

Prioritize Better & Achieve Goals More Efficiently with OKR

Practical Tips

An InLoox Whitepaper

Content

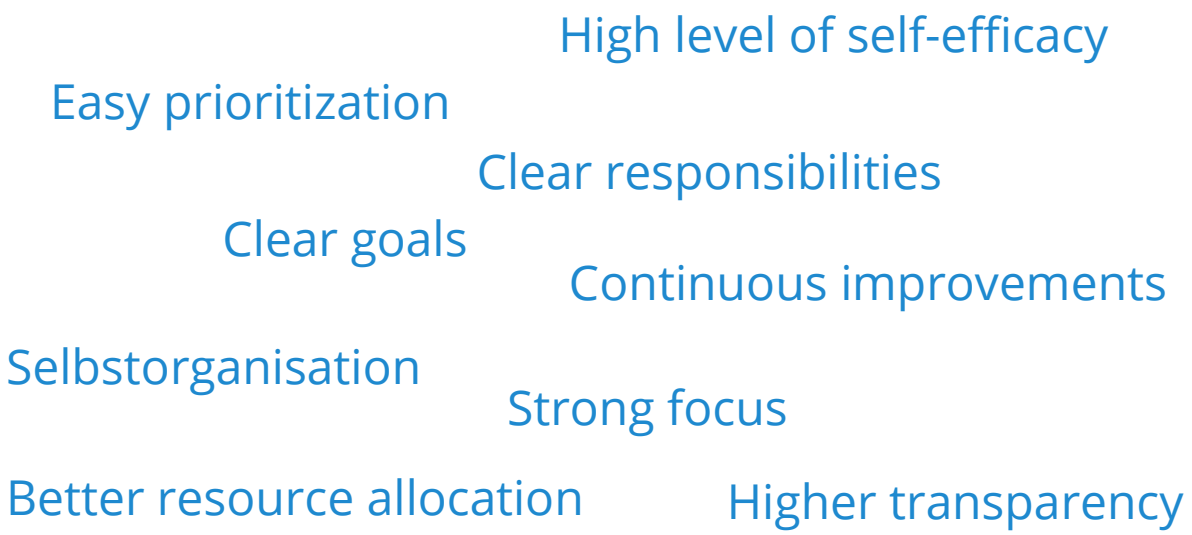
1. Introduction to OKR....3
2. OKR in practice....5
3. Lessons learned after one year of OKR....7
4. OKR with InLoox....9
5. Free OKR planning template for InLoox....14

1. Introduction to OKR

In the search for new and innovative management methods, you increasingly come across "Objectives and Key Results" (OKR). OKR is used for target management and is currently used by large companies such as Google, Twitter and Zalando. The approach is not only interesting for large and fast growing companies: Simple rules and high flexibility make OKRs an efficient tool to transfer company goals to teams and employees, to keep track of progress and to make objectives measurable. The method thus ensures that all activities harmonize with the goals of the organization.

Advantages of OKR

Organizing and managing employees with the help of the OKR method has a direct impact on the daily work of each individual and offers numerous advantages:



How does OKR work?

The basic principle of the method is very simple: Qualitative goals (Objectives) are to be achieved through quantitative and measurable measures (Key Results) within a defined period of time. The individual goals of the employees are aligned with the corporate and departmental goals. The greatest challenge of OKR can already be seen here: As long as the corporate goals have not been defined, the employee goals below them cannot be set in line with the strategy.

> *Each objective is assigned measurable key results.*



Example OKRs for different teams

Example 1: Marketing team

Objective: We have a strong brand with a high brand recognition value

Key Result 1: Increase visits from organic search by 10 percent

Key Result 2: 5 high quality press placements

Example 2: Production

Objective: We produce without any back orders

Key Result 1: Decrease waste by 10 percent

Key Result 2: Reduce idle time in production by 5 percent

Example 3: Human Resources

Objective: We have strong team spirit

Key Result 1: Every new employee takes part in our buddy program

Key Result 2: We strengthen the team spirit with two team events

Key Result 3: We promote cross-departmental collaboration with a monthly cross-departmental meeting

© InLoox GmbH

2. OKR in practice

Find out how OKR can be used in practice in the following case study from the marketing department of the project management software manufacturer InLoox.

How we discovered OKR

The reason why we introduced OKR was that we increasingly noticed that a once a year "check-in" in the performance review was not enough. In addition, we have our weekly marketing jour fixes, but again these are too small-scale to deal with strategic projects. This is how we became aware of the OKR method and found a quarterly review to be a good alternative. A quarter is a period in which you have enough time to introduce and test new measures. If after three months it is obvious that something is not working, this does not have too much of a negative impact. In addition, a year-on-year comparison is often misleading because, say, seasonal effects are not taken into account. With a three-month comparison, we can make much more accurate statements. Our primary goal was not just to react but to act quickly.

The implementation

Step 1: Collect information about OKR

First, we collected detailed information about the OKR approach, including a very detailed YouTube video that introduces the method. In the first moment it was important to find out how the Objectives and Key Results can be distinguished from each other and what to pay attention to when formulating them.

Step 2: Developing overarching objectives for the team

Then, in a 4-hour workshop with the entire marketing department, the objectives were developed based on the company's goals. Here, most of the time is spent on clearly defining the objectives. After the overall objectives were formulated, we were able to move on to the personal key results.

Step 3: Define personal Key Results

The team also worked together to define each team member's individual Key Results, which contribute to the departmental goals. The manager did not set any goals "top down," but instead openly discussed which measures made sense, who would perform them, and how the achievement of the goals could be measured.

Step 4: Clearly visualize & track OKR

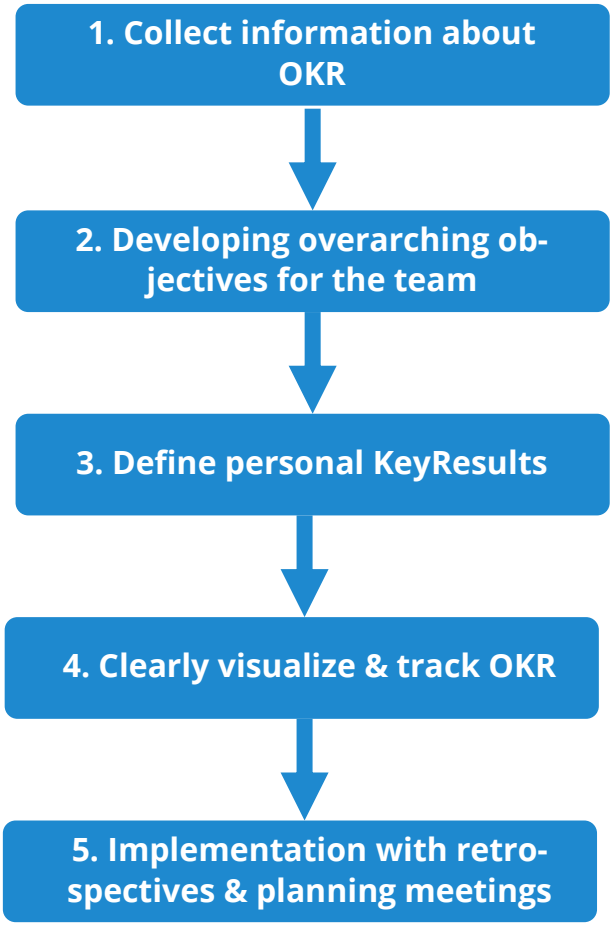
Finally, we created a project in our own software. This allowed us to record the objectives and key results in a familiar environment and, above all, transparently. If you would also like to map your OKRs with the help of InLoox, you will find out how to do this in Chapter 4 and also get a free planning template.

Step 5: Implementation with retrospectives & planning meetings

At the beginning of each quarter or after a retrospective, a meeting takes place in which each employee presents their KRs for the next period. Then, together with the superior, we decide which items have priority and which have to be postponed, if necessary.

At the end of each quarter, the retrospective takes place. Here, we review which goals were achieved and which were not. This is not about judging the value of the work, but about finding out why some things were not achieved and what we can do better next time. So it is also about continuously improving and accepting mistakes in order to learn from them.

Summary of the implementation process for OKR:





3. Lessons learned after one year of OKR

We have been working with the OKR method in InLoox's marketing department for over a year now. Our experience so far has been entirely positive. At first, working with OKR was planned as a 3-month experiment. At the first retrospective, it was unanimously decided that we would continue to manage our goals with it.

1. Schedule & hold retrospective meeting on time

Our biggest challenge was to schedule the retrospective at the end of each quarter and to do it on time. We often could not find a date to hold the retrospective and set the Key Results for the new quarter until a few weeks into the next quarter.

After nearly a year of always being behind on the retrospective, we decided to change the timeframes for our OKR. Instead of quarters, we now work with trimesters, i.e. a period now runs over four months instead of three, giving us a total of three blocks per year instead of four.

In addition, we now set ourselves a date for the retrospective at the very beginning of the trimester. This way, the retrospective is already blocked in the calendar of all team members and nothing can get in the way.

2. Quantify Key Results

At the beginning, one of the things that was difficult was to quantify the Key Results and define them in such a way that they were ambitious enough to motivate us, but at the same time did not seem unattainable. In addition, we were very strict with ourselves in the beginning, i.e. all goals that were not achieved 100 percent were put in the "not achieved" column in the Kanban board.

This made it seem as if we hadn't accomplished very much, although we were still able to achieve around 70 to 80 percent on most points.

We changed this approach after 3 quarters. A scaled score for target achievement was introduced. This enables us to depict how much we have actually achieved in a more detailed way, and even small successes are recognized.

3. Individualize the OKR method

At the beginning, we tried to stick very strictly to the basic ideas of the OKR method, for example with the quarterly scheduling or the very ambitious target setting. An important insight here is also that we should adapt the method to the individual needs and day-to-day activities of the respective team. We have learned to adjust

the process whenever we notice that something is not working well for us. Ultimately, the method only provides guidelines and, in order to reap the benefits, you should develop your very own "setup." This can happen by exchanging ideas with other companies that have already experienced it, or by "trial-and-error".

4. The benefits of OKR that we have experienced

The biggest advantage we gained from the introduction of the method is the clear definition of responsibilities. We can avoid duplicate work and in addition, each individual and the entire team is much more focused on the company's goals. This really helps to prioritize tasks. OKRs are not only visible to the marketing department, but to the entire company. So when an unplanned task comes in, we're much better able to judge whether a task is relevant to our goals. If not, it' s clearly communicated as to why we can't accept that task. In addition, we talk much more frequently about what has been achieved and what has not. The OKR system has also become an "early warning system." We can react much more quickly if something is going in the wrong direction.

4. OKR with InLoox

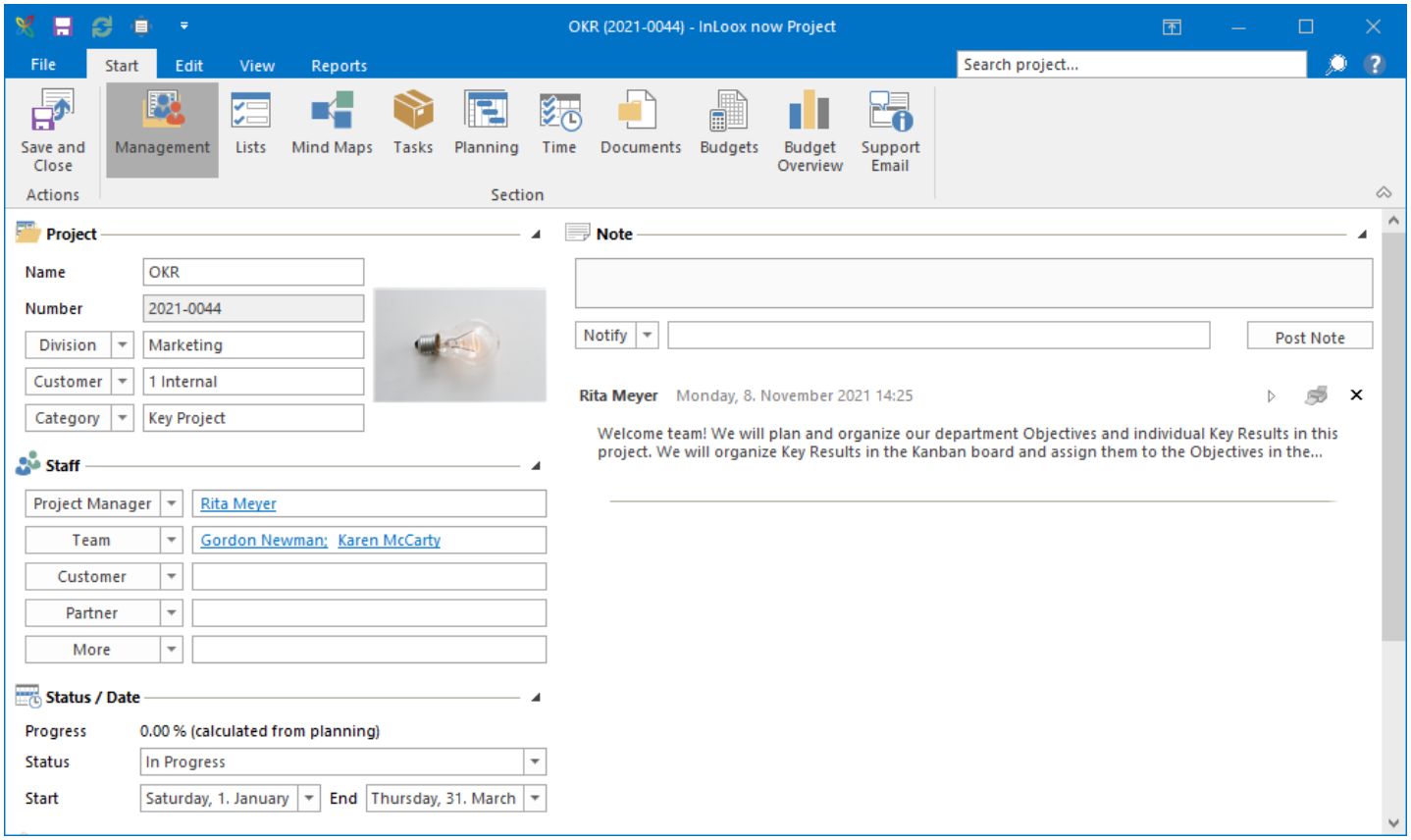
Manage OKRs comfortably and easily? With the InLoox project management software, you can organize your OKRs quickly and transparently - individually or in a team. Not only can you record goals, but you can also create individual key results as explicit to-dos.
OKRs are very flexible and can be customized. Objectives and key results should always be easy to manage. There are several ways to display OKRs in InLoox alone. In the following, we present a method for displaying OKRs with InLoox. This is the one we use ourselves.
You can manage the OKRs via an InLoox project and work with the project plan and the Kanban board. Based on the company goals, departmental goals are defined and personal Key Results are derived for each team member, which contribute to the departmental objectives. Attention: This is not a 1:1 mapping of the OKR model, but an adaptation that meets our personal needs for daily use!

Get inspired by our idea and develop your own approach to display OKRs with InLoox!



1. Create InLoox project to organize your OKRs

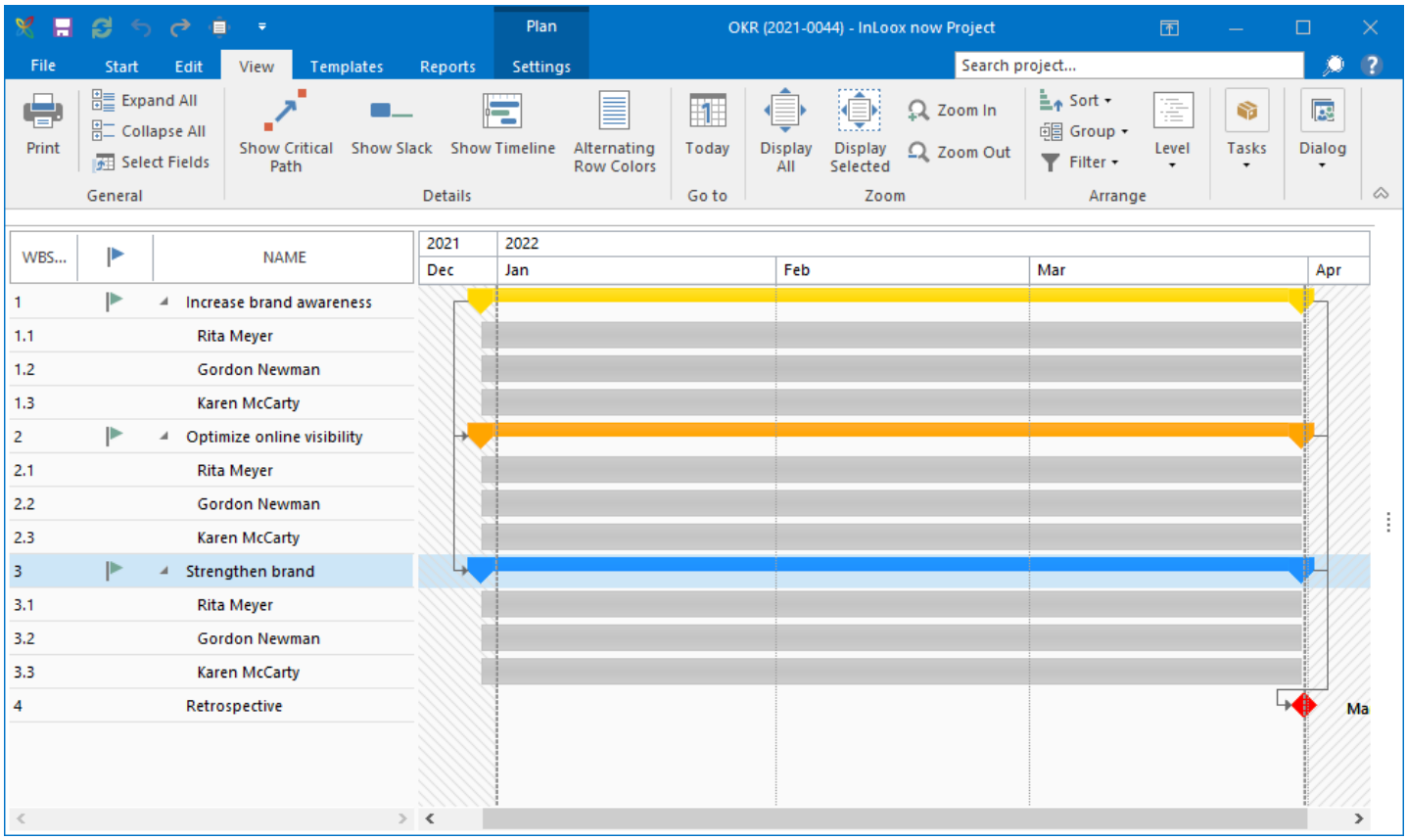
First, you create a new OKR project in InLoox. Together with your team, you organize the department's goals and the corresponding key results of each individual. As start and end dates, you enter the beginning and end of the OKR period - for example, from January 1 to March 31. Add the members of your project team or department to the project.



Project view in InLoox: Management page with all detailed information about the project.

2. Create a project plan with activities

Switch to the planning and create a rough project plan as an orientation. A collective activity is created for each team or department objective. For each collective activity, every employee receives a personal activity in order to map the individual key results in it. At the end you create a milestone for the retrospective.



Gantt chart in InLoox: Plan your "Objectives and Key Results"

3. Tasks with individual Key Results

Switch to the tasks and first customize the Kanban board for the OKRs. We use the following columns:

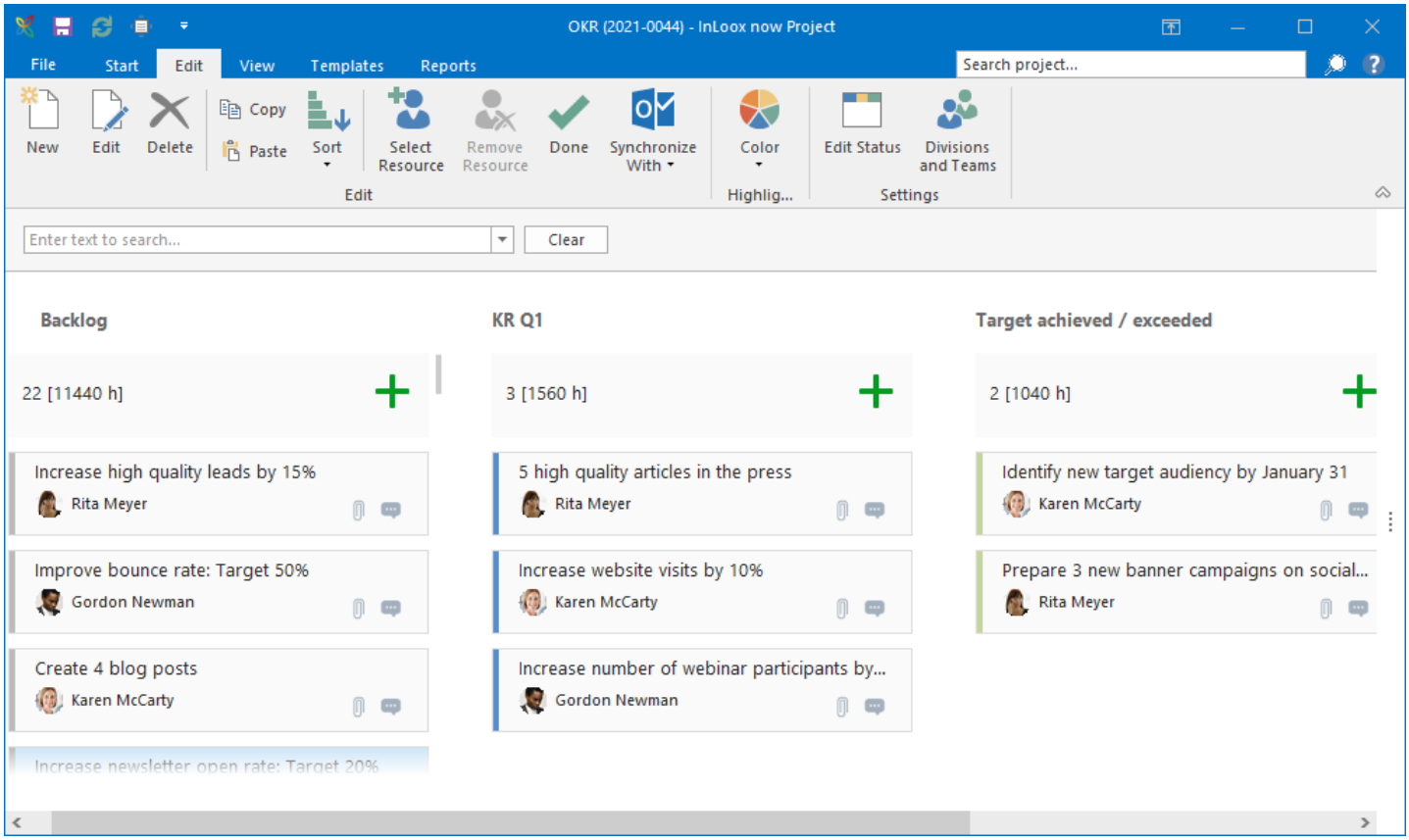
Backlog: Tasks that are pending but not a high priority for the current Key Results. These will be processed if there is time, or they will be carried over to the next quarter.

> **KR Q1:** All Key Results for the first quarter are initially collected here.

> **Target not achieved:** All Key Results that were not achieved.

> **Target achieved/exceeded:** All KR that were achieved or exceeded.

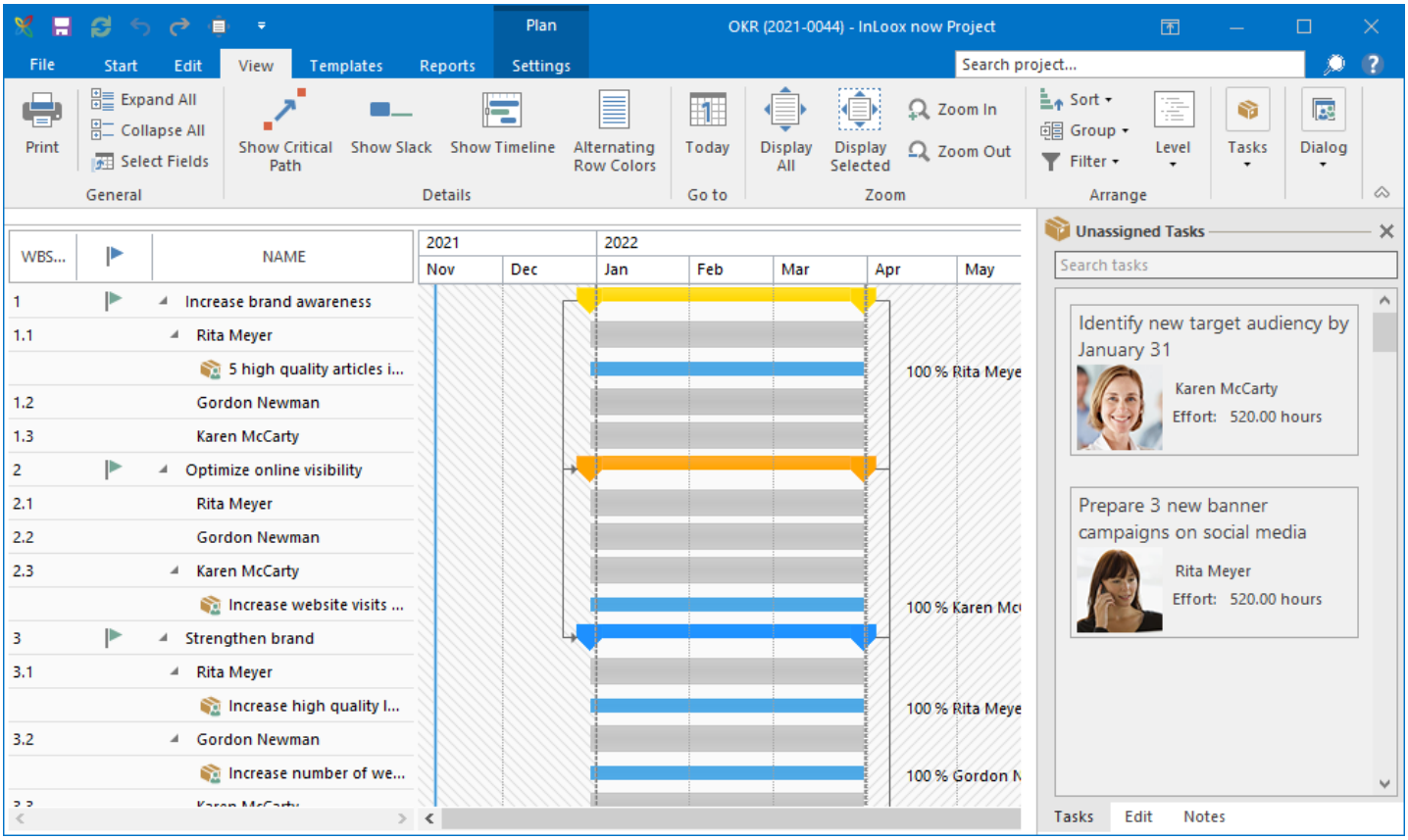
In the task description, you specify the key results and, if required, define further intermediate steps that are necessary to achieve the respective result. Working with the Kanban board is especially helpful for retrospectives. Here you can see at a glance what has been achieved or not achieved in the respective quarter:



Key results displayed in the Kanban board

4. Assign Key Results to Objectives

Return to the planning view. Here you decide which Key Result contributes to which Objective. Assign the corresponding tasks to the individual operation of the responsible resource in the collective operation of the targeted objective via drag & drop.



Individual Key Results of the team members are assigned to overall Objectives in the InLoox planning

5. Free OKR planning template for InLoox

Get started with OKR in the most simple and straightforward way by downloading the free InLoox planning template for OKR. Download the template here and plan the OKRs for the upcoming quarter with your team. With the planning template, you can easily use the InLoox project management software as an OKR software. Conveniently and comfortably in Microsoft Outlook.

The template contains:

> Gantt chart with objectives

> Possibility of resource allocation

> Kanban board with tasks - the Key Results

Download free OKR planning template

About InLoox

InLoox was founded in 1999 and develops project management software integrated in Microsoft Outlook that simplifies and accelerates business processes. The convenient Outlook integration makes InLoox the central platform for project and day-to-day business. The product portfolio currently consists of the two product lines InLoox PM for the installation in your own network and the cloud solution InLoox now!. Our core business is selling software licenses and services, which include consulting, training, implementation and support for our software solutions. InLoox, Inc. is based in San Francisco, USA. The company operates worldwide and is represented, on a regional level, by the InLoox Partner Network. InLoox enables customers in a multitude of industries based in over 60 countries worldwide. InLoox customers include AVIS, CHRIST Wash Systems, German Red Cross, LIEBHERR, Novartis, Pentax Europe, STOR-Opack, SEAT, Siemens, US Airways, Verizon and many more.

Contact:

Address: Walter-Gropius-Str. 17
80807 Munich

Phone: +49 (0) 89 358 99 88 - 0
Fax: +49 (0) 89 358 99 88 - 99

Email: info@inloox.com
Website: https://inloox.com

Get your 30-day free trial:

https://www.inloox.com/free-trial

© InLoox GmbH