Kanban Guide

The Kanban Guide is the definition of the ProKanban system. The diagram below is a condensed summary of the guide and is not intended to be a replacement. If this diagram and the guide differ, the guide is correct.

A **Kanban system** is the implementation of the three practices below

Those who participate in the value delivery of a Kanban system are called **Kanban System Members**

Defining and visualizing a workflow

The **Definition of Workflow (DoW)** is the explicit understanding of flow defined in the Kanban system. At a minimum, it must contain these elements.

A **Kanban board** is the visualization of the Definition of Workflow (DoW)

- A definition of the individual units of value that are moving through the workflow. These units of value are referred to as **work items** (or items).
- A definition for when work items are **started** and **finished** within the workflow. Your workflow may have multiple started or finished points depending on the work item.
- One or more defined states that the work items flow through from started to finished. Any work items between a started point and a finished point are considered **work in progress (WIP)**.
- A definition of how WIP will be controlled from started to finished.
- Explicit **policies** about how work items can flow through each state from started to finished.
- A **service level expectation (SLE)**, which is a forecast of how long it should take a work item to flow from started to finished.

Actively managing items in a workflow

Active management of items in a workflow can take several forms, including but not limited to these.

- Controlling Work in Progress.
- Avoiding work items piling up in any part of the workflow.
- Ensuring work items do not age unnecessarily, using the SLE as a reference.
- Unblocking blocked work.

Improving a workflow

The application of Kanban requires the collection and analysis of a minimum set of four flow measures (or metrics).

- **Work in Progress (WIP)**: The number of work items started but not finished.
- **Throughput**: The number of work items finished per unit of time. Note the measurement of throughput is the exact count of work items.
- **Work Item Age**: The amount of elapsed time between when a work item started and the current time.
- **Cycle Time**: The amount of elapsed time between when a work item started and when a work item finished.

Value optimization means striving to find the right balance of effectiveness, efficiency, and predictability in how work gets done.

- An **effective** workflow is one that delivers what customers want when they want it.
- An **efficient** workflow allocates available economic resources as optimally as possible to deliver value.
- A **predictable** workflow means being able to accurately forecast value delivery within an acceptable degree of uncertainty.