Aligning People, Strategy and Results in the New World of Work
Introduction

Strong strategic alignment has never been more vital for organizational success than right now. It’s also never been more challenging. We’re on the edge of a monumental shift in the way we work as we prepare to leave behind rigid, annual goal setting in favor of a more agile, transparent approach to rallying around key objectives. In this environment, workers need a clear line of sight to strategic objectives and focus on their own goals to meet them.

The COVID-19 pandemic didn’t kick off this change, but it did accelerate it. That’s why we conducted a research report of 215 senior-level leaders, supported by Hanover Research Group, to learn how they prioritize and facilitate strategic alignment at their organizations and found that 38% of respondents began using a strategic alignment model to enable performance three to five years ago. In this context, strategic alignment refers to how an organization intentionally deploys its resources in support of its strategy. In comparison, 35% started in the past three years. Of companies that began using strategic alignment software in the past year, 77% said the pandemic directly influenced their decision.

Regardless of where you are along this journey, it’s time to accept that our economy (and the teams supporting it) will not be returning to a pre-pandemic idea of “normal.” To thrive in this new environment, we’ll need to embrace a new model of ongoing goal management that does more than just connect people’s roles to top-down initiatives, but rather is integrated into daily work. We must design and implement systems that close the loop between people, strategy and results, creating a virtuous cycle of high performance.
Unite Your Sprawling Hybrid Teams Through OKRs

Many workforces (especially at large enterprises) were already globally distributed. Now the added complexity of hybrid workplaces will make aligning around common goals even more challenging. But even in an in-person setting, cascading goals in the traditional top-to-bottom way quickly dilutes their impact.

Connecting sprawling hybrid teams without a transparent model of strategic alignment is nearly impossible. In those types of situations, OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) can provide a more flexible, collaborative goal-management model for achieving challenging, ambitious goals.

- **Objectives:** What you want to accomplish. Aspirational and tied to strategic priorities.
- **Key Results:** How you’ll get there. Measurable, prioritized and with a deadline.

In this model, every member of your workforce can develop and share their OKRs with everyone else across the organization, helping each team member see what their colleagues are working on and how everyone’s work intersects with and supports the larger strategic vision.

With a small, co-located team, you can usually get by communicating OKRs in person, but in a hybrid enterprise environment, that quickly becomes unwieldy. This is where strategic alignment software
becomes especially powerful, by making everyone’s goals visible and allowing people to have a clear line of sight into the impact of their work. In addition, enterprise leaders will have a “bird’s eye view” of the real-time progress of their teams, meaning they will be able to course-correct decisions in real time.

Providing employees a sense of purpose directly translates to higher engagement. In fact, 86% of the senior leaders we surveyed reported a 5% or greater increase in employee satisfaction when employees felt that their work was aligned with strategic goals and initiatives. The boost to engagement can be the difference between success and failure in a highly competitive business environment. A more engaged workforce has a direct impact on revenue. Out of the leaders surveyed, 84% reported a 3% or more increase in revenue due to their strategic alignment practices.

At the end of the year, what we’re going to be able to definitively say is by implementing the Betterworks process, we were able to deliver on these 15 to 20 key initiatives that we would not probably have been able to otherwise.

Lauren Pilon,
Senior Director of Business PMO, LendingTree

If you’re interested in OKRs, it’s best to start simple and with a relatively limited scope. Identity a single, big picture goal for your organization and translate it into an actionable OKR format. Then, flow that OKR into your departmental or team objectives in order to see how your individual contribution feeds into the larger needs of your organization.
When you’re done, you should be able to see clear connections and priorities between each goal and clearly close the loop between the organization’s goal, your team’s performance and your personal contribution.

### Adopt Continuous Learning as a Strategic Imperative

When constant change is the “new normal,” continuous learning becomes a strategic imperative. Your organizational and team OKRs can help you identify the skills and capabilities you need to build now and for the future, and then give you the means to track people’s progress in acquiring and developing them. These learning activities should then be focused to support your business outcomes. For example: A learning activity can be a specific key result for a business OKR. Managers and employees can collaborate on this process and create virtuous cycles of accountability and reward for achieving results.

When these conversations are captured in a standardized, transparent system, talent leaders can use this data to track and develop learning pathways and promote internal mobility. Building a higher-skill, higher-capability workforce by investing in the people you already have strengthens your organization’s resilience and better positions you to achieve your strategic goals faster.

### Ensuring global team engagement

Ensuring that we keep our global team engaged while listening to them in real time was always a challenge. Engage has helped us change this from a challenge to a strength.

**Phillip Vincent,**

Global Head of HR, Business Partnering at Third Bridge Group Limited
Transform DEI Initiatives From Good Intent to Measurable Impact

Organizations are increasingly declaring diversity, equity and inclusion to be part of their strategic business objectives, but that doesn’t mean they’ve figured out how to align those objectives with day-to-day operations. Nor have they found consistent ways to measure the impact of these initiatives on the business.

Like any other major change initiative, DEI (Diveristy Equity Inclusion) work requires a massive cultural shift — and culture is created by myriad daily actions and decisions throughout an organization. By setting transparent objectives and measurable key results across your organization, you can translate those values into behaviors and measure the impact of those behaviors at scale.

Betterworks is our tool to solidify our core values of innovation, diversity, inclusion and collaboration.

Natalie Collier,
Kroger Operations Leader

This power is most readily observed when we talk about performance management processes themselves, which have historically been at risk from bias. A lack of transparency into episodic evaluations and conversations has only compounded the problem. However, by designing a system that supports and tracks regular performance conversations in a consistent way across the enterprise, some of that bias can be mitigated. Transparency can help reinforce the new norms, while also making it easier to identify trouble spots and correct them before they take root.
Looking Ahead

Now more than ever, people long to feel a sense of connection to the larger purpose of the organization where they work.

When they understand how their own work contributes to the broader goals of their teams, their departments and the organization as a whole, they find it easier to stay engaged and focused on the right things. It’s not enough to just declare strategic priorities from the C-suite and leave everyone else to figure out what that means to them. The new model of work requires explicit, transparent communication about those priorities across every layer and level of the organization. This is how we close the loop between people, strategy and results.
About Betterworks

Betterworks is the leading OKR and continuous performance management solution that helps enterprises achieve agility, align their organization and accelerate business and employee growth. Our award-winning software products deliver the critical insights, conversations, feedback and recognition needed to align, engage and develop today’s complex workforce. With Betterworks, organizations can ensure alignment, transparency and accountability across the enterprise for sustained competitive advantage.