

Future-proof entrepreneurship in SMEs: The OK!-Method

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Abstract

The OK!-method is based on a sound base of management/business administration theories, like Systems Theory and Business Administration method (In 't Veld, Slatus, & In 't Veld, 2023) (Veeke, Ottjes, & Lodewijks, 2008) (Simons, 2014), Multiple value model (Gleeson-White, 2014), Systems Thinking (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972), Dialogue & Communication (Scharmer, 2009) (Scharmer, 2018) and Kepner and Tregoe Method (1981). These bases of the OK!-Method are further developed by an input-throughput-output model of the international <IR> framework of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC, 2022). Besides the input-throughput-output structure, the IIRC model is linked to the external environment (including the creation, preservation, and erosion of value in time), as well as (new) business models in the context of purpose, mission and vision of the company. The outcomes can be positive and negative in time (including long-term orientation) regarding finance, social and environment (so, in fact, the well-known triple Ps in sustainability: People, Planet and Profit). New business models (Jonker, 2015) introduces business models that are not always based on ownership (but on usage) and profit maximisation. So, the orientation of new business models is more circular and sustainable (within the Rhineland business framework (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2019).

The base of management/business administration follows the mainstream literature (Bateman & Snell, 2004), and topics like External environment analyses instruments for stakeholders analyses and social factors developments, and Internal organisational analyses instruments for Strategy, Organisational culture, Leadership, Structuring, Processes, Staff, Company assets, Governance and Finance. Another essential layer in the OK!-Method is the Kepner-Tregoe method (1981). The method is based on four processes: Situation appraisal, Problem analysis, Decision analysis and Potential problem analysis.

What are the reasons for a company to draw attention to circularity and sustainability besides the traditional goal of generating profit? In the business environment (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2019), there is a shift from the Anglo-Saxon business model (based on maximising shareholder value and profit maximisation) to the Rhineland business model (based on long-term stakeholder value). This is not only observed in annual reports of large companies (with a quotation at the stock exchanges) but also for Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In the DOSIT method (Berendsen, Van Liere, Venselaar, Ansems, & Appelman, 2006) there are three main reasons SMEs are focusing on sustainable/circular approaches: Requirements from their clients (the market), (expected future) legislation from the government (national or international), and internal motives of the entrepreneur (often based on stewardship-related philosophies). In a recent contribution to this topic (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2023) the long-term value of an enterprise is the integrated value (IV), and it consists of three components: Financial Value (FV), Social Value (SV) and Environmental Value (EV). Or in an equation: $IV = FV + SV + EV$.

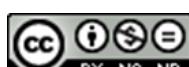
The OK!-Method uses seven sequential stages to contribute to a future-proof and sustainable organisation: Sensing, Assessing, Root cause analysis, Structured decision research, Setting up implementations, Implementation, and Evaluation.

Keywords: Multiple value, Integrated reporting, OK!-Method, New Business Models (NBMs), Circular Economy, Sustainability, Triple Ps, SDGs, and SMEs



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Introduction

Future-proof entrepreneurship is a balanced activity of a company between financial goals (like profit) and non-financial goals (like social and environmental impact) in a world that is characterised as VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). An entrepreneur has to navigate their company to be resilient in a VUCA world and manage their stakeholders' (long-term) interests, like profitability, social impact and environmental impact. This study focuses on SMEs (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises), often family-owned, and not on large companies, which usually have the legal structure of a public limited company (PLC, AG, SA, NV) with a quotation on a stock exchange.

The research method can be characterised as mixed methods (Creswell, 2022) and applied research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003), so a (modest) literature review has been used for the relevant pillars of the OK!-Method¹. Interviews and case studies are used to show the empirical impact of the method in eighteen (Dutch) SMEs, for reasons of confidentiality, only anonymous data are used and shown. The ultimate goal of this research is twofold: an overview of the main pillars of the OK!-Method and the OK!-Method applied in SMEs.

In the academic discussion of sustainability and circularity, we observe that both concepts are becoming more synonymous, although there are still some differences at the edges of the definitions.

'We define sustainability as the balanced integration of economic performance, social inclusiveness, and environmental resilience, to the benefit of current and future generations.' (Geisdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017)

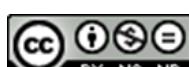
'We define the Circular Economy as a regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimised by slowing, closing, and narrowing material and energy loops. This can be achieved through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling.' (Geissdoerfer, Pieroni, Pogosso, & Soufani, 2020)

In 'Towards a consensus on the circular economy' (Prieto-Sandoval, Jaca, & Ormazabal, 2018) the differences between both concepts are getting smaller and smaller.

To measure the performance of an enterprise, the six capitals framework that has been developed by Gleeson-White (2014) and the International Integrated Reporting Council or IIRC (2022). The six capitals are: Financial capital, Manufactured capital, Intellectual capital, Human capital, Social and Relationship capital, and Natural capital. The IIRC model is provided in Appendix I.

So, to conclude, in Figure 1, a Venn diagram (Jansen, 2025) was constructed to summarise the discussion for this research.

¹ OK is an acronym for the Dutch word OrganisatieKundig. In English, organisatiekundig should be translated as management, organisational science, or business administration.



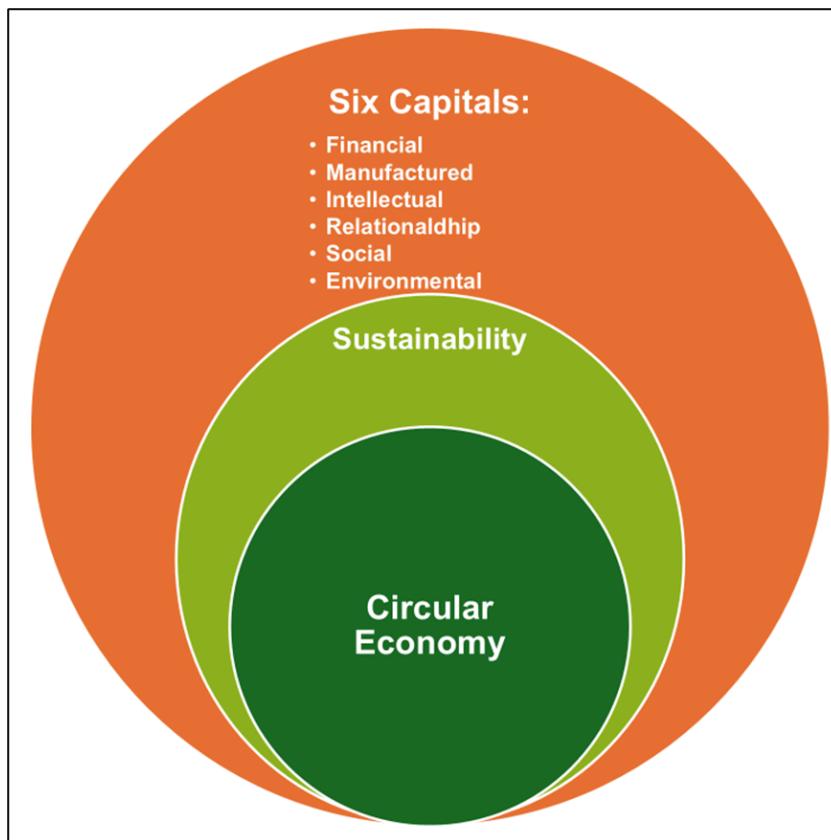


Figure 1 Multiple value model, Sustainability and Circular Economy

There are many schools of thought in finance and accounting for measuring the performance of companies (See Table 1), besides traditional measures like profit and added value, and thus the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product or GDP (Hueting & De Boer, 2019). The non-financial performance indicators are often used to measure the firm's contribution to circularity and sustainability. Balancing in integrated value is a paradigm shift in traditional thinking about the (financial) value of a company (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2025b).

The theory of the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 2004) introduced four perspectives to measure a company's performance in the 1990s and how each perspective relates to each other: Financial perspective, Customer perspective, Internal process perspectives, Learning & Growth perspective, and how intangible assets are transformed into tangible outcomes. The line of thinking is as follows: Learning & Growth (human resources) result in better Internal processes, so Customers will be more satisfied (and buy more, so sales increase), and this will result in better Financial results (like profit). In the model of Kaplan & Norton, there is no link to the environmental impact!

Table 1 summarises the four schools of thought in this article about the OK! Method.

Six capitals Gleeson-White (2014) & IIRC (2021)	Triple P or Triple Bottom Line (Elkington 1997)	Schoenmaker & Schramade (2024)	Kaplan & Norton (2004)
Financial capital	Profit	Financial Value	Financial perspective
Manufactured capital			
Intellectual capital			
Human capital	People	Social Value	Learning & Growth Perspective
Social & Relationship capital			
Natural capital	Planet	Environmental Value	N.A.
N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Internal Process Perspective
N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Customer Perspective

In the 1990s, the Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1997) was introduced to measure the company's Profit, People (social) and Planet (environment), the Triple P model.

This Triple P model (Elkington, 1997) is the base of the Integrated Value Model (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2023). The long-term value of an enterprise is the integrated value (IV), and it consists of three components: Financial Value (FV), Social Value (SV) and Environmental Value (EV); or in an equation: $IV = FV + SV + EV$. Each value (V) is the present value (where r is the discount factor for each value type) of the three cash flows (FCF = Financial Cash Flow, SCF = Social Cash Flow, and ECF = Environmental Cash Flow) according to the following formula (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2024):

$$IV = \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{FCF_i}{(1+r_f)^i} + \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{SCF_i}{(1+r_s)^i} + \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{ECF_i}{(1+r_e)^i}$$

Assume the present value of the ECF is very negative and is larger than the present value of SCF; in that case, the $IV < FV$. The following example is shown in Table 1 (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2025a) makes it clear that integrated value (IV) differs from financial value (FV):



Table 2 Empirical data integrated value (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2025a)

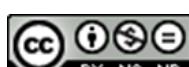
Value component	Weight	Value (Euros billions)
Financial value (FV)	1	+79
Social value (SV)	1	+283 -137
Environmental value (EV)	1	-183
Integrated value (IV)		42

Financial capital is on the passive or credit side of the balance sheet and shows how the assets are financed with Equity and Loans (Liabilities). Manufactured capital is on the asset or debit side of the balance sheet, but is also part of the planet/environment or natural capital. The OK!-Method measures the six capitals, Outside-in and Inside-out. We will discuss these concepts later in this article.

The OK!-method is based on a sound base of management/business administration theories, like: Systems Theory and Business Administration method (In 't Veld, Slatius, & In 't Veld, 2023) (Veeke, Ottjes, & Lodewijks, 2008) (Simons, 2014), Multiple value model (Gleeson-White, 2014), Systems Thinking (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972), Dialogue & Communication (Scharmer, 2009) (Scharmer, 2018) and Kepner and Tregoe method (Kepner & Tregoe, 1981). These bases of the OK!-Method are further developed by an input-throughput-output model of the international <IR> framework of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC, 2022). Besides the input-throughput-output structure, the IIRC model is linked to the external environment (including the creation, preservation, and erosion of value in time), as well as (new) business models in the context of purpose, mission and vision of the company. The outcomes can be positive and negative in time (including long-term orientation) regarding finance, social and environment (so, in fact, the well-known triple Ps in sustainability: People, Planet and Profit). New business models (Jonker, 2015) introduces business models that are not always based on ownership but on usage and profit maximisation. So, the orientation of new business models is more circular and sustainable (within a Rhineland business framework (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2019).

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maximising shareholder value and profit maximisation) to the Rhineland business model (based on long-term stakeholder value). This is not only observed in annual reports of large companies (with a quotation at the stock exchanges) but also for Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In the DOSIT method (Berendsen, Van Liere, Venselaar, Ansems, & Appelman, 2006) there are three main reasons SMEs are focusing on sustainable/circular approaches: Requirements from their clients (the market), (expected future) legislation from the government (national or international), and internal motives of the entrepreneur, often based on stewardship-related philosophies (Jansen, 2025).

Circularity and Sustainability in business

In annual reports of large companies (often with a quotation on the stock exchange), there is nowadays a balanced attention to the Triple P perspectives: Profit (or Finance), People (or Social) and Planet (or Environment). Some examples of such an approach can be found in, for instance, Ahold-Delhaize (Ahold-Delhaize, 2024), Maersk (Maersk, 2024), Stellantis (Stellantis, 2025) and Volkswagen Group (Volkswagen, 2024)

For SMEs, often family-owned companies, this type of very specialised reporting is not that common and required; we use the SME definition (with criteria such as Number of employees, Annual turnover and Balance sheet total) of the European Commission (2020). In Germany, the concept of 'Mittelstand' is often used to understand also the behaviour of larger enterprises (often family-owned) acting as an SME (Statistisches-Bundesamt, 2025).

Measuring double materiality is measuring financial materiality and impact materiality; balancing (simultaneously) between: Outward Impact & Inward Impact, Internal Stakeholders & External Stakeholders, Short-term versus Long-term, and Monetising. In Table 3, double materiality has been summarised.



Table 3: Overview of Double Materiality. Source: Double materiality: an overview (Jansen, 2025), developed by the authors and based on several publications, like: (Deloitte, 2024)

Double Materiality → Stakeholders ↓	Financial Materiality • Inside-out • Outward impact	Impact Materiality • Outside-in • Inward impact	
Internal Stakeholders:		Impact:	
		Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees Management Supervisory board ... 			
External Stakeholders:		Impact:	
		Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shareholders Banks Customers Suppliers Government Trade unions Industry associations Local communities ... 			

OK!-Method: An overview

The OK!-Method is based on several pillars of sound management research, especially for SMEs. We want to mention the main ones:

- I. Systems Theory and Business Administration method (In 't Veld, Slatius, & In 't Veld, 2023) (Veeke, Ottjes, & Lodewijks, 2008) (Simons, 2014)
- II. Systems Thinking (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972)
- III. Six Capital of Gleeson-White (Gleeson-White, 2014) (IIRC, 2022)
- IV. Kepner-Tregoe method (Kepner & Tregoe, 1981)
- V. Dialogue (and Communication) (Scharmer, 2018) (Scharmer, 2009)

The dialogue between the management team of the SME and their internal and external stakeholders is especially essential for the OK!-Method.

In the following five text boxes, each theoretical contribution is briefly explained.

I System Theory and Business Administration (Veeke, Ottjes, & Lodewijks, 2008) (In 't Veld, Slatius, & In 't Veld, 2023) describes how the elements and relations in a system are related to each other and to the environment in a process of transformation of inputs.



In the Levers of Control, Simons (2014) introduces four control systems: Belief systems, Boundary systems, Interactive control systems, and Diagnostic control systems. Especially soft controls are relevant for a company to learn in several ways (Tessier & Otley, 2012).

II Systems Thinking (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972)

Computer models are used to show the consequences of exponential economic development and population growth on the planet's natural resources, as well as all sorts of pollution. The complexity of such systems, with exponential growth, limited resources and feedback loops of human activities. A similar approach was developed by Mishan (1971) in a more qualitative way, introducing the costs of external diseconomies.

III Six Capital of Gleeson-White (Gleeson-White, 2014) (IIRC, 2022)

The traditional balance sheet (assets & equity) and income statement (costs & revenues) register the total performance of a company in a limited way. In the approach of Gleeson-White and the IIRC, a broader scope has been provided for the balance sheet and income statement, based on six capitals: Financial capital, Manufactured capital, Intellectual capital, Human capital, Social & Relationship capital, and Natural capital. The IIRC has placed the Gleeson -White model into a business model perspective.

IV Kepner-Tregoe method (Kepner & Tregoe, 1981)

A method to analyse a situation, develop the root cause of a problem, map different solutions, and implement the best solution. Structured questionnaires are often used to start the analysis stage of the method.

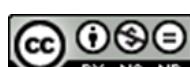
V Dialogue (and Communication) (Scharmer, 2009) (Scharmer, 2018)

Scharmer summarises Theory U (2009) as follows: '*A theoretical framework for the analysis of principles, practices, and processes that differentiate among four types of emergence and antiemergence: the four types differ in terms of their source (or their structure of attention) with respect to where their activity is enacted or performed from. Theory U illuminates the source level of enacted systems (or social systems)*'

Theory U describes the (communication, especially listening) process in a U shape: Downloading, Seeing, Sensing, Presencing, Chrystalising, Prototyping, and Performing with five movements: Co-Initiating, Co-Sensing, Co-Presencing, Co-Creating, and Co-Evolving (Scharmer, 2009).

To summarise, we can define the OK!-Method as:

'Based on sound empirical methods from business administration/management, the method observes, assesses, investigates, influences, and evaluates the futureproofing of organisations through a highly structured, dialogue-promoting question structure from the following



perspectives: Six Capitals, 17 SDGs, Integrated Business Approach, and Shareholders. ’ (Jansen, 2025)

The OK!-Method (See Appendix I) uses seven sequential stages: Sensing, Assessing, Root cause analysis, Structured decision research, Setting up implementations, Implementation, and Evaluation (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024). The underlying theory behind the seven steps is, in fact, a total quality model (TQM) like the EFQM model, in which several stages (including feedback loops and evaluation) are the backbone of the model (EFQM, 2024).

The next component in the OK!-Method is the six capitals of Gleeson-White (2014) and plotted (Appendix II) in the multiple value framework of the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC, 2022). The six capitals are: Financial capital, Manufactured capital, Intellectual capital, Human capital, Social and relationship capital, and Natural capital. The six capitals are embedded in the OK!-method, so in each step, the six capitals are monitored in a balanced way. The sensing stage leads to insights into the (im)balance of six capitals through the perception of the environment now and with unchanged policy for the future; and to an (im)balance on the six capitals due to the perception of internal stakeholders now and in the future, with unchanged policy.

The components three, four and five are part of the so-called integrative model of analysis, which functions as a framework of the OK!-Method (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024).

The third component is the four environmental (f)actors: Ideological breeding grounds, Social factors, Interest groups, and Directly involved stakeholders.

The fourth component in the OK! Method is the nine organisational focus areas: Strategy, Leadership, Organisational culture, Formal structures, Business and information processes, Business assets, Staff and talent, Finance, and Law. The focus areas function as a system of lenses through which to observe the organisation internally and externally.

The fifth component is a star of competencies for the SME management teams: value-creating capacities, Connecting capacities, Professionalising capacities, Organising capacities, and Changing capacities. It also includes more general skills like Communication, Networking, Human, and Reflection (see also Appendices I and V).

The OK! method uses a database model to ask management teams of SMEs about their state of the art of being circular or sustainable in their company. The input of the complete management team is needed to avoid a lack of transparency and top-down approaches. So, communication is essential from scratch and during the execution of the OK!-Method. An IT-driven database with about 400 questions will be used for the several questionnaires in the seven steps of the OK!-Method. The IT-driven database of the OK!-Method can store data and generate tables and graphs to discuss the outcomes with the management team of an SME at each stage. An example of such a multiple-value output is plotted in Figure 1 (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024).

Compared to the double materiality overview (Table 1), the OK!-Method is more profound because the inside-out and outside-in approaches are used for all external and internal stakeholders! So, there are more perspectives in the OK!-Method than in the traditional



approach of double materiality from Table 3. As in the outside-in approach, the different environmental aspects are considered, like: Directly involved stakeholders, Interest groups, Societal factors (DESTEP+) and Ideological breeding ground. The traditional DESTEP method (Kotler, 2000) to map the environment of an organisation is extended with legal, fiscal, labour market and media aspects, besides the traditional DESTEP factors (Demographic, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Political factors).

The inside-out approach is focused on the nine organisational areas and the capacities of management & staff actors (the star in the OK!-Method, see Appendix V for more details).

Essential for the OK!-Method is the interaction of the SME involved with its environment, in four main levels (see also Appendix I) the environment is categorised: Directly involved stakeholders (Customers, Competitors, Suppliers, Banks, etc.), Interest groups (Regulators, Trade unions, Action groups, etc.), Societal factors also known as DESTEP+ (Demographic factors, Social & Cultural factors, Technical factors, Environmental factors, Political factors, Legal & Fiscal factors, Labour market, and Media), and Ideological breeding ground (National Cultures, Ethical values, etc.).

Figures 2 and 3 provide an example of a management team's perception of the international organisation and people and networks of people plotted over the six capitals. The colours match the traffic lights: green is okay (no action is needed), orange (some action is required), and red (action is necessary).

Figure 2 Multiple value diagram - Perception environment (Outside-in)

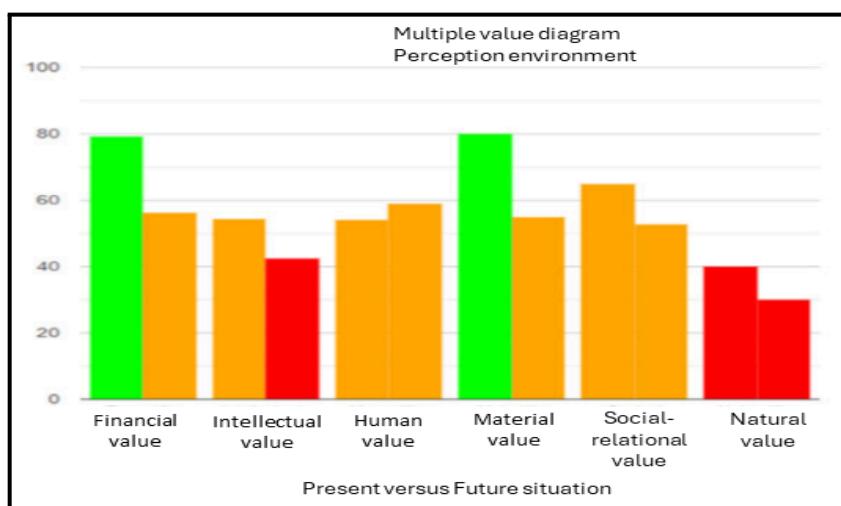
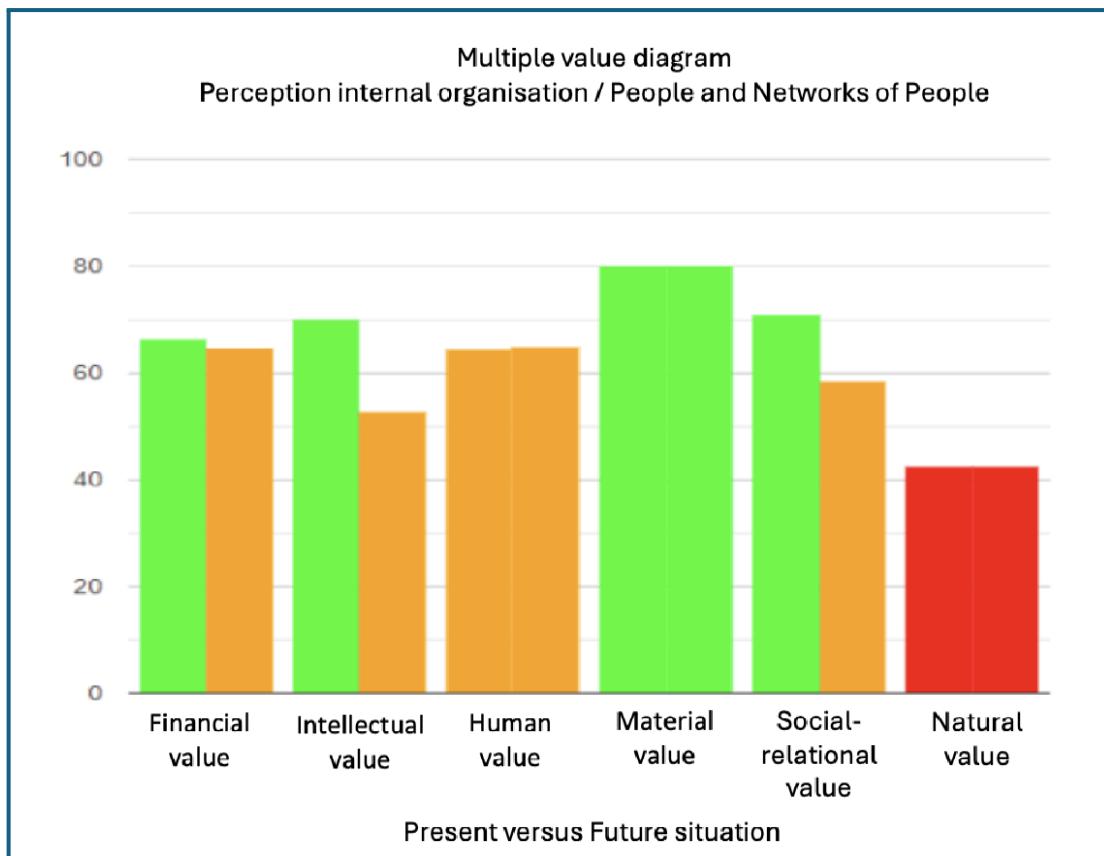


Figure 3 Multiple value diagram - Perception internal organisation / People and networks of people



Appendices III and IV provide similar overviews for monitoring the outcome of the OK! Method for the internal organisation and the environment (e.g., stakeholders) in the embedded system of the six capitals.

The essence of the integral analysis of future-proofing is Outside-in (External stakeholder analysis on coping now and towards the organisation's future) and Inside-out (Strategic analysis of internal stakeholders on sustainability of the organisation's dimensions now and in the future). Each stage of the OK! -Method will now (see Table 4) be clarified with some questions from the used IT model. Appendices I and II can be consulted for a more detailed overview of each stage.

Table 4 With questions about the 7 Stages of the OK!-Method (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024)

Stage	Description	Typical questions
I	Sensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we seeing and discussing all the external opportunities and risks in the 'now' and potential opportunities and risks for the future? • What are all the internal strengths and areas for improvement in the 'now' and potential strengths and areas for improvement in the future?
II	Assessing	<p>Main questions are focused on creating strategic chains of coherence to improve the six capitals (dis) balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose an environmental change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Which external actors and factors are related to this change? ◦ Which internal aspects out of the nine organisational areas are needed to realise the environmental opportunity? • Choose an environmental threat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Which external actors and factors are related to this threat? ◦ Which internal aspects out of the nine organisational areas are needed to prevent threats?
III (Solution phase 1)	Root cause analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the root causes of current undesirable results or the exceeded expected results? • Why is the score for this issue negatively or positively impacting the current value balance? • Why have we deviated from our intended course despite our intentions to the contrary?
IV (Solution phase 2)	Structured decision research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What decisions do we take to eliminate or strengthen the causes of observation that contribute to the strategy? • What multiple value criteria ensure that these decisions will contribute to healthy, future-proof chain effects?
V (Solution phase 3)	Setting up implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will work together? • When to carry out the activities ('what') in a specific way? • How to accurately and carefully implement the decision(s)? • How do you draw up project plans so that decisions are implemented?
VI	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure that the projects you set up are implemented efficiently and effectively, and that stakeholders always feel involved? • How do you maintain awareness of potential problems and opportunities that may arise during implementation?
VII	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the degree of satisfaction of people who have participated in the process of the above 6 phases? (Process evaluation) • What are the chances of success of a plan in each of the above phases for analysis and implementation, tested against criteria such as relevance, soundness and feasibility? (Evaluation planning) • Are the results of the influence exerted as a satisfying experience on the multiple values? This is now the start of the new cycle. (Result & impact evaluation).

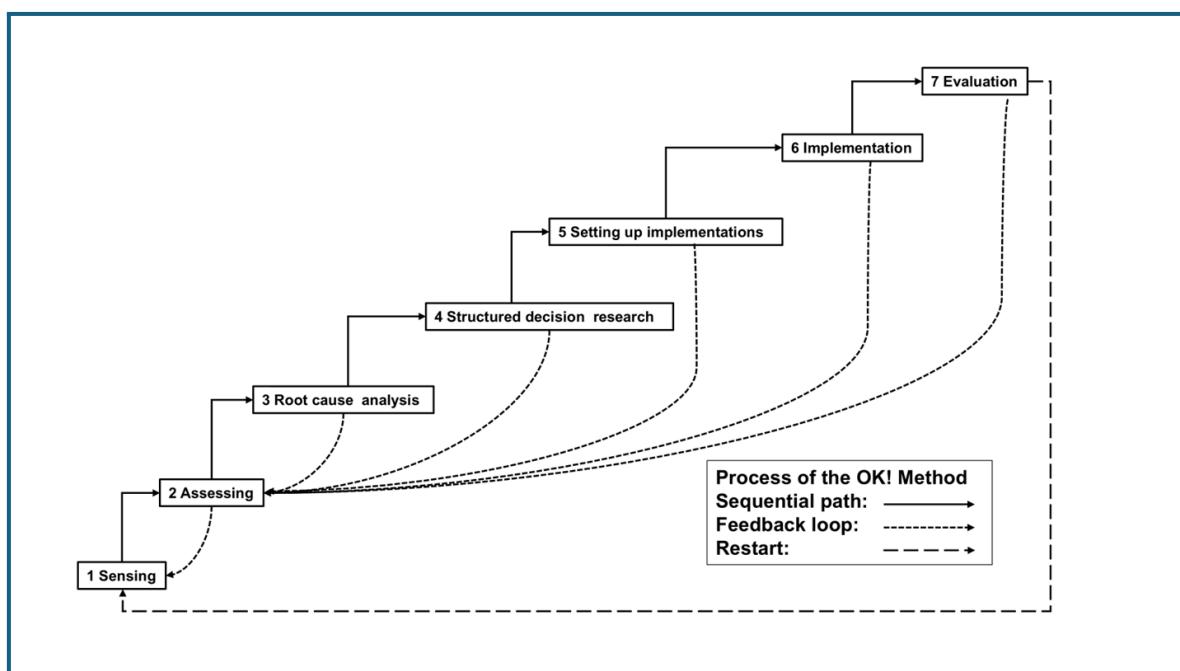


Example of an SME using the OK!-Method

The text box below contains an anonymous reaction from the management team of an SME, in which it is made clear how the OK!-Method is helping the company on its path of circular development in a future-proof setting.

"The director felt that an integrated strategic approach to the environment in the internal organisation was needed to get out of the declining turnover trend. To get everyone properly involved, he decided to attend the nine strategy sessions of the OK!-Method to be implemented. The dialogues during the four observation sessions were fascinating and connecting, revealing information one would never have seen alone. Also, the external supervisors' stimuli brought in with insights from outside – does this not play a role within your organisation? -, encourage the team to reflect. Astounding were the six strategic projects that emerged from the fifth session: the assessment dialogue. Looking at all observations together broke through thinking from our departmental perspective and made us realise: 'how strongly we depend on each other for sustainable success!' Based on this integral idea, structuring questions is now made through process and content, which is necessary to steer the cooperation process in the right direction, make decisions, and set up and implement the projects. The classic KPI management per department has been replaced forever by joint guiding management of the whole organisation. The greatest value? 'We now lead the organisation as one team, involve high-quality knowledge parties from the area and see much better from each other what is needed to become successful together!' (Case study OK!-Method, 2025)

Figure 4 Process overview of the OK!-Method (developed by the authors)



As we observe in Appendix I the process overview of the OK!-Method has been mapped: Each step will cost the MT of an SME 2 – 3 weeks to prepare, so after 18 -27 weeks, the method will be implemented at the firm level of an SME (complete cycle of seven steps in about nine meetings with the MT of an SME and certified supervisors of the OK!-Method). After finishing the first seven steps in the OK!-Method, the cycle repeats itself in the company. Of course, during the implementation route, there will probably be some circular spin-offs (like managers say: '*to harvest low-hanging fruits* '). In Figure 4, the seven process steps have been mapped, and the feedback loops are shown after each step.

First results of the OK!-Method

Based on eighteen implementations in Dutch SMEs, the following textbox provides a first impression of the method's success for SMEs.

How do we master the multiple value balance?

In any case, the environment influences the organisation through the mutual influence of the organisation on the environment and the environment on the organisation. The interaction between inside and outside leads to 'externally future-proof or not'. In the case 'if not':

- 1. We ourselves damage the value chain of which we are a part of, causing 'external' anger, at least in part, and consequently prompting action (inside out);*
- 2. external developments beyond our direct sphere of influence have negative future consequences (outside in).*

Both movements lead to negative outcomes from an external perspective. This puts pressure on an organisation's future-proofing. If external perceptions are not carefully analysed or even ignored, this will sooner or later weaken the organisation. It is therefore important for SMEs to develop a deep understanding of external perceptions. This creates a solid foundation for professional responses from within. This means that the internal value balance must also be in order. How sustainable is internal value development? Are we humanly, socially relational, intellectually, materially, ecologically, and financially capable of responding professionally, carefully, and in a future-proof manner to what the environment demands of us?

That is why we work with a value balance from both an external and an internal perspective.

In the assessment phase, we relate all external and internal perceptions by engaging in dialogue to create strategic chains of coherence, which can be compared to the circles of cause and effect in systems thinking (Senge, 2006). After which we, again via well-thought-out questions (methodically), identify causes, make decisions based on multiple value criteria, and set up plans in which the goals are always formulated from the six value areas.

The power is 'the questions that give shape and content to the process towards future-proofing'! (Riepma, Results of the OK! -Method, 2025)



Conclusion

Circularity and sustainability are fundamental trends in business, not only for large companies (MNEs or multinationals), but also for small and medium-sized enterprises (often family-owned). The OK!-Method is meant for SMEs (although MNEs are not excluded). Based on five sound theoretical pillars, an interactive model has been developed, based on a set of questions for the management team of an SME. The model consists of seven steps or stages (with feedback loops) to develop a long-term (multiple value) strategy for the SME to perform in terms of Profitability, Social performance, and Environmental performance. Financial results are the outcome of the firm's internal and external value developments, and are thus a long-term orientation (which is typical for the Rhineland business model). The investments in internal capital aspects should safeguard the financial result and prevent risks of externalities in the future

A balanced development of the six capitals or three values (Financial value, social value, and environmental value) of SMEs is essential, as well as the dialogue between the management team of the SME and their internal and external stakeholders, for the OK!-Method is crucial. The seven steps of the OK!-Method are a continuous process (like in total quality models, such as EFQM).

Implementation of the OK!-Method is feasible within one year, and there is now a track record of 18+ SMEs in the Netherlands.

The challenges to expanding the OK!-Method in SMEs in the Netherlands and abroad include starting further research on implementing this method to develop a long-term and balanced business strategy.

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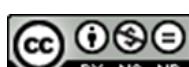
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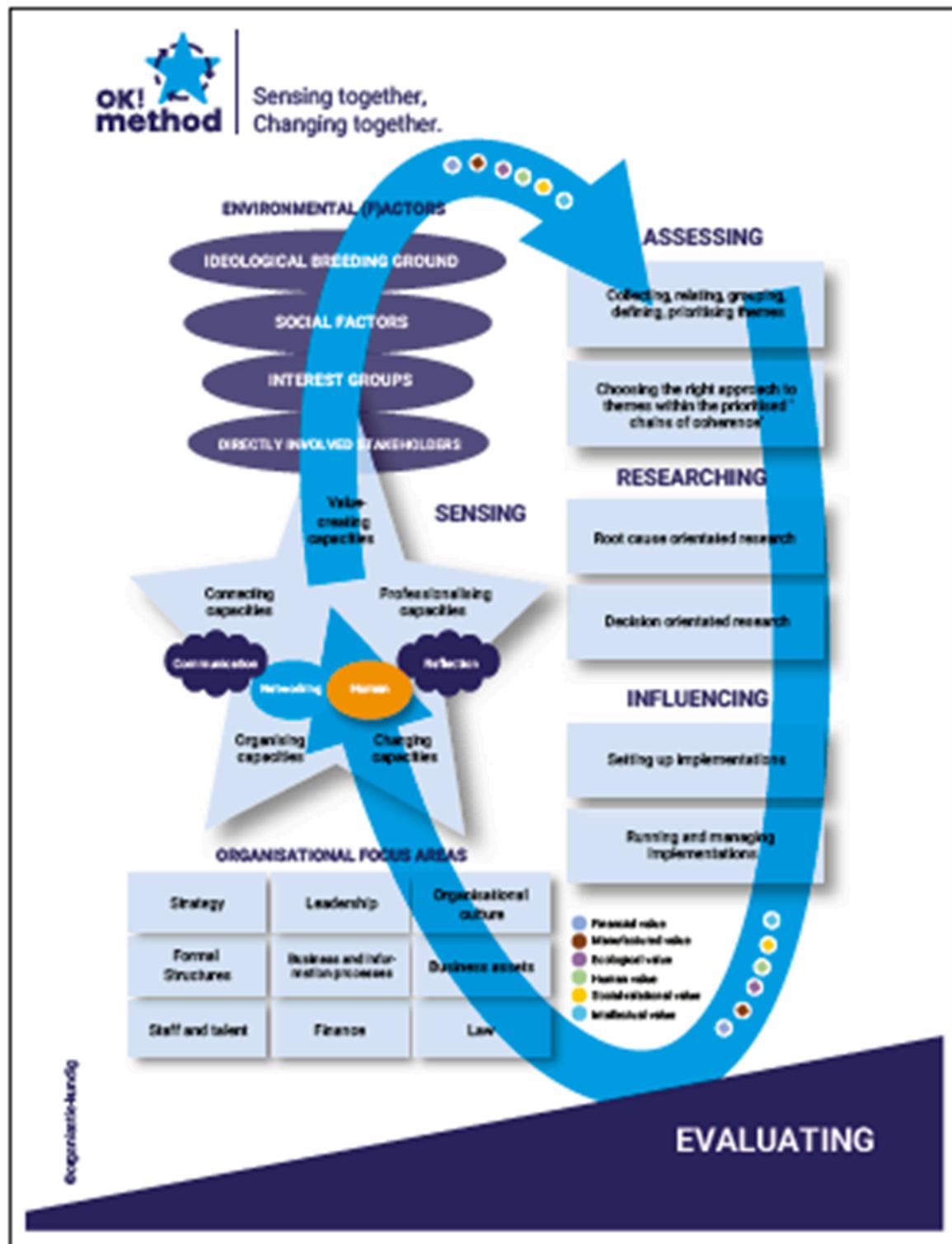
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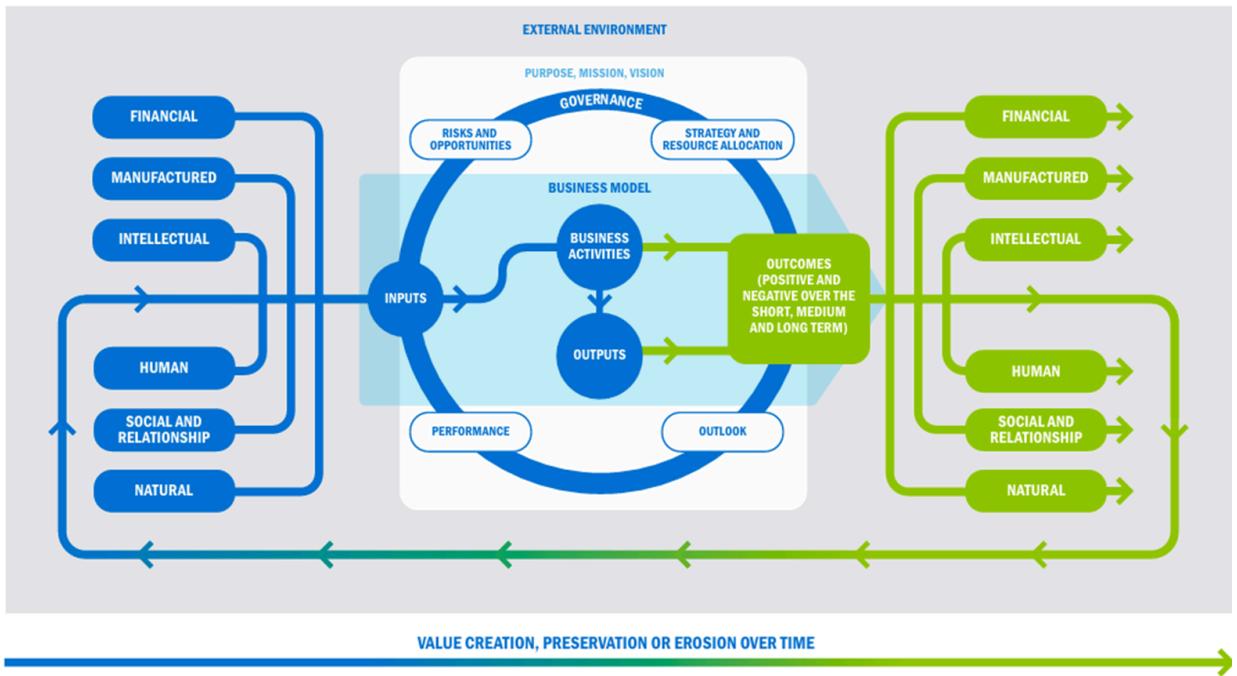


Appendix I

Figure 2 OK!-Method (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024)



Appendix II



Source IIRC model (IIRC, 2022)

Appendix III

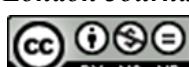
Figure 1 Internal organisation aspects and their link to the six value types (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024)

Strategy	Leadership	Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission, vision and core values ● Quantified key objectives ● Competitive strategy ● Product/ Market combinations ● Marketing & Sales mix ● Network relations ● Innovation capability ● Business and revenue model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roles ● Styles ● Characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural typology and influencing tools ● Organisational typology and culture ● Organisational culture and cultural diversity ● Change potential ● Cultural interventions
Structure	Business- & Information processes	Business assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formal division of labour (macro, meso and micro level) ● Defined business and information processes ● Formal consultation and decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary processes ● Supportive processes ● Managerial and control processes ● Innovation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raw materials and supplies ● Energy ● Distribution systems ● Physical technologic systems ● ICT systems
Personnel & Talent	Law / Compliancy	Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personnel planning ● Employment terms policy ● Employment conditions policy ● Assessment and remuneration policy ● Talent development ● Employee participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategic ● Organisational ● Business and Information processes ● Business assets ● Personnel and talent ● Leadership ● Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance sheet ● Profit and Loss account ● Orientation on the future ● Monitoring

Figure 6.5 Internal organisational aspects and their link to the six value types

Index

- Financial value
- Material value
- Intellectual value
- Human value
- Social relational value
- Natural value



Appendix IV

Figure 3 External actors/ stakeholders and factors influencing an organisation's perception of value (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024)

Directly involved stakeholders	Advocacy groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● Customers ● ● Competitors ● ● Suppliers ● ● New entrants ● ● Substitutes ● ● Cooperations partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ● Supervisors ● Financers ● Accountants/Administration offices ● Insurance companies ● Grand providers ● Standard setters ● Labour market parties ● Networks ● Lobby circuits ● Action groups
Societal factors	Ideological breeding ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographic factors ● Economic factors ● ● Social and societal factors ● Raw material and energy factors ● Technological factors ● ICT factors ● Ecological factors ● Political factors ● Legal factors ● Labour market factors ● Media attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Characteristic country cultures ● Ethical value basis

Index of the six value types
 Financial value
 Material value
 Intellectual value
 Human value
 Social relational value
 Natural value



Appendix V

Figure 4 Internal aspects, capacities of networks of people and their link to the six capital or value types (Van Aken, Riepma, & Westerdijk, 2024)

