Welcome to Module 7 Lesson 7: Working in a 90-day World.

So what do we mean by that?

It's been found that people tend to kind of start to get off track after about 90 days of working on a project. It's an easy way to kind of divide up the year. You take your annual, your one-year plan and then you put it into four quarters and it makes it easy to have quarterly projects that lead you to that one-year plan. And it seems to be an appropriate period of time to get a significant project done and to stay on track.

So we'll be talking about setting quarterly goals every 90 days throughout the organization to help you get towards the mid-year plan and then the BHAG.

Before we get into the quarterly, let's talk about the one-year plan.

You've done your three-year picture. And now you're going to get into the one-year. So the three year picture was a little bit more describing a picture. It was a little more, “we'd like it to look like this,” “let's include some of this,” “let's include some of that.”

Now is when we absolutely start using SMART goals. So you were making sure that every one of our goals for the one-year plan meets all the SMART criteria. And it's not movable like the three-year plan is. So with the one-year, we're revisiting that at every annual planning session.

So, every 90 days we're revisiting the one-year plan, but ideally will not be changing or moving. The three-year plan can change, but the one-year plan ideally would not change. So you'll set your date. You'll set some specific goals and then you'll start creating 90-day rocks or quarterly projects, rocks – same thing, that will help you get to that one-year plan.

So with setting your rocks, keep in mind less is more. As a reminder from the reading material, the rock is a like a quarterly project that once identified, gives you the ability to prioritize against all the email and the smaller projects that kind of fall around the rock like the sand or the water and the pebbles. So in this situation less is more.

When folks get going on the ignition, they tend to get excited and they want to take on a lot which is awesome. But as I said earlier, people overestimate what they can get done in a year. So, keep it doable especially with your first quarter or two. You don't want them to make it a gimme at all.

But it is important that it be attainable so that people start to get momentum. They start to believe in the plan. They start to believe in your vision and your BHAG. And they get excited. And then they have that energy to take on bigger rocks. So start fairly small with the first quarter but always can keep in mind that less is more.

No one should ever have more than three to five rocks because it's just becomes a burden and frankly, it's unfair.

So how many rocks should you have?

Three to seven company rocks. So within a company there will be projects that many people contribute to like, let's say launching a product. That's going to involve basically every department but you'll have only one person own that rock.

This is from the Entrepreneurial Operating System. These are the numbers that they recommend. And I found them in practice to be pretty on point. But I really go more towards the lower number as much as possible, especially in businesses that are smaller or in a startup environment.

When you have larger, more established businesses sometimes you can go with more company rocks. But if you're coming into an environment that's kind of messy, and there's maybe some tension within the leadership team, go with less is more so that you can get those initial wins.

There should only be one owner of a rock. Like I said there will be lots of people that contribute to a company rock but there should be only one person that owns that rock. By owning that rock it means that they're the person that's making sure that all the coordinated elements of that rock are getting done. And they're reporting back to the team.

So if it's a company rock, they're reporting to the leadership team on how to how it's going. If it's departmental rock, then the person who owns that rock is reporting to their team.

Essentially we'll get into meeting rhythm in the next lesson but we're going to recommend that you have weekly team calls. And during those weekly team calls, there's conversation around – not too much conversation. Ideally just reporting on where people are with their rocks. So it’s the company rocks that happens at the leadership level.

Leadership team members will also often have their own rocks separate from a company rock. If someone has three company rocks, then they shouldn't also have three as a leadership team member. You're still within that seven but, add them all together is my point. It shouldn't be too burdensome.

Keep in mind if someone, let's say, your CMO has a rock of launching a campaign. The CMO is not going to create the campaign, right? But they're going to own that rock. They're going to make sure that their team is getting everything that needs to get done on time in order to launch that campaign. And they are going to be reporting to the other leadership team members on a weekly basis on how that rock is going.

Rocks roll downhill. So essentially they'll that CMO will have a marketing campaign launch rock. And then they would say take the copy portion of that and that would be a rock for their copy chief. They would take the automation portion of that and that would be a rock for another person on their team.

So ultimately what ends up happening is the rocks at the top sort of break up as they go throughout the organization. And then they assist in getting those larger rocks done, if that makes sense. So your direct reports to the leadership team members usually have two to four. And then as you trickle down, ultimately everyone should have at least one.

In situations where there’s a lot of people in an organization that have the same role, like say customer service rep, I often get questions around what those rocks could possibly be because it's not necessarily all going to be contributing to one project.

In that situation, I would suggest that people have their rock should be either goals to increase their pick a number, right? Increase sales. Increase response time. Whatever it is that's relevant to that person's job and to how they're doing within their job. And or they can have a rock around like training or learning opportunities.

So, eat the elephant one bite at a time. If your elephant is the BHAG or your BHAG is the elephant, then your rocks are the bites, right?

The idea is that every rock that is established throughout the quarterly planning is to support that BHAG.

So, frequently asked questions that we get around rocks: how to track. We'll soon have a tool within our software that you can use to track rocks. But again you can have it in your project management. You can have a simple Excel file. Whatever is easiest for you, just as long as it's accessible to everyone. That everyone can view it and then the person who needs to update it can update it.

Sharing rocks is a no-no. Ultimately only one person should be responsible for a quarterly project to get done. Again, they're not necessarily the person to do all the work, but they are the person to own it and to be responsible and accountable for that getting done and reporting on its progress.

And I don't recommend adding rocks during the quarter. Once your rocks are established, they should be set. There might be situations, particularly at the beginning, where you realize, this wasn't actually a good rock for that person. Maybe we should move it to that person. There's this other thing that just came up and it's really important and it's going to take longer than a couple of weeks to get done, then you might add that in. For the most part once you set the rock, that's it. It's a decision made and we move forward.

So that's it for working in the 90-day world. Thank you for joining me. I know I'm throwing a lot at you so please feel free to reach out to CAIO@ChiefAIOfficer.com with your questions.

And otherwise, I will see you in the next lesson where we will go over meeting rhythm.

Thank you.