



# 7 Principles to help you create a culture in which OKRs can thrive

Actionable advice for developing an ambitious and engaged workforce ready to embrace transformation



# 1. Transformation not change

Most organisations turn to OKRs because they want to see a shift. This is often in things like innovation, accountability and transparency. These don't just happen because goals are suddenly written as OKRs. Transformation is often needed.

Transformation is a “big” word and gets used in organisations in a number of contexts. Change is constant, and something that any business has to work with, not against, in order to survive.

We differentiate transformation from change in order to create clear outcomes from the beginning. Whilst this may sound like semantics, **clarity of language and meaning are vital.**

Change is something which can be undone or reversed. We can introduce a new process, team structure or product, and it is possible to go back to the “old ways”, particularly in behaviour.

**Transformation cannot be reversed** because not only has an external change taken place, for example, an improved business process is now in place, but crucially an internal shift has happened with the mindsets of those involved in that process.

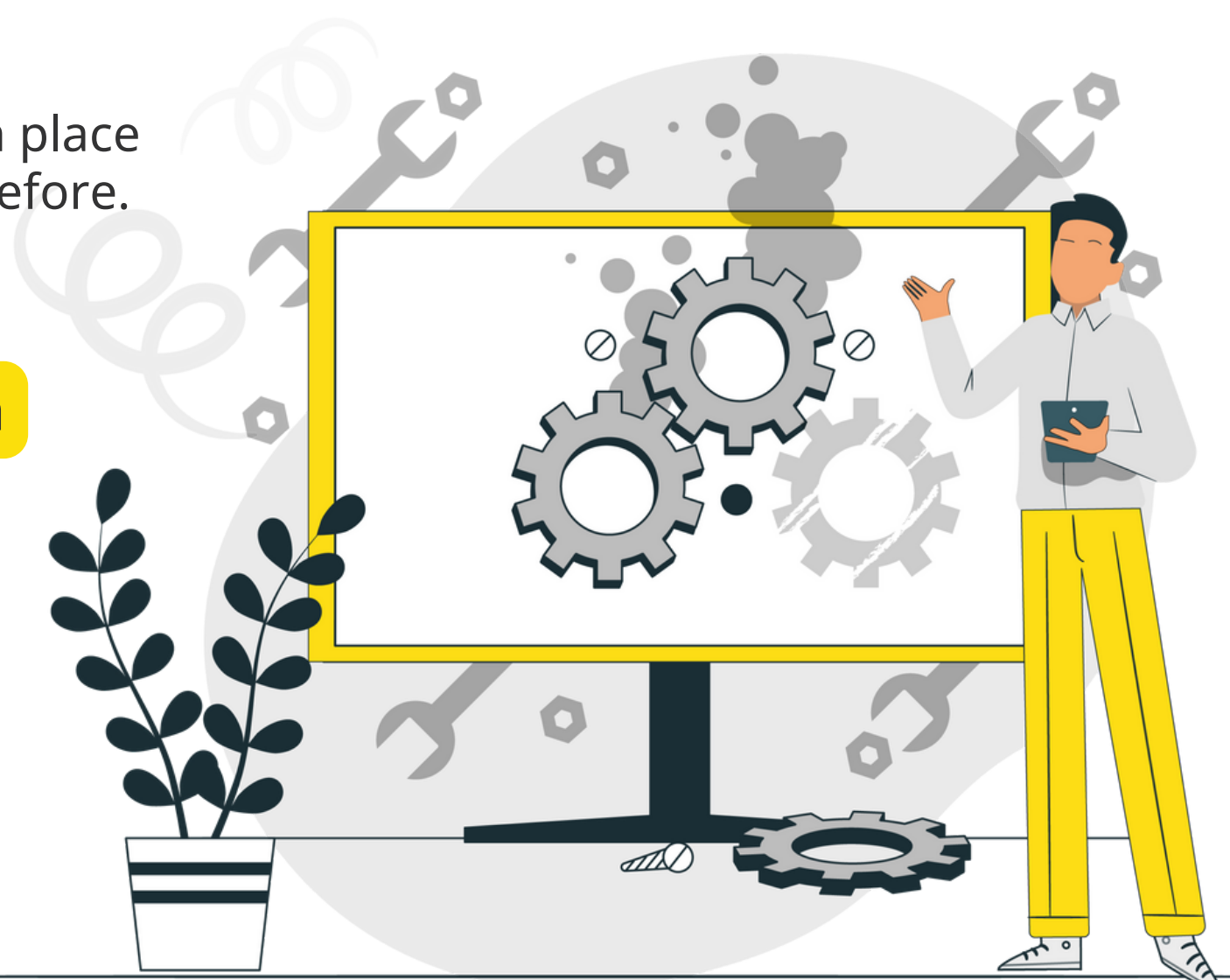
So, whilst OKRs on one level are a process change, to use them effectively and successfully, transformation may be needed in the culture and for individuals.

Personal transformation involves creating a new more empowered mindset and this is not something that can be undone.

It has become part of the consciousness or awareness of the individual.

They may choose to ignore it, or need some time to integrate new behaviours, but the insight has taken place and so the person can't *go back* to how they were before.

**People need to experience transformation in ways which have meaning for them personally in order to be able to change their behaviour.**



## 2. Lead from the top and actively role model

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There's a critical role for leaders when it comes to creating and sustaining cultural transformation.

The most senior leaders, including non-executives/ board members, must be visible in leading and role-modelling from the top including being able to **effectively communicate the cultural story** i.e. *why we are doing this* and *how we are going to do it*, and then behave in a way that is aligned with that story.

When senior leaders don't do this, the impact of any engagement initiatives can be undermined. Colleagues are confused by the mismatch between what is said and what is done.

They disengage, become cynical and may actively resist any further efforts to engage them and work against change initiatives.

**Bottom line is if your senior leaders are not role modelling OKRs, you can't expect everyone else to buy into them either.**



**The creation of a healthy culture needs to be driven by the most senior leaders** and managers, down and through the organisation to reach staff members in a way that allows them to feel personally connected.

**Research shows that typically, around 25- 30% staff engagement is the tipping point, but as low as 10% can make the difference if that 10% is absolutely committed to cultural transformation.**

Supporting the board, senior leaders and managers to understand what is required of them in bringing in OKRs and to be able to demonstrate the transformation in their own mindsets and behaviours, is crucial to leverage the investment in culture across the organisation and make OKRs work.

### 3. Engage hearts and minds

Very few people in any organisation will tell you they're bored or don't have enough to do! People are busy. Most come to work with the desire to give their best, feel productive, useful and fulfilled. They get on with what they see needs to be done.

**The reality is that the work of bringing in OKRs, let alone transforming culture, requires additional time and effort, on top of the day job.**

It can't be done simply by instructing people to behave differently, so there needs to be a way of engaging with their hearts, as well as minds, to access the energy, motivation and inspiration that is required to transform a culture.

There's often rich history and organisational heritage that's a fundamental part of the existing culture in which certain values and behaviours have become the norm - "how we do things round here".

There can be a considerable difference between organisational values and behaviours i.e. *what it says about values on a website or poster, and what actually happens.*

**Organisations must find a way to explore this openly** to identify behaviours that are blocking or creating a barrier to change, collectively and individually.

This is done through engaging emotionally, with hearts as well as minds, and feeling the desire and motivation to transform mindset and behaviour at a deep, personal, values-based level, as well as more functionally and intellectually with helping people understand the *why, what, how* and *when* of OKRs.

For some, there can come a realisation that this is not something they want to be part of, for a variety of reasons.

Our role is to surface this in a healthy, constructive way so that individuals and managers can make appropriate choices and decisions about team structure, role requirements, individual capability and willingness to learn and develop.

Sometimes it's healthier for the team, individual and organisation if someone chooses to move on and is supported to do so in a constructive, respectful and balanced way.

Here at **There Be Giants**, we connect team, company and personal objectives to measurable results.

Our team is committed to working with you to develop a robust and adaptable framework based on your organisation's needs, not one based on theories and management bestsellers.

Learn more about how our powerful and proven **OKR solutions** can help you reach and optimise all of your organisational goals.



## 4. Happy staff = happy customers

Staff engagement is directly linked to increased business performance and customer satisfaction. Therefore, happy customers also equals happy staff.

**Employee experience** (often abbreviated to EX) is exactly what it sounds like – your workers' perceptions and feelings about their journey through all the different stages of their employment.

It's now more important than ever to prioritise employee experience, no matter what industry you currently operate in. That's because when companies get employee experience right, they can achieve twice the customer satisfaction and innovation, and **generate 25% higher profits** compared to those that don't.

Many organisations want to improve customer experience and this can be a critical step on the pathway to growth. The most successful way to do this is staff engagement in culture transformation and personal mindset shift. When allied with OKRs, this is a powerful combination.

As per OKR best-practice: start with the end in mind and focus on the outcomes you want, the growth you want to achieve, including milestones such as an increase in customer experience and/or improvements in the staff climate survey as markers on the journey.

By prioritising a positive employee experience for the workforce, you're directly informed whether staff are willing to put the time, effort, and intellect into achieving the company's objectives and goals. This includes any ambitious **OKRs you've set together!**

Henry Ford's quote is also a good way to remind people of how the relationship with customers really works:

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**It's not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. It's the customer who pays the wages.**

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## 5. Transfer skills and competence

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We love working with clients who want to co-deliver workshops with us, as this provides a great opportunity for [skills transfer through OKR coaching](#), mentoring and facilitation skills training.

Developing internal capability creates greater and longer-term capacity and capability within the organisation to lead and drive the development of culture and the implementation of OKRs. We prefer to do this with you, not to you, and support you to do this with yourselves.

We recommend using a coaching approach and a strengths-based feedback model to build skills and confidence. We know that opening up this additional learning and development route to the organisation demonstrates equity and offers a different growth opportunity.

We've noticed a significant impact on transformational results when individuals develop facilitation skills and are able to lead sessions for and with their colleagues.



### How OKR training can benefit your business

For the highest chance of impactful OKR longevity, [you'll need internal OKR superstars](#) to help you craft high-quality OKRs, maintain real traction and encourage a healthy culture within your organisation.

Fortunately, as part of our solution, we will provide OKR training to your team of OKR coaches. Our OKR training will equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to ensure OKR longevity and supercharge your business growth.

Our OKR training doesn't just focus on the OKR process, but focuses on change management and how to get others in the organisation on board. It's important to get people through the change curve and we cover this area in depth.

Learn more about our [OKR Coach Training](#), or [speak to our team](#) to find out more.




## 6. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Organisations need to be mindful of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) not only because they are the right principles to follow, but also diversity of insight is vital for innovation.

Today's issue isn't whether or not we should make DE&I a priority in the workplace. It's how to actually make it happen.

Often, organisations can find it hard to embed DE&I initiatives within cultural transformation programmes, instead running them separately from the overall culture focus. This tends to cause confusion and weakens both sets of messages.

**We recommend you develop and deliver programmes that equips leaders and teams with:**

-  A personal commitment to diversity
-  An understanding of the business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion practice in the organisational context of transformation
-  The ability and desire to role- model the behaviours needed to build a diverse workforce and ensure everyone feels included

OKRs are a great way to do this in practice, rather than as a separate, stand-alone initiatives.

Having diversity of role models in leadership and management helps staff feel a greater sense of belonging, as well as showing pathways for development and creating a sense of where they might aspire to.

Remember, focus on outcomes rather than actions.

**[Click here for DE&I OKR examples](#)**



## 7. Evaluation and impact assessment

Measurement at the start, throughout and at the end are critical, and measurement is embedded into the OKR framework.

With cultural transformation, measuring culture makes a difference and creates data that leads to dialogue and dialogue is needed to bring conditions 1 to 6 to life!

Taking the time to plan how and when to measure, assess and evaluate is vital, otherwise there's no quantitative data about what is different and what has been achieved.

And this is another key factor in managing culture change – it's all about dialogue, discussion, listening and asking questions of ourselves and others, reflecting and reviewing, working on the business as well as in the business.

This is a huge challenge for leaders at all levels who can be overwhelmed on a daily basis with a never-ending cycle of meetings, reporting and so on.

**Many leaders benefit from coaching** around culture and the impact of their leadership behaviour, so if there is an opportunity to set that up for people, we would recommend that approach too.



**Click here to learn more about leadership culture**

# A Bespoke OKR Solution

By designing an experience that supports and develops your employees, you are investing in the long-term success of your company and ensuring that your most valuable assets – your employees – are equipped to thrive throughout their employment.

Put simply, an engaged culture marked by high levels of involvement, consistency, adaptability, and a transparent mission improves sales and customer satisfaction.

Implementing the right OKRs ensure that your business maintains momentum while achieving ambitious goals. Clear company values can also help to create a sense of shared purpose and direction, which can help to motivate and engage employees to excel.

For a deeper understanding of how employee experience can help you achieve your organisational goals, have a candid chat with one of our experts at **There Be Giants**.

**Schedule a meeting with an expert**



## THERE BE GIANTS

There's no better time than now to initiate meaningful, important organisational cultural shifts.

Our team of giants are of the big and friendly variety, so please do get in touch if you want to know how to survive and thrive in the economic downturn.

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