viable option from Merriam (2009, p. 40) was examining internal documents such as OKR reports and strategic plans, which could have valuable information about the formal aspects of the OKR implementation. However, through the process, the authors found that most participants didn’t have much relevant documents related to the implementation process, and those who did were hesitant to share as the relevant

documentation was considered sensitive. Ultimately, the authors accepted that semi-structured interviews were the main source for data.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

In order to thoroughly find answers for the research questions, the authors developed a semi-structured interview guide that followed Merriam's (2009, p. 99) approach of utilizing open-ended questions. Merriam (2009, p. 103) describes the process to start with neutral questions, and move on to more narrow questions as the interview continues. This approach maintains a balance between providing a comprehensive coverage of important subjects and allowing for exploration of particular experiences and emerging themes (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1, and is designed to assess how various scaleups implemented OKRs. It delves into the implementation process, challenges faced, and factors that contribute to success.

In order to verify the effectiveness and accuracy of the interview guide, the authors did a pilot test with a startup founder who had used OKRs. This initial interview provided a valuable opportunity for the authors to test their questions and approach, enabling them to make necessary adjustments. Some of the changes done was changing the question from being leading to being more open-ended. The study also offered valuable insights into how participants might interpret and respond to the questions, ensuring that the questionnaire effectively gathered detailed and relevant information. Further, the authors got the possibility to test and practice their own probing skills. Probing are questions or comments that follow up something the participant says, and are virtually impossible to prepare beforehand (Merriam, 2009, p. 100). This was often used when the perceived importance of a factor was unclear.

3.3.2 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducted primarily through virtual meetings, considering the geographical spread and busy schedules of the participants. Each interview was planned to last approximately 30 minutes, allowing sufficient time to cover all relevant topics. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants, using digital recording tools to ensure clarity and accuracy for later transcription and analysis. The interviewers began each session with a brief informal conversation to put the participants at ease. The use of open-ended questions encouraged respondents to freely share their experiences and insights on OKR implementation.

This approach allowed participants to bring up factors organically, leading to more open and genuine responses.

3.4 Data Organization and Analysis

The authors used their smartphones to record the interviews. These devices were chosen for their convenience and ability to capture high-quality audio. Prior to each interview participants were provided with information regarding the recording procedure and their consent was obtained, in accordance with ethical guidelines, to ensure transparency in the research process. After conducting the interviews, the recordings were transcribed using NTNUs speech to text service¹. Subsequently, a manual verification process was done to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the transcribed data for further analysis. This gave the authors verbatim transcriptions of the interviews, which is considered the best foundation to analyze (Merriam, 2009, p. 110).

3.4.1 Analyzing the Data

As described by Merriam (2009, p. 204), the authors first had to analyze each case by itself, and then move on to cross-case analysis. When performing the within-case analysis, the authors read through the transcripts and labeled all answers which seemed relevant, following the open coding process as described by Merriam (2009, p. 200). By concentrating on the parts of the transcripts considered to be most relevant, the authors efficiently pinpointed the instances where respondents discussed factors affecting their implementation of OKRs. This gave a quick overview of the interview and which factors were mentioned and their context. Based on the mentioned factor and its context, the authors were able to identify categories that explained the factor (Merriam, 2009, p. 185). For example, when the participant meant that implementing courses in OKRs to train the organization in the framework was important, a more general category of “educating about OKRs” could be drawn out. Next, the authors made a table which included all the mentioned factors, and what degree of importance the participant meant they had. An example of this is shown here, from participant 2:

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Clear goals for company	Setting great KR	Focused on intention	Leadership as OKR champs	Gradual implementation	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	Mid	High	High	High	Mid	Mid	High

Table 2: Example of a participants answers coded and categorized

¹ <https://i.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/Norsk/Tale+til+tekst>

The ranking of perceived importance has three levels: Low, Mid, and High. With the low category the participants acknowledged the existence of the factor, but did not see it as a contributing element in the successful implementation of OKRs. With Mid, short for medium, the authors categorized answers where the participant mentioned factors and perceived it as of some importance, but not essential to implement OKRs successfully. Lastly, the High category was used when a participant mentioned a factor and saw it as critically important to implement OKRs successfully. By doing this analysis on each interviewee, the authors could move on to the next stage and do cross-case analysis.

With the tables from each participant, the authors could collect them into a matrix where all mentioned factors and the perceived importance from each participant was shown. The factors in the matrix were sorted by how often the factor was mentioned. The matrix enabled the identification of patterns and trends, revealing which factors were crucial and often mentioned, and which were perceived less important. Success factors that were more often mentioned and perceived of higher importance would be considered as important success factors to implement OKRs successfully. Similarly, the ones further down would be assessed as less important. Thus the matrix summarized the results of the data collection, and set the stage for an engaging discussion about the success factors to implement OKRs. The implications of the found factors were discussed in chapter 5, where each of the identified factors were analyzed across cases.

3.5 Ensuring Validity and Reliability

When using methods such as open coding there is an inherent risk of researcher bias influencing the interpretation of data (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). To mitigate this risk the authors deemed it necessary to have the participants verify the coding of their answers, and rating of how important the factors were and how well the company handled that factor. This process is known as the *member checking process*, where the aim is to validate the accuracy and relevance of the coded data (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). The coding was sent to each participant where they could give feedback and alter the coding or approve it without change. Out of all the 10 participants, two of them asked to change two of the factors. Thus, the open coding seemed to be mostly accurate. Through this member checking process the authors were able to significantly reduce the risk of researcher bias, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research.

3.5.1 Ethics

Patton (2002, p. 522) points out that the reliability of qualitative research depends on the trustworthiness of the researchers, as well as strict methods and a deep understanding of qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). Furthermore, there also rises ethical problems when collecting data and sharing the results. When collecting it, the researcher has to make sure doing so in a way that doesn't affect the Participant by violating their privacy or giving false information about their views. Therefore the researchers remained clear that all the participants were not to be mentioned by name and their company only described vaguely to understand context. Further, to address the issues raised by Patton, the researchers made sure to include an external researcher as quality assurance of the methods chosen before conducting the data collection. Lastly, all Participants got information on how their data was going to be used, analyzed and handled.

3.5.2 Strength and weaknesses

The authors backgrounds is seen as one of the greater strengths when researching this topic. Both authors have experience in OKRs and are motivated to research it so they can leverage the framework better in the future. One of the authors is a co-founder of a startup who from day one has used OKRs to help the team with alignment and focus. The other author currently works in one of Norway's largest scaleups, where one of his tasks is OKR implementation. He has also done so in other scaleups, and seen the troubles scaleups meet in the implementation phase. Thus both authors have prior experience and interest in the research and the findings of the research. However, with former experience the authors are also prone to bias other researchers wouldn't have. Furthermore, as the authors only have written one academic text earlier, they're novices in both planning, executing, and analyzing academic research. That is seen as a significant weakness.

In hindsight the authors also found some weaknesses in their methodological process. First, the research had 10 participating interviewees. That's enough to find some similarities, but it's not enough to conclude with a comprehensive understanding. For further research in this field and this type of research, 10 participants is the bare minimum. Furthermore, as most of the documents related to OKRs from the participants were sensitive it was difficult to get any triangulation. This weakens the credibility of the findings. Lastly, the process of open coding is also seen as a weakness of the study. Another approach, such as Gioia et al. (2013, p. 15)

could include more direct quotes and descriptions of the participants. By coding the answers of the participants, biases or wrong interpretation might affect the outcome in the study. However, it's also worth noting that the authors still believe Merriam's method was the best way forward, and would still utilize that than to use methods such as Gioia (2013).

4. Results

As described in section 3.4.1 there were two stages of analyzing the case studies; First there was an within-case analysis, and then onto a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). This chapter starts by summarizing the findings from each interview, and then moves on to cross-analyze the cases.

4.1 Within-case analysis

4.1.1 Participant 1: The OKR champion

The first participant was the founder and CEO of a scaleup which had gotten 40 million NOK in funding and had about 40 employees. As the CEO P1 decided to implement the framework when the company surpassed 20 employees two years earlier. Before that, the company used "Must win battles" as a framework, but as they grew, alignment became harder and more important. That's when P1 learned about OKRs. After reading a couple of books on the subject, the CEO bought "Measure what matters" (Doerr, 2018) to the entire leadership team, as well as any employee who wanted it. By first implementing it into the R&D department of the organization, employees and leaders got time to adjust to it. Since then they've branched it out to the entire organization, and built knowledge and routines to utilize the framework more efficiently. P1 calls these changes and experiences "learnings".

*"One of the key learnings we've had is being ruthless at setting **great** key results. It takes skill to do that, and that's why it's essential to educate all and have OKR champs in management".*

When summarizing the most important factors to succeed with OKRs, P1 mentions communication, having OKR champions, setting great key results, and having proper follow-up routines to make the framework work as great as it can. Despite the active actions to educate the organization in the framework, the CEO reflects that they could have done even more to

educate the organization, especially related to setting great goals. P1 stressed the necessity to find their own fit with the framework:

“We’ve found our own structure on OKRs. From how we structure objective and key results to how we do follow-ups, it’s very important. Now in January we rush to reach last year’s unfinished goals, and then in February we go all in on the new OKRs”.

P1 gave their implementation-process a 5 out of 10, and that it’s something they’re still working on. From the interview, the authors summarized P1s view on implementation factors in the table below. Originally, the authors coded “setting great key results” as an implementation factor of high importance and sent it to P1. Through the member checking process however, P1 described that it wasn’t significant to achieve when implementing, but that is what one should strive for, viewing it as a learning process. Therefore “Setting great key results” got changed to “Is a learning process” with high importance, which is seen below.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Talking about OKRs	Is a learning process	Employee engagement	Leadership as OKR champs	Gradual implementation	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	High	High	High	Mid	High	Mid	High

Table 3: Participant 1s answers

4.1.2 Participant 2: The performance pilot

When creating the AI fintech company, P2 already had experience with OKRs. But instead of implementing it from the start, P2, like P1, waited until they crossed 20 employees. Before that, the founder saw “Must win battles” as a more efficient framework, but experienced that as they grew they came in need for more alignment. That’s when OKRs became the preferred framework and the founders began implementing the framework 1.5 years ago.

“We have great results with OKRs, but it has just been luck. We’re really good at setting great key results, but we implemented it half-hearted. As a management team we haven’t prioritized being OKR champions or invested enough in educating and incorporating the framework.”

By already being used to set goals in the organization through “must win battles”, it was easier to initially succeed with OKRs. P2 explicitly addressed that to succeed with the framework it is essential being comfortable with setting goals and that the entire organization understands what that goal means. And on top of that, if the entire organization understands the way goals are set

and how the structures around OKRs works, the implementation becomes easier. As P2 described, they implemented the framework progressively, with the organization increasingly relying on it over time, instead of implementing it 100% from the start, or divided in departments. Finishing the interview, the founder emphasized that they had no belief in gradual implementation by department. To help the company to fully integrate the framework they have now hired a consultant to structure their OKR processes and educate the organization.

“I think too many jump all in too fast and buy software to do it all at once. I don’t think that’s a good strategy, but at the same time I think we’ve spent too long. The best advice would be to make an implementation plan of what you do in which quarter.”

Thus P2 is critical to gradual implementation on each division, but is positive to gradually rely on it as a company. The perspective is interesting, as much of the theory states the opposite. P2 gave their implementation-process a 6 out of 10. From the interview the authors summarized P2s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Clear goals for company	Setting great KR	Focused on intention	Leadership as OKR champs	Gradual implementation	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	Mid	High	High	High	Mid	Mid	High

Table 4: Participant 2s answers

4.1.3 Participant 3: The OKR unicorn

As a company which recently reached unicorn status (a company valued over a 1 billion USD), it was over 6 years since this founder implemented OKRs into the company. At the time of implementation they were in the scaleup phase. To begin with, the entire management team read the book “Measure What Matters”, which introduced them to OKRs. Then they bought the book for all employees. Even still, all employees who begin working in the company start by reading that book, as that is essential to understand the processes behind how the company discusses and makes decisions. The founder described it as their “bible”.

“We’ve used OKRs in a variety of ways - from each employee having their own objective and key results, to everything being streamlined and connected. Now we use it as a tool to communicate strategy, and make better decisions faster.”

Thus P3 found educating and adjusting the framework to fit their needs important to succeed with OKRs. When asked about the most important successfactors the founder addresses that one should dare to think big from the beginning and find 3-4 key results the entire company can work towards. That’s also how they use it today to communicate strategy, and make sure teams are aligned and transparent on their role and contribution.

“We’ve worked a lot on how we write good objectives and key results. We spend a lot of time working together and refining these to make sure the OKRs are aligned.”

The co-founder thus believes that good key results and objectives play a factor in how well the OKRs work. P3 follows-up that they’ve learned that importance through their work with OKRs, and that its something that comes with time. In total P3 gave their implementation-process a 7 out of 10. From the interview the authors summarized P3s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Coaching in OKRs	Talking about OKRs	Clear goals for company	Setting great key results	Employee engagement	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	High	Mid	High	High	Mid	Mid	High

Success-factor	Spend time on alignment						
Importance	High						

Table 5: Participant 3s answers

4.1.4 Participant 4: The scrum master

Before founding the company, P4 worked in another scaleup and got exposed to MBO. Back then, P4 didn’t see much value in the framework. That skepticism has followed P4 all the way to the scaleup which P4 now works in and co-founded. Yet OKRs were implemented when the scaleup grew to 40 employees and was in need of improved alignment and a goal setting framework. P4 then proceeded to explain how management and departments such as finance utilize OKR, but departments such as product-teams utilize Scrum.

“Where I’ve seen the most use of OKRs is that we get a discussion on what we have to prioritize, and make it so that our goals are aligned across teams.”

Thus, instead of having objectives and key results for each team, they have company wide objectives and key results as well as scrum instead of key results where it's more beneficial. Overall, the founder thought the framework is beneficial to get management to think in similar contexts and speak the same language, but P4 personally prefers scrum for its flexibility.

“Overall I give our OKR implementation and use a 2 out of 6... To really get it working one has to include it pretty early, preferably when setting the strategy. We’ve been good at formulating key results but I’m not sure OKRs has made any difference.”

P4 then explained that to truly succeed with OKRs one has to focus on integrating it into how management works, and revisit it often. If not, the OKRs lose touch with reality fast and become a bigger burden than the upside it provides.

P4 gave their implementation-process a 3 out of 10. From the interview the authors summarized P4s view on success factors in the table below. From the interview the authors coded that P4 perceived importance of “employee engagement” and “effective alignment step” to be low. However, after some correspondence on mail through the member checking process, P4 altered “Employee engagement” to be of medium importance, and “Effective alignment step” to be of high importance.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Continuous check-ins	Focus on intention	Employee engagement	Relevant team level OKR	Effective alignment step	
Importance	Mid	High	High	Mid	Mid	High	

Table 6: Participant 4s answers

4.1.5 Participant 5: The hands-on associate

P5 works as an associate in an investment firm which has implemented OKRs in several of their portfolio companies. In the interview, the authors focused on a recent investment in a scaleup with 90 employees where P5 has been in charge of the entire implementation process. The first critical success factor highlighted was the management’s commitment to the framework. P5 further stressed the importance of viewing the first quarter with OKRs as a learning experience:

“So in Q1, everyone agreed that the purpose of that quarter was to learn. Both what works and what doesn’t work. And one realized that it’s not a silver bullet to just do as Google has done”.

One of these learnings was to have OKRs on a team level, not just department level, as these department OKRs often became too general to feel relevant for the teams. They started by only implementing department OKRs, but experienced that teams started to define their own OKRs anyway to make the overall OKRs more relevant to them. Further, the importance of intense coaching was highlighted. P5 believed hands-on coaching of all the teams on all stages of the OKR process was crucial.

“You can’t have a consultant come in once a week to train 100 employees. You have to be there full time and discuss the goals of each team to really get that alignment.”

P5 went even further and stated that he believed 70% of the value from OKRs is getting that alignment working across teams. Finally, P5 stressed the importance of weekly check-ins on the OKRs to see what OKRs are falling behind schedule and how one can bring them back on track. P5 gave their implementation-process an 8 out of 10. From the interview, the authors summarized P5s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Coaching about OKRs	Continuous check-ins	Focus on intention	Leadership as OKR champs	Gradual implementation	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	Mid	High	High	Mid	High	Mid	High

Success factor	Is a learning process	Relatable team OKRs	Spend time on alignment				
Importance	High	Mid	High				

Table 7: Participant 5s answers

4.1.6 Participant 6: The adaptive architect

According to this founder, setting goals was in the company’s DNA from the beginning. Already when being three employees they implemented OKRs as the way to execute on their strategy. Since then, the company has grown to 25 employees, and declined down again to 5. Throughout the company's lifetime they’ve had OKRs and adapted the framework to fit the organizations needs, and learned some valuable lessons on the way.

*“To implement it successfully you need to have the whole management team on board, just the CEO won’t do. You also have to dare to have an awkward first cycle, and throughout that adapt the framework to fit your needs. Lastly, be transparent and communicate **all** goals.”*

P6 further explained how the company had check-ins with the entire company, finding valuable feedback from several of the employees outside of management. P6 goes further into detail on how an 8-month cycle didn’t work as well, as they couldn’t iterate on the feedback. Reflecting on how they work today, P6 believes that one should have strategy over years, and OKRs to execute on that quarterly.

“We’ve done a lot of workshops to get our OKRs working well. I think a lot of startups fail by going into the first cycle and just following the book.”

The CEO then proceeds to explain that they break larger goals, such as a big revenue target and break it down to initiatives that each one of them can contribute to. P6 gave their implementation-process a 9 out of 10. From the interview the authors summarized P6s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Talking about OKRS	Continuous check-ins	Clear top level objectives	Engage all employees	Leadership as OKR champs	Adjusting it to “fit” them	Spend time on alignment
Importance	Mid	High	Mid	High	High	High	Mid

Table 8: Participant 6s answers

4.1.7 Participant 7: The drummer

Being results-oriented from day one, P7 was well-read about multiple frameworks, before choosing to implement OKRs. But, similarly as in other cases, it wasn’t until they surpassed 10 employees they began seeing the need for more alignment and OKRs. The first time they tried implementing the framework they failed, as they didn’t have the full support of management or employees. 2 years later, they found themselves struggling even more with alignment and decided that it was time to really implement OKRs.

“One thing we did wrong was that we talked a lot about the framework and how it worked, instead of talking about where it’s taking us. We’re now way more focused on having fewer goals and communicating those in our meetings.”

The CEO proceeds to explain that one of the problems they've had is not having names on their key results. According to P7 these goals slide out at once and no one can be held accountable. By educating with presentations and quizzes, the organization got to understand how it worked, and why it was necessary.

“We’ve learned that sales and development have different rhythms, so having them work in similar sprints and OKRs is hard. You have to understand how to adjust the framework to fit that inner rhythm to really get it working well.”

Elaborating on this, P7 explained that finding the right rhythm on follow-ups in different departments with different structures is key to making a well functioning operative structure. Building on that structure, P7 underscores the necessity to measure and track with check-ins on a weekly basis to understand if they're going the right direction.

P7 gave their implementation-process a 7 out of 10. From the interview the authors summarized P6s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Talking about OKRs	Continuous check-ins	Clear goals for company	Setting great key results	Intention, not process focus	Engaging all employees
Importance	High	Mid	High	High	High	High	Mid

Success factor	Leaders as OKR champs	Adjusting it to “fit” them	Relatable team OKRs				
Importance	High	Mid	Low				

Table 9: Participant 7s answers

4.1.8 Participant 8: The drum

Keeping the process from P7 in mind, the authors interviewed one of the employees in P7s scaleup. This experienced Tech Lead was not too enthusiastic about OKRs, or how it was currently used in the company. Previous experiences with OKRs at bigger companies also affected P8’s views. P8 had experienced the implementation of OKRs as a “play for the gallery”, where it was performed to attract the approval of management and investors, instead of giving speed and direction.

“We haven’t been very good at setting goals, and I don’t think we’ve been very good at following the goals we set for ourselves either. We just set some goals and try to play the game.”

P8 explained that it seemed more important to follow the process correctly, than to actually get things done. Another challenge, more related to P8’s current employer, was the fact that unclear and vague management objectives made it hard for teams to use them as directional. To improve the implementation, P8 underscored the importance of training in OKRs, and educating why it’s important. P8 further highlighted the importance of continuously talking about the goals:

“One must talk about these goals until one turns green in the face and gets tired of it, because it’s only then it starts to stick, so it doesn’t work to just say on January 4th that these are our goals, and then follow it up in the OKR tool, I think that works poorly.”

P8 continued by exemplifying ways to do this through all-hands meetings and that it is something the teams discuss every week. Conclusively, P8 adds that clear goals for companies and teams are critical, and that OKRs aim to solve the hard problem of alignment in businesses, but that it’s no silver bullet.

It’s worth noting that the P8s department was one of the parts of the company where P7 saw OKRs to be sub-optimal. In P7s view, OKRs is a great tool for management and to run a tight operating ship, but that there also exists better frameworks for departments such as development. This might also explain large parts of P8s critical views on the benefits of the framework. P8 gave their implementation-process a 5 out of 10. The authors summarized P8s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Coaching about OKRS	Talking about OKRS	Continuous check-ins	Clear goals for company	Focus on intention	
Importance	High	Mid	High	Mid	High	High	

Table 10: Participant 8s answers

4.1.9 Participant 9: The OKR coach

Being Head of Operations while the company grew from 10 to 40 employees, P9 was the central figure to implement OKR into the scaleup. Before doing so, they and the management team figured that the first year would be filled with trial and error, and therefore emphasized that

the first year was a phase to learn and adjust. Initially they struggled with the implementation as some employees didn't see the use of the framework or see how it would make them more efficient. In the beginning they also mixed key results with health metrics and KPIs, confusing the employees. This, combined with the belief that more key results would lead to better use of the framework led to more confusion than focus.

“By emphasizing that it was a learning phase, several employees came with feedback on how the OKR structure could be improved and adjusted. This, combined with having multiple workshops with the management team to refine our OKRs made a big difference.”

P9 further elaborates that engaging the employees in the process is one of the most important factors in the implementation phase. P9 also emphasized making the necessary adjustments to have it fit them, and get the CEO to be an OKR champion as something that worked well and was of critical importance. P9 also pointed out that having themselves as a OKR coach in the company, which helped guide and engage employees throughout the implementation, was important and that it also inspired other employees to become OKR champions.

“It’s important to include all employees continuously. This makes it easier to discuss the OKRs and if they make sense. It also makes it easier to make changes and hold people accountable”.

P9 gave their implementation-process an 8 out of 10. The authors summarized P9s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Educating about OKRS	Talking about OKRs	Clear goals for compan	Setting great key results	Engaging all employees	Leaders as OKR champs	Adjusting it to “fit” them
Importance	Mid	Mid	High	Mid	High	High	High

Success factor	Is a learning process	Spend time on alignment					
Importance	High	Mid					

Table 11: Participant 9s answers

4.1.10 Participant 10: The experienced explorer

This Head of R&D joined the scaleup just 2 months after it was founded and the team only consisted of 4-5 people. In the beginning, they felt OKRs did not make too much sense, but

when they split into a Product and a Commercial team and passed 10 employees, they felt the need for OKRs. The team members were familiar with OKRs from a former, later stage, scaleup and therefore it felt natural to implement the framework.

“OKRs were less helpful when we did them per team. It was just because we weren’t big enough that it made sense yet.”

Similar to other participants P10 found that they had to alter the recipe from the book. As cited above, P10 and the other managers found themselves too small to utilize it the same way. Therefore they concluded that it was more useful to have OKRs on a company level, rather than per team with the size of their company at around 25 people. P10 further explained some experiences related to following up on the OKRs:

“We put a lot of work into making the OKRs. And then as the quarter kind of went on, we’d forget about them [...] And then I would be shocked by them at the end of the quarter because you had to review them”

To mitigate this, they implemented check-ins two times a week on the OKRs. P10 also highlighted the importance of OKRs not being set top-down, but in a more collaborative manner. P10 explained that the teams themselves know best how they contribute towards the objective and how to best measure this and that this would make the OKRs more relatable for the teams.

P10 gave their implementation-process an 8 out of 10. The authors summarized P10s view on success factors in the table below, which were approved without changes.

Success-factor	Continuous check-ins	Setting great key results	Engage all employees	Adjusting it to “fit” them	Relatable team OKRs		
Importance	High	Mid	Mid	High	High		

Table 12: Participant 10s answers

4.2 Cross-case analysis

Completing the within-case analysis, the authors now have several factors which are said to affect the implementation of OKRs. Many of these have also been recurring. To summarize the findings, the authors have collected the tables into one matrix, which summarizes the findings.

See table 13 below. The matrix is sorted top-down based on how often the success factor was mentioned. To facilitate seeing trends in the answers, the levels are colored.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Adjusting OKRs to “fit” them	Mid	High	High		High	High	High		High	High
Educating about OKRs	High	Mid	High	Mid	Mid		High	High	Mid	
Engaging the whole organization	Mid		Mid	Mid		High	Mid		High	Mid
Having leadership as OKR champs	High	Mid			High	High	High		High	
Doing continuous check-in on OKR status				High	High	High	High	Mid		High
Having clear company goals and objectives		High	High			Mid	High	High	High	
Focusing on the intention of OKRs, not the process itself		High		High	Mid		High	High		
Viewing OKRs as something to learn	High		Mid		High	Mid			High	
Spending time on the alignment step			High	High	High	Mid			Mid	
Talking about OKRs	High		High			Mid	Mid	High		
Setting great key results		High	Mid				High		Mid	Mid
Coaching in OKRs			Mid		High			Mid	Mid	
Having relatable team level OKRs				Mid	Mid		Low			High
Doing a gradual implementation	Mid	Mid			Mid					
How successful have you been in implementing OKRs?	5/10	6/10	7/10	3/10	8/10	9/10	8/10	5/10	8/10	8/10

Table 13: Summary of the findings

The sorted matrix shows some interesting results. The factor that seems to be most important when implementing OKRs is adjusting the framework to fit with the scaleup. In the words of P5 and P8, following Google’s way as explained in Doerr’s book “Measure What Matters” was “no silver bullet”. Next, “educating the organization” in the framework was perceived as an important

factor, where 8 of the 10 participants saw it as an important factor. 4 of these even saw it as critical. The way they were educated varied, but the purpose of mitigating misunderstandings and confusion was almost always the purpose for the action. The next factor, “engaging the whole organization” was mentioned by 7 out of the 10. P9 and P6 both found valuable feedback from engaging all employees, and using their feedback to find the right goal formulations.

P9 also mentioned that having the CEO as OKR champion was incredibly important, and set it as essential to have the CEO as a champion for OKRs. P6 went further and said that it’s not enough just having the CEO to vouch for OKRs; “you need to have the entire management team”. Out of the 6 participants mentioning “management as OKR champions” as an important factor, 5 found it to be critical. The same number of votes were given to the factor “having clear company goals and objectives”. Where the participants of larger companies, P3 and P7 both used OKRs to communicate strategy towards the entire company. P8 also sees this as an important factor when working in P7s company, to set direction and help the employees understand what’s important. As P3 put it, “it helps making decisions faster”.

P7 also addressed that they were too focused on the process in itself in the beginning, and not where it is going to take them. P6 said that they saw that many fail by just “following the book”. Thus “focusing on the intention of OKRs, not the process” itself was mentioned by 5 out of 10 participants. As P8 put it “the worst thing is when OKR just works as a play for the gallery”. To find some answers that help scaleups avoid playing pretend, it’s natural to discuss these results up towards the existing literature and see if it can answer the research question.

5. Discussion

The following chapter will discuss the results against the presented theory. The chapter will mainly be structured as a cross-case analysis using the summary of the findings in Table 13, supported by relevant contextual information from the interviews. The factors will be grouped into three sub-chapters, based on whether the factor is important before, during or after the implementation process itself.

Setup for success

Several of the identified success factors relate to what can be viewed as preparations before the actual implementation process of OKRs starts. This includes factors such as educating

employees in the framework and how it is introduced to the organization. Furthermore, it includes how one can prepare the implementation by establishing leadership commitment and clear directional goals for the company to guide the process.

5.1.1 Educating about OKRs

A factor that was raised by 8/10 participants as a success factor was the importance of “educating about OKRs”. P3 raised this as a critical success factor and described how all new employees still are required to read a book on OKRs as part of their onboarding. Rompho (2023, p. 6) points to how a challenge when implementing OKRs can be employees' understanding of the concept of OKRs, especially when organizations use OKRs and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) simultaneously. This was experienced to lead to confusion and a less successful implementation. P9 highlighted this exact challenge of understanding the difference between KPIs and key results that confused employees, thereby supporting the findings of Rompho (2023). The importance of educating employees in OKRs was also underscored by P1 as a mediator for another identified success factor “Setting great key results”. This demonstrates a type of relationship between the success factors, where success factors in the setup phase works as facilitators for succeeding with other success factors. Further research could seek to identify and characterize the relationships between the different success factors.

5.1.2 Having leadership as OKR champs

“Having management as OKR champions” was mentioned by 6 of the participants. For P5 that was the first critical success factor highlighted. 5 other participants also mentioned it as a success factor, including P7 that highlighted this as a main reason for failing to implement OKRs at an earlier stage. In accordance with goal setting theory someone's performance will only fall at high levels of goal difficulty if there is a significant reduction in goal commitment (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 215). This validates the significance of commitment to improve performance, something that would characterize a successful OKR implementation. During the interview P5 emphasized the significant impact that leaders may have on the commitment of an entire department to the framework. This underscores the crucial role of leaders, as they have the potential to influence the commitment of a substantial portion of the company.

5.1.3 Having clear company goals and objectives

“Having clear company goals and objectives” was highlighted by 6 of the 10 participants as an important success factor. This factor is regarded as part of the setup, as all interviewees described how their OKR process always started with some overall company goals and objectives to guide the process. Grove (1983, p. 108) described the creation of OKRs as a cascading process that starts with the company objectives. And further described this cascading effect by explaining that if a manager meets his objectives, the supervisor will meet his. One can therefore argue that the quality of the implementation depends on the objectives of the company, as everyone's objectives depend on these objectives. This importance is underscored by how it is highlighted by a majority of the participants in our study.

5.2 During the Implementation

Although some success factors may be addressed before beginning the implementation, the authors have also found several success factors that must be taken into account during the actual implementation of OKRs. In cases where the companies fail with these factors altogether, the entire implementation might fail, as P7 experienced the first time they tried.

5.2.1 Coaching in OKRs

Related to the earlier identified success factor of education in OKRs, “coaching in OKRs” was highlighted by only 4 participants, with only P5 mentioning it as a critical success factor. The authors distinguish between education and coaching by how often they occur and the communication style. While education is primarily a one way communication, passive and rare, coaching is more of a two way communication exercise at a higher frequency. As all of the participants that highlighted coaching also highlighted education, one could argue coaching should be viewed as an extension of education. By the same argument, coaching could be viewed as a measure to mitigate the same problems that education attempts to mitigate. More specifically, with these two factors one could mitigate the problems raised by Rompho (2023, p.6) related to confusion around the framework during implementation. However, with only one participant highlighting this success factor as critical, further research is needed to validate and nuance the importance of this factor.

5.2.2 Setting great key results

“Setting great key results” was viewed by 4 of the participants as an important success factor and only 2 as a critical success factor. P1 was the most clear in highlighting the importance of this factor, and that they had learned to be ruthless at setting great key results. He described these great key results in line with how Niven and Lamorte (2016, p. 48) described good key results as quantifiable, challenging and specific and defined such that one can at the end of the OKR period objectively determine whether the key result was achieved or not. Goal setting theory further describes how setting goals with the right characteristics affect performance. Locke & Latham (1991, p. 215) conclude that maximum effort is not aroused under a “do your best” goal. This is in line with how Niven and Lamorte (2016, p. 48) describe great key results as objectively measurable. Goal setting theory also describes how specific goals show less variation in performance than people with vague goals (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 216). This is also in line with how Niven and Lamorte (2016, p. 48) describe great key results as specific. Spending time to formulate great key results, in line with the principles of goal setting theory and the existing OKR literature, could therefore contribute toward an implementation of OKRs that leads to both greater and more predictable performance.

5.2.3 Engaging the whole organization

“Engaging the whole organization” was mentioned by 7 of the participants, but only 2 participants thought it was of high importance. This could suggest some minimum level of engaging the whole organization is very important to succeed as it was mentioned by 7/10 participants, but maybe not to a large extent, as only 2/10 highlighted it as critical. Thomson (1988, p. 2) describes how MBO contrasts traditional planning and objective setting by introducing an element of dialogue into the process. And this dialogue could lead to a better implementation as Mitchell and Dosset (1978) demonstrated that participative goal setting led to higher performance in their study of 76 engineers/scientists and their 38 managers. However, the degree to which a person has to be engaged in the goal setting to extract these benefits remains to be identified, and could be the reason for the difference in how important the participants found this factor.

5.2.4 Doing a gradual implementation

“Doing a gradual implementation” was only highlighted by 3 participants and no participants highlighted it as a critical success factor. P2 even emphasized that they had no belief in gradual

implementation by department, and only rely on it gradually. This provides a strong indication that this factor is not a critical success factor for OKR implementation in scaleups. P1, which argued that it was of some importance, described how it gave them time to adjust the framework. Adjusting the framework was the factor that was identified as the most important in our study with 7 participants mentioning it as a critical success factor. If P1's hypothesis, that a gradual implementation could make it easier to adjust the framework, the factor could still hold significant importance in a successful implementation strategy.

5.2.5 Adjusting OKRs to "fit" them

As mentioned, "adjusting OKRs to "fit" them" as an organization was mentioned as a critical success factor by 7 participants, more than any other factor identified. These 7 participants also happened to be the only participants that rated the success of their implementation as a 6/10 or higher. This relationship between appreciating the importance of this factor and succeeding with their implementation could further substantiate the importance of this factor. However one should appreciate that our measure of how successful the implementation was based on self assessment with limited triangulation. Adjusting OKRs to fit an organization could be viewed as similar to how Grove (1983) developed Drucker's (1954) concept of MBO into what we now know as OKRs with his description of a successful MBO system. Our findings may suggest that each organization needs to create their own further adaptation of the OKR framework to ensure a successful implementation.

5.2.6 Viewing OKRs as something to learn

"Viewing OKRs as something to learn" was highlighted by 5 of the participants as a success factor, exemplified by how P6 described how you must dare to have an awkward first cycle. Further, P9 highlighted how expressing clearly to the whole organization that using OKRs is a learning process that takes time and multiple attempts to succeed, made it easier for employees to give feedback on how it could be improved and adjusted. This suggests that one could view this factor as an extension of or a contributing factor to the success factor of adjusting OKRs to fit an organization, as it can make it easier to make adjustments based on employee feedback. With P9's description of how it can lower the threshold for feedback, this factor could also affect the previously mentioned success factor related to engaging the whole organization. What's interesting is though this is one of the most mentioned success factors, there seems to be little focus on it in the academic literature.

5.2.7 Having relatable team level OKRs

“Having relatable team level OKRs” was mentioned by 4 participants and only as a critical success factor by P10. P10 explained how OKRs could be too high level to feel relatable to the people in the teams. P10 elaborated by highlighting how the teams know best how to measure their outcomes and that it would make the OKRs more relatable. Further, P5 explained how they first only implemented OKRs at the department level and not the team levels below, but then the teams organically started to create their own OKRs to make the department OKRs more relatable, supporting P10’s view. This factor connects to several aspects of goal setting theory, including how increased specificity could increase effort (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 215). Further, goal setting theory also describes how commitment leads to better performance on hard goals (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 217).

With this theoretical foundation for this success factor, one could find it strange that only 4 participants mentioned it as a success factor. However, a challenge with this factor also highlighted through our interviews, particularly by P4 and P7, was how team level OKRs could interfere with other tools used for execution, planning and prioritizing at this level. P4 described how they used another very established framework, specific for their discipline, at the team level, and that it was challenging for the employees to use the two frameworks simultaneously. P7 described a similar challenge, but generalized to a bigger set of contexts where teams in the organization had different tools for prioritizing and setting goals that led to OKRs seeming redundant.

5.2.8 Spending time on the alignment step

“Spending time on aligning the goals” is a common step in an OKR process where the departments try to align their proposals for OKRs (Troian et al., 2022, p. 4). Spending time on the alignment step was mentioned by 5 participants and by P3, P4, and P5 as critically important. P5 claimed that 70% of the value of OKRs was extracted from this step. Improved alignment is one of the key benefits of OKRs described in OKR literature (Steiber & Alänge, 2013; Rompho, 2023). If the hypothesis of P5 is true, that spending more time in this phase results in improved alignment, then this could be a defining characteristic of successful implementations, characterized by achieving their goal of improved alignment. However, this should be nuanced with what the most effective activities are to perform to make the most of this

step of the OKR process, balancing the time spent on alignment and time spent on doing the actual work.

5.3 Benefitting from the implementation

Finally, there were several success factors identified related to the phase after the OKRs themselves have been implemented. These include how the OKRs should be followed up and reiterated on to most effectively unleash the benefits of the implementation.

5.3.1 Talking about OKRs

"Talking about OKRs" was mentioned as a success factor by 5 participants, with 3 of them mentioning it as a critical success factor. P8 was clear on the importance of continuously talking about the OKRs, exemplifying forums such as all-hands meeting and making it something teams discuss every week. This is in line with how Locke & Latham (1991, p. 225) found that goal setting has limited effect without feedback. This highlights the importance of getting feedback on the OKRs to trigger the desired positive effect of having goals, something that is also discussed related to the next factor.

5.3.2 Doing continuous check-in on OKR status

"Doing continuous check-in on OKR status" was viewed as important by 6 participants and a critical success factor by 5 participants. P5 stressed the importance of weekly check-ins on the OKRs to see what OKRs are falling behind schedule and how one can bring them back on track. This factor can be viewed as an extension of the previous factor, "talking about OKRs", but from the participants' description, this factor has a bigger focus on establishing recurring routines to discuss how one is performing against the OKRs. Extending on the theory in the previous factor, it is interesting to draw parallels to what was a common MBO implementation mistake. Niven & Lamorte (2016, p. 3) described that the most common mistake was transforming the highly collaborative process into a top-down bureaucratic exercise. Furthermore, the integrity of the model was damaged by it being implemented as a static exercise, often only iterating on an annual basis with a "set it and forget it" pattern. This mistake has similarities to how a lacking focus on continuous check-ins on the status of OKR could unfold, leading to the OKRs being forgotten and not serving their purpose as directional in the day to day work.

5.3.3 Focusing on the intention of OKRs, not the process itself

“Focusing on the intention of OKRs, not the process itself” was raised as a success factor by 5 participants, including 4 participants highlighting it as critical. P8 had a particularly strong view on this as he had experienced at a former employer that OKRs were a “play for the gallery”, performed to attract the approval of management and investors, instead of giving speed and direction. Another way to formulate this would be to differentiate between having OKRs and using OKRs. The importance of this factor should also be viewed in conjunction with the previously mentioned important factor of adapting OKRs to fit them, as they both relate to not viewing the suggested process as the single true answer.

5.4 What are the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups?

Drawing on the results from the research and the adhering discussion, the authors now return to the research question of what the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups are. To limit the set of success factors to the most important, the authors removed success factors that had less than 5 participants highlighted as important. The remaining, most important success factor in the matrix is shown below, in table 14.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Adjusting OKRs to “fit” them	Mid	High	High		High	High	High		High	High
Educating about OKRs	High	Mid	High	Mid	Mid		High	High	Mid	
Engaging the whole organization	Mid		Mid	Mid		High	Mid		High	Mid
Having leadership as OKR champs	High	Mid			High	High	High		High	
Doing continuous check-in on OKR status				High	High	High	High	Mid		High
Having clear company goals and objectives		High	High			Mid	High	High	High	

Table 14: The most important factors when implementing OKRs

This list of commonly regarded success factors provides an answer to our research question, highlighting the factors to keep keen attention to when implementing OKRs. Furthermore, for

those wanting more factors to be aware of, they can look to table 13. The limited set of critical success factors in table 14 can guide scaleups in their implementation of OKRs, as factors to be particularly aware of.

Following the same structure as our discussion, the most important factors related to the setup phase are having management as OKR champs, educating about OKRs and having clear company goals and objectives. Further, during the implementation itself, the most important success factor was adjusting OKRs to “fit” the organization. And finally, related to benefitting from the implementation of the framework, the most important success factors were to be doing continuous check-in on OKR status and engaging the whole organization.

Some of these factors have been highlighted previously in the limited existing OKR literature, including leadership support, educating about OKRs and engaging the whole organization (Silva & Souza, 2023, p. 431). This supports the argument that these factors are among the most important success factors. The other three factors, adjusting OKRs to “fit” them, doing continuous check-in and having clear company goals and objectives are not highlighted in previous literature (Silva & Souza, 2023, p. 431). These factors seem highly relevant, and important to succeed with OKR implementation. However, this should be researched with more cases, as this study is prone to bias with a small set of cases.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Implementing OKRs

To answer our research question “*What are the critical success factors of implementing OKRs in scaleups?*” the authors performed a qualitative study to extract and rank critical success factors in the implementation of OKRs in scaleups. Goal setting theory provided the conceptual base for the discussion, while also referring to the existing, but limited, literature on OKRs. As theory related to OKRs in general is limited and to our specific research question extremely scarce, the study is exploratory in nature.

The factors found to be the most important when implementing OKRs are “Adjusting the framework to fit their organization”, where several experienced that the way Doerr (2018) describes in his book “Measure what matters” didn’t work very well in their own company. Further, “Educating the organization in the framework” proved to be of great importance, as well as “Engaging the entire organization” and having “Management as OKR champions”. In addition the factors “Having leadership as OKR champs”, “Doing continuous check-in on OKR status” and “Having clear company goals and objectives” were shown to be of significant importance.

6.2 Contributions

The study contributes to the literature on OKRs by providing an overview of factors that are important in an implementation of OKRs. Stray et al. investigated the effect of OKRs in the specific context of agile teams. They highlighted the implementation as challenging, and suggest further research to look into how OKRs improves alignment in large scale projects and how involved different stakeholders should be (Stray et al., 2022, p. 108). Our research contributes to this by providing details on what the important success factors are for implementing OKRs in an entire company. Specifically related to the involvement of different stakeholders, we comment on leadership's role in the implementation and the role of engaging the whole organization as important success factors.

Silva & Souza (2023, p. 432) conclude in their literature review of OKRs that further research is needed to better understand the benefits and challenges in implementing OKRs. This master thesis seeks to enhance the existing body of knowledge and address the need identified by

Silva & Souza. The thesis employs an exploratory method to discover the key characteristics that play a crucial role in the effective implementation of OKRs. Our findings indicate that the most important success factors when preparing to implement OKRs are having leadership as OKR champs, educating about OKRs and having clear company goals and objectives. Further, during the implementation itself, the most important success factor was adjusting OKRs to “fit” the organization. And finally, related to benefitting from the implementation of the framework, the most important success factors were to be doing continuous check-in on OKR status and engaging the whole organization.

6.3 Practical Implications

Due to the extensive prevalence of OKRs in scaleups, the study has very high industry relevance. This was reflected by how the authors were able to very quickly identify motivated participants to partake in the study. Furthermore, most participants asked to be sent the results of the study without the authors offering it first. The results have high practical relevance as they can be used as a framework for making sure one pays attention to the most important factors in ensuring a successful implementation of OKRs in a startup. Startups should use this list of factors when planning their OKR implementation and focus on ensuring that they succeed with the identified important success factors.

6.4 Limitations and Further Research

The study was performed with 10 participants, and although our results show convergence on some of the factors, a bigger study would provide a better basis for generalization. Additionally, the authors mainly interviewed the top management of business, something that could lead to a skewed view of the OKR implementation. Factors that people other than top management in the companies would find important could therefore have been neglected in the study. Another limitation was the lack of triangulation. Only one case had two different perspectives. The study therefore does not sufficiently investigate how the same implementation can be perceived as more or less successful by different people in the same company.

The study also does not investigate the question of whether OKRs increase the performance of companies and does further not compare the framework to other alternatives. The research also focuses on the specific case of implementing OKRs in scaleups and generalizations to more mature companies should therefore not be assumed without validation. Further, the definition of

scaleups utilized fits companies that are of different sizes. There is therefore significant room to nuance our findings for companies in different stages within our wide scaleup definition.

Further research could seek to compare and measure the effectiveness of focusing on the different success factors identified, e.g. how much more successful is the implementation if there is a large focus on coaching. There is also significant room for further research related to nuancing the general factors the authors have identified and identifying and characterizing the relationship between the factors. This will increase the practical applicability of the research as more specific success factors will make them easier to act upon. Further comparative studies on the importance of OKRs to scaleup success should also be performed to motivate or discourage further research on OKRs.

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Attachment 1: Interview guide

Brief introduction to the study's purpose, confidentiality assurance, and interview structure.

Setting goals and measuring progress in general:

- a) How have you worked with setting goals in the organization and measuring progress towards these?

OKRs in general:

- a) What was your overall experience using OKRs?
- b) How successful would you describe your use of OKRs? And why?

The OKR Implementation Process:

- a) Describe the Implementation process.
 - Potential follow ups:
 - i) How did you train the organization in using the framework?
 - ii) How did you adapt the framework to your business?
 - iii) Who did you involve and in what sequence in the creation process of the OKRs?
- b) Challenges During Implementation: What were the main challenges you encountered during the OKR implementation process?
- c) Effective Strategies: What strategies or practices worked well during the implementation?

Key Success Factors for implementation of OKRs

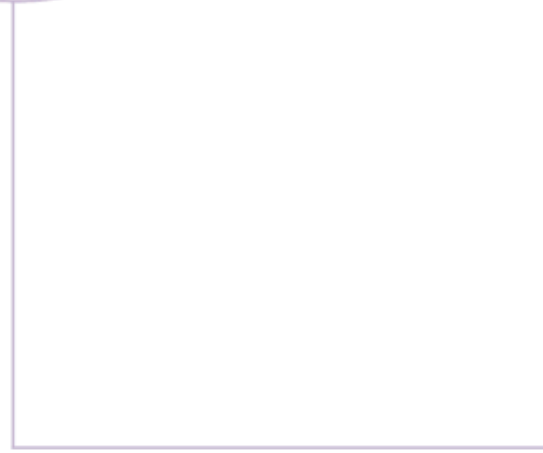
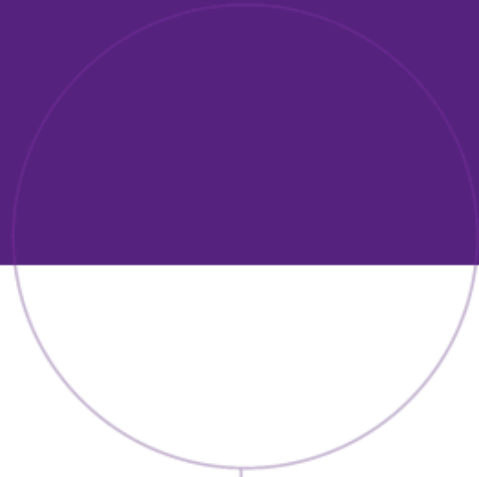
- a) Top Success Factors: In your opinion, what are the top three most important factors for successful OKR implementation?
- b) Performance in Key Areas: How well do you think your company has succeeded in these three areas?
- c) Overall: How successful do you feel the OKR implementation has been in your company?

Reflection and Improvement

- a) Advice for Others: Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other scaleups implementing OKRs?

Closing the interview

- a) Opportunity for any additional comments or insights.
- b) Thank the participants for their valuable contribution to the study
 - i) Ask if they know an employee who also won't mind and interview





Declaration of use of AI aids / tools

Name:	Trond K. Haugå and Tord Ø. Søfteland
Course code and -name:	TIØ4945 Entreprenørskap, masteroppgave
Semester:	Spring 2024

Did you use AI-based aids or tools when creating this report/thesis/work?

- No
 Yes

If *yes*: please specify the aid/tool and area of use in part I below. If *no*: fill in part II

PART I

Text

- Spell Checking:** Have parts of the text been checked by AI tools?
(E.g. *Grammarly, Ginger, GrammarBot, LanuageTool* or similar tools)
- Writing assistance:** Have one ore more of the ideas or methods been suggested by AI tools?
(E.g. *ChatGPT, Google Bard, Bing Chat* or similar tools)
- Text generation:** Have parts of the text been generated by AI tools?
(E.g. *ChatGPT, GrammalyGO, Copy.ai, WordAi* or similar tools)

If *yes*, specify which tool(s) you have used and the usage here:

ChatGPT was used for suggesting relevant theoretical frameworks in the brainstorming phase of the thesis work. ChatGPT was also used for idea generation for how to structure the method chapter.

Images and figures

- Image generation:** Has one or more of the images/figures in the report been generated by AI tools?
(For example *Midjourney, Jasper, Dall-E* or similar tools)?

If *yes*, specify which tool(s) you have used and the usage here:

Codes and Algorithms

- Programming assistance:** Have parts of the code/algorithms that i) appear directly in the report or ii) have been used to produce results such as figures, tables, or numerical values been generated by AI tools? (E.g. *GitHub Copilot, CodeGPT* or similar tools)?

If *yes*, specify which tool(s) you have used and the usage here:

Data generation and data analysis

- Data generation:** Has all or parts of the data generation been carried out using AI tools?
- Data analysis:** Has the data analysis been conducted using AI tools?

If *yes*, specify which tool(s) you have used and the usage here:

Other

- Other AI tools:** Have other types of tools been used?

If *yes*, specify which tool(s) you have used and the usage here:

PART II

I am familiar with NTNU's regulations: It is not allowed to generate an answer using artificial intelligence, and submitting it as your own work/response, wholly or partially. Therefore, I have accounted for all use of artificial intelligence either directly in the task/report/work or in this form.

DocuSigned by:

Tord Sjøfteland

CC08355A020D40B.....

Tord Ø. Sjøfteland, Trondheim, 29.01.2024

DocuSigned by:

Trond K. Haugå

F3B31BCFBA924CB.....

Trond K. Haugå, Trondheim, 29.01.2024