

How Tradition Capital Bank aligned every team and got organic growth moving

BANKING & FINANCE · 138 EMPLOYEES · WORKBOARD AI

After four years of individual goal setting, this Minnesota bank's key growth metric had not moved in over a year. With Wave Nine, it built a shared OKR culture run by its own internal coaches.

Growth

organic growth moving again after more than a year flat

3rd

quarter of the program: full engagement across the bank

Weekly

OKR updates in WorkBoard AI, up from bi-weekly

AT A GLANCE

CLIENT

Tradition Capital Bank, a mid-size bank in Minnesota built on one-on-one client relationships

INDUSTRY

Banking & Finance

COMPANY SIZE

138

CHALLENGE

Individual, yearly goals that pulled teams in different directions, duplicated work in silos, and an organic growth metric that hadn't moved in over a year

SOLUTION

WorkBoard AI as the OKR platform, with Wave Nine consulting at every step: an executive OKR workshop, onsite coaching, a trained team of internal coaches and weekly reporting

RESULTS

Organic growth moving again, full engagement by the third quarter, strategic alignment across departments, more transparency and a more even workload

THE CHALLENGE

138 PEOPLE, TOO MANY DIRECTIONS

Dedicated employees and teams were often working at cross-purposes.

Even mid-size organizations struggle with strategic alignment, with teams working in silos and duplicating efforts that distract them from their larger goals.

Alignment was a key challenge for Tradition Capital Bank, a mid-size bank from Minnesota that is committed to forging one-on-one relationships with its clients. Tradition Bank is equally committed to its 138 employees, each of whom is featured on its website, and the executive team works to make sure everyone understands the role they play in the organization as a whole.

After four years of working with a goal-setting methodology called Traction, COO Jessica Porter found that dedicated employees and teams were often working at cross-purposes. Seeing little to no movement on important metrics such as organic growth, the executive team began exploring OKRs as a potential solution.



We were moving in too many different directions, with multiple teams working on the same things, but in siloes. Others were getting stressed out because they didn't realize they played a part in someone else's priority, and it was hard to move the needle.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

STRUGGLING TO FIND ALIGNMENT

Before exploring OKRs, Tradition Bank had used the Traction methodology for four years, and Traction takes a very different approach to setting goals and evaluating progress.

TRACTION

INDIVIDUAL "ROCKS"

Each employee sets a goal for themselves

Only loosely connected to team, department or company goals

Set once a year, with little room to iterate

OKRS

A TEAM SPORT

Built on communication and collaboration

Interconnected goals across the organization

Set quarterly, so goals can be rethought along the way

For a company struggling with alignment, the individual nature of Traction didn't produce the results the bank was hoping for, and the yearly rocks left no flexibility to iterate.

“With the Traction approach, each of our nearly 150 employees had an individual goal or 'rock,' which took us in 150 different directions.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

“

We had an important metric surrounding organic growth, but despite our work with Traction, it hadn't moved in over a year.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

A board member recommended the OKR methodology, and Jessica began researching it, reading *Measure What Matters* and other foundational books. Convinced that OKRs could support alignment and help Tradition Bank reach its goals, the bank partnered with Wave Nine to launch a comprehensive OKR program. It faced five challenges:

01

Individual, yearly goals with little link to company priorities

02

Teams duplicating work in silos without knowing it

03

No clear view of who was working on what

04

Top performers carrying more than their share

05

An organic growth metric flat for over a year

BUILDING AN OKR CULTURE

Jessica and her team researched OKR solutions and OKR consulting firms. They chose WorkBoard AI as their platform to track OKRs and plan-to-progress, and hired Wave Nine to consult them at every step and train their internal coaching staff.

From the initial executive OKR workshop, Tradition Bank worked with Wave Nine's consultants to set meaningful, action-based company OKRs and to think through how each one connected to the executive strategy.

Wave Nine went beyond identifying the metrics Tradition Bank already saw as priorities. It asked the right questions to help leaders formulate a clear path forward. As is often the case, an outside perspective helped them view their challenges from a different angle.



Tradition Bank achieved high adoption rates and employee engagement thanks to the full commitment of the executive team, and key metrics such as organic growth moved in the right direction. Over time, Wave Nine handed the reins over to internal coaches, taking more of an advisory role and empowering Tradition Bank to build a transparent, self-sufficient, OKR-based culture.

“

As we moved into the third quarter, we started seeing full engagement in the program and real progress toward our goals. It wasn't just a matter of checking things off the list, it was everyone moving in the right direction.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

Jessica and Wave Nine attribute the bank's OKR success to four things:

01

Leadership support

Strong backing from the leadership team

02

Internal coaches

A strong team of internal coaches

03

Onsite coaching

Coaching on site from Wave Nine

04

A steady rhythm

Mid-quarter check-ins and weekly OKR updates in WorkBoard AI, up from bi-weekly

GREATER OVERSIGHT AND A MORE EVEN WORKLOAD



Jessica also maintains that appointing a business sponsor or owner for the WorkBoard AI platform itself kept everyone on track and engaged.

As Tradition Bank's WorkBoard AI owner, Jessica regularly reviews updates in the system. She studies workstreams to understand where different teams focus their efforts, and she leaves comments so employees can dig even deeper. It also shows that management is just as engaged in the initiative, and that OKRs aren't a mindless, set-it-and-forget-it task.

Jessica's active engagement drove adoption and participation among employees, and it gave leaders transparency and insight into what everyone was working on.

SPOTTED

Two teams working on the same thing from different angles



COORDINATED

Jessica brings the teams together



RESULT

Maximum efficiency, and no teams working against each other

Throughout the engagement, Wave Nine was by her side, helping Tradition Bank develop its coaches, craft results-oriented OKRs and shape the larger strategy. Wave Nine also ran weekly reports to help managers see who was working on specific projects, so they could allocate tasks more efficiently.

In the past, top performers took on more than their fair share of work, and there was no way to tell whether tasks could be reassigned to someone capable of completing them. With Wave Nine's support and the oversight features in WorkBoard AI, Jessica and her managers can assign work more evenly, which improves efficiency and reduces the risk of burnout for the bank's highest performers.



Wave Nine's staff was amazing and super accessible. They were always willing to roll up their sleeves and have a conversation. They were 'all in' on our success.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

ALIGNMENT, TRANSPARENCY AND ORGANIC GROWTH

Once Tradition Bank saw movement on key metrics that had been stuck for so long, such as organic growth, the strengths of its OKR program became clear to the entire board and executive team. The OKR program brought the bank these benefits:

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Employees from all departments can see how their work contributes to the company's overall success.

TRANSPARENCY

Leaders and managers can see what different departments are working on and adjust their plans, so teams don't duplicate efforts or work against each other's goals.

ORGANIC GROWTH

Every department contributes, in its own way, to the key metrics around growth and other broad goals.

Full engagement: by the third quarter of the program, the whole bank was engaged and making real progress toward its goals.

A more even workload: managers assign work more evenly, reducing the risk of burnout for top performers.

The team-focused, fast-paced nature of OKRs, with quarterly goals and regular check-ins, gave this mid-size bank the flexibility and insight to manage change effectively. All that work helped the bank build a focused, efficient and collaborative workplace.

As Wave Nine steps back to let Tradition Bank's coaches take the lead, it remains available in a supporting role, helping the coaches refine their efforts, write quality OKRs and keep building an OKR culture that will stand the test of time.



WORKBOARD SHOWCASE

How Tradition Capital Bank uses WorkBoard AI to see who is working on what and keep every team pointed at the same goals.

01 • PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

OKR Management

Teams update their key results weekly and review progress at mid-quarter check-ins. Green and red status shows at a glance which OKRs are on track, which gave the bank the confidence to set more ambitious goals.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Quarterly goals that can be adjusted along the way
- ✓ A weekly, shared picture of progress
- ✓ A clear signal on when to raise the bar

02 • EFFORT AND WORKLOAD

Workstreams

As platform owner, the COO studies workstreams to see where each team focuses its effort, and comments to dig deeper. Weekly reports built on this data show managers who is working on which projects.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Visible leadership engagement that drives adoption
- ✓ Work spread more evenly across the team
- ✓ Lower burnout risk for top performers

03 • CROSS-TEAM VIEW

Alignment

Employees from every department see how their OKRs connect to company goals. Leaders use the same view to find teams tackling the same problem from different angles and bring them together.

BENEFITS

- ✓ Every team linked to the bank's priorities
- ✓ Duplicate or conflicting efforts caught early
- ✓ Shared ownership of organic growth

SETTING AMBITIOUS OKRS AND "LEANING INTO THE RED"

“ We're seeing a lot of green in the system. So we're going to work on setting more ambitious OKRs in the quarters ahead.

Jessica Porter

Chief Operations Officer (COO), Tradition Capital Bank

Green, on the WorkBoard AI platform, means that OKRs are on track for successful completion, and Tradition Bank consistently delivers on most of its OKRs. Wave Nine's consultants, however, encourage their clients to "lean into the red."

Red means that a goal is off track and needs attention, and some degree of red is to be expected when teams push themselves to do big things. That's why a 70% completion rate for OKRs is considered admirable: the best OKRs are both inspiring and ambitious.

GREEN

On track

OKRs on track for successful completion. Tradition Bank sees a lot of it.

RED

Needs attention

Expected when teams push themselves to do big things.

THE BAR

70%

A completion rate considered admirable for inspiring, ambitious OKRs.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR OTHERS IMPLEMENTING OKRS

- 1 **Executive engagement is essential** to OKR success.
- 2 **A strong internal coaching community** helps create an OKR-focused culture.
- 3 **Onsite coaching can be highly beneficial** for organizations like Tradition Bank, where 95% of employees work onsite.
- 4 **A WorkBoard AI owner** who stays on top of all activity, leaving comments and studying the big picture, offers powerful insights and increases engagement.
- 5 **Set ambitious OKRs**, aim for 70% completion, and "lean into the red."

Today, Tradition Bank has embraced OKRs at every level of the organization, thanks to strong leadership, committed employees and a talented staff of internal coaches who eagerly put what they learn from Wave Nine into practice. As Wave Nine steps into an advisory role, Tradition Bank continues its work with OKRs, using them as a catalyst for growth, collaboration and communication around a shared company vision.

STRATEGY EXECUTION WITH OKRS AND AI

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

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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.

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