

Da Kanban Booky (May 2025)

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Before-Blabla

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Dis booky wanna be da one-big-togethery book for all da tribe, by giving only da small-small guidey for Kanban. Depending where you standy, lotsa other ways can holdy-hand with Kanban, so Kanban can hug da whole big rainbow of banana-giving and big-boss headache.

Dis booky got termy-term rules for some words. Dey no wanna push out nobody else's words — dey only say how da words is meant right here.

Termy-Term Rules

Kanban or Kanban system: All da ideas in dis booky, glued togethery — specially for brainy worky stuff.

Stakey-holder: A thingy, one peep, or a gang o' peeps who is boss of, noseey about, or changed by what go into da Kanban system, what happen inside, and what come out.

Banana (value): Banana you maybe get, or banana you already got, for a stakey-holder. Like: make da customer happy, make da end-user happy, make da company happy, make da big blue planet happy.

Looky, looky-making (visualize): Any way to put idea in da head so ev'rybody go "AAAAH, me see!" — includy just 'splaining it clear. No must be piccy.

Uh-oh (risk): Da chance dat bad thingy could happen.

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What Is Kanban, Den?

Kanban is a planny for making da banana zoom-zoom betta through a process. It got da following tree do-dos, all workin' togethery:

- Makey and looky da worky-flow
- Manage da worky bits in da worky-flow, all da time
- Fix-fix da worky-flow

When peeps actually do dem, all dese Kanban do-dos togethery is called a Kanban system. Da peeps who join in da banana-giving of a Kanban system is called Kanban system peeps.

Why Use Kanban?

Right in da middle of Kanban sit one word: zoom-zoom (flow). Zoom-zoom is da maybe-banana moving through a system. Most worky-flows exist to make banana big, so da planny of Kanban is: make banana big by making da zoom-zoom good. Making banana big mean huntin' for da right balance of tree thingies:

- A worky-flow dat **giv da right stuff** (effective) giv da stakey-holders what dey want, when dey want it.
- A worky-flow with **no wastey** (efficient) spendy all da monies and peep-power da best way it can, to giv banana.
- A worky-flow with **no surprisey** (predictable) can guessy when da banana arrive, and da guessy is close enough to livey with.

Da planny of Kanban is to make da Kanban system peeps ask da right questions SOONER-SOONER, as part of da fix-fix-forever effort chasing dese goals. Kanban system peeps should aim for a balance dat last long-long time, no burny-out. At da endy of it all, da planny of Kanban is to help you see da swappy-swaps (trade-offs) and boss your uh-ohs.

Because Kanban can work with almost any worky-flow, it no belong to one job-kind only. Brainy worky peeps in monies, in lighty-and-watery, in doctor-place, and in computery (to name just few) all got banana outta Kanban do-dos. Kanban work teeny-tiny and work BIIIIIG, and in most places where banana get given.

Kanban Brainy-Think

Kanban borrow from old-and-goody zoom-zoom brainy-think, includy but no only: systems thinky-think, lean rules, queue brainy-think (how big da batchy, how long da liney), wibbly-wobbly (variation), and quality checky-check. Keepin' a Kanban system gettin' betta-betta on top of dese brainy-thinks is one way companies can try to giv more banana.

Lotsa other banana-loving ways share da same brainy-think dat Kanban standy on. Because dey so samey-same, Kanban can and should be used to make dose giving-ways stronger.

Da Kanban Do-Dos

See Da Work: Makey and Looky Da Worky-Flow

Making da zoom-zoom good need you first to say what zoom-zoom even MEAN round here. Da out-loud shared understandy of zoom-zoom among da Kanban system peeps, inside dere own place, is called a Definitiony of Worky-Flow (DoW). DoW is a big-big idea of Kanban. Ev'rything else in dis booky leany heavy on how da worky-flow got defined.

At da very small-small minimum, Kanban system peeps must-must make dere DoW using ALL of dese bits:

1. A say-so for da single bits of banana dat is moving through da worky-flow. Dese single bits of banana is called worky bits (or just bits).
2. A say-so for when worky bits is started and when dey is finished inside da worky-flow. Depending on da worky bit, your worky-flow may got more dan one starty point or finishy point.
3. One or more say-so'd states dat da worky bits zoom through from started to finished. Any worky bits sittin' between a starty point and a finishy point is counted as work in progress (WIP).
4. A say-so for how da WIP going be bossed from started to finished.
5. Out-loud policies about how worky bits can zoom through each state from started to finished.
6. A service level expectation (SLE), which is a guessy of how long it should take a worky bit to zoom from started to finished. Da SLE itself got two bits: a chunk o' time dat go by, and a how-sure number stuck to dat chunk (like, "85% of worky bits will be finished in eight days or less"). Da SLE should be builded from da oldy cycly time, and once you worked out da number, it should be looky-showed on da DoW. If no oldy cycly time data exist, a best guessy do fine until dere is enough oldy data for a propa SLE sum.

Da order you do dem in is no importanty, long as dey ALL get adopted.

Kanban system peeps often need extra DoW bits too, like what dey value, what principles dey hold, and what dey promisy each other — depending on da Kanban system peeps' situationy. Da options is many, and dere is stuff beyond dis booky dat can help decide which ones to put in.

Kanban system peeps also often need more dan one DoW. Dose many DoWs could be for many gangs of Kanban system peeps, for different floors o' da company, etc. While dis booky say no minimum and no maximum number of DoWs, it do cheer you on to make a DoW wherever da Kanban system peeps need to gluey da zoom-zoom to banana-for-realsies.

Da looky-version of a DoW is a Kanban boardy. Making at least da small-small bits of a DoW see-through on a Kanban boardy is must-have for chewing da knowledge dat tell you how to run da worky-flow best, and for making da fix-fix happen.

Dere is no special rules for how a looky should looky. Thinky about all da bits of a

DoW (like da worky bits, da policies) plus any other local thingies dat might sway how da banana zoom. Kanban system peeps is limited only by dere own silly imagination for how dey make da zoom-zoom see-through.

Manage Da Work: Bossing Da Worky Bits, All Da Time

Da worky bits in da worky-flow must-must be managed actively. Active managing of worky bits in a worky-flow can looky like lotsa things, includy but no only dese:

- Bossing da WIP.
- Making sure worky bits no get oldy-oldy for no good reason, using da SLE as your looky-stick.
- Unstucky da stucked work. (Bee-doo! Bee-doo!)

A common do-do is for Kanban system peeps to looky over da live worky bits regular-regular. Dis looky can happen all-da-time, on a regular beaty, or a mixy-matchy of both.

Kanban system peeps must-must out-loud boss how many worky bits is in a worky-flow from started to finished. Dat bossing can be showed on a Kanban boardy any way da Kanban system peeps thinky is good. Best-best: da system run no above and no below da bossy-number dat ev'rybody agreed.

One thingy dat happen when you boss da WIP: it should make a pully system. Kanban system peeps should start work on a bit (pully it or picky it) only when dere is a clear beep-beep sayin' dere is room to do it. When da WIP dropy below da bossy-number setted in da DoW, dat can be da beep-beep to picky new work. Kanban system peeps should holdy back from pickin' more worky bits into a given part of da worky-flow dan da WIP bossy-number allow.

Bossing da WIP help da zoom-zoom, and often make da Kanban system peeps' togethery focus, promisey-keeping, and worky-togethery much betta. Any okay-okay exceptions to bossing da WIP should be made out-loud as part of da DoW.

Fix Da Work: Making Da Worky-Flow Betta-Betta

Given an out-loud Definitiony of Worky-Flow, da Kanban system peeps' jobby is to fix-fix dere worky-flow forever, to reach a betta balance of giv-da-right-stuff, no-wastey, and no-surprisey. Studyin' da system all da time can pointy-point at da improvements for da DoW.

It is a common do-do to looky over da DoW now and den, to talky-talk and do whatever changes is needed. Dere is no rule, dough, to sitty and waity for a big formal meeting on a regular beaty to make dose changes. Kanban system peeps can and should make right-now-when-needed changes as da situationy say. And dere is also nothing sayin' dat worky-flow improvements must be teeny or baby-steppy. If da Kanban system peeps feel a BIG change is needed, den dat is da thing dey should do.

Zoom-Zoom Numbers

Doing Kanban need you to collect and starey-stare at a small-small set of zoom-zoom numbers. Dey showy da Kanban system's healthy-ness and how it go right now, and dey help you choose how da banana get given. Da four must-must zoom-zoom numbers to tracky in Kanban is:

- **WIP:** Da number of worky bits started but no finished.
- **Throughputty:** Da number of worky bits finished per chunk o' time. Noticey: da measure of throughputty is da exact county of worky bits. (One, two, tree — no half-a-bit!)
- **Worky Bit Oldy-ness:** Da time gone by between when a worky bit started and today-today.
- **Cycly Time:** Da time gone by between when a worky bit started and when a worky bit finished.

Long as da Kanban system peeps use dese numbers like dis booky say, dey can cally any of dem whatever other names dey fancy (Cycly Time could be Zoom-Zoom Time, Throughputty could be Giving Rate, etc.).

For dese four must-must zoom-zoom numbers, started and finished mean exactly where da Kanban system peeps putted dose points in dere own DoW.

All by demselves, dese numbers mean NOTHING-NOTHING, unless dey can tell you something about one or more of da tree Kanban do-dos. It is up to da Kanban system peeps to decide da best way to squeezy dese numbers (like, looky-show dem in charty-charts, checky da wibbly-wobbly, etc.).

Da zoom-zoom numbers listed in dis booky is only da small-small minimum for running a Kanban system. Kanban system peeps may, and often should, use extra local measures dat help dem make choices with data instead of with feely-feelings.

Last Blabla

One can, and probably should, gluey other principles, methody-methods, and techniques onto da Kanban system. Still: da small-small set of do-dos, da numbers, and da spirit of making banana big must-must be kept. No throwy away!

Oldy Story of Kanban

Da now-now state of Kanban can be tracked back to da Toyota Production System (and its grandpapas before dat), and to da work of peeps like Taiichi Ohno and W. Edwards Deming. Da togethery set of do-dos for brainy worky stuff, what peeps now mostly call Kanban, mainly got borned on one team at Corbis in 2006. Dose do-dos spreaded zoom-zoom quick to a big and mixy-mixy international tribe dat keep making da whole thing betta and betta.

Big Thank-Yous

As well as ev'rybody who helped grow Kanban over da years, we wanna say one BIG banana thank-you to dese peeps specially, for what dey gived to dis booky:

Emily Coleman for her inspiration in making da meaning of banana (value) much, much biggerer.

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2025 Changey-Changes

To say da intent clear, termy-term rules got added for:

- Kanban, Kanban system, stakey-holder, banana (value), uh-oh (risk), looky, and looky-making
- Banana-for-realsies could be for stakey-holders, includy but no only da customers
- Simpler say-so of Kanban, specially for brainy worky stuff
- Service Level Expectation got moved into da Definitiony of Worky-Flow section
- Less out-loud (and so more bendy) about how da WIP get bossed
- More out-loud about many DoWs, about wibbly-wobbly, and about gluing zoom-zoom to banana-for-realsies
- Da tree do-dos got simplered, and picky (worky bits) get said more often
- “Kanban Measures” got renamed to “Zoom-Zoom Numbers”
- More out-loud about da bendy-ness around zoom-zoom number names
- Threwed away da bit about Kanban being no-can-change

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