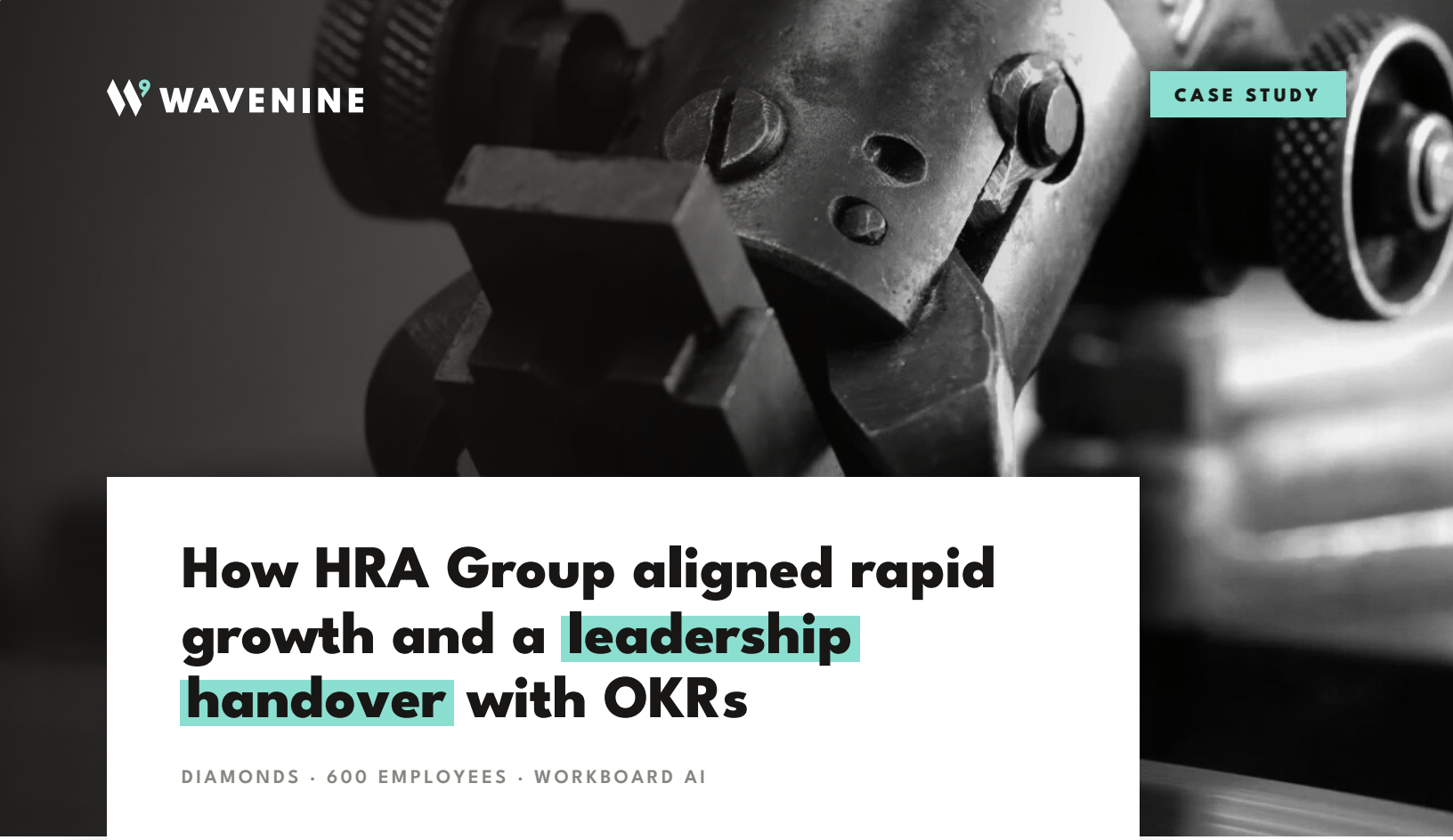


WAVENINE

CASE STUDY

How HRA Group aligned rapid growth and a leadership handover with OKRs

DIAMONDS · 600 EMPLOYEES · WORKBOARD AI

HRA Group was scaling fast and preparing to hand leadership to the next generation of the Ariel family. Wave Nine combined OKR consulting with leadership coaching to keep the company aligned through both.

6

quarters from outside support to in-house OKR ownership

3

days of leadership retreat that made OKR-based decisions standard

1

full-time staff member hired to run OKRs in-house

AT A GLANCE

CLIENT

HRA Group, a global innovator in the diamond trade, headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, with offices and factories around the world

INDUSTRY

Diamonds

COMPANY SIZE

600

CHALLENGE

Rapid growth after launching Dialog, an OKR program at risk of losing steam and focus, and a leadership transition to the next generation of the founding family

SOLUTION

OKR consulting and leadership coaching from Wave Nine: OKR strategy and rollout, WorkBoard AI as the single source of truth, a digital operating rhythm, weekly leadership coaching and a three-day leadership retreat

RESULTS

An OKR program that touches every part of the business, in-house ownership after six quarters, clearly defined roles and a detailed plan for the leadership transition, and OKRs as a shared language for decisions

THE CHALLENGE

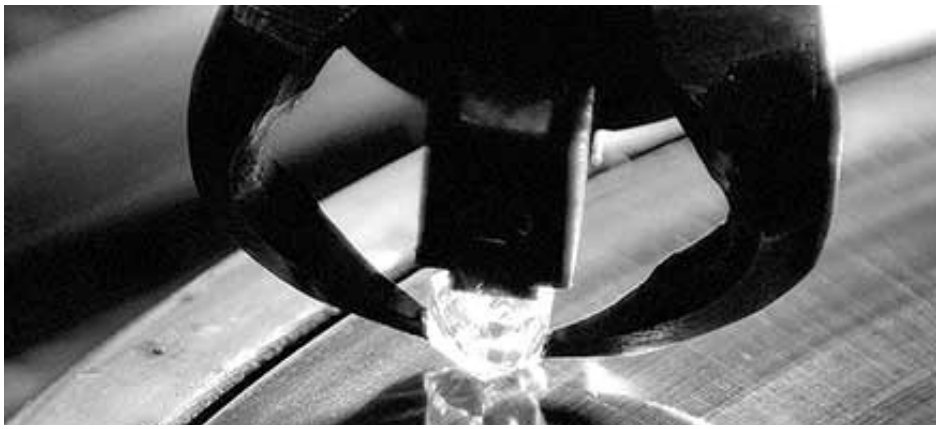
FAST GROWTH AND A GENERATIONAL HANDOVER

Two big changes at once: a business scaling fast and a family passing the torch.

HRA Group is headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, with offices and factories around the world. While its reach is global, HRA remains a family business, with direct descendants of the founders at the helm and many family members in key management roles.

In 2022, HRA experienced rapid growth thanks to Dialog, the first-ever diamond subscription service for retailers, which HRA introduced to the market. Scaling comes with its share of challenges, and the leadership team adopted the OKR methodology to align the company's different departments and guide the expansion.

After internal role changes, however, HRA's OKR program was at risk of losing steam and focus. The leadership team wanted more than to keep the program at its current level. It realized that outside expertise and resources would help, both for its OKR efforts and for its leadership transition.



THE CHALLENGE

SECURING A FAMILY LEGACY

At the same time, the company's leaders Uri and Sara were preparing to pass the torch to their sons, Itay and Aaron, and their daughter, Reut. They hoped to secure the company's legacy with a strategic transition.

TODAY'S LEADERS

Uri and Sara Ariel

→

THE NEXT GENERATION

Itay, Aaron and Reut Ariel

The Ariel family turned to Wave Nine for OKR consulting and leadership coaching, so the close-knit family could expand the business strategically, improve internal communication and develop guidelines for effective collaboration. HRA needed to:

Guide rapid growth

Align the company's different departments behind shared strategic priorities as it scaled.

Revive the OKR program

Shape, improve and monitor the OKR strategy so it would mature, after role changes had put it at risk.

Improve communication and collaboration

With clear and accountable goals across the leadership team.

Design a smooth leadership transition

Passing the torch from one generation to the next.

> **We were expanding and transitioning leadership to a new generation, a process that involves a lot of emotions that need to be navigated with gentle hands. OKRs made sure everyone was swimming in the same direction, and Wave Nine's leadership coaching was transformative.**

Itay Ariel
President, HRA Group

THE OKR PROGRAM

OKRS HELP MANAGE EXPANSION

Wave Nine partnered with HRA Group to develop the OKR strategy and implement it broadly, followed by an ongoing engagement to:

1	**Mature the OKR practice**	Solidify the practice, so all staff have clarity and energy around the company's strategic priorities.
2	**Create one source of truth**	Introduce WorkBoard AI as the dedicated single source of truth for OKRs and strategy execution.
3	**Write better OKRs every quarter**	Coach the leadership team and departments to write OKRs with clearly defined, outcome-based and action-oriented results, every single quarter.
4	**Build visibility in WorkBoard AI**	Support the team in architecting, maintaining and updating its OKRs in WorkBoard AI.
5	**Set up a digital operating rhythm**	Regular updates, with quarterly OKR reviews and resets that increase accountability for results and ease the reporting overhead.

THE DIGITAL OPERATING RHYTHM

ONGOING
Regular OKR updates in WorkBoard AI

→

EVERY QUARTER
OKR review

→

EVERY QUARTER
OKR reset

More accountability for results, less reporting overhead

> It would have been difficult to replicate our results without Wave Nine guiding us through the process.

Itay Ariel
President, HRA Group

THE OKR PROGRAM

FROM CHORE TO INSIGHT

Wave Nine ran the program and also put in place the structures, processes and behaviors that drove team engagement from within. This triggered a mindset shift that unlocked alignment on a level HRA hadn't experienced before. The process became faster, more reliable and more impactful.

BEFORE

"Update OKRs as a chore"

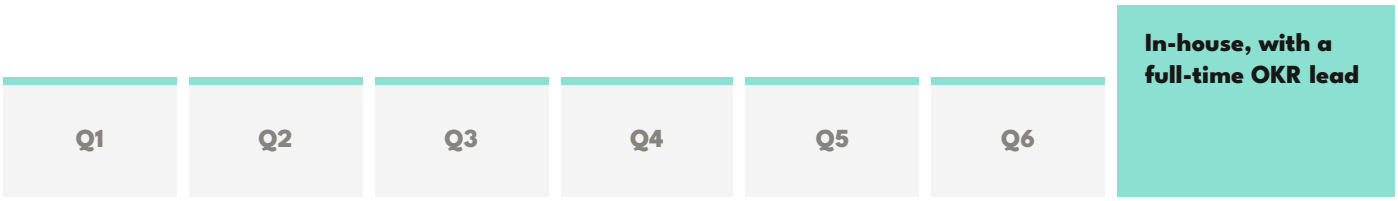
→

NOW

"Teams deriving insights from OKRs week over week"

Six quarters to in-house ownership

After six quarters with Wave Nine, HRA Group had deeply adopted and mastered the OKR process. It was ready to take over its OKR efforts internally, and hired a full-time staff member to manage them. Wave Nine continues to work with HRA every week to keep the practice strong.



OKRs touch every part of the business

Today, OKRs touch every part of HRA's business, including key projects such as its lab-grown diamonds and its operational excellence efforts. OKRs also help HRA deliver on its mission to provide sustainable, ethical solutions throughout the diamond supply chain.

Lab-grown diamonds

Operational excellence

Sustainable, ethical solutions across the diamond supply chain

LEADERSHIP COACHING

LEADERSHIP STRATEGY AND OKR COACHING

During the OKR implementation, Wave Nine focused specifically on enabling the executive leadership transition through OKRs. This involved:

01
Working with leadership to align the goals of family members with the needs of the business

02
Improving communication and collaboration through transparent OKRs

03
Identifying and defining clear procedures for trade-off decisions

Wave Nine began by working one-on-one and in small groups with members of the leadership team every week, to understand the strategy, the goals and the interpersonal challenges. Through facilitated workshops and conversations between different team members, Wave Nine crystallized a mutual understanding and aligned goals.

The work culminated in a three-day leadership retreat in Whistler, British Columbia. There, the leadership team learned to use the OKR structure and process for decision-making, trade-off decisions and clear communication, which is now standard practice in the company.

EVERY WEEK
One-on-one and small-group coaching

→

TOGETHER
Facilitated workshops and conversations

→

WHISTLER
A three-day leadership retreat

> Wave Nine was very thoughtful in their approach to understanding our business, and has put the resources in place to help us manage the OKR process internally.
>
> **Itay Ariel**
> President, HRA Group

Embedding OKRs into the leadership team's decision-making resulted in:

Clearly defined roles

A detailed plan for the transition of leadership

Open communication and conflict resolution protocols

THE RESULTS

A COHESIVE COMPANY UNDER A NEW GENERATION

HRA Group now uses OKRs for far more than goal setting. OKRs are its shared language of success and its process for decision-making and prioritization, including protocols for difficult risk mitigations that keep the business moving forward. Today, OKRs are HRA Group's system to force alignment, encourage clear communication and support successful collaboration.

> **The value that Wave Nine gave us, as a family and a business, has been transformative. I don't have the words to describe how well they managed themselves in a very delicate environment.**
>
> **Itay Ariel**
> President, HRA Group

HRA Group's work with Wave Nine helped it define clear OKRs and build a solid digital operating system, with the platform and processes that create visibility and organizational alignment. This paved the way for HRA to manage its OKR efforts internally and keep creating innovative solutions. The leadership coaching and strategy work helped HRA achieve greater cohesion, sharpen its communication and collaboration skills, and design a path forward under the new generation of leadership.

- **In-house ownership after six quarters,** with a full-time staff member managing the OKR program.
- **OKRs across the whole business,** from lab-grown diamonds to operational excellence and the mission of sustainable, ethical solutions.
- **From chore to insight:** teams derive insights from OKRs week over week, in a faster, more reliable and more impactful process.
- **A planned leadership transition:** clearly defined roles, a detailed transition plan, and open communication and conflict resolution protocols.
- **A shared language for decisions:** OKRs as the standard process for decision-making and prioritization, including protocols for difficult risk mitigations.

ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH

WORKBOARD AI SHOWCASE

How HRA Group uses WorkBoard AI as the single source of truth for its OKR program.

01 · OKRS

OKR Management

HRA Group runs its company, department and team OKRs in WorkBoard AI's OKR Management module, where Wave Nine helped the team architect, maintain and update them every quarter.

BENEFITS

- One source of truth for strategy and goals across departments and offices
- Outcome-based OKRs that teams update regularly
- Less effort spent compiling status reports

02 · VISIBILITY

Alignment and Heatmap

OKR Management and the Alignment views give HRA's leaders visibility of how department OKRs connect to company priorities, including for the new teams formed as the company grew.

BENEFITS

- New departments linked to company priorities as they form
- Gaps and overlaps between teams visible early
- Leaders see progress and attention across the business at a glance

03 · RHYTHM

Meetings and Operating Model & Cadence

HRA Group runs its digital operating rhythm in WorkBoard AI, with regular OKR updates feeding quarterly reviews and resets.

BENEFITS

- Regular updates feeding each quarterly review and reset
- Higher accountability for results each quarter
- A rhythm HRA runs in-house

Implemented with **Wave Nine**, the No. 1 implementation partner for WorkBoard AI.

WAVENINE

KEY TAKEAWAYS

THE VALUE OF AN OUTSIDE VIEW

HRA Group's work with OKRs and leadership coaching underscores the value of bringing in an outside observer who can see things from a different angle, especially when emotions are high and change is imminent.

> **We really benefitted from having someone from the outside come in and quarterback our OKR work, and the leadership coaching was excellent.**
>
> **Itay Ariel**
> President, HRA Group

The team's willingness to open up, address its challenges and take a strategic approach to innovation has paved the way for its continued success. By defining their challenges and embracing difficult conversations, the Ariel family is helping secure its legacy and support future generations in the decades to come.

An outside view when emotions run high

Weekly coaching for the leadership team

OKRs as a shared language for decisions

STRATEGY EXECUTION WITH OKRS AND AI

Let's talk about what this could look like in your organization.

wavenine.com

WAVENINE

Wave Nine Inc.
490 43rd Street, Suite 90
Oakland, CA 94609
United States

About Wave Nine. Wave Nine are AI and OKR consultants for complex organizations. Founded in Silicon Valley, we have guided 300+ transformations in 30+ countries, trained 50,000+ people and are the No. 1 implementation partner for WorkBoard AI. We help leadership teams turn strategy into results: the right goals, a steady operating rhythm, and AI that the whole organization uses to run the business.

wavenine.com · linkedin.com/company/wavenine