

Project Kick Offs

What's a Project Kick Off?

A collaborative meeting you hold before a project begins to get everyone aligned on desired outcomes. Yes, this meeting takes time, but it will save you and your team far more time (and frustration) by catching problems early on.

How does a Kick Off meeting look?

- Schedule a 30-90 min Kick Off meeting each time your team takes on a new project.
- Invite or interview relevant stakeholders – folks who will be impacted by your work.
- Pick ritualized questions to answer at every Kick Off (see sample template for ideas).
- Use a visual system to capture decisions (e.g., Jira, Asana, physical Kanban board).
- Beware of the Planning Fallacy (our tendency to underestimate how long things take). Add at least 30% buffer to all time estimates. Remember the Coordinating Effect – the more people are involved, the more buffer you'll need to add.
- Rotate meeting roles (facilitator, timekeeper, note taker) across your team for greater engagement and inclusion.
- Set up the Kick Off for success by sharing context/background of the project before the meeting or do a silent pre-read all together in the first 10 minutes of the meeting.

Project Kick Off Template

Define Scope: 15 minutes

- ☐ What is the Definition of Done for this project? (How will we know it is definitely finished?)
- ☐ What is our Definition of Success for this project?

Determine Participants: 15 minutes

- ☐ Who are the stakeholders? (Who will be impacted or might impact us later on?)
- ☐ What is each person's role? (Try the DACI model: Driver, Approver, Contributors, Informed)
- ☐ What interdependencies do we need to consider for this project?

Estimate Time: 10 minutes

- ☐ How long do we expect this project to take? (Should we add buffer? Probably!)
- ☐ Does everyone involved (including Driver, Approver, and Contributors) have time to do it?

Bonus - Do a Pre-Mortem: 20 minutes

- ☐ What are all the things that could go wrong with this project?
- ☐ How can we prevent these problems or reduce them?

Next Up: Schedule your [Project Retro](#).



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