WHAT IS
THE KANBAN METHOD?

Since its inception, the Kanban Method has developed and matured as an effective approach for organizations to achieve greater *business agility*.

It has been applied across a spectrum of sectors in organizations ranging from startups to large multinational corporations - including Technology, Transportation, Education, and Health Care (to name a few).

The Kanban Method can be applied at 3 levels: with **Teams** to develop sustainable practices, by **Managers** to improve their ability to provide products and services, and by entire **Organizations** to develop responsive enterprises that can navigate an increasingly changing market.

While the Kanban Method is appropriate in all 3 areas, its biggest benefits are realized *at* and *beyond* Management. For this reason it is appropriately referred to as a *Management Method*.

The Kanban Method is not a replacement for a current *framework* or *process*. Rather it works with any existing process or framework and takes an evolutionary approach to improving what is already in place.

With this evolutionary mindset at its core, it is often considered to be "*the alternative path to agility*".

DEMAND   CAPABILITY

The Kanban Method seeks to achieve balance between (customer) Demands and (business) Capabilities. In organizations where this balance is off, it is typical to see examples of an overworked and unproductive workforce, poor quality, unpredictable results, late deliveries, no time for innovation, and missed opportunities.

The Kanban Method gives you the ability to re-balance the equation by leveraging numerous techniques to help shape demand and improve capability. It doesn't prescribe any mandatory practices, but has greater results in companies where leadership is encouraged and employees across the organization are motivated to solve problems and put in the work to do so.

THE KANBAN METHOD ACHIEVES ORGANIZATIONAL BALANCE THROUGH 5 KEY CONCEPTS

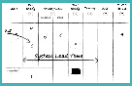| Visual Models	Improved Predictability through Flow	Maximize Agility	Service Delivery Commitment	A Culture of Respect & Leadership

THE KANBAN METHOD IN
5 KEY CONCEPTS

VISUAL MODELS

Knowledge Work is largely intangible. Kanban uses visual models such as boards and metrics to "unhide" work in progress.

This creates visibility into status and a single point of truth for collaboration.

IMPROVED PREDICTABILITY THROUGH FLOW

There are many ways in which our work can get stuck: dependencies on others, rework, unclear needs, interruptions, and bottlenecks to name a few. These delays introduce risk to your ability to provide predictable and reliable products and services. The Kanban Method provides techniques to manage flow, remove delays, and get risks under control.

MAXIMIZE AGILITY

Agility is the ability to match the pace demanded by your market. The more frequently your market changes, the more agile you may need to be. The Kanban Method helps you maximize your agility by offering approaches to manage your:
- Approach to starting work
- Speed of delivery
- Consistency of delivery
- Frequency of delivery

SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITMENT

The Kanban Method allows you to manage your capabilities so that you can make promises that you can keep.

With Kanban you can effectively measure your service, judge the impact of changes you introduce, and use data to effectively predict your delivery capabilities.

A CULTURE OF RESPECT & LEADERSHIP

In many companies, the structure of the organization prevents people from reaching their full potential; the Kanban Method effectively reveals these pain points. Armed with greater appreciation of your organization's challenges and the means to do something about it, the Kanban Method encourages participation throughout your workforce to lead change. It is done in an evolutionary way, starting with what you do now, to avoid change resistance and introducing unmanaged risks to your organization.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE KANBAN METHOD

We currently use an Agile framework, such as Scrum. Do we need to stop?

No. The Kanban Method is not a framework, and so it does not compete with Scrum or any other Agile framework or process. One of its principles is "Start With What You Do Now", whether that is Scrum, Waterfall, or something else entirely. It respects your current process and simply gives you additional tools to evolve your existing process to improve over time.

We don't need continuous delivery – we release every 2 weeks/2 months/2 years. Is Kanban right for us?

The Kanban Method does not prescribe that you deliver continuously – you can batch your deliveries at whatever cadence is appropriate for your business. The Kanban Method will, however, help reveal what delivery cadence is appropriate for your business and allow you to make adjustments to support it.

Do I need to go through a big Agile or Digital transformation to use Kanban?

The principle "Start With What You Do Now" is intended to avoid installing large forced changes. The Kanban Method respects how you work today, and helps organizations evolve at a pace compatible with their goals and risk tolerance. In many instances it can begin with one manager introducing the method in one service and expanding from there.

Do we need a "Kanban Board" in order to apply the Kanban Method?

The Kanban Method is used primarily in Knowledge Work where the work is intangible or "invisible". The Kanban Method introduces the concept of a model to make this work visible and, in doing so, creates a platform to manage it. A "traditional board" is not always required and, in some cases, is inappropriate. For instance: a help desk service with thousands of requests a day may be better off implementing their model through their service management application of choice.

Do I have to apply all the practices to do Kanban correctly?

There is no minimum set of practices to be doing Kanban; rather the Kanban Method considers this to be a maturity continuum. You are doing Kanban as soon as you've built a model with the intent to apply the method! Over time, your Kanban implementation should evolve to further maturity, solving for more of your business challenges.

Is there certified training on the Kanban Method?

Lean Kanban University develops high-quality certified Kanban classes taught by Accredited Kanban Trainers (AKT) across the globe. Training is available for Team Members, Coaches, Managers, and Executives. The Canadian organization SquirrelNorth provides for both public and private Kanban classes.

Is the Kanban Method most effective within teams?

The Kanban Method can help teams with their practices, allowing for more sustainability and reliability. The method however, provides much broader benefits when applied to entire services, products, divisions or even entire organizations.

I've heard Kanban being referred to as a Framework or a Process; is this correct?

Frameworks are descriptions of a new process for you to follow. Frameworks might be appealing in that they can take the guess work out of designing a new process. However, they may also lead to significant organization disruption, risks, and costs without necessarily solving your business problems. The Kanban Method does not dictate to you a specific process for you to follow and so is not a framework. Rather it is a *Management Method* which gives you the tools needed to evolve your existing process to solve business problems specific to your capabilities and market needs.

Does Kanban work at scaling Agility across an entire organization?

The Kanban Method very elegantly scales across an entire organization by introducing Kanban in one service or product line at a time. Because the Kanban Method is not a framework, it doesn't run into the challenges with having a canned process to deal with unknowable challenges at scale.

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SquirrelNorth is Canada's largest team of Kanban experts and trainers.

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