

# Viva Goals Works Council Approval at Microsoft

## Introduction

At Microsoft, the introduction of Viva Goals—a goal and objectives and key results (OKR) management solution that helps you set business goals and aligns teams to your organization’s strategic priorities—was met with enthusiasm. However, given its potential to be used to assess employee performance, Microsoft reviewed this new product with its own works councils in Europe, who identified some key considerations for Microsoft’s deployment of Viva Goals internally. Early engagement with our works councils enabled Microsoft to make product adjustments, develop guidelines for internal use of Viva Goals, and foster continued dialogue with our works councils throughout deployment.

Below we provide more information about our own discussions with our works councils and the steps we took to address their feedback. Nothing here is meant to provide legal advice for your own deployment of Viva Goals. As always, you should carefully review your own deployment with appropriate stakeholders at your organization to ensure alignment with your workplace policies, practices, and procedures, as well as compliance with any legal requirements applicable to your organization.

## 1. Engaging with Our Works Councils

- We engaged in early dialogue with our works councils to gain insight into their feedback. A key focus was assessing any potential overlap between the use of OKRs with Viva Goals and our internal employee performance and development systems—systems that assist employees in defining accountabilities and expected impact as well as making improvements over time.
- Through collaborative discussions, we emphasized that Viva Goals was designed to set aspirational goals, enhance alignment, provide transparency, and increase employee engagement. Viva Goals is not a replacement for our own employee performance and development system.
- Our Works Councils appreciated our commitment to transparency and agreed to work closely with us to define the proper guidelines and policies.

## 2. Crafting Clear Guidelines

- Our next step involved close collaboration with our Human Resources (HR) team to craft comprehensive guidelines to distinguish between OKRs and our existing performance and development approach.
- These guidelines covered:
  1. **Purpose:** Clearly articulating the purpose of our OKRs (including their aspirational nature) and their alignment with organizational goals.
  2. **Ownership:** Establishing that OKRs are for the organization or team to use to measure their progress and making it clear they are not performance evaluations.
  3. **Measurement:** Highlighting that OKRs were outcome-focused and not tied to individual performance ratings.
  4. **Frequency:** Encouraging regular OKR updates without linking them to performance reviews.
  5. **Manager Guidance:** Detailing that managers play a crucial role in ensuring successful OKR implementation by defining meaningful outcomes, high-quality KRs and success metrics, and by reviewing dashboards, and projects statuses to align with OKRs.

## 3. Publishing Guidelines Companywide

- We disseminated these guidelines across our entire organization. Transparency was key—we wanted every employee to understand the distinct role of OKRs.
- The guidelines were made available through the company HR website.
- We encouraged open discussions and addressed any queries or misconceptions promptly.

## 4. Differentiating Individual Goals vs. Team Goals/Organizational Goals

- Our Works Councils emphasized the need for policy differentiation between individual and team goals or organizational goals within Viva Goals.
- To address this, we introduced specific policies:
  - **Multiple Owners:** In certain geographies, objectives or key results required more than one owner.
  - **Team-Only or Organization-Only Goals:** In select regions, individual goals were discouraged. Instead, employees were encouraged to set goals that belonged to their teams or broader organizational units.

**Additional Resources:**

- [Viva Goals security, privacy, and compliance | Microsoft Learn](#)
- [Understanding-OKRs-vs-Performance.pdf \(microsoft.com\)](#)
- [Powering purpose-driven employee engagement and driving efficiency internally at Microsoft with OKRs and Microsoft Viva Goals - Inside Track Blog](#)
- [Viva la Vida! Work life is better at Microsoft with Viva](#)