

WHAT IS KANBAN?

Kanban (看板) is not just a visual board. It's a tool to improve the flow of work. It is often used by both Lean and Scrum teams to assist with continuous improvement through metrics and visual management.

Main Focus



Respect for the existing process

Start by visualising the current process, its workflow rules, its flow. Don't create a "to-be" state and then implement it.



Commit to continuous improvement

Kanban is designed for continuous improvement. The whole team and the process owner must commit to this for Kanban to be effective.

4 Key Practices

Kanban has four mandatory elements. Watch out for just visualising work because its easy and convenient over deliberate use of all its 5 key elements. Visualising work is great, but Kanban is a complete toolset for continuous improvement.



Visualise workflow

Visualise at the team level, not the project level. Be transparent. It's easier to manage work when you can see the whole 'system'.



Limit work in-progress (WIP)

Manage backlog items from time considered started to when team consider them finished. Don't overload the system. Leave some capacity to jump on the unexpected.



Actively Manage Work Item Progress

Respond quickly to blocked items. Pull work at the same rate as it goes out. Ensure work items aren't left to age unnecessarily.



Inspect & Adapt Definition of Workflow

Explicit policies around workflow and progression criteria between work stages. Agree as a team what to change

4 Key Metrics



WIP

How much work in-progress are you allowing for each of your process steps?



Work item age

How old are the items in the system? The older the items the less likely that they're of as much value as when they were first raised.



Throughput

How many items are being delivered to clients? Is the rate of delivery slow? Throughput = WIP / Cycle Time.



Cycle Time

How much time does an item spend in each workflow step? Days is usually a precise enough measure.