



### 3 KEYS OF ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL SETTING

In working with all kinds of organizations, CXN's objective is to drive high-impact change across the enterprise. We help organizations create a repeatable and scalable rhythm for execution against strategic plans:

- defining goals and objectives;
- aligning teams in pursuit of the strategy;
- achieving execution cadence.

We've isolated **three keys to success in goal setting**. We work most commonly in the OKR (Objectives & Key Results) framework, but these "three keys" transcend OKRs and apply to any goal setting and execution framework.

#### TAKE IT FROM THE TOP

Successful goal setting is rooted in **alignment**. Without a clear, top-level mission and set of objectives, it's impossible for leaders of business lines and their teams to sync to the overall direction of the enterprise.

When we start from scratch at a new organization, we spend two or three quarters working *solely* with company leadership. It's tough work, getting smart, headstrong leaders to align around a common mission and create a shared language around strategic objectives. If we can get them on board, cascading through the rest of the organization is pretty easy.

Too many organizations leap head-first into goal setting, rolling it out to rank and file employees without buy-in or understanding from top leaders. This is an invitation to failure.

#### IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE (NOT "PEOPLE")

A strong goal-setting and execution system is rooted in what OKRs guru [John Doerr](#) refers to as "measuring what matters" — isolating and tracking the metrics that serve as leading indicators of success. This data-first approach often fools organizational leaders into believing that goal setting should fall into one of two domains — People or Operations.

**Here's the danger:** In a People alignment, goal setting is slotted in as another piece of employee performance management. In an Ops-driven alignment, goal setting can become an extension of the weekly focus on sprints, Workday and Asana boards, KPIs, etc.

In reality, effective goal setting is about using base-level data and metrics to align people (with all their varied methods and motivations) around a set of agreed medium- and long-term objectives for which they share

accountability. Done right, *its power lies in its ability to build and align powerful teams*. Often, that means finding another home for goal setting.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU

Contingency, our term for the unknown and unforeseen, plays a huge role in our lives. No one who's lived through 2020 needs a reminder of that.

And yet goal-setters often create objectives or define key results that assume their efforts take place in a vacuum, with no anticipated effect from unexpected or unanticipated external forces.

When they fail to achieve their objectives because of some outside event, they shrug: "Who could have predicted that?"

*Well, actually ...*

We focus relentlessly on getting clients to drill down into the **self-controlled actions and outputs** that position them for goal success. Our goal is breaking down data and metrics to get to repeatable outputs that are the true building blocks of success.

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<sup>1</sup> For what it's worth, we see the greatest success when goal-setting is owned by Finance and run as a General Administration function.