INDEPENDENT SURVEY · 280 LEADERS

The Goal-Setting Benchmark

The framework you pick barely moves the needle. Four habits stacked on top of it decide whether goals get hit.

Based on 280 Ops & Strategy Leaders · Tech Companies of 50–200

15→71%
GOAL SUCCESS CLIMBS WITH EACH HABIT ADDED

2.9×
MORE CONSISTENT WITH 3–4 HABITS

59%
LOSE AN HOUR+ A MONTH CHASING STATUS

FOREWORD

Stop arguing about frameworks. Start stacking habits.

We asked 280 operations and strategy leaders which goal-setting framework they run, how consistently they hit their goals, and what happens in the weeks between reviews. The framework they picked barely predicted anything.

What predicted success was a stack of four ordinary habits — reviewing weekly, tracking continuously, keeping goals visible, and using real software instead of a spreadsheet. Each one lifts a team's odds on its own. Stacked, they compound: teams doing all four hit their goals nearly three times as consistently as teams doing none.

This report follows that thread from start to finish. It sets the framework question aside, names the four habits and what each one is worth, shows how they compound, and explains why most teams that claim discipline never actually run it — then what to do about it, in order.

> **One argument, seven findings.** The habits matter more than the framework — and tracking matters more than setting.

An independent study by OKRs Tool · No customers in the sample · Association, not causation.

THE ARGUMENT

How the case builds.

01 **The framework debate is a dead end**
No framework wins the market, and the label barely predicts success.

02 **So what does? Four habits**
Named, with what each one is worth on its own.

03 **Stacked, they compound**
The staircase — success climbs with every habit added.

04 **Most teams only claim them**
The illusion gap between saying “consistent” and doing the work.

05 **Tracking is the underrated half**
Of the four, the habit the market spends the least energy on.

06 **The cost of skipping them**
A working week a year, and it shows up in results.

07 **Then the tool sets your ceiling**
And the one problem no habit fixes.

FINDING 01

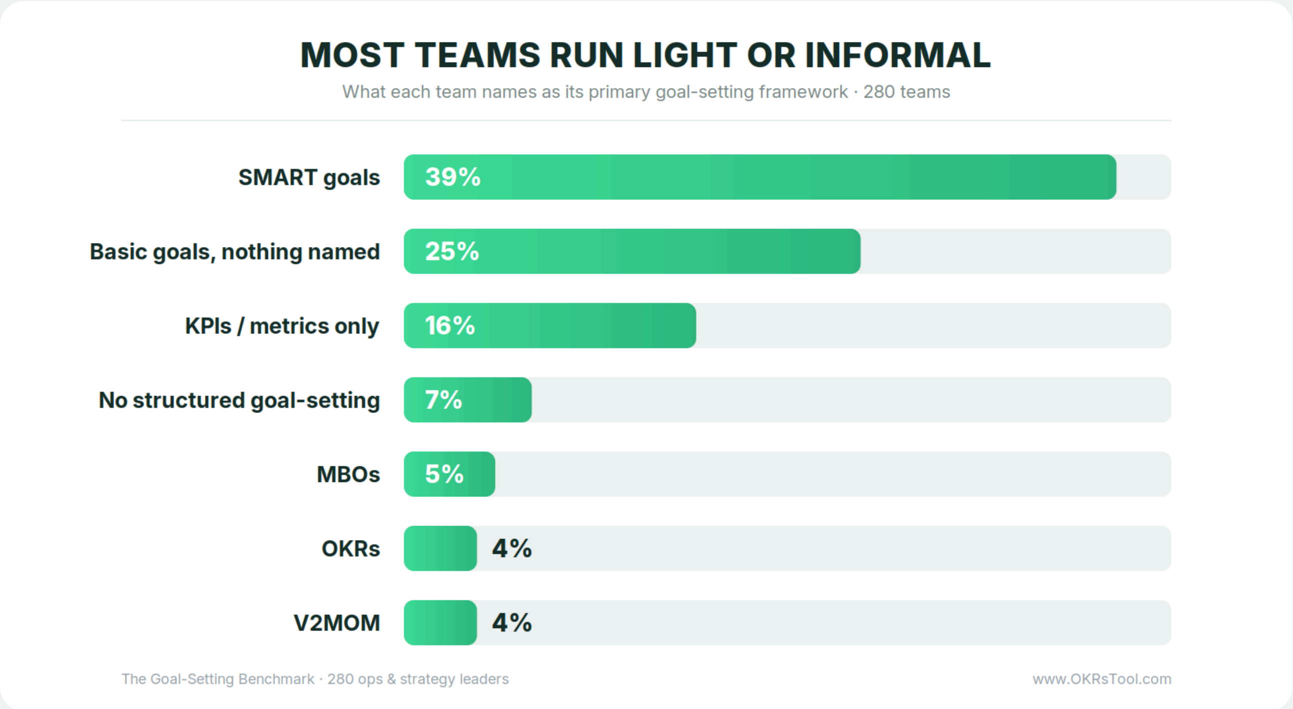
Start here: the debate everyone has.

The framework doesn't decide it.

4%

NAME OKRS · NO FRAMEWORK HOLDS THE MARKET

Start with the question everyone asks first — which framework should we use? The data suggests that is the wrong question. Most teams run something light: SMART goals or no named framework at all cover nearly two-thirds of the market, and the structured methods split the rest. Which one a team picks barely moves whether it hits goals.



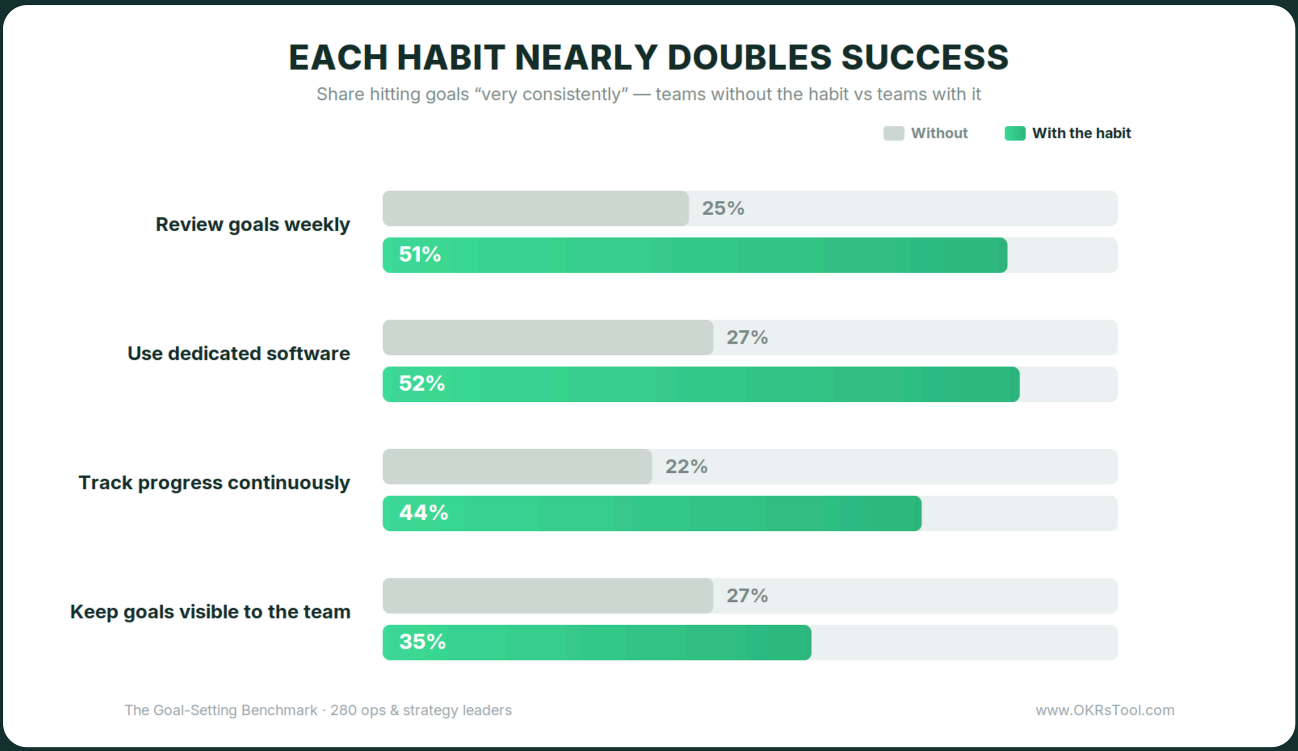
> Applying a framework consistently helps — 43% of teams that do hit goals very consistently, against 23% of those that apply one loosely. But **which** framework makes almost no difference. So if the label is not what separates teams that hit goals from teams that miss, what is?

FINDING 02

The answer the data keeps pointing to.

These four habits.

Four habits separate teams that hit their goals from teams that miss — and they work whichever framework a team runs, or none at all. Each habit roughly doubles a team's chance of hitting goals very consistently. Weekly review and dedicated software pull hardest; keeping goals visible does the least on its own, but pays off once the other three are in place.



Teams with each habit hit goals far more often than teams without it. None of these habits is complicated, and none depends on the framework above it. The rest of the report answers one question: what happens when a team **stacks all four**?

FINDING 03

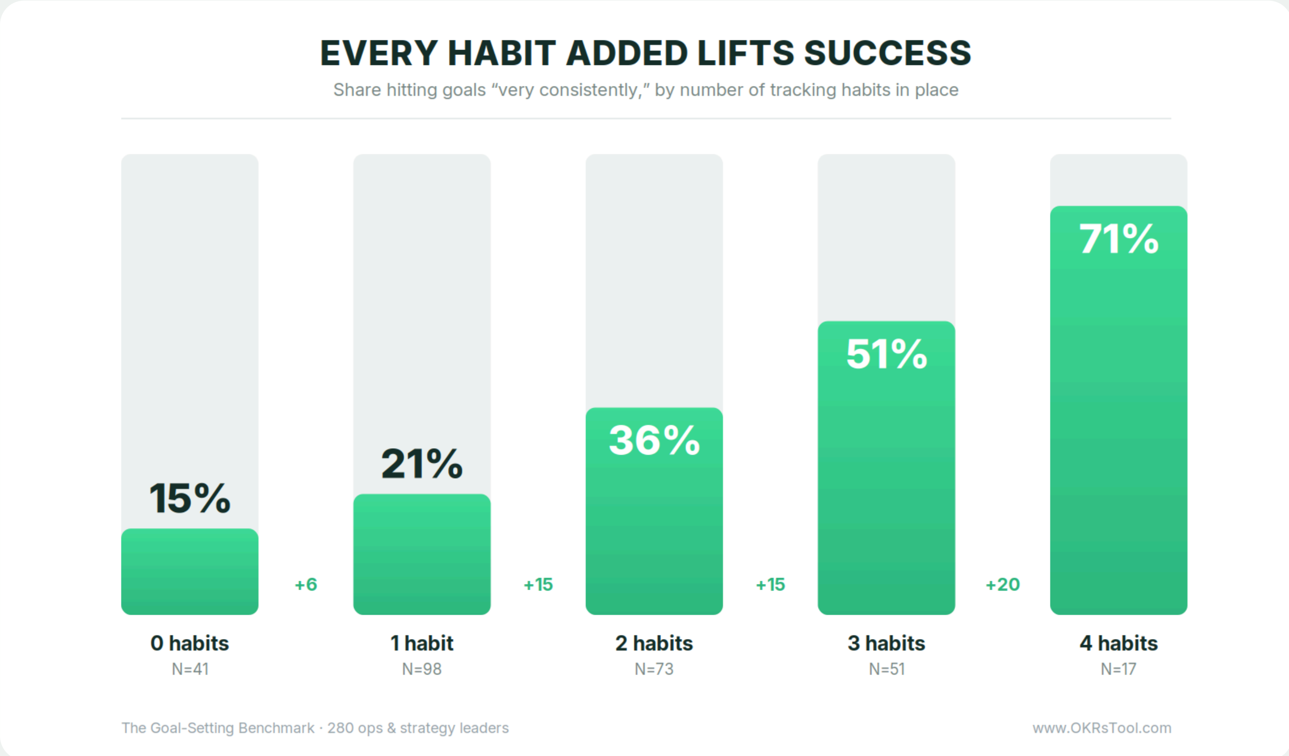
Stack them, and they compound.

The Staircase

2.9×

3–4 HABITS VS 0–1, ON HITTING GOALS CONSISTENTLY

Individually the four habits help. Together they compound. Scoring every team 0–4 on the habits and plotting how consistently each group hits its goals produces a clean staircase — each habit added lifts success, with no plateau until the very top.



> A team on plain KPIs with all four habits out-performs a team on a fashionable framework with none. The climb is close to linear — every habit added lifts success — which is why the framework a team picks matters so little next to the habits it keeps.

FINDING 04

If the habits work, why doesn't everyone win?

Most teams only claim them.

Here is the catch. Just under half of teams say they apply a framework consistently — but when we asked those same teams what they actually do between reviews, the habits mostly were not there. They have the label of discipline without the mechanics.

36%

of teams claiming a "consistent framework" actually review their goals weekly. A third only touch their goals when a review is coming.

41%

are on dedicated software

64%

track progress continuously

Among teams that say they apply a framework consistently · n=133

> The gap between the staircase and reality is not about knowing what to do — it is about **doing it**. Closing it takes no new framework, only the four habits run for real. And one of those four does more work than the market gives it credit for.

FINDING 05

Of the four, the one the market underrates.

Tracking wins goals.

33 > 29

GOOD TRACKING BEATS GOOD SETTING ALONE

The market spends its energy on setting better goals. So we split teams four ways — strong or weak on setting, strong or weak on tracking — and compared results. Setting a goal well and then tracking it badly throws most of the benefit away.

SET WELL · TRACK POORLY

29%

Good goals, left to drift. Barely ahead of teams that do neither. n=48

SET WELL · TRACK WELL

51%

The winning quadrant — both halves working together. n=85

SET POORLY · TRACK POORLY

18%

Neither discipline in place. The floor. n=96

SET POORLY · TRACK WELL

33%

Rough goals, tracked tightly — still beats good goals left to drift. n=51

> A carefully set goal that no one tracks lands at 29%. A roughly set goal that is tracked closely does slightly better, at 33%. **Tracking carries at least as much weight as setting** — and it is the habit teams most often skip.

FINDING 06

What skipping the habits actually costs.

A working week a year.

59%

LOSE AN HOUR+ A MONTH CHASING STATUS

The habits cost only attention. Skipping them costs real hours — and then results. Most teams lose an hour or more every month just reconstructing where goals stand, and the teams losing the most are the same ones falling behind.

59%

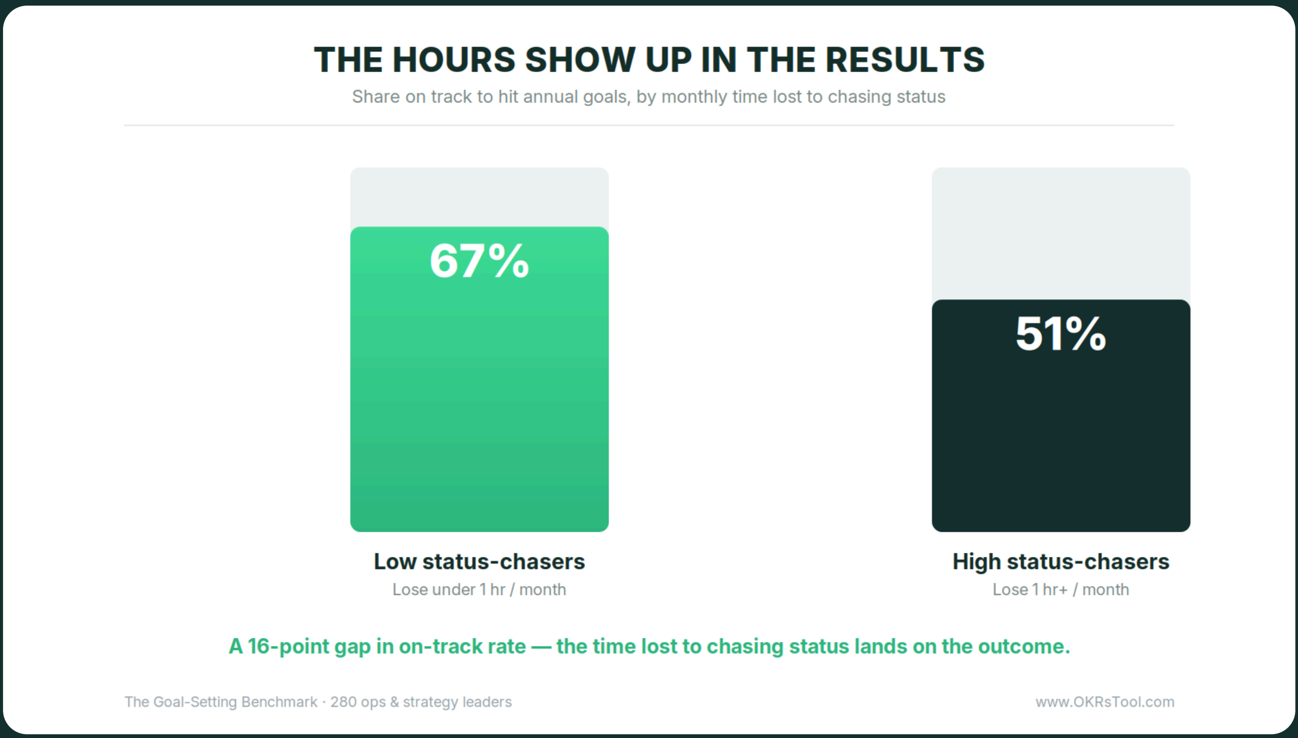
Lose an hour or more each month chasing the current status of goals — roughly a full working week a year

66%

See work duplicated because goals are not visible in one place

16 pts

The on-track gap between low and high status-chasers



FINDING 07

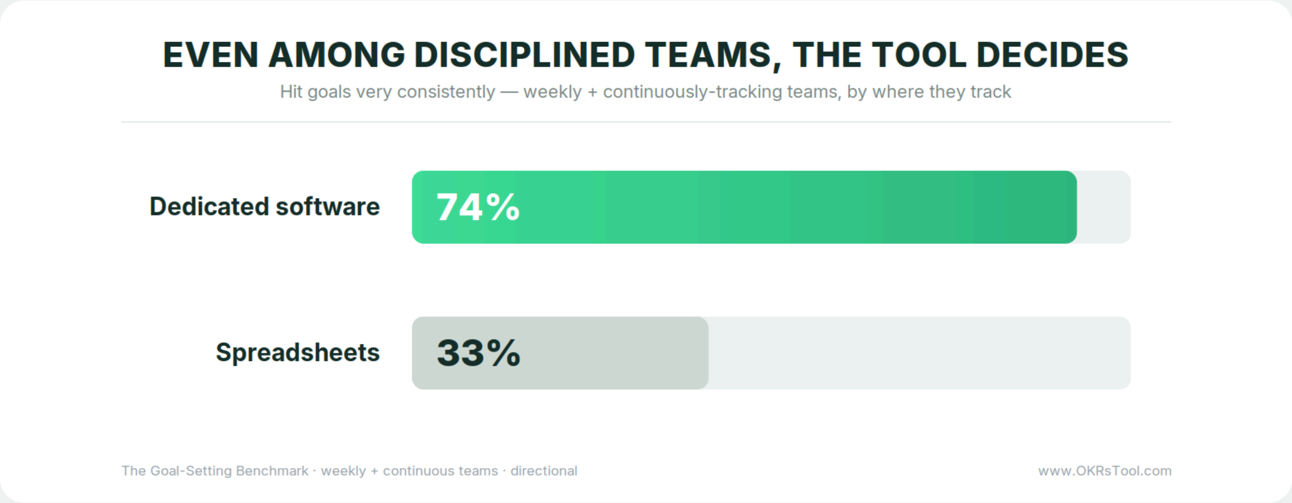
Do the habits first. Then the tool decides how high.

The Ceiling — and its limit.

74 vs 33

SOFTWARE VS SHEETS, AMONG DISCIPLINED TEAMS

Habits raise the floor; the tool raises the ceiling. Among teams that already review weekly and track continuously — the ones doing the hard part right — those on dedicated software still hit goals far more consistently than those on spreadsheets.



One thing no habit fixes

Reviewing weekly does almost everything — except fix shifting priorities. "Priorities shifted" is the number-one reason goals get missed (46%), and it stays number one whether a team reviews weekly (47%) or quarterly (51%). Cadence keeps a goal honest; it does not decide whether the goal still matters.

> We include this because it is true, not because it flatters the story. The habits win goals — but a strategy that moves underneath the goal is a leadership problem no tracking cadence can solve.

PROFILE

What all four, done for real, looks like.

The teams at the top of the staircase are not running secret best practices. They run the same four habits everyone knows about — they just actually run them. Here is what that looks like day to day.

The goals are named and they have a home. Every team can state the top priorities without looking them up, because the goals live in one durable place — not a slide deck seen once a quarter. Most daily work visibly ladders up to a company objective, and when priorities shift, someone redraws the links rather than letting them drift.

Progress stays current, and anyone can see it. Status updates as work happens, so no one scrambles to reconstruct it the night before a review. Because it is visible at a glance, no one loses an hour a month hunting for where things stand.

The rhythm and the tool hold it together. A standing weekly check keeps attention on goals between reviews, not only during them — and the whole thing runs on software built to keep goals in front of people, rather than a spreadsheet that only records what someone remembers to type.

> The distance between this and where most teams sit is not a capability gap. It is a practice gap — and practice can be built, one habit at a time.

THE PLAN

Four moves, in the order that pays.

1

START HERE

Put every goal in one visible place

The cheapest habit and the one that kills duplicated work. Shared visibility alone moves 66% of teams off the “same work twice” problem and makes the next three moves possible.

2

THEN

Make it a weekly rhythm

Move from “update before the review” to a standing weekly check — the single habit with the biggest swing on consistency.

3

THEN

Track continuously, not before reviews

Close the illusion gap. If status only becomes true at review time, you have a reporting ritual rather than a tracking habit.

4

RAISE THE CEILING

Move off the spreadsheet

Once the habits are real, the tool is what is left. Even among disciplined teams, dedicated software more than doubles very-consistent achievement. Do this last — a tool without the habits changes nothing.

METHOD & DEFINITIONS

How to read these numbers.

Sample	280 Operations, Strategy, and Business Operations leaders at technology companies of 50–200 employees, independently panelled.
The four habits	Weekly review · continuous progress tracking · goals visible to team or wider · dedicated goal software. Each team scored 0–4.
“Very consistently”	A respondent’s own rating that their team hits its goals very consistently — the stricter of our two success measures.
“On track”	A team reports being on track against its goals for the current cycle — the second, independent success measure.
Working-week figure	The “working week a year” line is directional: it applies a midpoint to the 1–3 hour band across twelve months. The 59% figure is a direct survey read.
Association, not causation	Every figure is a correlation across a cross-section. Disciplined teams may differ in ways we did not measure. We report what moves together, not what causes what.
No customers	No OKRs Tool customers are in the sample. This is an independent read of the market.

Percentages are rounded and may not sum to 100. Figures are yearless by design — the benchmark is meant to be cited without a date attached.

WHERE THIS LEAVES YOU

The framework was never the hard part.

The teams pulling ahead are not the ones with the best-named framework. They review weekly, track continuously, keep goals in the open, and use a real tool to do it. Four habits, stacked — and tracked, because tracking decides more than setting.

OKRs Tool exists to make those four habits the path of least resistance — one visible place for every goal, progress that stays current on its own, and a weekly rhythm that does not depend on anyone chasing a spreadsheet.

Build the stack.
Start free at OKRsTool.com

Start Free →

- **One visible source of truth**
  Every goal in one place, visible by default — the habit that kills duplicated work.
- **Progress that stays current**
  Continuous tracking in place of a pre-review scramble — the end of the illusion gap.
- **A weekly rhythm built in**
  The check-in cadence that swings goal consistency more than any other habit.