**Dr. Grove’s Basic OKR Hygiene**

The essence of a healthy OKR culture—ruthless intellectual honesty, a disregard for self-interest, deep allegiance to the team—flowed from the fiber of Andy Grove’s being. But it was Grove’s nuts-and-bolts approach, his engineer’s mentality, that made the system work. OKRs are his legacy, his most valuable and lasting management practice. Here are some lessons I learned at Intel from the master and from Jim Lally, Andy’s OKR disciple and my mentor:

***Less is more.*** “A few extremely well-chosen objectives,” Grove wrote, “impart a clear message about what we say ‘yes’ to and what we say ‘no’ to.” A limit of three to five OKRs per cycle leads companies, teams, and individuals to choose what matters most. In general, each objective should be tied to five or fewer key results. (See chapter 4, “Superpower #1: Focus and Commit to Priorities.”)

***Set goals from the bottom up.*** To promote engagement, teams and individuals should be encouraged to create roughly half of their own OKRs, in consultation with managers. When all goals are set top-down, motivation is corroded. (See chapter 7, “Superpower #2: Align and Connect for Teamwork.”)

***No dictating.*** OKRs are a cooperative social contract to establish priorities and define how progress will be measured. Even after company objectives are closed to debate, their key results continue to be negotiated. Collective agreement is essential to maximum goal achievement. (See chapter 7, “Superpower #2: Align and Connect for Teamwork.”)

***Stay flexible.*** If the climate has changed and an objective no longer seems practical or relevant as written, key results can be modified or even discarded mid-cycle. (See chapter 10, “Superpower #3: Track for Accountability.”)

***Dare to fail.*** “Output will tend to be greater,” Grove wrote, “when everybody strives for a level of achievement beyond [their] immediate grasp. . . . Such goal-setting is extremely important if what you want is peak performance from yourself and your subordinates.” While certain operational objectives must be met in full, aspirational OKRs should be uncomfortable and possibly unattainable. “Stretched goals,” as Grove called them, push organizations to new heights. (See chapter 12, “Superpower #4: Stretch for Amazing.”)

***A tool, not a weapon.*** The OKR system, Grove wrote, “is meant to pace a person—to put a stopwatch in his own hand so he can gauge his own performance. It is not a legal document upon which to base a performance review.” To encourage risk taking and prevent sandbagging, OKRs and bonuses are best kept separate. (See chapter 15, “Continuous Performance Management: OKRs and CFRs.”)

***Be patient; be resolute*.** Every process requires trial and error. As Grove told his iOPEC students, Intel “stumbled a lot of times” after adopting OKRs: “We didn’t fully understand the principal purpose of it. And we are kind of doing better with it as time goes on.” An organization may need up to four or five quarterly cycles to fully embrace the system, and even more than that to build mature goal muscle.