



Keeping a growing and distributed workforce focused and aligned





About Widen

Widen is a 70-year-old marketing technology company that today, builds digital content management solutions used by over 600 of the worlds best-known brands. Founded in 1948, Widen began engraving plates for newsprint. Fast forward to today and their experience in creative workflow and content management is unmatched. They have 150 employees with offices in London and Madison Wisconsin. Matthew Gonniner is the CEO, and OKR Champion.



Company

Widen Enterprises, Inc.



Industry

Technology



Goal

Stay aligned and focused on executing strategy whilst hiring new employees and opening facilities around the world.



Results

A clear path to success resulting in improved alignment and employee engagement



CHALLENGE

Keep a growing and distributed workforce focused and aligned

Back in 2016 Widen was growing fast, hiring 30 new people per year and opening new facilities around the world. Staying aligned and focused on executing strategy became a challenge.

Although Widen prided themselves on their open, flexible and transparent communication style, even though teams were talking regularly CEO Matthew Gonnering felt that they'd been lulled into a false sense of security. "Just because we were all talking with each other, everyone thought we're aligned," he said.

As the company grew so did the challenge of keeping everyone aligned and focused on executing their strategy. "We used to talk a lot about "strategy", internally and externally, but I remember coming to the point where I thought; what does strategy really mean?" said Matthew.



"We were looking for a way to empower more people but weren't sure how to do that. OKR gave us a simple yet powerful way to do that."



Matthew Gonnering
CEO at Widen

Matthew made the decision to approach strategy in a simpler, more straightforward way. The answer lay in the book "Playing to Win" by Roger Martin and A.G. Lafley.

"As soon as we switched to using the "playing to win" framework we got a lot more buy-in from the rest of the organization. Suddenly this whole concept of "Strategy" became much clearer to everyone."

With a clear definition of strategy in place and a framework to create it, the next challenge was to fit the pieces of the puzzle together by taking their strategy as a starting point and developing the

management tools to execute and measure its performance.

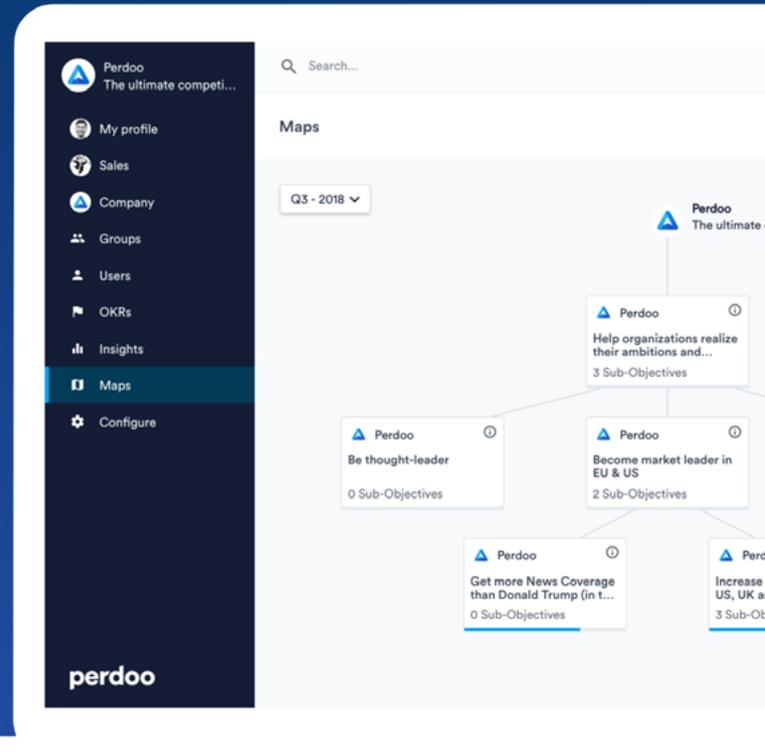
Before the Widen leadership team formed Widen's long-term strategy, Ben Dotte, Director of Engineering, was already on the OKR path with Widen engineering teams.

The Engineering team began using OKR to set goals and combined it with their existing agile development process for managing the work they were doing. "I was following Ben and the Engineering team from afar", said Mathew, "and what they were achieving with OKR was so interesting I decided to take a closer look".

SOLUTION

Turn company strategy into clear and measurable goals

Shortly after Ben and Widen’s Engineering team began working with OKR, Ben approached Perdoo looking for OKR software to support his team. Thanks to their success with OKR and Perdoo, Matthew decided that OKR would be the perfect tool to help Widen execute their newly formed strategy and asked us for help.



Working together with Matthew, their Perdoo Coach began by translating Widen’s strategy into a hierarchy of goals in Perdoo. Starting with their long-term “mission and vision, The Widen leadership team created long-term objectives as the guides that Widen would use to create annual Company and quarterly Team OKRs.



Strategic pillars

“Our long-term strategy is what guides our OKRs and we put all of it in Perdoo to make it fully transparent to everyone at Widen.” said Matthew. Widen’s Ultimate Objective represents their mission and vision and below this 5 strategic “pillars” represent outcomes with 5 year timelines. With their strategy mapped in Perdoo, Widen began drafting Company and Group OKRs.

“When we started setting up annual Company OKRs we did that quite quickly. Then it started to get more complex when our teams started creating their Team OKRs and declaring them for the quarter.”

A challenge many face when working with OKR for the first time is understanding how to focus on outcomes. Perdoo’s training for team leads helped them focus on results instead of activities.



Results that matter

The Perdoo Coach worked closely with Matthew and the teams at Widen to ensure their Team OKRs were outcome focused, rather than output focused, which required a shift in thinking.

Matthew began to quickly see a number of benefits once all their OKRs were finalized and teams started work. “OKR really helped us understand what leadership looked like.” he said. “We were looking for a way to empower team leads and give them a structure everyone could work with but weren’t sure how. OKR gave us a simple yet powerful way to do that.”

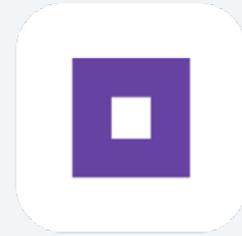
RESULT

A clear path to success, improved alignment and engagement

Feedback from teams has been overwhelmingly positive. As early adopters and champions of the framework the Engineering team felt they owned its success. Encouraging adoption organization-wide became much easier since the Engineering team were able to demonstrate how OKR had helped them achieve remarkable results and contribute to moving Widen closer to their Company Goals.

Even though some teams were reluctant and saw OKR as extra overhead, once they broke through that barrier they understood how OKR could become the centerpiece of conversations about what they were working on, and why.

Using the Perdo software Widen are now able to connect Quarterly and Annual OKRs to their 5 strategic pillars, playing-to-win strategy and their long-term ambition. All this was made possible by Perdo's Maps module. Matthew and everyone else at Widen now have a complete strategic overview of all company priorities, from quarter by quarter to 10 years out. Everyone understands the bigger picture, and stays focused on what matters most.





“Now we’re navigating 2019 OKRs, we have the chance to see where we may or may not have enough team effort. For example, I can see if we have 25 Group OKRs aligned towards one Company Objective and I can ask the question, do we need more people working towards other Company Objectives? Are we overcommitted here?” said Matthew.

Widen use annual OKRs as a starting point for financial planning. Understanding how their teams are aligning with their strategy helps them make better decisions on where to allocate resources as well as helping them identify where they may have gaps.

“Another big benefit is that new employees can really quickly see how all the teams are connected and what they’re all focused on, how all this work we’re doing is connected to a bigger purpose,” Matthew added. “We couldn’t do that without Perdo.”

“We’re really excited about the future at Widen and the potential of our people, sure, we’re a software company and we have a product, but our purpose is to unlock human potential. I really believe that Perdo helps us do that.”



Matthew Gonnering
CEO at Widen

Ready to get started?

To learn more about Perdoo, and how we can help you connect strategy with execution and achieve company-wide alignment, visit:

perdoo.com/get-a-demo



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