

Tips for Effective Stand-up Meetings / Continuous Improvement

What is a stand-up meeting?

A stand-up meeting is a short, daily meeting used to keep teams aligned throughout their workweeks. The purpose of a stand-up meeting is to clarify priorities for the day, identify potential roadblocks, and talk as a team about the work being done.

For teams using Kanban boards to manage their work, daily stand-ups are a great way to reinforce the most helpful practices of Kanban, such as limiting work-in-progress (WIP).

Tips for Effective Stand-up meetings:

- **Keep it short:** the recommended time allotment is 5-15 minutes.
- **Keep it small:** if your meeting has more than 15 people that leaves less than a minute for each person to speak.
- **Stand up!** The discomfort of standing for long periods helps keep these meetings short.
- **Start promptly:** do not wait for anybody, do not reschedule if some team members are not present.
- **Determine the order of the flow:** have the last person who enters the room start and after that the order can be clockwise or counterclockwise, or the order can be more random (e.g. pull names from a hat).
- **Every stand-up needs a leader** who balances time-awareness and keeps to the agenda. The leader can rotate to create autonomy, or be a designated person to promote consistency.
- **Agree on an amount of time allotted to each person**, such as one minute each, and adjust this as needed, as the team gets more comfortable with the meeting's flow. If someone veers off-topic, it is the leader's job to redirect politely. Consider using a whiteboard to capture topics for further discussion after the stand-up. Consider using a timer to signal the next turn, if team members tend to exceed their allotment.
- **Each person addresses three questions, examples might be:**
 1. What have I recently accomplished/what did I accomplish yesterday?
 2. What are my in progress tasks/plans / what will I do today?
 3. What obstacles/roadblocks do I need help with?
- **If you have a stand-up meeting with a Kanban board, you do not need to spend much time on what was done the previous day, but rather on what is slowing down items that have been in progress for the longest amount of time.** Discuss blocked items and what help you need to deal with any impediments.
- **Focus more on flow, not status:** stand-up meetings are not status meetings; the purpose is to discuss how to keep work moving. Avoid detailed explanation of tasks/items. A stand-up can be considered successful if team members engage in discussions after the stand-up meeting, not during.
- **Make connecting quick and easy – if you have remote workers, have them dial in or videoconference in.** A good rule of thumb is that if setting up takes more than 5 minutes, you are wasting time and should consider building in connection/setup time.