

GP-AI Gatekeeper 2025 – OKR DevOps solving the cultural problem for David Farley

2088z33)  GP-AI Gatekeeper 2025 – OKR DevOps solving the cultural problem for David Farley 
[23 Jan 2025]

By **Nick Ray Ball**

Sunday – 22:55 GMT – March 02, 2025

Dear David Farley,

In podcast episode [☆DF !\[\]\(e3f8612927870f2e0f9f5989e6dd3064_img.jpg\) 62b6. How OKR DevOps Encourages Testing](#), you and Nicole Forsgren discussed the idea that “if you want to win friends and influence people, **show them a problem they have that your solution can fix.**”

I’ve worked on **OKR (Objectives and Key Results) systems** [since 2016](#) and its parent CMS, S-Web, [since 2002](#). Its **points-driven method for encouragement and collaboration** is out of the park in terms of behavioural science driving motivation and collaboration

In your book Modern Software Engineering, which is very dear to me, you explain that one of the most significant problems is **the cultural problem around TDD test-driven design** and continuous delivery practices.

In the Innovate UK GP-AI Gatekeeper Grant Application, I had the opportunity to include two appendices on project delivery, where I presented the OKR system and within a simple yet powerful concept: **By awarding more points for testing than for completing the code—and linking point scores directly to lifetime royalties if the project succeeds—developers are no longer encouraged to test—they’re financially invested in it.** Just as musicians continue earning from hit songs decades later, developers secure perpetual rewards for well-tested, robust software.

Beyond financial incentives, **the gamified OKR system itself is fun and highly addictive**—so much so that, if my experience is anything to go by, we’d have to add rules to make people work less for health reasons.

Then, there’s the Hawthorne Effect, a foundational element of this system dating back to 2018: [UCS Hawthorne for Richard Thaler](#). In short, people are more motivated by knowing they’re being observed than by direct financial incentives. Because of this, the OKR system sees collaboration as a fundamental part of motivation.

When you monetise testing, when the OKR system itself is cool, fun, and addictive, when it leverages the Hawthorne Effect, and when it fosters deep collaboration, **you create a system that naturally drives behavioural change.**

And by solving the motivation problem, you solve the cultural problem.

Job done. 

~

The 3 OKR System Documents Within the GP-AI Gatekeeper Presentation

Innovate UK Smart grants application question 8: Delivering Your Project

Question 8 – [Delivering Your Project](#)

Question 8 – [Project Plan Appendix](#)

The Podcast Episode

I was inspired to write this—something that had been on my mind for a while—while re-listening to the [Sienna AI Beyond ☆DF66 podcast](#): and the retrospective podcast episode [☆DF 🚀 62b6. How OKR DevOps Encourages Testing](#)

David Farley:

“I often frame my version of the same advice, which is first to have the conversation on their terms, not yours. Don’t go and tell people that you want to do Continuous Integration; tell people that we want to make sure that we can deliver software faster and more safely into the hands of users. What matters to the people is what matters; different people will frame the problem differently.

And the other thing, if you want to win friends and influence people, is, try and identify a problem that they have that you can solve using these techniques, and if you can solve a problem using these techniques, you’ll definitely win them over. They’ll be more impressed and more willing to listen.”

Nick Ray Ball:

“I’m just going to jump in here. The thing that made me believe it was possible to create not only the S-Web 6 VC AI CMS (Sienna AI) but also the entire 10 technologies design was **the absolute need for testing**. Because of the testing structure and because I had virtualised that as **a large Albert Hall Oculus dome displaying every little test**, so we can always see when something’s knocked out—**the branding alone of that, is sufficient to sell it to anyone who has experienced a system failure**; it can be adapted and transformed into a solution for the NHS and nearly every company. Pay attention to the problems, the complaints, and the bug testing. When you throw away every bug test report, or it doesn’t get reported, crash and burn.

So the way TBS-CC-OKR DevOps really began was with that concept of testing, and recently we’ve seen the test tube emoji 🧪 **scoring** 90 points, encouraging me to do testing, that I wasn’t really that into doing but as soon as I got that 90 points guaranteed I was there doing it for three hours straight

I understand that’s quite general, but sometimes the simplest solutions are the most effective. Naturally, you have to develop the entire OKR software to execute that, but truly, it’s just a spreadsheet with rules. OK, I haven’t heard it yet, so I’m eager to hear Nicole’s response.”

Thursday – 16:23 GMT – January 23, 2025

Original version:

Dear David Farley,

In podcast episode [☆DF 🚀 62b6. How OKR DevOps encourages testing](#), we hear the episode begins with you and Nicole Forsgren. You talked about if you want to endear yourself with somebody, show them a problem that they have that your solution can fix.

I’ve been working on OKR (Objectives and key results) Systems since 2016 and its parent, the TBS-CC, since 2002. Its points-driven method for encouragement and collaboration is out of the park in terms of behavioural science motivating and collaborating.

But for you, in your book, which is very dear to me, it seems that the biggest problem you had was the cultural problem around test-driven design and continuous delivery practices.

In the Innovate UK GP-AI gatekeeper grant application, I had the opportunity to add two appendices about delivering the project. I used this to present the OKR system within it, which mentions that simply by awarding more points for the test than for the completion of the code, when points equal royalties for life if one has a hit (just like music), you solve the motivation problem.

In solving the motivation problem, you solve the cultural problem.

Job done.

Nick Ray Ball

Founder

Sienna AI Ltd UK

www.S-Web.org

Username: Innovate UK

Password: UK1

Company Number **14929119**

W R E N H O U S E , 5 E L M G R O V E , E P S O M , S U R R E Y , K T 1 8 7 L Z

Contact

+44 7387 394 298.

Nick@SiennaAI.net

Sienna AI by Nick Ray Ball
1999 to 2025

Websites:

www.CapeVillas.com (2000 /25)

www.ExperienceAfrica.com (2009/10)

www.s-world.biz/TST/index.htm (2011)

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www.AngelTheory.org (2016/20)

www.S-World.org (2020/23)

www.NickRayBall.com (2023)

www.S-Web.org (2020/24)

SiennaAI.net 2025

(SiennaAI.net Opens to the public Q2 2025)

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[Twitter.com/NickRayBall](https://twitter.com/NickRayBall)

[Linkedin.com/in/Nick-Ray-Ball](https://www.linkedin.com/in/Nick-Ray-Ball)

[Facebook.com/NickRayBall](https://www.facebook.com/NickRayBall)