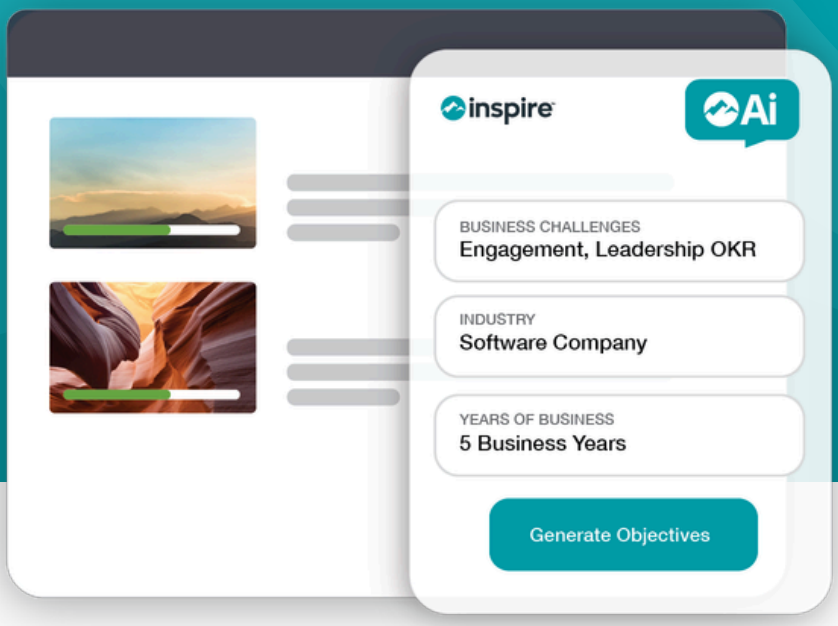
EXECUTIVE GUIDE

inspire™

The C-Suite's Guide to OKR Management

Turning strategy into results you can actually see, measure, and move.

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





Chris Wollerman
CEO and Founder, Inspire Software

THE EXECUTION GAP

Your hardest problem isn't the strategy. It's the execution.

Most leadership teams don't have a strategy problem. They have an execution problem. The plan is sound, the market is understood, and yet results arrive late, smaller than promised, or not at all.

The research is blunt about why. A study of more than 8,000 managers by Donald Sull and colleagues at Harvard Business Review found that two-thirds to three-quarters of large organizations struggle to execute their strategy. Kaplan and Norton put a finer point on the cause: on average, 95% of a company's employees are unaware of, or do not understand, their company's strategy. When almost no one can see where the organization is headed, it is no surprise that effort scatters.

95%

of employees don't understand their company's strategy (Kaplan & Norton, HBR)

2/3+

of organizations struggle to execute the strategy they already have (Sull et al., HBR)

14%

of employees say their reviews actually inspire them to improve (Gallup)

OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) exist to close that gap. Used well, they are not a goal-tracking exercise that runs once a quarter. They are the operating system that connects what the executive team decides in the boardroom to what every team does on Monday morning. This guide is about managing OKRs from the top, where the leverage is highest.



THE EXECUTIVE VIEW

OKRs are a system, not a scoreboard.

> **The basics, briefly.** An **Objective** is a clear, qualitative statement of what you want to achieve. **Key Results** are the measurable outcomes that prove you got there. Objectives inspire. Key Results keep you honest.

At the team level, OKRs look like goal setting. At the executive level they are something larger. They translate strategy into aligned action, give you real-time visibility into whether that action is working, and create the accountability to course correct before the quarter is lost.

Three shifts separate executive OKR management from ordinary goal tracking.

From activity to outcomes

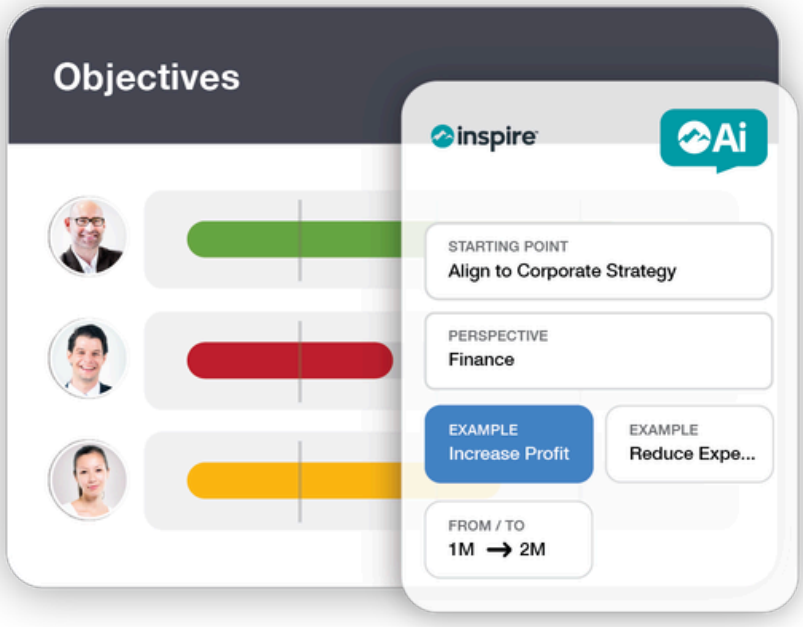
Key Results measure results, not tasks completed. A team can be busy all quarter and move nothing that matters.

From annual to continuous

Strategy does not pause between planning cycles, and neither should the conversation about whether you are on track.

From private to visible

When goals live in one leader's head or a buried spreadsheet, alignment is a hope. When they are visible from top to bottom, alignment becomes something you can manage.



YOUR ROLE

Five things only the C-suite can own.

1 Set the few objectives that matter.

The job of the executive team is not to set more goals. It is to decide which handful of objectives the whole company will rally behind, and to say no to the rest. Focus is the gift only the top can give.

2 Make the strategy legible.

If 95% of employees cannot describe the strategy, that is a communication failure, not an employee failure. Connect every team's OKRs visibly to the corporate objectives so people can see the line from their work to the mission.

3 Protect alignment across functions.

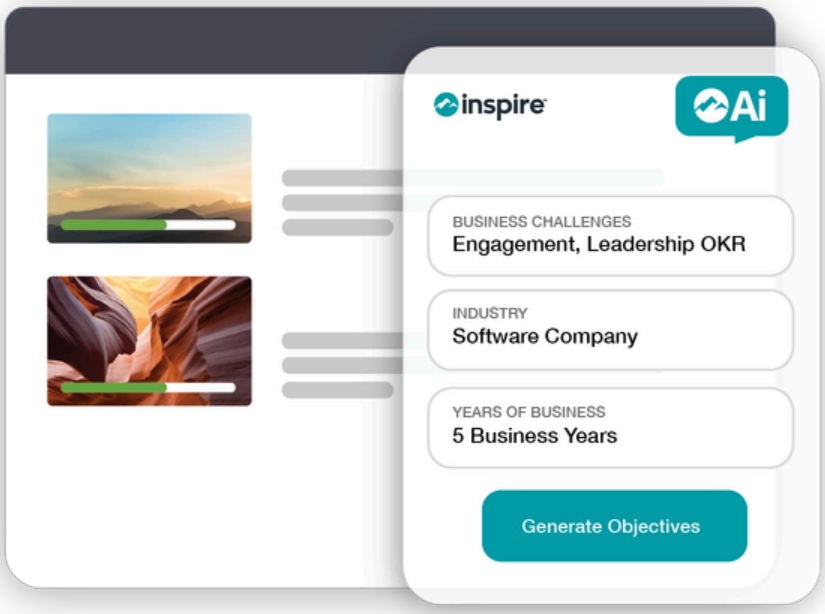
Most execution breaks down horizontally, between departments, not vertically. Use OKRs to surface the dependencies between sales, product, and operations early, while there is still time to act.

4 Inspect what you expect.

Build a regular rhythm of strategy reviews where progress is discussed openly against the Key Results. A dashboard nobody reviews changes nothing.

5 Model the behavior.

Teams watch what leaders do, not what they announce. When executives keep their own OKRs current and talk about them, the rest of the organization follows.



VISIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

A dashboard is only as good as the conversation around it.

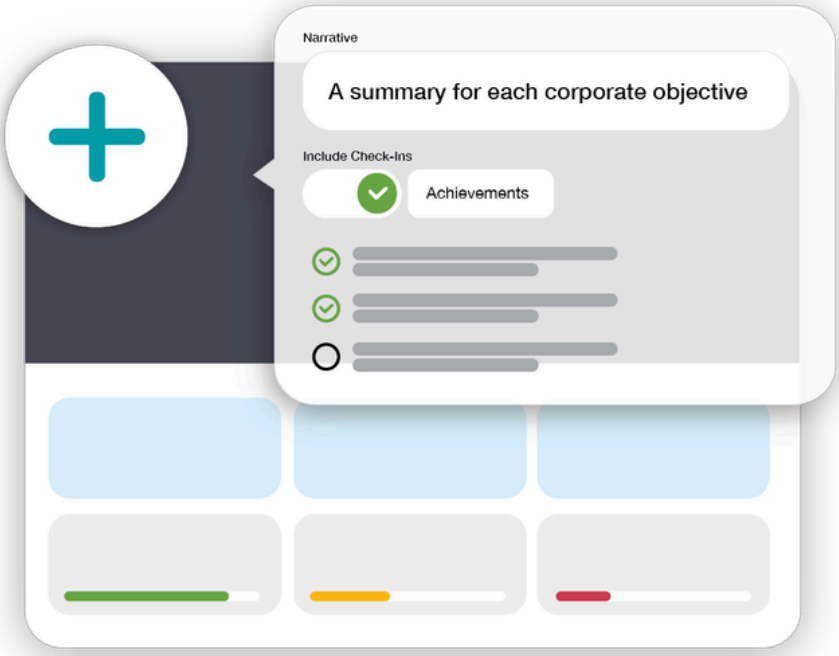
Visibility is where most OKR programs either come alive or quietly die. Real-time dashboards give the executive team a single view of progress, alignment, and risk across every team, so the quarterly business review stops being a scramble to assemble slides and becomes a live look at the truth.

But the dashboard is not the point. The conversation is. Inspire is built around **CFR**: Conversations, Feedback, and Recognition. It is the human engine that keeps OKRs moving between planning cycles.

- **Conversations.** Structured 1-1s that tie directly to each person's active objectives, so coaching is grounded in real work rather than memory.
- **Feedback.** Continuous and in the flow of work, not saved up for an annual review that only 14% of employees say inspires them to improve.
- **Recognition.** Visible acknowledgment of progress, which is what sustains momentum on a long objective.

THE POINT

Strategy reviews answer "are we on track?" CFR answers "what are we going to do about it?" You need both, and they need to live in the same place.



THE NEW ADVANTAGE

AI takes the administrative drag out of execution.

OKR programs rarely stall for lack of intent. They stall under the overhead. Drafting good objectives, preparing for 1-1s, summarizing progress, and keeping dashboards current all take time that busy leaders and managers do not have.

This is where AI is starting to matter. Inspire uses AI to help draft and sharpen objectives, surface 1-1 talking points tied to each person's goals and recent check-ins, and turn raw progress into a readable summary. The effect is less time spent administering the system and more time spent on the judgment only leaders can provide.

What good OKR management looks like

- Every employee can name the company's top three objectives.
- Each team's OKRs link visibly to a corporate objective.
- Progress is reviewed on a regular cadence, not just at quarter end.
- 1-1s reference live goals, not stale notes.
- The executive team sees risk early enough to act on it.



YOUR NEXT STEP

See where your strategy stands today.

Start with the **Inspire Strategy Assessment**, a quick way to gauge how ready your organization is to execute on what matters most. It takes minutes and gives you a clear read on your alignment, visibility, and accountability gaps.

Then **book a demo** to see how Inspire connects OKRs, continuous performance, and engagement in one platform, so strategy becomes something you manage every week instead of revisiting once a year.

Book a demo | Take the Strategy Assessment

Inspire Software enables organizations to execute strategy with precision at scale. By unifying OKRs, continuous performance management, and employee engagement, Inspire gives leaders a single view of progress, accountability, and impact. Teams move faster, decisions get smarter, and results become more predictable. inspiresoftware.com