

Open Kanban

Open Kanban Metadata		
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Main Repository:	Open Kanban on GitHub	https://github.com/agilelion/Open-Kanban
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Release and License:	1.00 Rev A	CC-BY 3.0

Our Movement for a Free Open Kanban

Open Kanban is a movement to make the core values and principles of Kanban available to all. It is inspired by the Open Source [movement](#) goal to give software users and developers the four essential freedoms of [free software](#).

Likewise Open Kanban’s purpose is to give the Kanban community those four freedoms, but now in the context of shared knowledge:

1. Freedom to use Open Kanban for any purpose (freedom 1)
2. Freedom to study, question, and change Open Kanban as you wish so that it works for you and your organization (freedom 2)
3. Freedom to fork or modify copies of Open Kanban to create your own customized version, and give it to anyone (freedom 3)
4. Freedom to benefit the entire Open Kanban community with a better solution for all, by sharing your contributions with the main Open Kanban repository. This is possible via your submissions to our main repository on [Github](#). This freedom shows our commitment to communication, collaboration and continuous improvement (freedom 4.)

Open Kanban Introduction

Kanban is becoming an important part of Agile Software Development and IT, VersionOne’s authoritative 2013 [State of Agile Survey](#) reveals that Kanban has doubled in adoption among the Agile methodologies, and is frequently used as an alternative to Scrum.

However with growth also came a push to align Kanban (the [Agile and Lean](#) method with over four decades of history) with some proprietary ideas and interpretations of what Kanban is. This situation was fully explained in the initial post we shared about the need for Open Kanban, you can read more about it [there](#).

Open Kanban actually corresponds to what most people familiar with the Agile movement think of when they refer to Kanban itself: An [Agile method](#) for IT and Software Development; unlike other Agile methods Kanban adds a vast [Lean](#) heritage. In [Japan](#) where the Lean movement originated this type of Kanban is called カンバン (Kanban.)

Open Kanban’s first objective is to offer a free, open source, collaborative friendly Kanban that is both [Agile and Lean](#).

What is Open Kanban?

Open Kanban Definition

Open Kanban is an Agile and Lean [ultra light method](#) to improve any area of your organization. Although it’s main focus is in IT and Software Development, Open Kanban can be used in any business or non-profit to achieve agility and continuous improvement.

However Open Kanban is not a full or complete Agile or Lean method, instead it is the heart of that method that is the reason it can be ultra light. The best comparison in the software world would be the [kernel](#) of an open source operating system

Open Kanban includes three key components that define it:

- A set of values that align it with the [Agile](#) and [Lean](#) Movements for IT and Software Development
- A set of practices that translate those values into action
- An open source license that allow anyone to build upon it or modify it.

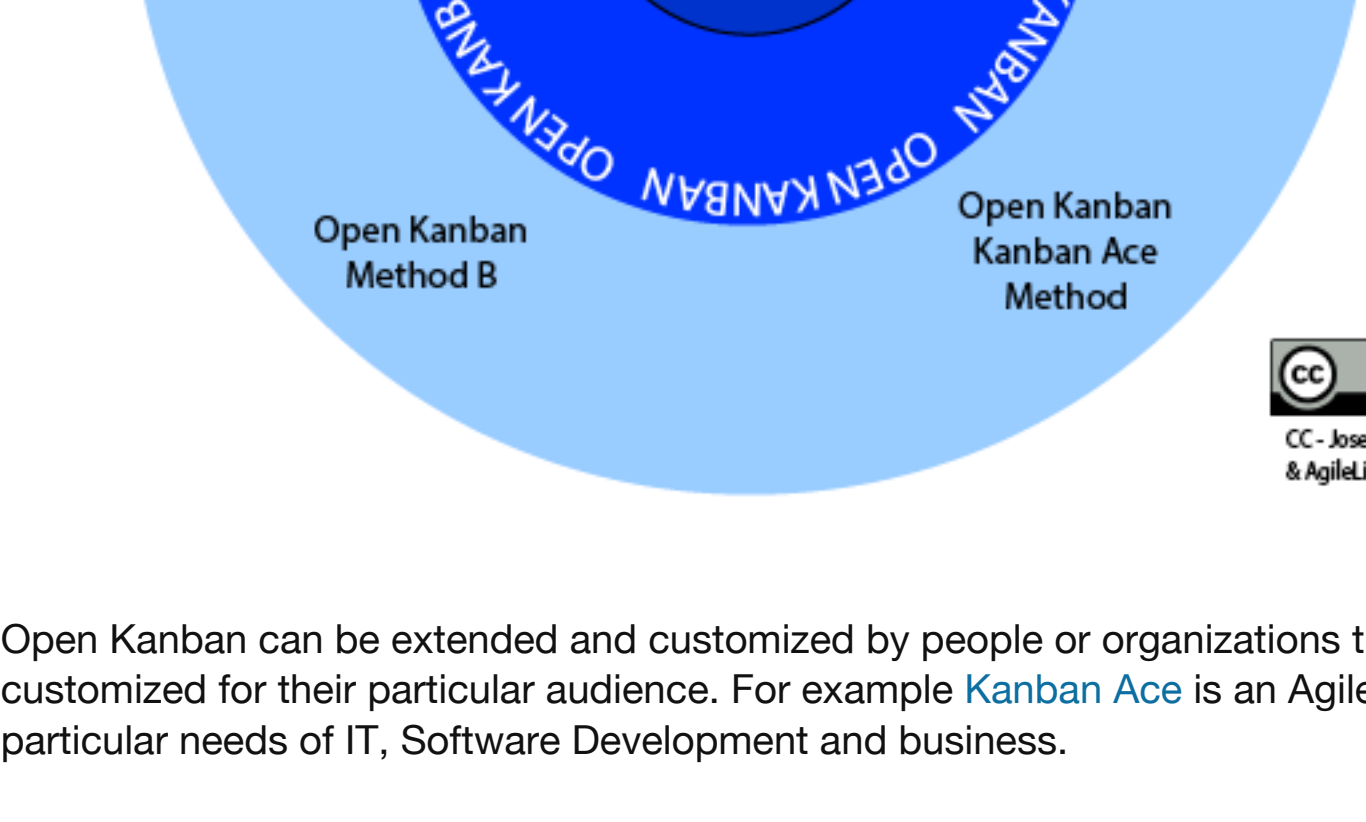
The Open Kanban Movement

Extensions on top of Open Kanban constitute Agile and Lean Methods based on Open Kanban, or Open Kanban Methods. Open Kanban is the heart of all those Kanban methods. Our license allows them to be free or commercial. All these Kanban methods working together and collaborating are the basis of the Open Kanban Movement. We look forward to having many Open Kanban methods that collaborate with each other to benefit all.

All Open Kanban Methods share in common the following characteristics:

- A common Open Kanban core that is both Agile and Lean
- A collaborative approach to improve Open Kanban itself by submitting their ideas back to the main Open Kanban repository; where they can be shared with all the Open Kanban community.

The nature of the Open Kanban Movement can be easily understood by examining the diagram below:



Open Kanban can be extended and customized by people or organizations that wish to create an Agile and Lean Kanban method that is complete and customized for their particular audience. For example [Kanban Ace](#) is an Agile and Lean Method based on Open Kanban; but extended to address the particular needs of IT, Software Development and business.

As the Open Kanban movement grows we expect many additional Open Kanban methods to join us. We already share many key ideas with Alan Shalloway’s [Kanban for Teams](#), Corey Ladas [Scrumban](#) and Karl Scotland’s [Kanban Thinking](#). We extend an open invitation to them, and to any leading thinker or organization that wants to join us to build a strong Open Kanban Movement.

Open Kanban Components

The following are the key values and practices that make up Open Kanban. Given that this is our initial release, we do expect future contributions and revisions. Feedback is welcome, and yes you can use GitHub with a [Pull request](#)!

1. Open Kanban Values

Open Kanban practices are rooted in values that are Lean and Agile; those values are an integral part of Open Kanban. Open Kanban values are:

1. Respect for people
 - At the core of Lean and TPS is respecting people. Respect for people also means assuming responsibility for your actions, and empowering others to take those actions.
 - Respect for people allows for delegation and the demand-pull that is crucial to Kanban. When any developer is able to take a story from the backlog and pull it to development or QA, he is able to do so because we respect him, we respect his skills, and we give him the ability to do so, we empower him through our respect.
 - Respect for people also aligns with sustainable pace in Agile, or Muri 無理 in Lean. If you respect your team you will not work them to death, or subject any worker to intellectual or physical demands that make it nearly impossible to succeed. An exhausted developer, manager or team are the perfect recipe for disaster. Kanban cannot succeed this way.
2. Courage
 - Respect for people is not enough; like [Kent Beck](#) noticed in order to improve or even correct mistakes we need courage. When a manager, VP, or person in authority makes a mistake and someone with lower rank notices it, it takes courage for him to tell us about it.
 - Courage combined with respect for people enable effective delegation, proper demand-pull and continuous improvement.
3. Focus on Value
 - One of the key purposes of Kanban is the creation of value. In software development value means the creation of working, good quality code and is also part of Agile. Value implies customer satisfaction, and that is the purpose of our efforts.
 - Value is at the center of Lean and TPS, but frequently it is mentioned as the reverse side of the coin: eliminate waste or “Muda” in Japanese Muda 無駄 represents anything that does not add value to your process or flow. By eliminating waste, we optimize the creation of value.
4. Communication and Collaboration
 - Communication, and collaboration are at the center of teamwork. One value does not work without the other that is the reason we decided to group them together. To succeed we need to make ourselves heard (communicate) but also we need to be able to work with others to create value.
 - Without teamwork Kanban fails, and to be honest almost any business that does not communicate and collaborate properly will fail.
5. Holistic or Systemic Approach to Change
 - Deming’s [System of Profound Knowledge](#) and Goldratt’s [Theory of Constraints](#) reminds us that no single part of a system can ever bring overall improvement. We need to take a [holistic](#) view of the system and understand it. And the key part of the system is people, not just as resources, but also as full rounded individuals who make the system work.
 - Kanban agrees with this vision and aims to drive improvement where it counts. An understanding of the whole is fundamental to arrive at steady, successful change.

2. Open Kanban Practices

Open Kanban values translate into action by following four key practices:

1. Visualize the workflow
 - When we are doing knowledge work, like programming a method, designing a user interface or writing a business report most of the work is invisible. This means that the output of your effort is much smaller than the effort involved, and the bulk of that effort cannot be easily seen.
 - Kanban deals with this challenge by using [Kanban boards](#), visual representations of the [flow of work](#) that show how work items move from stage to the next.
 - This Kanban practice makes it easier to collaborate in a team setting, and also provides transparency about the process and the work everyone is doing. If you are a manager you can easily see at any moment what is the status of things, and if you are a team member you can see your impact on the overall work.
 - Visualizing the workflow is not limited to Kanban boards; one can also use signs and diagrams that the team can see in their work environment, like dashboards, performance metrics or other [information radiators](#).
2. Lead using a team approach
 - Unless your organization is composed of just one person, you cannot achieve anything worthwhile without leading a team.
 - Although Kanban starts where you are, and does not need to modify any titles or roles in an organization, Kanban cannot work without a team to deliver value.
 - Teams and team leadership are crucial to deliver value. Both are needed in Kanban: good teams and good team leadership. No need for new roles or titles, but we do have a need for working teams, with leaders in them!
3. Reduce the Batch Size of your Efforts
 - Research in the way the [mind works](#), and [countless](#) experiences from [Lean](#), the [Theory of Constraints](#) and [Kanban](#) confirm that to deliver value faster, with better flow and good team morale we need to focus and limit the number of things we do. Multitasking does not work.
 - Limiting how many things you do at any given time, means reducing the batch size of whatever you are doing at a particular stage of the value chain. By doing this you will deliver value faster because you are able to focus your efforts, one of the best explanations of this fact has been given by [Donald G. Reinertsen](#). Keeping the team focused helps them finish what they start faster.
 - Limiting WIP is a consequence of reducing the batch size of your efforts, and not the other way around. However doing either will result in improvements in efficiency and productivity. Open Kanban does not ask you to limit WIP, but it does request that you “Reduce the Batch Size of your Efforts.”
 - How do you reduce the batch size of your efforts? Reduce the complexity and the quantity of things you do at any stage of the value chain. In software development this would mean: reduce the number of large stories (epics) you create, and do your best to keep stories simple; also reduce the volume of stories you work on any stage of the Software Development Life Cycle; this way your team will focus, and deliver more value.
4. Learn and improve continuously
 - The four previous practices ensure you are doing things better than before, and that you deliver more value. However to make sure you make a significant jump in innovation, morale, and value we must also stop, learn and apply our knowledge to improve!
 - It is worth mentioning that this practice aligns with the Agile value of embracing change, and there are many ways a Kanban team can implement this practice, you could have Retrospectives, Strategy Meetings or even [Kaizen Groups](#).
 - Learning is the key concept before continuous improvement can ever happen! Once learning is part of the culture, part of the workflow, then improving continuously becomes easy.
 - Open Kanban further supports learning by listening to the community and updating itself to be a better Agile and Lean method.

3. Open Kanban’s License

Our search for a suitable open source license for the project led us to three possible choices to foster collaboration and the four freedoms we have embraced, those licenses were: the GNU [LGPL](#) v3, the [MIT](#) license and [Creative Commons](#) most open licenses.

Although the first two licenses are [appropriate](#), both are designed for sharing of computer source code. Creative Commons on the other hand is appropriate for knowledge work that deals with writing, and media creation. Major endorsements by [Wikipedia](#), [Flickr](#), [Autodesk](#) and many [more](#) convinced us of their reputation and [future](#) as a trustworthy promoter of [freedom](#) in our culture.

Our Open Kanban license is therefore based on [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license](#), commonly referred to as [CC BY](#) as our license; this is one of the most open licenses available. Open Kanban’s CC BY license fully allows you to:

- Share, copy, and modify Open Kanban
- Use Open Kanban for personal, commercial or non-profit goals.

We only ask you that you:

- Give us credit
- Contribute your best ideas back to Open Kanban root repository.

How Can You Contribute?

First of all talk about and recommend Open Kanban! You can find the company behind this idea: AgileLion Institute on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Google Plus](#), and on the [web](#).

Second, if you understand Kanban well, and wish to contribute, get familiar with Git, fork us and contribute back to us by submitting your [pull request](#) on [GitHub](#)!

Third, our vision of Open Kanban is much bigger than this document, we want to make Open Kanban into an independent website, and spread the Open Kanban Movement around the world of Agile and Lean practitioners. If you would like to do more we welcome your help in any of the following areas:

- Translations. We would like to reach the world with Open Kanban. We welcome translators from any part of the world!
- Graphic Design. We would like to create several logos to identify people who follow, support us, or join forces as Open Kanban Methods or Certified Education providers.
- Web Design and Development. We would like to have a website dedicated to Open Kanban, where people can find information about the project, education providers and like minded people who support the initiative. We are committed to Open Source solutions and languages such as PHP, Drupal and Ruby on Rails.
- Hosting. If you would like to host our website, let us know. We are committed to open source operating systems such as Linux and FreeBSD.
- Open Kanban Education. Join our initiative to offer Certified Open Kanban courses. We are in the early stages of this initiative; we would like to join forces with several education providers who share our vision for an Open Kanban alternative in the market. If you are interested please [contact us](#).
- Financial Support. A financial donation page will be created soon, but if you want to contribute now, feel free to contact us [directly](#).
- Ideas and Suggestions. We welcome them in our [forum](#)!

Finally do consider contributing to the sponsor behind this project: AgileLion Institute by taking a [class with us](#). Our Kanban Ace course is the first one that is fully based on Open Kanban, and while you learn you make Open Kanban stronger.

We truly believe in an open, collaborative Open Kanban Movement for all, thanks so much for staying with us all the way to the end Open Kanban’s main document. May the values and principles of Open Kanban be useful to all of you!

Joseph Hurtado
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Kanban Ace Coach - An Open Kanban Method