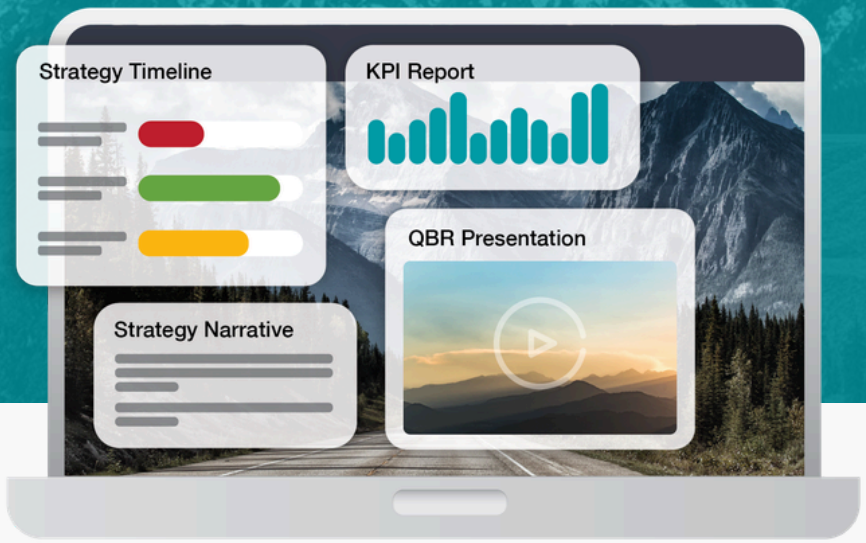
FOUNDERS GUIDE

inspire™

5 Things Every Founder Should Know About OKRs

A short, practical guide to using OKRs to scale focus, without scaling yourself into the bottleneck.

One platform to align strategy, grow people, and deliver results





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WHY THIS MATTERS

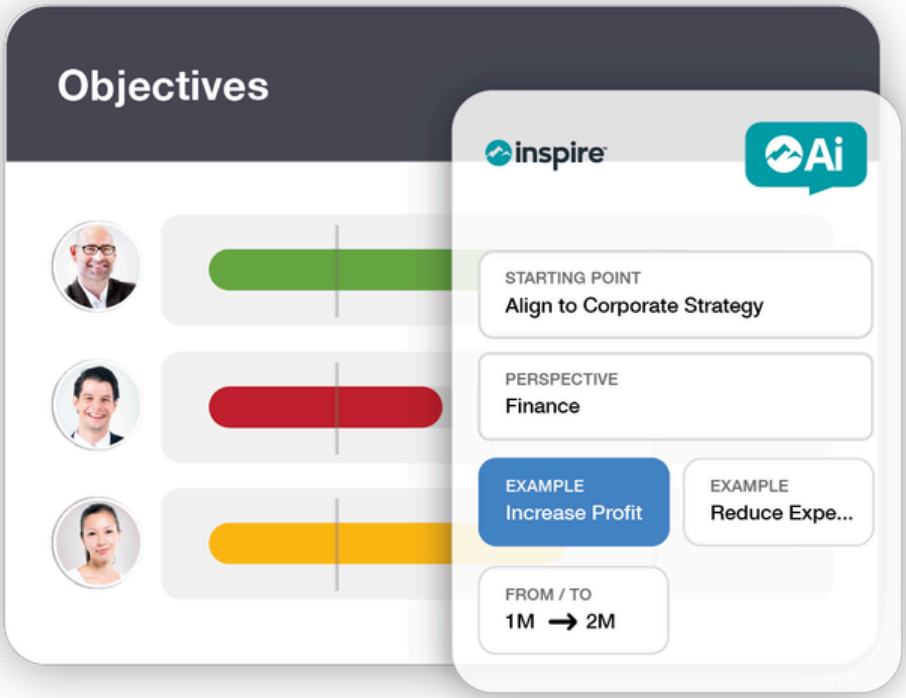
When you're early, the strategy lives in your head. That stops working fast.

You make a hundred small calls a week, and somehow they mostly point the same direction, because the direction is you.

That breaks sooner than most founders expect. The moment you hire past the point where everyone can hear you think, focus starts to leak. Two people solve the same problem twice. A great engineer ships something nobody asked for. You become the bottleneck on decisions you shouldn't be in.

OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) are how you scale focus without scaling yourself. Done right, they let your team make good calls when you are not in the room. Done wrong, they become busywork everyone resents. The difference comes down to a handful of things. Here are the five that matter most.

> **OKR, in one line.** An **Objective** is where you're going. **Key Results** are how you'll know you got there. That's the whole idea. Everything else is discipline.



THE FIVE THINGS

Start here.

1 OKRs get you out of the middle of every decision.

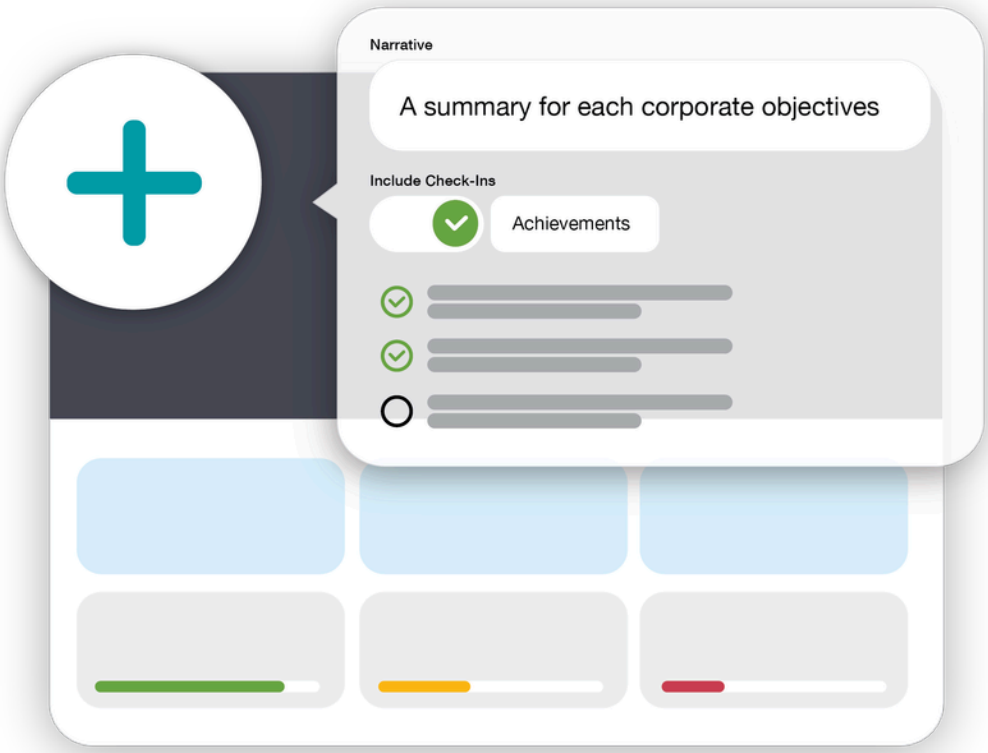
Once your Objective and Key Results are written down and shared, your team has a reference point that isn't "go ask the founder." That's the real prize. You're not trying to track goals. You're trying to make your judgment repeatable across people who aren't you.

2 Measure outcomes, not effort.

The most common founder mistake is writing Key Results that are really a to-do list. "Launch the new website" is a task. "Lift trial signups from 4% to 7%" is an outcome. Tasks let a team look busy while the business stands still. If you can finish a Key Result without the business being better off, rewrite it.

3 Fewer goals beat more goals, every time.

When everything is a priority, nothing is. Pick three objectives for the company, not ten, with five Key Results at most under each. The discipline of leaving good ideas off the list is the whole point. A focused team that finishes three things beats a scattered team that starts twelve.



THE FIVE THINGS

And don't skip these.

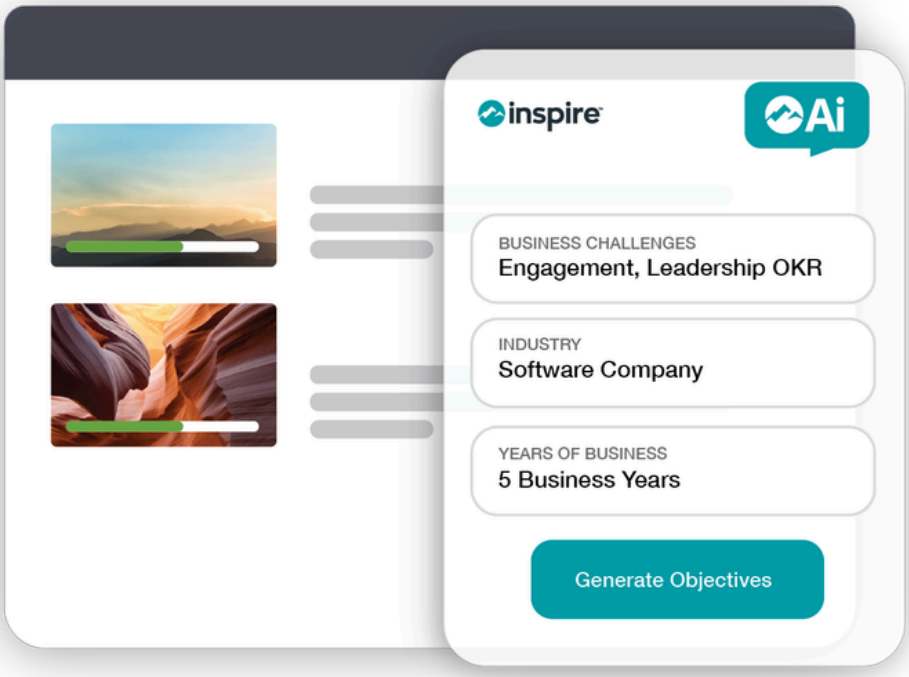
4 OKRs only work if you actually talk about them.

The fastest way to kill OKRs is to set them in a kickoff and never mention them again. They need a rhythm: a short weekly check-in on progress, a real conversation when something is off track, and a habit of recognizing wins out loud. Inspire is built around this rhythm with **CFR**, which stands for Conversations, Feedback, and Recognition. The goals are the easy part. The cadence is what makes them stick.

5 Planning is not the hard part. Execution is.

Most founders are good at strategy. The plan is rarely the problem. Research by Donald Sull and colleagues at Harvard Business Review found that two-thirds to three-quarters of organizations struggle to execute the strategy they already have. The gap isn't knowing what to do. It's doing it consistently while everything else is on fire.

That last point is exactly where a tool earns its place. Inspire keeps your objectives, weekly check-ins, and progress in one place, and uses AI to take the admin off your plate, helping draft objectives, prep your 1-1s, and turn updates into a clear picture of where things stand. Less time managing the system, more time building the company.



A QUICK GUT CHECK

Five ways founders get OKRs wrong.

- Treating them as a task list instead of a set of outcomes.
- Setting too many, so the team never truly focuses.
- Tying them to pay too early, which quietly teaches people to set safe goals. Whether OKR scores influence comp is a choice you control, not something the system forces.
- Setting them once and never revisiting them.
- Keeping them in a spreadsheet only you ever open.

What good looks like

- Your team can name the company's top three objectives without checking.
- Progress is visible to everyone, not just you.
- Check-ins happen weekly and take minutes, not hours.
- When you step away for a week, the work still points the right way.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Find out how execution-ready you really are.

Start with the **Inspire Strategy Assessment**. It takes a few minutes and shows you where focus, visibility, and follow-through are leaking, before they cost you a quarter.

Then **book a demo** to see how Inspire keeps your OKRs, weekly check-ins, and team progress in one simple place, so you can lead the company instead of chasing the spreadsheet.

Book a demo

Take the Strategy Assessment

Inspire Software helps organizations turn strategy into action and performance into measurable growth. Our unified platform connects OKRs, performance management, and employee engagement, giving leaders real-time visibility and teams clear alignment to what matters most. inspiresoftware.com