Real-World Kanban
Second Edition
Do Less, Accomplish More
with Lean Thinking

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Take Charge and Make Changes

Ever since Agile revolutionized software development - which it undoubtedly has - what got lost was organizations learning to self-improve. For many, taking the well-beaten path to make use of Agile means the application of frameworks, Scrum, SAFe to name a few, unfortunately, often after the initial excitement of the shiny new toy improvements stalled. My hypothesis is that organizations didn't learn to self-improve, they simply learned to follow a script.

This is book is for you who sets the bar at challenging status quo. For you who's aim is set at achieving continuous improvement.

If you would like to do better, this book is for you. If you are looking for ideas on how to improve efficiency without adding resources, this is for you. If you simply would like to learn from real case studies and pick up a few tips and tricks for your own improvement, this is for you. If you are wondering how to use Agile in a non-software domain, this is for you.

This book offers five case studies on how real-world companies used Kanban and Lean thinking to improve time to market, product quality, and cross-department collaboration and teamwork.

As I write this second edition, nine years after the first, I will admit that one reason it took such a long time was that I was convinced that the development in product development methodology would have overtaken the book in two or three years, making the first edition of the book more as an anecdotal time capsule of "the old ways".

Re-reading the book today, with the perspective of product development in 2025, I can see that it challenges most organizations' comfort zones.

A few use cases where the book has relevance:

- How to improve end-to-end value delivery by 2x
- How to improve beyond scaling Agile in IT

- How to, in our context, find a constructive way out of a death march project
- How to drive change critical to shared success in the organization around you

I have always been curious to find out how a team that starts their improvement journey using Kanban would fare a few years down the road. I am thrilled to be able to share a story of such a team.

Finally, this second edition includes a rich set of Kanban board examples as a bonus, which should be helpful for those of you who would like to set up a Kanban system.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book doesn't have any how-to recipes. This is a case-study book—each chapter shows how we found the right solution for each problem. This book was written with managers and business leaders in mind. The case studies provide helpful ideas for managers who run Agile teams and Agile teams who want closer interactions with people in business units and other operations outside IT. Business leaders who want transparency in what goes on in IT and managers interested in learning how we ran a multi-team development project without a formal project office should check out this book.

Scrum masters will pick up guerilla tips and tricks for solving problems with other teams, and senior managers will learn how to coach leaders to collaborate over the value chain.

Helpful Books

Here is a list of the many excellent and in-depth books out there that I'd recommend for further reading:

Books on Kanban

- Anderson, David J. *Kanban [And10]*
- Burrows, Mike. *Kanban From the Inside [Bur14]*
- Hammarberg, Marcus, and Joakim Sunden. *Kanban in Action [HS14]*
- Kniberg, Henrik, and Mattias Skarin. *Kanban and Scrum: Making the Most of Both [KS09]*

Books on Lean

- Kniberg, Henrik. *Lean from the trenches [Kni11]*
- Liker, Jeffrey. *The Toyota Way [Lik04]*

- Modig, Niclas. *This is Lean [MA12]*
- Poppendieck, Mary, and Tom Poppendieck. *Lean Software Development [PP03]*
- Reinertsen, Donald. *The Principles of Product Development Flow [Rei09]*

Online Resources

This book also has its own web page.[1] Check it out—you'll find the book forum, where you can talk with other readers and with me. If you find any mistakes, please report them on the errata page. If you've purchased the ebook, clicking the little gray box above the code extracts will directly download the extract for you.

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1. https://pragprog.com/book/mskanban/real-world-kanban