Kanban in Action

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Do you have more work that needs to be done than you have time to do it? Do you suffer from interruptions and context switching? Would your work benefit from faster feedback and shorter lead times? Are you challenged to find time and guidance for improving your way of working? If you answered yes to any of these questions, kanban is for you!

Kanban is an emerging second generation agile method inspired by five decades of process excellence in the Japanese auto manufacturing industry, also known as lean thinking. Kanban leverages visual management techniques to involve stakeholders and to facilitate understanding of how the work works. Through limiting the amount of work in process, and by focusing on finishing that work as soon as possible, kanban helps you to adjust demand to capacity, to reduce lead times and to create a driver for continuous improvement.

Kanban in Action is a down-to-earth, no-frills, get-to-know-the-ropes introduction to kanban. It's based on the real-world experience and observations from two kanban coaches who have introduced this process to dozens of teams. In this book, you'll discover basic but powerful techniques on how to visualize and track work, how to construct a kanban board, how to visualize queues and bottlenecks, and much much more. You'll learn the principles of why kanban works as well as nitty-gritty details like how to use different color stickies to help you organize and track your work items.

Kanban in Action Details

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From Reader Review Kanban in Action for online ebook

Armando Ferreira says

I did read this book as preparation for the PMI-ACP exam. It is a really good book, especially for beginners and intermediate level Kanban enthusiasts. The first section is fantastic and gives the reader a quick but effective introduction to Kanban, condensing the most relevant concepts in a few pages. In the other two sections concepts are fleshed out in a progressive manner, for readers looking for more details and advanced topics. If you want to learn about Kanban, I recommend you this book.

James Williams says

We've been using Scrum at work for several years now -- and we've had a lot of success with it. But recently, the team I'm on has started to notice that (for various and unnecessary reasons), our workload is not as amenable to Scrum as it used to be. So we're starting to talk about looking for something else and Kanban is the most obvious starting point.

Skimming Wikipedia had given me a rough idea of what Kanban was, but this book filled in the details in a breezy, entertaining, and enjoyable-to-read fashion. It uses comic illustrations and interactions between a fictional team who's trying out Kanban to highlight the sort of situations that come up when using Kanban and how to deal with them.

In particular, this book heavily emphasizes the idea that Kanban isn't a system or process so much as it is a set of principles and rough guidelines. Because it's not itself a process, you can implement Kanban on top of whatever process you're currently using -- something I've not managed to glean before.

My one criticism of this book as that all of the examples are far too neat. In the real world, I'd expect you to run into far more gray areas that aren't handled quite as easily the ones the book's imaginary team faces. In particular, I'd have liked to see some examples for adding Kanban to an existing Scrum workflow -- the authors point out that this is possible several times, but never really get into what that means. Too often, they just shrug their shoulders and say "It depends".

I guess that's what consultants are for. But if you'd rather do some reading instead of (or before) paying those consultants, this book is probably not bad place to start!

Michal says

best kanban book so far

Mylene says

Great book if you want to get insight in Kanban, what is is, how it works and when to use it.

The style is great, good examples to make everything clear.
Absolutely worthwhile :)

Sebastian Gebski says

True surprise - a positive one. I expected this book to be something like 'Kanban for dummies', but as I consider myself agile zealot, I've decided to read it anyway and it was a good pick:

1.) It's not trivializing the topic - each chapter truly has its purpose and it's clear that author have a clear vision of what they'd like to hand on. It's a problem with half of agile books - they feel like you're reading the same sentence over and over.

2.) The examples make sense and they are not too trivial. I knew the topic, I've read D. Anderson's books and I wasn't bored at all.

3.) It's exactly as comprehensive as you'd like it to be. It refers to ToC (Theory of Constraints) but about as much as possible; it mentions the tools, but doesn't focus on them as they are only the helpeers; etc. Good balance indeed.

Cons:

1.) Somehow I didn't like the chapter about "Kanban games" at all - they all felt unclear and IMHO introducing any of those to any team I've worked with would not be a better clarification than going through some cases.

2.) If you've read D. Anderson's "Kanban" there's still not much for you here. Don't misunderstand me - "Kanban in Action" is really good, but it's D.A. who has nailed it completely and his book should be enough for 95% of wanna-be-kanbaneers. That's why I'm giving only 4 stars.

Anyway - if you want to read about Kanban: go for D. Anderson's "Kanban". But if by any kind of accident you get this book instead, no harm done - it's a decent read and you'll get the idea for sure.

Karl Metivier says

This is a very good and visual hands-on book about Kanban. Plenty of advices for agile coaches, developers, ScrumMasters and any other team members. We get to learn the basic of Kanban and we goes beyond to have good success with it.

Disclaimer: I did the tech review of this book for Manning Press.

Henrik Berglund Berglund says

I liked the practical writing style and the pragmatic approach taken by the authors. Contrary to what I have

experienced at "lean" and kanban focused conferences, there is no bashing of other ideas nor any fundamentalism in this book. Very nice, and quite in line with lean and agile values.

Instead the authors places kanban in context, also discussing alternative and complementary approaches that teams may want to try. They also do away with the misconception that Kanban is something that you can use instead of your current process.

One of the last chapters adresses common critizism towards Kanban. Reading the authors views in that section was the most interesting part for me.

For the concept, style of writing and pragmatic approach it is clearly five stars for this book.

Jano Suchal says

TL;DR If you already read a little about Kanban, you can skip half of this book.

Visualize your actual workflow using stick-it notes on a board with columns representing stages of your process. Lower the times it takes to a workitem to be done/shipped/deployed (lead time) and increase throughput. How? Stop starting, start finishing and limit your work-in-progress (WIP). How do you limit your WIP? Setup constraints on WIP per team member, per process stage (columns on board) or per work classes (lanes/rows on board). This is basically what you learn in the first third of the book.

The book is rather long with lots of repetition of basic principles. I've realized that I might not be the target audience when the authors started to explain a simple ratio equation on multiple pages with the words: "Eh, what?". On the other hand, if you are non-technical person looking for an easy-to-follow and comprehensive guide to start using Kanban, grab this book. In overall I've learnd all I wanted to know about Kanban and kudos to the authors for the chapter about drawbacks of using Kanban.

Sohi Eklund says

Kanban coached through a book

It is a book packed with experience in a really neat format, and I think both beginners and people more experienced using Kanban, will have good use of this book!

Davi Bauer says

Excellent book. I learn a lot along the reading. Practical, objective, well written and to the point. Kanban is a meta-process: an improvement process for an already-existing process.

The book teaches how you can start using Kanban today, independently of the current situation of your project, only making the work visible. Improvement opportunities will appear when you start reducing the working in process.

You can learn the principles of Kanban through some games such as pass the pennies. A great way to understand why limiting the work in process is a good idea, as well as why improving the parts do not necessarily improve the whole system.

Does not matter if you are using Scrum or not; Kanban can fit as well. One of the most important thing is the mindset behind it, what goes through the theory of constraints and the queuing theory (aka Little's law). Must-read.

Josh Gomez says

Easy read, informative, and insightful. It's very practical and they use plenty of real-world examples and scenarios to start applying Kanban principles immediately. I had no trouble reading or understanding their concepts. It's well-written.

Vít Kota?ka says

An excellent book about *Kanban*. If you are new to *Kanban*, start with this one and later you can continue with the bible Kanban Successful Evolutionary Change for Your Technology Business from David J. Anderson.

If you already know something about *Kanban* and you want to be inspired, you can pick this book too. And if you are into *agile* for couple of years and you want to move on, this can show you the possible way.

Kanban in Action is both: practical and strong in theory as well. And there is a valuable virtue, because the book is highly actual - the Kanban community is very lively and *Kanban* itself is quickly evolving, which is mirrored in the book.

This is the fourth book about *Kanban* which I read. And I have to say: it's the best Kanban book on the market today.

Jose Papo says

If you want to start with Kanban methods and also to understand many of its details I fully recommend you to read this book. It's an excellent introduction to Kanban and also shows how to optimize it.

Javier says

Great book. First chapter with a practical view and then beyond the principles and practices how Kanban can be integrated with other practices or can be enriched with some agile practices. And to finish a chapter about games and tools so a very complete and very enjoyable reading.
Lead time: 21 days.

Andrew Doran says

Excellent introduction to the concepts of Kanban. I learnt so much. The book is very well-written and explains topics in just the right amount of detail with plenty of references to articles and books if you want to go deeper. Recommended.