



OKRs in Mid-sized Companies

SPCG reading on adoption, common mistakes, and realistic roadmap — reference literature and strategic implications

STUDY — STRATEGY & MANAGEMENT

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

About this publication

This report is an SPCG analysis consolidating public indicators available at the dates indicated. It does not constitute primary field research conducted by SPCG.

Sources used are cited throughout the text and fully listed in the bibliography. Interpretations and recommendations are labeled as SPCG reading.

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SUMÁRIO EXECUTIVO

Principais conclusões

This report consolidates SPCG's reading on adoption of OKRs methodology by Brazilian mid-sized companies, based on reference literature. Analyses and recommendations are SPCG readings.

- 01 OKRs are goal definition and tracking methodology, popularized by Intel in the 1970s and widely adopted by Google.
- 02 Adoption of strategic cascading by OKRs and adaptive goals is estimated at 20-25% of Brazilian companies (Análise Econômica 2025).
- 03 Well-known Brazilian companies adopting OKRs include: Nubank, VivaReal, Locaweb, ContaAzul, Moip, and Runrun.it.
- 04 Five most common mistakes identified in Brazilian literature: (1) lack of executive leadership, (2) lack of objective clarity, (3) excess of OKRs, (4) inadequate tracking, (5) lack of communication and feedback.
- 05 MIT Sloan Management Review Brasil highlights OKRs promote culture of accountability and adaptability.
- 06 Success depends on cultural change, not technical implementation.
- 07 Illusion of simplicity is trap: 'countless implementations have not been successful due to illusion that it is easy-to-implement methodology' (Vanzolini).

SECTION 01

What are OKRs – concept and origin

Basic structure

- Objectives: qualitative, aspirational, short. Describe what the company wants to achieve.
- Key Results: quantitative, measurable, verifiable. Describe how we'll know if we're achieving the objective.

Standard cycle

Traditional cycle is quarterly, with definition sessions at start and retrospective at end.

Origin and popularization

Methodology originated at Intel in the 1970s, developed by Andy Grove. John Doerr introduced OKRs to Google.

Difference from traditional KPIs

- KPIs are performance indicators – continuous metrics.
- OKRs are specific goals framework – combine qualitative ambition with quantitative goals in defined cycles.

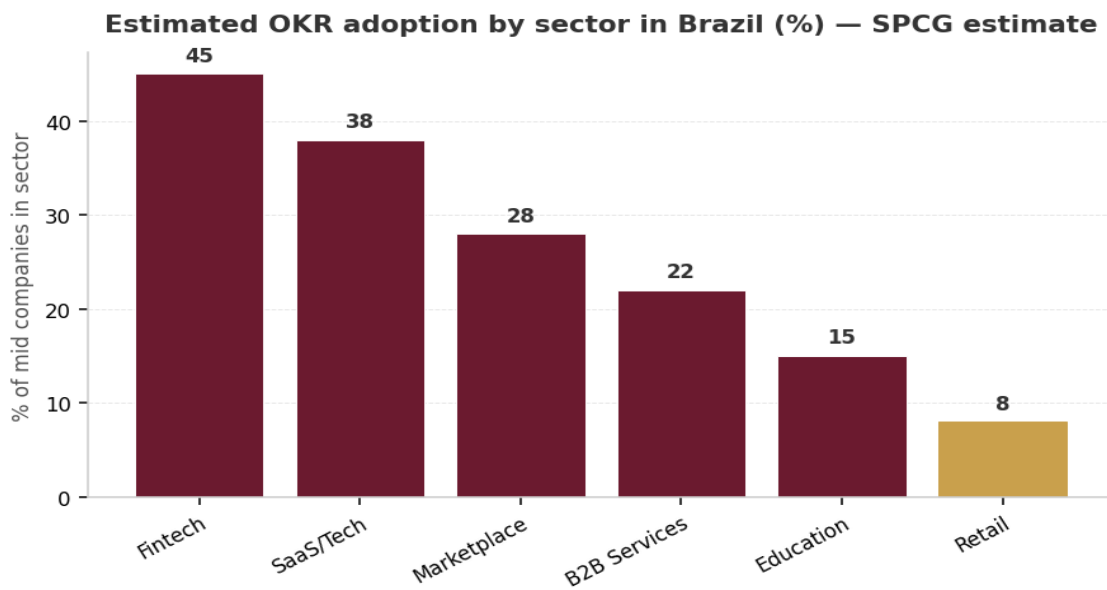
SECTION 02

OKR adoption in Brazil

Estimated adoption figures

According to specialists consulted by Análise Econômica (January 2025), estimated diffusion of strategic cascading by OKRs is between 20-25% of Brazilian companies.

Well-known Brazilian companies adopting



Important note: these percentages are SPCG estimates, do not come from formal research. Should be interpreted as relative hierarchy.

Companies explicitly mentioned by literature as adopters: Nubank, VivaReal, Locaweb, ContaAzul, Moip, Runrun.it.

MIT Sloan Management Review Brasil (2024) perspective

MIT Sloan Management Review Brasil published analysis in 2024 highlighting that OKRs promote culture of accountability and adaptability.

SECTION 03

Five most common implementation mistakes

Mistake 1 – Lack of executive leadership

Jornal Empresas & Negócios: 'attributing implementation responsibility to a project manager and not to a CEO is a mistake'.

Mistake 2 – Lack of objective clarity

Elofy (2024): 'lack of clarity in defining Objectives is among most common mistakes'.

Mistake 3 – Excess of OKRs

Vanzolini: 'a frequent mistake is establishing excessive number of OKRs'. Practical rule: max 3 to 5 objectives per quarter for company, and 2 to 3 per area.

Mistake 4 – Inadequate tracking

Vanzolini: 'many neglect importance of regular OKR tracking'.

Mistake 5 – Lack of communication and feedback

Consolidated reading (GS1 Brasil, Elofy, Vanzolini): successful OKRs require communication infrastructure.

SECTION 04

Patterns of successful implementations

1. They start small

Successful companies start with 3-4 corporate OKRs only.

2. Top leadership participates in rituals

Owner, partner, or CEO participates personally in initial definitions and biweekly tracking meetings.

3. Invest in prior training

Successful companies invest in leadership and area training BEFORE first cycle.

4. Adapt methodology to context

- Semester cycles instead of quarterly
- Simplification of rituals
- Integration with existing KPIs
- Reduced scale in pilot

5. Sustain discipline for at least 4 cycles

It is in the 3rd or 4th quarterly cycle that benefits become evident.

SECTION 05

Realistic 90-day implementation roadmap

Days 1-15 — Preparation

- Top leadership strategic alignment session (4-8 hours)
- Basic area leadership OKR training (3-4 hour workshop + reference material)
- Preliminary KR definition for each corporate OKR

Days 16-30 — Collaborative definition

- Each area defines 2-3 own OKRs, aligned to corporate ones
- Cross-area discussion session (60-90 min)
- Consolidation and publication of final OKRs

Days 31-75 — Operation with biweekly rituals

- Biweekly tracking session (30-45 min)
- Mandatory presence of top leadership in first 4-6 sessions
- Methodology adjustments as needed

Days 76-90 — Structured retrospective

- Cycle retrospective — 90 min
- KR balance, root cause analysis
- Preliminary preparation of next cycle OKRs

SECTION 06

SPCG readings and recommendations

If you're starting

Start small – 3-4 corporate OKRs only. Ensure top leadership participation. Invest in prior training.

If you already tried and it didn't stick

Review the five mistakes. If you decide to retry, take 6-month break and restart from scratch.

If you're in consolidated pace

After 4-6 cycles, consider expanding scope.

When NOT to use OKRs

If your company is in emergency mode, OKRs worsens situation.

General strategic recommendation

Consolidated reading of Brazilian literature converges to one point: OKRs are powerful tool, but not solution for fundamental problems.

How SPCG can help: our People & Organization practice includes specific service of OKR Implementation in mid-sized companies. Write to contato@spcg.com.br.

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Brazilian cases mentioned in literature

Brazilian companies cited by consulted literature as OKR adopters: Nubank, VivaReal, Locaweb, ContaAzul, Moip, Runrun.it.

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Obrigado por chegar até aqui.

Se este material foi útil e você quer discutir aplicação ao contexto da sua empresa, ficaremos felizes em conversar.

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