

## **Lead agile with goals. The OKR method – application in a savings bank**

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**Abstract:** To achieve their corporate goals, savings banks in Germany use several controlling-systems. These systems are often combined with assessment-systems for the employees. Mostly they are carried out annually, for example as part of discussed conversations.

But are these systems still suitable to steer the contributions of individual employees to achieve the company goals in a more and more dynamic world? The OKR method (O stands for “Objectives”, KR stands for “Key Result”) a possible alternative.

The OKR method was used in the examined medium-sized savings bank for three years. After the first few runs it became clear that a modification becomes necessary. For this purpose, the author (together with a manager of the savings bank) used the results from the OKR reviews were evaluated. A new concept was created for an adapted application of the OKR method for savings bank.

The findings are not just interesting for savings banks, but for all companies who deal with the OKR method.

**Keywords:** *Goals, Objectives and Key Results, OKR, Planning, Strategy, Leading*

**JEL Codes:** *M12 – Personal management*

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## Introduction

This article deals with the current topic of target control in companies with a more conservative environment: the topic is illustrated using the example a concrete savings-bank in Germany. Savings-banks are a typical form of local banks in Germany. Nowadays, companies, which join in traditional target agreements, reach their limits. Such target control systems have so far been used, on the one hand, to distribute (sales-) goals and monitor their achievement. On the other hand, they were used to evaluate the performance of employees.

As part of a leadership workshop the managers (of the savings bank involved in the investigation) expressed their dissatisfaction with the previous target control system.

The reasons for the dissatisfaction were varied. On the one hand, the target control was perceived as too rigid and the connection to the evaluation system as not fair. An alternative was found with the idea of an agile target control using OKR. Many modern companies use this OKR method based on John Doerr.

Against this background, the following research questions were investigated as part of the study. They serve targeted research:

*Research question 1:* To what extent is the OKR method suitable for goal management and as a management tool in a savings bank?

*Research question 2:* To what extent can the OKR method be used in a savings bank?

To introduce the reader into the topic, the second chapter of this article shows the theoretical background of methods to target control systems. In the first part of these remarks, the theoretical foundations of the management method by means of “Objectives” and “Key Results” (OKR) were presented. Examples for the application of the method are also presented. In the second part, the reader is also presented with alternative ideas and methods for managing goals.

In the chapters three and four the concrete application in the examined savings bank is presented. The third chapter contains a representation of the special conditions of the medium-sized savings bank. The necessity of suitable target systems, the differences of organizational units and the

challenges in the application will be shown. In the fourth chapter, a concept will be developed specifically for the savings bank with possible solutions and the adapted design of an agile target management tool based on the OKR philosophy.

Finally, the fifth chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis.

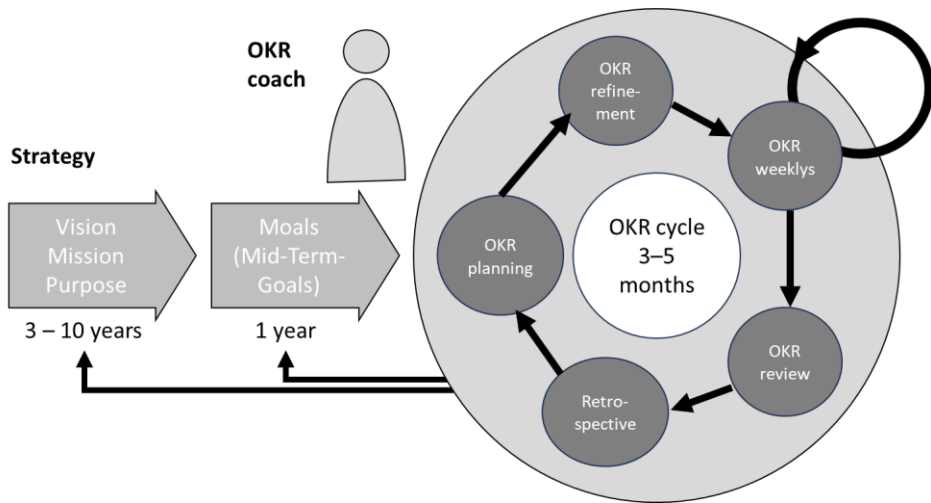
## **OKR - an agile method for goal control**

All companies are required to achieve their corporate aims on the organizational units, which they regularly formulate and record in their strategies. The challenge is to make them sufficiently concrete for the individual teams and their members and to make them manageable. This is where a modern method comes into play that is making its way from Silicon Valley to Europe and Germany: Objective and Key Results (OKR) (Praz, 2022).

The creator of the agile goal management system OKR is Andrew Grove. He introduced and used this new method in 1971 at Intel (change-ment, 2022). OKR is a leadership model that John Doerr drew attention to in 1999 by adapting it for using it for Google to develop, measure and implement. He helped Google through OKR in the founding phase served to control the development and growth of goals. This was a role model for numerous other companies (Doerr, 2018). For example, Edeka, Daimler and the Deutsche Telekom already use OKR (die.agilen, 2022). Studies show that agile management methods – such as OKR – are popular in practice (Becker et al., 2020).

### ***How the method works***

The OKR model is a cyclical process that uses Objectives and Key Results to support employees and managers to work together and focus their efforts to make a measurable contribution to achieving the corporate goals (Niven, 2016).



**Figure 1: Illustration of the OKR control loop**

Source: own illustration based on Niven & Lamonte, 2016

The OKR control loop is an agile process. Based on the normative framework the company sets so-called moals (mid-term goals) for one year. This is followed by three to four OKR cycles of three to five months each year. An OKR cycle starts with the so-called planning. Weekly or fortnightly meetings follow – these meetings are called “weekly”. The cycle ends with the review/retro. Then follows the next cycle, starting with the planning (Niven & Lamonte, 2016).

The individual elements of the OKR model are described below in their character.

#### *Target Element – Moal*

Not mandatory, but often helpful, is the use of mid-term-goals (Moals) (changement, 2022). This type of goal incorporates elements from the normative framework, usually consisting of values, vision, mission, and strategy. Moals thus serve as a link between the normative or the strategic level and the company’s target system. They apply for one year and form the annual focal points of the target system for this period (Niven & Lamonte, 2016).

Suitable moals could fulfill the following requirements:

- superordinate (abstract and not measurable)
- achievable within one year
- qualitative
- wide scope for action
- formulated in a positive and motivating way with verb (Weber, 2019).

These requirements are not mandatory. Likewise, moals are not necessary. Nevertheless, they provide orientation for deriving “objectives” (change-ment, 2022).

#### *Target element – objectives*

For each cycle, objectives (“Os”) are formed, if applicable, derived from the moals. These objectives describe “what” is to be achieved and they are also referred as “what-goals”. objectives can be set from “above”, i. e. by team leaders or from within from the hierarchy via the cascade. They also can be set from the team – under the moderation of the team leadership. In this way they apply to the entire team. In the literature there is (varying by type of task, type of team etc.) a mix of approx. 60% from above and approx. 40% from below considered suitable. It is also possible for different teams to form common objectives (Kudernatsch, 2019).

The requirements for a suitable objective can be:

- overarching “what”-goal (not detailed and not measurable)
- implementable within one cycle (in contrast to the moal)
- sufficient room for maneuver
- formulated in a positive and motivating way with a verb (Weber, 2019)

The team has about two to four objectives per cycle, towards the achievement of which the team members work toward with their own contribution goals, known as key results (Niven, 2016).

### Target element – key result

Key results (KRs) for the cycle in question are also achieved by each individual team member as a contribution to one or more objectives. A key result describes what a team member specifically intends to do for the respective cycle. It shows how or what he or she contributes to the achievement of the objective (Niven, 2016). Therefore, a Key Result also can be referred as a “how-goal” (Niven & Lamonte, 2016).

For appropriate key results (as opposed to objectives), general requirements for goal formulations, for example according to the SMART model.

Appropriate requirements for a key result can be:

- (S) specific
- (M) measurable
- (A) attractive
- (R) realistic
- (T) terminated – results from the end of the cycle (Helmold & Terry, 2021).

The relationship between the types of goals in the OKR model are shown below in the form of the target model:



**Figure 2: Target system for the OKR method**

Source: own representation

To illustrate this, examples from the savings bank example for formulating goals are shown below.

- *Moal*: “We increase the digitization level of our savings bank!”
- *Objective*: “We are expanding our technical capabilities in our Department!”
- *Key Result*: “I create a digital sample file!”

### *Process Element – Cycle*

The duration of a cycle is between two and four months, depending on the task. In most cases, a cycle lasts for three months. In principle other periods are also possible – a single cycle is also feasible. It is be noted, however, that a synchronization of the cycles in terms of time and content can be of the cycles can make sense, especially if the target world is also synchronized (Breyter, 2022).

Each cycle starts with the planning. After this, the weeklys are carried out. The review/retro then forms the conclusion (Niven & Lamonte, 2016).

### *Process element – Planning*

In planning, the parameters for the beginning cycle are defined. In a workshop the team members of the respective team or organizational unit or organizational unit initially work on the objectives under the moderation of the team leader. If necessary, the Moals and the specifications of the hierarchy (communicated via the hierarchy levels to the teams) or the team management must be considered. As a result, the team is provided with objectives, to which the individual members can respond with the help of their individual key results. The formulation of the key results forms the end of the planning process, so that the objectives and key results for the cycle are fixed (Niven & Lamonte, 2016).

### *Process element – weekly*

The weekly meetings usually take place on a weekly basis at a uniform date and for a short period of time, for example half an hour (Wozni, 2021). Another rhythm may be appropriate – fortnightly weekly – for example – are also possible. Ultimately the rhythm is determined by the task. In the context of the weekly each team member announces the current status of his or her goal achievement and the degree of goal achievement. For this purpose, the key results of the individual team members are visualized, for example with a meta-plan-wall or electronically with a table and provided with the degree of target achievement to enable transparency and a dialog. Necessary adjustments in the formulation of objectives also take place here. In addition, an exchange between the team members can take

place about the need for support or problems in the achievement of goals (Kaufmann & Servatius, 2020).

### *Process element – review/ retro*

In the review / retro, the team looks back on the past cycle in the context of a workshop. This is also where the respective cycle comes to an end. This review takes place on two levels (Teipel & Alberti, 2019).

The *review* deals with the content issues of the past cycle. Questions can be:

- What was the level of goal achievement?
- What helped with goal achievement?
- What inhibited goal achievement? (Weber, 2020)

The review should be done in a structured way. There are numerous methods for this in the literature methods that help to create a suitable framework, to collect the necessary information, to gain insights, to define possible measures and to conclude the workshop. Examples include the Starfish method, and the 4-L Retrospective are mentioned (Ng & Kuduk, 2024).

In the *retro*, on the other hand, we look back at the organizational content of the last cycle in order to be able to make improvements for the following cycles.

Questions are asked here such as:

- Was the cycle well organized?
- What can be better organized in the cycle (Weber, 2020)?

The retro can also be done in a structured way.

The aim is to learn from the past cycle in terms of content and process for the next cycle (Wozni, 2021).



**Figure 3: Cycle representation as an agile process for teams.**

Source: own representation

### *Process element-Team*

Even if OKR is used in the classic form of goal management for the entire company and at a lower level for organizational units, the method can also be used for any other form of team. For example, for management teams, project groups and work groups or for one-off activities across groups. The elements of the OKR method should always be considered, such as the moderating and orienting role of the team leader (Stray et al., 2021).

Whether the OKR method is appropriate ultimately depends on the task at hand. The OKR method is more suitable for creative tasks or implementation tasks, i. e. tasks that involve intensive collaboration and exchange. In the literature, therefore, other, alternative methods for the goal control.

### *Alternative methods for target control*

A short overview of alternatives is given in the following table:

**Table 1: Target control systems**

	MBO	sharing	OKR
Goals	goals are agreed, Employees then have to achieve goals, Performance goals	Goals are recorded on the goal card, independent further development and goal achievement, operationalization of company goals from planning, primarily performance goals	focus on goals, independent further development and goal achievement, Moals and Os for orientation possible, performance goals and development goals
Time frame	fixed	fixed	fixed
goal achievement	1	90 - 100%	60 - 70 %
Performance evaluation	Performance evaluation based on goal achievement	Performance evaluation without goals	Performance evaluation without goals
direction of effect	top down	team specifications from planning	60% top down, 40% bottom up
fixpoint	goals from the leader	goals card	Moals, Os
Focus	run	run	change

Source: own representation

A common characteristic of the shown target control systems is an effect for a fixed point in time. Furthermore, in all systems targets are used for performance control.

The differences in most demarcation points are mainly found in the degree of of the design options.

Management by objectives (MBO), in German “Führung durch Zielvereinbarung”, aligns the agreed goals of individual employees with the company’s goals, so that team members feel motivated and involved in their work (Fernandes, 2023). The Management by Objectives model was first introduced by Peter Drucker in his 1954 book “The Practice of Management”. Peter F. Drucker also focuses on monitoring the performance of team members using reporting and performance appraisal tools (Drucker, 1976). “Sharing” (in German: “Teilen”), on the other hand, is not a scientific management method. This approach originates from the widespread handling of target management in Sales units of banks. For this article, the description of the method from RMW (management consultancy from Zurich), which the Sparkasse uses in the sales units, was used. “Sharing”

combines elements of MBO and OKR and serves the autonomous distribution of team goals among the individual team members (Weber, 2019).

OKR features the greatest scope for team members and opens an extension of the steering idea in the areas of change and development (Stray et al., 2021).

### **Further development of OKR and creation of a concept for the savings bank**

First, the question arises why the test savings bank dealt with the topic of target systems and what made it necessary to change or modernization of the old target system.

The previously used target system was relatively free in terms of content and could be varied according to the tasks of the teams. In addition, the achievement of goals was linked to the (performance) evaluation of the employees and was discussed in (semi-) annual meetings between employee and leader. One of the topics discussed at a management meeting was the target system – it was questioned. This system was perceived as outdated and in parts also as unfair, because:

- The link between the target system and evaluation prevented ambitious goals from being set. Because the focus was on achieving goals.
- The low frequency of the conversations (twice a year) did not allow for energy and focus. The effects of ambitious goals were also not visible.
- The rigid one-year target was not flexible as reactive, timely adjustment was not possible or foreseen.

Based on the results of the management conference, the leaders of the savings bank to look for new ways of target management with the help of a management consultancy. In order to take into account, the specifics of the savings bank under evaluation, it was necessary to the diversity of tasks in the organizational units and teams of the savings bank.

In more and more companies, parallel modes of modes of division of labor are becoming more common. Exemplary of this are the terms used in the financial sector, where managers distinguish between “run the

bank” and “change the bank.” In “Run the Bank” mode, day-to-day business is handled, and core processes are improved. The “Change the Bank” mode, on the other hand, aims to change the basic logic. change the basic logic. This refers to the business model, i. e. the way in which value is created for customers way value is created for customers (Cachelin, 2015).

The type of tasks performed by the respective organizational units in the studied savings bank differ in the respective proportion of tasks between day-to-day business and strategic or process-related tasks. While the sales units predominantly perform tasks related to day-to-day business, the share of strategic tasks in the staff units increases. The goals of in the respective organizational units are therefore also dependent on the task.

If we now add the aspect that goal management can also include goals that affect employee development, then goal control is also a leading tool. This aspect was missed at the management meeting.

A new idea for goal control had to be found that was suitable to focus and energy to a goal in a structured way and at the same time to have a motivating effect. OKR was presented as a solution by the accompanying management consultancy (RMW, Zurich) and tested in the savings bank. Initially, OKR was used as a pilot in two staff departments and an OKR variant (“sharing”) adapted by the management consultancy was introduced as a test in two branches. After initial positive experiences, OKR was rolled out throughout the company.

The experience gained from the reviews and retros after one year and three cycles made it necessary to a renewed examination of OKR was necessary. The feedback from the reviews and retros shows the experiences of the respective teams. The survey was carried out in the reviews and retros with the help of the following questions within the framework of a a workshop:




- What do we need more of?
- What do we need less of?
- What can we leave out?
- What should we keep doing the same?
- What can we do new?

The review results were spotted and structured by the author together with a division manager of the savings bank. The main statements are summarized below – initially in general and then separately according to reviews and retros as well as positive and negative statements.

*General assessment*

The initial euphoria with which OKR was launched has subsided. The attractiveness of the method was not always high in the teams since it was often perceived as additionally especially when the impression arose that OKR neglected the day-to-day business. In addition, the benefits of OKR were not sufficiently clear. It shows mixed picture, which is particularly influenced by the different tasks of the teams in the respective organizational units. While the sales units also predominantly reflected sales focal points in their objectives, the staff units tended to focus more on development. Positive aspects were the expansion of their own room for maneuver and the opportunity to learn from each other in the weekly meetings.

The general assessment for the entire savings bank was summarized as follows:

How do you rate the <b>motivation and energy</b> with which you want to achieve the goal?	How do you rate your <b>focus</b> on the goal?	How do you rate your <b>persistence</b> in working towards the goal?
		

**Figure 4: Overall summary of the first overall cycle.**

Source: Results presentation (research savings bank)

*Review of content*

In the review of the content, positive assessments were made of the goal management, results and the impact of OKR.

The path from Moals over Objectives to Key Results was helpful from the point of view of the participants, since it provided an orientation for the formulation of key results and the focus on and that the focus was on the overall objectives of the company. Another positive that the achievement of objectives was between 80% and 90% for most of the employees, the respective teams and the company as a whole. The goals (key

results) motivated employees and the high level of ambition led to positive experiences. Likewise, the possibility of an interim goal adjustment was found useful and motivating. Overall, OKR was successful despite external pressures (e. g., from Corona). The quality of the key results was improved, and the implementation of the key results was more important than the evaluation by a percentage.

The results also led to satisfaction. The essential results made it possible to lay the foundations (preparatory work) for future tasks. In addition, it was possible to work rigorously on topics such as specific earnings goals or personal development goals. The regularity and structure of the weekly meetings helped.

OKR had a positive effect on goal achievement in the sales control system (goal maps). The formulation of key results shared by several team members has also proven effective. In staff areas, topics from “to-do lists” were taken up and implemented. Also, for special topics, such as the introduction of a new employee or a central campaign could be consistently implemented with the help of the Key Results.

In contrast, for goal management (both for objectives and key results), negative experiences were also gathered on the effect of OKR in general.

For example, Objectives were often formulated in such an open or general way that the team members would have preferred more concrete and selective objectives for formulating more specific and selective objectives to guide them in formulating suitable key results. It also fits that the team also had difficulty in formulating suitable objectives.

Similarly, the development of key results was a great challenge, because new impulses, the right goal size and depth was often difficult to find and formulate (“SMART”).

It was also difficult to maintain the enthusiasm for OKR and the quality of the key results.

In addition, there was sometimes a tendency to formulate mundane tasks as key results instead of formulating key results as motivating, inspiring goals. Overall, employees and managers wanted more freedom in the design of objectives and key results.

The impact of OKR was also perceived to be weakened, because the cycle was perceived as “poor” overall. The achievement of objectives was not satisfactory or very heterogeneous in some areas, as there were, for example, teams where weeklys were sometimes canceled in order not to interfere with day-to-day business.

In the end, the way OKR was handled was still heterogeneous and the goals were handled differently. In addition, it turned out that a coordination of the goals (objectives and key results) with the goals of other teams and organizational units – as well as with actions outside of the OKR and goal management world, for example sales campaigns.

### *Organizational review – retro*

Positive feedback was received in the Retro for the areas of weekly, impact and general organization.

The 14-day rhythm of the weekly was considered suitable and, since it was set up as a fixed date, helpful. In the sales units, a frequency of four weeks was viewed as positive.

An improved internalization of the use of OKR among teams and team leaders as well as more routine in the weekly is seen as positive. In this respect, the review/retro contributed to learning and development. The last cycle was also viewed as the best cycle to date (organizationally). In addition, a good effect was achieved through rigorous work.

Similarly, the overall organization of OKR was perceived to have improved. Initially, a guideline was very helpful, which was created by the personnel department of the savings bank, and which has been made available. The change from four to three cycles a year was also viewed positively. One challenge (due to Corona) was to move away from face-to-face weeklys to the use of Skype. This change was positively received, as it created a stronger stringency. The alternation in moderation, in which each team member is considered as a moderator, also has proven to be effective, as it has increased identification with OKR. It was positively noticed that the OKR-Weekly stands on its own and is not mixed with other topics or used as a team meeting.

Overall, there was now greater certainty in the running of OKR. And it was suggested that OKR should also be used to manage cross-organization-unit objectives or team objectives and to and to effect change in general.

Negative feedback was received on the topics of general organization, goals, weeklys, collaboration between teams, and OKR in the hierarchy provided. OKR's general, overarching organization could be improved. Thus, Cycle changes, i. e., the transition from Review / Retro to the next Planning were not well timed and unclear and were therefore perceived as bumpy. It was also suggested that the weeklys should again be held in

face-to-face form in order to increase the dynamics. At the same time, the opposite suggestion was made, to keep the implementation via Skype.

For the purpose of goal control, it was suggested that the objectives and key results should be collected or to make them transparent in order to improve cooperation. The idea was also formulated to create team key results, i. e. one team key results, i. e. one key result for several team members.

For the weeklys, it was noted that there was often not enough time to hold them. Therefore, there was a demand to keep them and not to skip them. Also was demanded that the weeklys should take place monthly. One suggestion was to have allow cross-team guest participation in weeklys.

Collaboration between the teams could be deepened by providing cross-team support in working on key results could be deepened. Also, cross-team objectives were also suggested to improve task completion and collaboration were suggested.

On the question of how OKR should be structured in the hierarchy and whether and how cascaded (i. e., along the hierarchy levels), there was uncertainty. This is because questions such as “Is there also an ‘o-hierarchy’ along the organizational hierarchy?” or “To which objectives do managers form their key results?” were not answered.

Overall, the results from the reviews and retros were very heterogeneous. While individual topics can be defined by regulation, for example, the cycle duration, other topics such as the target focus (sales target or development goal) can be more difficult to grasp. It became clear that there are still unclear about the design of OKR, but also that there were conceptual deficits in the savings bank. It appeared necessary to adapt OKR both conceptually and in its handling seemed necessary.

### **Further development of OKR and creation of a concept for the savings bank**

A team of two from the second management level of the studied savings bank, consisting of consisting of the author and another division manager, dealt with OKR. OKR was questioned in general and in its elements and compared with other target management systems in the literature in the context of a workshop with the help of a comparison. First of all, the design scope of OKR were illuminated, and then a concept was developed that would make the application of OKR specifically for the savings bank under

investigation. This was followed by an assessment to be able to measure the success of the adjustments. This work was carried out in three steps:

- First work session
  - Determination of the approach
  - Review of all documents
  - Formulation of work orders
- Processing work orders
  - Each individually
- Second working sessions
  - Compilation of results
  - Documentation of the results in the concept paper (presentation)

### *Design spaces*

First, it was found that the design of the moals can be very variable. Moals are based on the company's normative framework and take into account the strategy, planning, cultural and value framework, vision, mission, target images and external requirements. This base allows a wide latitude for the formulation of moals, which does not makes it easy to find suitable moals. The formulation can then be in the form of moderated workshops or (with the help of a guide), for example by the management. The moals found in this way then form the basis for the development of objectives. There – depending on the task of the teams – objectives can also be formulated without moals (e. g. for special tasks, like campaigns), moals can be dispensable. If suitable objectives can be found without orientation to Moals, for example orientation by the team leader, the development of Moals can be dispensed with.

Since OKR is suitable for goal management of tasks for both formal and informal teams, goals can also be formulated and used for both team types. The design of the goals then differs in the degree of freedom, since the formal working groups (e. g. organizational units or project groups) and their tasks are integrated into the existing processes of the company involved. Therefore, the formulation is based on the moals (if available). In contrast, moals usually cannot help informal groups, such as work groups or informal teams, because of their particular task.

In addition to the possibility of orientation through goals, the intervention or participation of the team leader can also influence the design of goals. The degree of influence can also be varied. The range extends from the goal setting to the free formulation by the team members. Assessing the suitability of the goals remains the responsibility of the team leader.

The goal formulation depends on the team's task and can be varied in terms of its degrees of freedom, both in terms of direction and the degree of specification.

The contributions of the individual team members, the key results, are formulated independently by the team members and affect the objectives. Although the key results should be formulated specifically (“smart”), there is also scope for design here. A key result can be, for example, a task goal or a development goal. A team member can make and edit one or more key results. It is also possible for two or more members to formulate a common key result.

The design of the weekly can also be varied. First is the rhythm of the meeting variable. Project groups also have a weekly meeting proven as well as in teams with special tasks. On the other hand, for teams with a 4-week rhythm may also be suitable for a high proportion of operational tasks. A 14-day rhythm is most common at the researched savings bank.

Furthermore, the weekly can be varied in terms of duration and content. If as part of the weekly, the current status of the key results alone are discussed, the duration is shorter than if the current statuses are discussed in detail and the key results are discussed with any obstacles. Depending on the task the duration of the weekly should be varied depending on the team. An integration of the weekly into a team meeting, for example as a separate one agenda item is also possible.

The last design space examined deals with the type of team or the task group. The elements of OKR can be used in any way transferred from group to the studied savings bank. Not only for Organizational units that result from the organizational structure, but for each team that is created through shared tasks – be it formal or informal group – the OKR method should be suitable for goal control. Even if two employees have a common, perhaps temporary, task, they could use OKR as a task and goal management method.

Overall, depending on the task and team structure, OKR can be used and suitable for controlling goals and sometimes also for controlling tasks. A framework can then be built from the possible variations as a design aid. A concept should be used for this purpose for the savings bank examined.

It became clear that OKR is no isolated instrument for the savings bank. So, it must be implemented next to the existing instruments for leadership and target control. OKR is also a leadership tool. Therefore, the savings bank concept needs to be classified into the savings bank’s management instruments. There is also one for orientation differentiation of OKR from other types of tasks is helpful so that the alignment of OKR becomes clear as a tool for goal and task management.

Hereafter you can the conceptual elements for the studied savings bank are determined. In the savings bank examined, OKR is not the only management tool available disposal. The Sparkasse’s management philosophy essentially combines four things leadership instruments, on the one hand, in the relationship between the manager and the individual employees (impulse discussions and evaluation discussions) and on the other hand in the relationship between manager and team (celebrating successes and OKR). It becomes clear that performance is a team effort supported by the OKR method.



**Figure 5: Management instruments of the investigative savings bank**

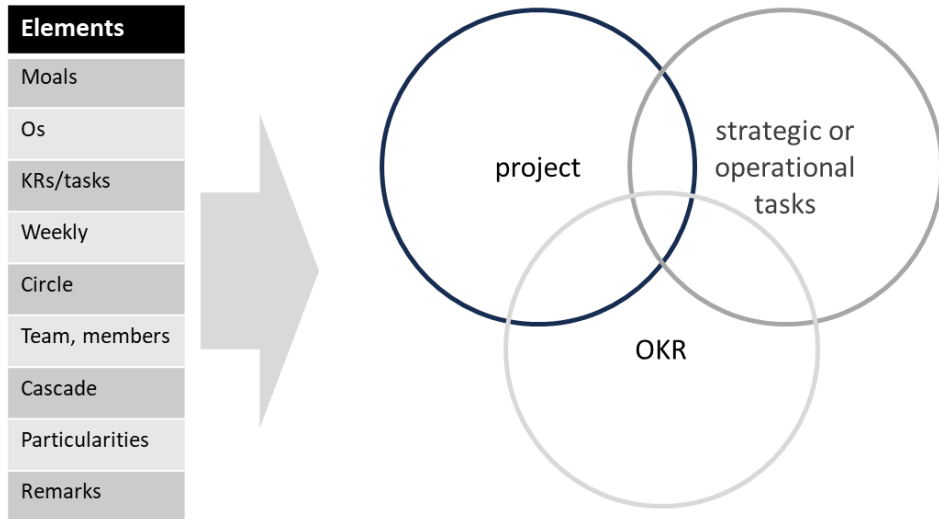
Source: own illustration

The embedding in the savings bank's task types makes it clear that here too OKR method is not the only type of task processing to achieve goals.

Naturally, the largest share of task processing is taken up by everyday work, embedded in the hierarchical structure of the savings bank. This is the nature of the Work between the opposite poles of operational work and strategic work. While in sales and production units, operational tasks usually predominate the proportion of strategic tasks is higher in staff units.

In contrast to hierarchically embedded tasks, team composition lies for project groups (or other working groups) outside the organizational structure the company.

OKR can now be viewed as a third element, as this method is one Task processing is possible in any team composition, both within or outside the organizational structure or in a mixed form. In addition, OKR can not only be used as an independent task control tool, but also with its design elements as a target control system for the others forms of work serve.



**Figure 6: Types of tasks**

Source: own illustration

The concept for the concrete application in the studied savings bank must now be Elements of the OKR method for different team compositions and design tasks and thus make them applicable. Here are for everyone Teams, team leaders and all managers share the conceptual ideas to make the application in the savings bank manageable. In addition to this, the actual concept is served by two tools, an application matrix and a regulator system.

With the help of the application matrix, one is created for the elements of the OKR method design for possible team and task combinations shown and the design variants are shown. This is not a hard and fast rule, but to provide guidance.

In the original, the matrix has two additional columns for orientation, in which for two well-known “model companies” also designed the OKR elements are shown.

Elements	Team distribution	Team staff	Working group, across organizational units	Project
Moals	provide orientation	provide orientation	not always relevant	not relevant
Os	often replaced by goal card, Os are possible, act on goal card	formulated by management and team (orientation: 60 to 40%)	O or task were formulated together, leader moderates	Project goals, milestones
KRs/tasks	KRs for Team-Os -> act on goal card	KRs for Team-Os	KRs and tasks of the members werde formulated	Task planning
Weekly	regular meetings, preferably weekly	regular meetings	regular meetings, weekly	Regular project meetings
Circle	4 months	4 months	duration of the O-task	duration of the project
Team, members	Organizational unit in the market, distribution unit	Organizational unit in the stuff	Implementation team, voluntarily	Project team and members
Cascade	No, Sales focus possible	No	No	No
Particularities	relevant is the target map, derived from corporate planning	Relevant is the effect	Single process	Single process, particularly organized in agile projects
Remarks	Focus: run, sales success, development	Focus: change, development	Focus: implementation	Focus: Change, implementation

**Figure 7: Application matrix of the investigative savings bank**

Source: Concept of the studied savings bank

It turns out that there are differences in the focus of task and goal achievement recorded, but also that the use of for working groups and projects OKR seems suitable. It also becomes clear that the individual design spaces remain variable.

Therefore, a tool that makes the design spaces manageable is useful. A control system that creates the design space between (partly ambivalent) showing opposite poles was therefore added to the concept as a component.

First of all, general regulations should be mentioned that affect the organization of OKR in the company and are intended to provide appropriate guidance.

- Business .....private
- Circulation.....process
- Development .....performance
- Flexibility .....security

Then regulations for designing the objectives and key results are helpful in order to achieve appropriate ones and be able to formulate suitable goals:

- Run .....build (the bank)
- Run .....build (my competence)
- Normal work .....add on
- Goal card .....other goals (interplay)

KRs/Os alone .....together (together, helping)  
 Os only for the cycle.....intermediate Os  
 From above .....from below (Objectives)  
 Cascades.....Single  
 “Agree” on goals.....set goals

The lists are not exhaustive and can be supplemented. Still give they provide sufficient assistance and orientation.

In order to assess the implementation of the OKR method in the studied savings bank a suitable scale had to be found first. For this purpose, measure the effectiveness and benefits for the company as qualitative features were used.

The effectiveness was assessed for the impact on the savings bank as a whole, but also for the target areas objectives and key results are considered. In addition, questions were raised that assessed the effectiveness of the contributions as part of the reviews/retros:

- Where could I achieve the most?
- What effect could I achieve?
- Was each individual contribution recognized as important?
- In the reviews and retros it was more like “right, wrong”, or after “different, helps” asked?

In addition, a controlling of the OKR processes and their effectiveness was carried out. It was determined that the respective team leaders are responsible for implementing the OKR method. The human resources department became responsible for the entire savings bank as the “guardian of the system” for the use of the OKR method as a management tool.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In the studied savings bank, OKR is used as a management tool (among other Instruments such as impulse discussions and evaluation discussions) for goal management and employee development. In addition, will also consciously create a separation between goal achievement and evaluation.

OKR as management tool in the studied savings bank creates focus, persistence, and energy among team members to increase performance and their development steer.

**The OKR method is suitable for goal management and as a management tool in a savings bank** (*research question 1*). The benefits of OKR for the studied savings bank extend from: individual employees through to the entire company. This method helps everyone to contribute their own amount and to focus on specific tasks judge. Topics (both everyday topics as well) will be discussed for each team Special topics) can be addressed and structured task implementation is possible. The company management can do this with the help of moals or given objectives control focus for the entire company and achieve impact. For the savings bank as overall, the OKR method is an implementation aid, a goal management tool and a managment tool with which effectiveness and effects can be achieved.

**The OKR method is more than a goal management system and can be applied to any Companies and every task can be adapted and used** (*research question 2*). OKR can thanks to its agile components for goal control and task processing can be used and is not just based on the structures of the respective company limited but is for every type of formal and informal (work) group suitable. In a modified form, the OKR method can be applied to other savings banks and banks and transfer companies and tasks, for example to projects become. This is made possible by individual design of the process elements to OKR. These can be tailored to the respective task and to the respective Target system can be modeled.

Here too, an individually created one can be used as an aid application matrix and your own control system (based on the example of the savings bank) can be used:

Elements	Characteristics (examples, expandable)	Team A	Team B	Working group	project
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non</li> <li>• For orientation</li> <li>• as a default</li> </ul>				
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specification by team management</li> <li>• joint formulation by team</li> <li>• Mixed forms (e.g. 60/40)</li> </ul>				
Key Results/ tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each teammember</li> <li>• Common KRs</li> </ul>				
Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular weekly</li> <li>• different rhythm</li> <li>• if necessary</li> </ul>				
Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly every three months</li> <li>• Single pass (e.g. for a project)</li> </ul>				
Team/ members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal group/ unit</li> <li>• Informal group</li> <li>• Projekt group</li> </ul>				
hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• No integration</li> </ul>				
...					
particularities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration into agile project organisation</li> <li>• O = goals from goal card</li> </ul>				
Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus</li> <li>• special requirements</li> </ul>				

The assignment is determined individually

**Figure 8: Sample for creating an application matrix**

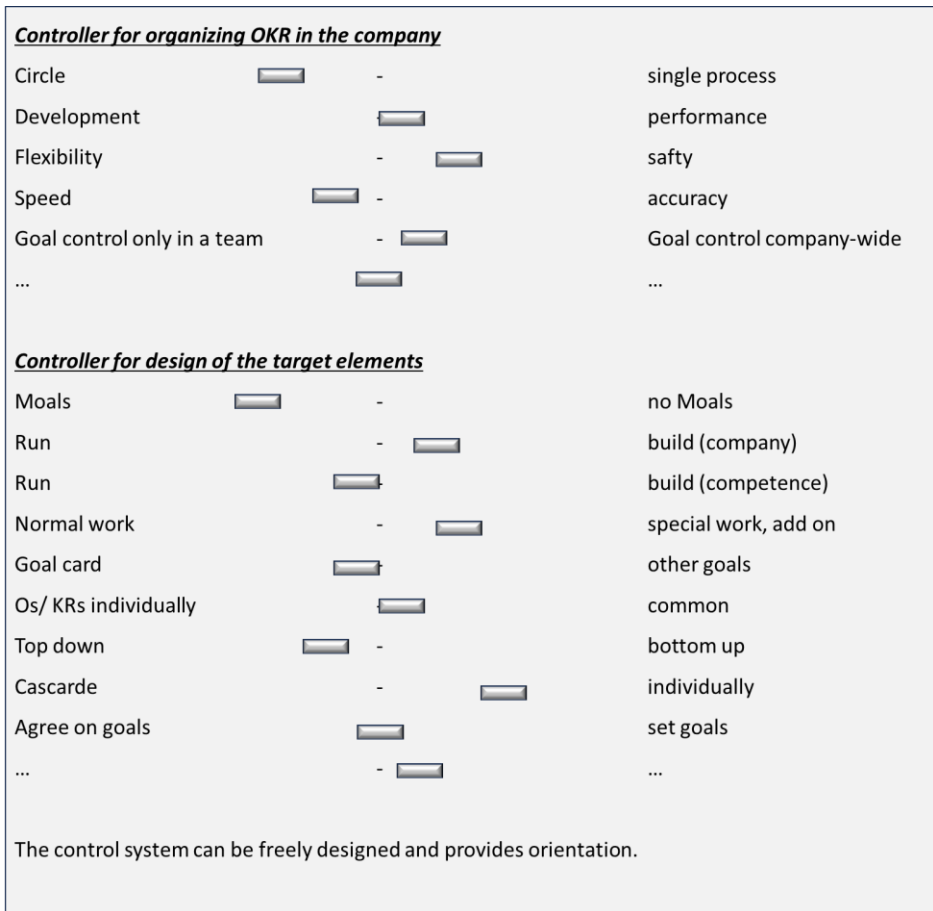
Source: own illustration

The research questions can be answered in summary as follows: To what extent is the OKR method suitable for goal management and as a management tool in a savings bank?

*Research question 2:* To what extent can the OKR method be used in a savings bank?

Future research could examine the extent to which the method of the morphological box was used to create the application matrix can be.

Techniques for finding ideas, for example, mind maps or the 6-3-5 method can be used.



**Figure 9: Pattern for creating a control system**

Source: own illustration

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