SCRUM AND OKRS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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INTRODUCTION

Scrum and OKRs: What's the difference?

Founded by Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber in the 1990s, the Scrum framework was created as a new approach designed to meet the demands of the new, competitive and fast-paced landscape of modern product development. The term "scrum" was a nod to rugby - scrum is a period in the game where players pack together to obtain the ball.

Scrum is a product-oriented project management methodology most commonly used for software delivery, agility and other complex products. Its framework is lightweight and agile. Each component within the framework serves a specific purpose and is essential to Scrum's success and usage.

Although this framework is for largely technical tasks, it has more in common with the Objectives and Key Results framework than one would think. In this resource, we'll answer the following questions:

In this resource, we'll dig into these parallels more and answer these questions:

— What are the core elements of the Scrum Framework?

— What are the main differences between OKRs and Scrum?

— What are the similarities between OKRs and Scrum?

— If I have more questions, where should I send them?

What are the core elements of the Scrum Framework?

As defined in the [Scrum Guide,™](#) the Scrum framework consists of:

– **Scrum Teams and their roles** - Scrum teams are defined by three roles: the Product Owner (who represents the interests of the stakeholders), the Development Team (that executes all tasks) and the Scrum Master (who facilitates the process according to the framework). Designed to be self-organizing and cross-functional, the structure of the Scrum team and its corresponding roles help provide autonomy to the group

— **Events** - According to the Scrum Guide, the purpose of scrum events is to "create regularity" and "minimize the need for meetings." The events are a part of the "Sprint" - a fixed period of time, typically no longer than a month, in which the following events occur: sprint planning, daily scrums, the development work, the sprint review, and the sprint retrospective. The Scrum Guide states that "once a Sprint begins, its duration is fixed and cannot be shortened or lengthened."

— **Artifacts** - "Artifacts" refer to key information points for the Scrum team needs to move the process forward. Focusing on artifacts is the point in the Scrum process where the team directs its efforts on analysis and implementation. This phase promotes transparency of the work as well as promoting a "shared understanding" of the work among the team. There are 3 artifact products:

  – The product backlog - a list of every element the product requires including changes that need to be made to the product

  – The sprint backlog - created by the development team, it monitors all of the outstanding items needed to meet the overall sprint goal

  – The increment - the result of the sprint that ultimately meets the sprint goal. The product at this point in the process should be complete and fully functioning

What are the main differences between OKRs and Scrum?

The Objectives and Key Results framework and Scrum differ in 3 distinct ways:

1. **Purpose:** Scrum in many cases, is for software development or other complex projects. Objectives and Key Results, however, lay the groundwork for larger aspirational goals such as increasing the overall impact of an organization.

2. **Time:** While both OKRs and Scrum emphasize time-bound metrics, OKRs are typically set on a quarterly or annual time-frame whereas Scrum focuses on a relatively quick timeline to develop complex products.

3. **Adaptability:** OKRs are universal and work everywhere. They work for all structures of companies and nonprofits, but also work for individuals. Scrum, on the other hand, requires a team. There are clear and defined roles, and a Scrum team require at least 5-7 individuals.

What are the similarities between OKRs and Scrum?

Although OKRs and Scrum differ fundamentally, they can work together. They share core principles that all teams should value to meet their daily goals and demands. These principles are:

Transparency

Both frameworks rely heavily on the concept of transparency. Transparency is one of the 3 central pillars of the Scrum framework. Likewise, OKRs are meant to be shared with every team member so every one is one the same page and can find their role and responsibility within the vision.

Timeliness

"Nothing moves us forward like a deadline." - John Doerr, Measure What Matters

Both frameworks emphasize time as a core element of the process. Timeliness in both frameworks evokes and a shared mission and culture of accountability among the team.

Success Criteria

A common thread that lies in both frameworks is the importance of having a clear picture of what success indicates. Both frameworks measure outcomes clearly. Within OKRs for example, success is defined by whether or not the key results have been met. This is the ultimate indicator that the objective has also been met.

A scrum project is finalized when the Increment is complete in a phase called "done." The Scrum Guide emphasizes the importance of every team member having a shared understanding of what "done" means. This also fuels deeper transparency among the team.

Rigor

While the elements of both frameworks are straight-forward, the goal-setting process for both can be quite rigorous. The Scrum Guide says the framework is "lightweight, simple to understand, and difficult to master." Implementing Scrum requires the training and teaching of the Scrum Guide - and each role has its own set of specialized skills.

Similar to Scrum, OKRs are also lightweight and flexible, yet they can be difficult to master. The process of establishing and honing in on just 4-5 objectives can be challenging for a team. Teams must also ensure the key results are well aligned to the overall objective.

The two systems can be used in conjunction. OKRs help teams articulate the overall goals for an organization or team. Scrum equips teams with a process for delivering on complex projects. It is important that the projects being worked on by Scrum teams are in service of the goals expressed in the OKRs.

If I have questions, where should I send them?

We'd love to hear from you! If you'd like to learn more about the differences and similarities of the two frameworks, or would like to share your experience using them, feel free to let us know by emailing us here. You can also learn more about OKRs by reading "Measure What Matters" or exploring more FAQs, Resources, and Stories, right here at WhatMatters.com.

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