

- Personal Kanban is a system utilizing the rules of Kanban to organize life's work.
- This system is based on a book, *Personal Kanban: Mapping Work | Navigating Life*, written by authors Jim Benson and Tonianne Demaria Berry. This presentation will refer primarily to that book.
- Personal Kanban offers a way to bring peace of mind to daily tasks and prioritize the work that is most important to you.
- This presentation starts with the basics of Kanban and then dives into how Personal Kanban works, how to set it up, and how to start filling your personal backlog and prioritizing your work.

1. What is Kanban?
2. What is Personal Kanban?
3. Why Personal Kanban?
4. How to get started
5. Ways to prioritize your work
6. Final takeaways / Q&A

Your Expectations

- What system or system(s) have you used to organize your professional or personal work before?
- What would you like to improve about your organization?

- Kanban is a pull system for organizing work, developed as part of the Toyota Production System by Taiichi Ohno.
 - Kanban is Japanese for “visual card” or “sign board.”
- As opposed to a push system, which would generate parts and send them down the line regardless of need (generating waste), Kanban pulled parts when they were needed, cutting down on waste and making production more efficient.
 - A “Kanban” or card is produced detailing what is needed and is sent to the inventory system.
 - A good way to visualize this is going to the store for milk. The Kanban will tell you what type of milk is needed (Vitamin D, whole, 1%) and how much (half-gallon, gallon)

- Both Kanban and Personal Kanban operate under two primary rules:
 1. Visualize your work.
 2. Limit Work in Progress (WIP).

*Tutorial Board (Start Here!)



Private

Ready



Help, Pro Tips, Webinars & More



Add a card...

Doing



Create Your First Board

☰ ☑ 0/5

Add a card...

Blocked



Power-Ups, Integrations, APIs, oh my!

☰ 📎 1

Add a card...

Done



This is a card. Drag it to the "Tried It" List to show it's done. →

Trello Basics [CLICK TO OPEN]

☰ 📎 1

Add a card...

- Why is it important to visualize work?
 1. Have you ever assured yourself you can remember something and then struggled to remember it?
 2. We tend to carry a lot of things in our head, increasing mental load.
 3. Sometimes we can forget small details about something we're supposed to do.
 4. Or, in focusing on small details, we might neglect bigger ones, like impact of a task on stakeholders.

- Visualizing work also means exposing the trade-offs in doing any work.
 1. When we leap into tasks without fully understanding context, we might lose sight of what trade-offs are involved in the work we do.
 2. For example, if you have enough time before lunch to either respond to an email or finish an hour-long task, one trade-off is that not responding to the email might leave someone blocked on their work.
 3. By visualizing work and making it more explicit, you can see where in your process there are trade-offs for both you and other people on your team.

Benefits of Visualizing Work

- Visualizing your work allows you to see it and fully understand it.
 1. You can get it all out of your head, reducing mental load.
 2. You can understand how your work items interact with each other, giving greater context to your work.
 3. With this context, you can better prioritize your work.

- Why is it important to limit WIP?
 1. Because we have to.
 - "We cannot do more than we are capable of doing. This should seem obvious, but it's not." (p. 14)
 2. Many things limit our ability to do work:
 - Predictability of a task
 - Level of experience with a task
 - Energy level
 - How much other work is in progress

- Research suggests that we are not as good at multitasking as we think we are.
 1. UC Irvine study: workers took on average 25 minutes to recover from interruptions such as phone calls or emails and return to their original task.
 2. NY Times 2007: Extreme multitasking may cost US economy \$650 billion a year in lost productivity.
 - Rosen, Christine (2008.) The myth of multitasking. The New Atlantis, 106, Spring 2008. 105-110.
 3. Multitasking is thought to increase mental load and stress by requiring too much to go on at once. Tasks may be completed, but quality is lower than if one thing happens at a time.

Benefits of Limiting WIP

- Keeping our focus fully on one thing at a time, often resulting in finishing things faster than if we try to multitask.
- Reacting calmly to change because we have a better structure for accommodating emergencies or surprises.
- Doing a more mindful job, resulting in better quality the first time.

- Have any of you ever started on something and gotten halfway through, and then left it for later?
 - Have any of you still not done that thing you were halfway through?
- According to studies on the Zelgarnik Effect, adults have a 90% chance of remembering interrupted or incomplete thoughts or actions over those that have been seen through.
 - This implies that getting things done and being able to see them done gives the brain a lot of satisfaction - hence why Kanban can be effective, because you are moving things to done and seeing them done.
 - Anything that gets from halfway done to done is no longer haunting you.

Cookie the Dog

- One of the authors, Jim Benson, played a joke on his dog as a child.
- He threw the dog a couple of pieces of cereal and Cookie ate them easily.
- He then increased the number of pieces of cereal until it was too many at a time for Cookie to handle, and the dog panicked and didn't catch any of them.
- When we take on more than we can handle, it can result in residual stress buildup because we're trying too hard to focus on everything and not stick to the limit of what we can do.



- Steps to get Started:
 1. Prepare your Format
 2. Establish your Value Streams
 3. Establish your Backlog
 4. Establish your WIP Limit
 5. Pull Tasks from Backlog according to WIP Limit
 6. Reflect on the process and continuously improve

1. Prepare Your Format

- Personal Kanban can be as simple as a file folder and sticky notes.
- A whiteboard with erasable markers can also be effective.
- Software also exists to set up a Personal Kanban.
 - One software that is free and is particularly good is Trello.

2. Establish a Value Stream

- Value stream is a visual representation of work from beginning to end.
- The simple value stream in a Kanban board is the following:
 - Ready: Waiting to be processed from the backlog.
 - Doing: In process
 - Done: Completely finished
- Value streams can also include:
 - Blocked: Waiting on an external dependency

3. Establish Your Backlog

- Next, it's time to establish your backlog, bringing in everything that you need to do so that you can sort it out.
- This is a tricky step, because the authors recommend to bring in *everything*.
- The first substep is to list down tasks using whatever form you want, like sticky notes or a mind map. Just get everything out of your head into the backlog.
- This process is supposed to be uncomfortable. You should feel like it is an impossible mountain of work.
- Once everything is in your backlog, prioritize it and put the topmost priorities into your Ready column.

4. Establish Your WIP Limit

- Start by picking an arbitrary number. I did 3, but could be more or less depending on how comfortable you feel.
- Add this number to your doing and make sure you enforce no more than that number.
 - If you're using software, sometimes it does this for you, either by prohibiting more than your WIP limit or turning red if there is more than 3.
- On some days, you will feel energized to do more, and that's okay.
 - Just make sure things don't end up half-done!
- On some days, you will feel incredibly tired and want to do less, and that's also okay.
 - Don't end up like Cookie!

5. Pull Tasks From Your Backlog

- Each time you pull a task into doing, you're prioritizing based on your current context.
- As you pull, ask yourself:
 1. What's most important?
 2. What can I fit into my schedule?
 3. What can I batch together or complete in sequence?
- Remember, pulling is fundamentally different from pushing.
 - When you pull a task, you are making a conscious choice to do this above all else.

6. Reflect On What You've Done

- After a week or more, stop and reflect on what you've done.
- Do a retrospective on yourself:
 1. What did you do particularly well?
 2. Where did you struggle?
 3. What made you feel better about yourself through completing?
 4. Did you do the right things at the right time?
 5. Did you get value from what you completed? Did someone else?

To-Do Lists are Evil?

"To-do lists are the embodiment of evil.
They possess us and torment us, controlling what we do,
highlighting what we haven't.
They make us feel inadequate, and dismiss our achievements
as if they were waste.
They must be stopped."

Barry, Tonianne DeMaria; Jim Benson. Personal Kanban: Mapping Work | Navigating Life (p. 60). Modus Cooperandi Press. Kindle Edition.

What do To-Do Lists Lack?

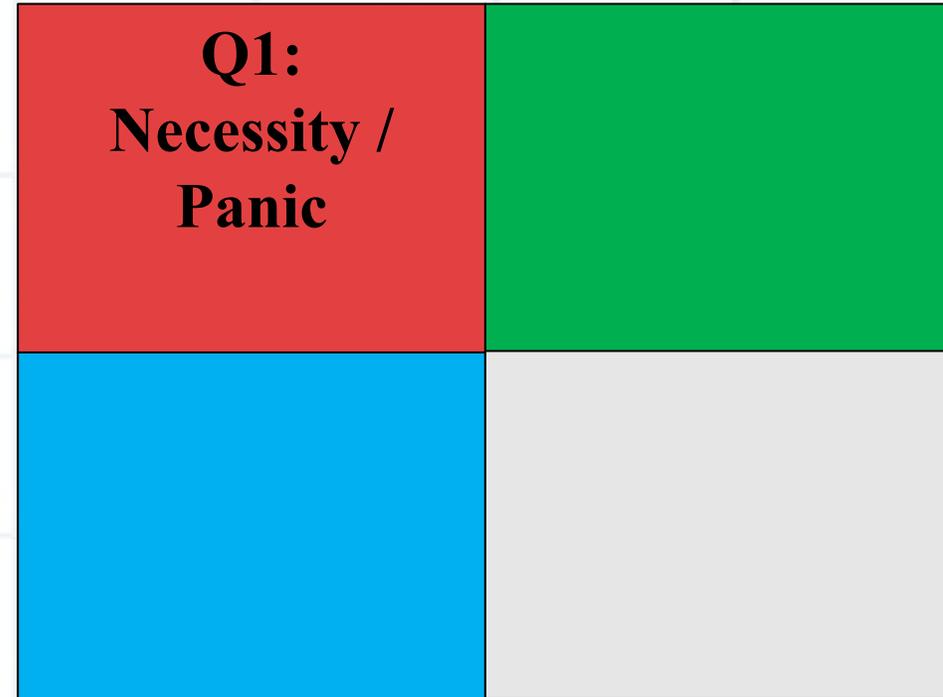
- Context
 - In a to-do list, you have top to bottom.
 - Do one thing, then the next, then the next.
 - The reward for completing a task is the next task.
 - However, with context, completing one task can open up three new tasks.
- Priority
 - Having more control over priority lets you take advantage of productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness.
 - Productivity: Getting the right work done.
 - Efficiency: Doing more while expending less effort.
 - Effectiveness: With our options explicit, we can make more informed decisions.

- 1. Start with structure.
 - Dan Ariely: Experiment on students in his classes
 - With deadlines imposed from him, the students did best.
 - With self-imposed deadlines, the students did okay.
 - With no deadlines, the students struggled.
 - Effective prioritization is driven by *clarity*.
- 2. Plan constantly but plan as close to the last minute as possible, in an Agile way.
 - “Plans are useless. Planning is indispensable.” –Dwight D. Eisenhower

- 3. Use the Time Management Matrix
 - Popularized by Stephen Covey.
 - However, the authors have some suggestions for how to do it differently.

Q1: Urgent and Important	Q2: Not Urgent but Important
Q3: Urgent but not Important	Q4: Not Urgent or Important

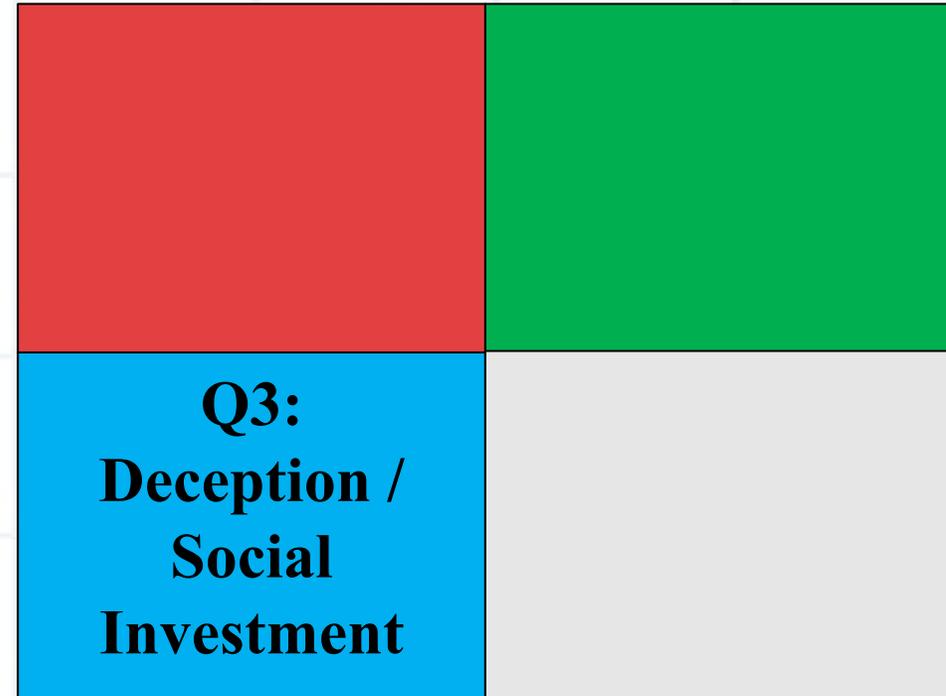
- Q1 is Urgent and Important – the fires that must be put out.
 - Classic Covey calls it the Quadrant of Necessity. These things must be done.
 - Personal Kanban calls it the Quadrant of Panic. Do these, but examine *why*.
 - Anything in this quadrant should have a retrospective done to examine how it got to the state of panic,



- Q2 is Not Urgent but Important.
 - Classic Covey calls it the - Quadrant of Quality and Personal Leadership. Quality-related tasks like enhancing skills, removing bottlenecks, creating kaizen (continuous improvement) events
 - Personal Kanban calls it the Quadrant of kaizen. Time and effort spent here is an investment in future quality.
 - This is called the antidote to panic.

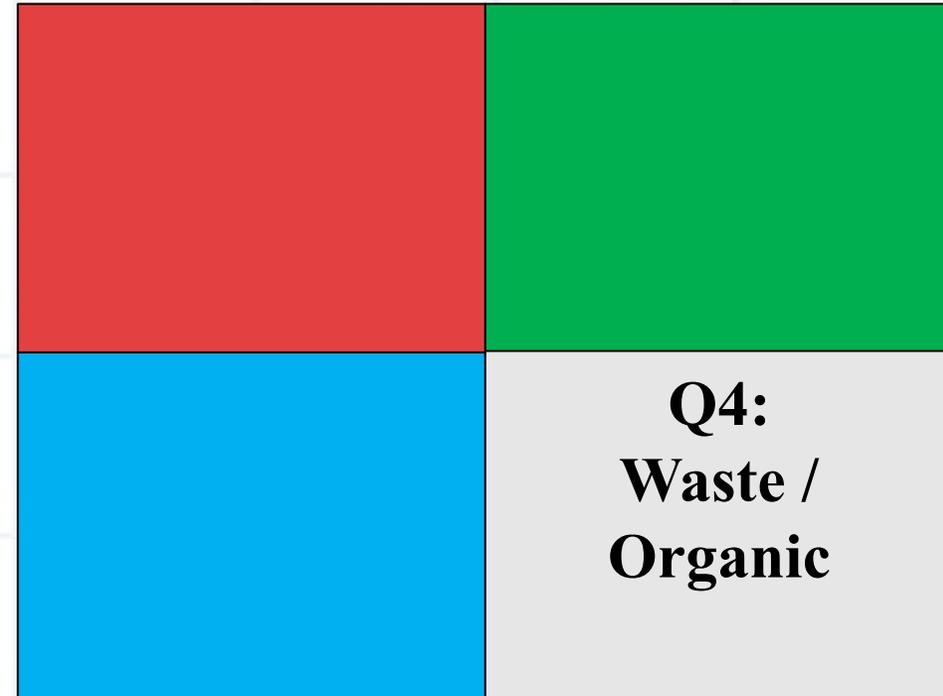


- Q3: Urgent but Not Important
 - Classic Covey calls it the - Quadrant of Deception because it contains tasks like phone calls and meetings that might waste time.
 - Personal Kanban calls it the Quadrant of Social Investment. Time spent here represents socialization, networking, and meetings/calls with possible payoff.



Q4: Waste / Organic

- Q4: Not Urgent or Important
 - Classic Covey calls it the Quadrant of Waste and counsels to avoid as many of these as possible.
 - Personal Kanban calls it the Organic Quadrant because it represents life. Not only are there opportunities to relax and recharge, but there are also hobbies and side projects that could also produce something.



Conclusion

1. Personal Kanban is not only a system for organizing work; it is also a system for organizing life.
2. By following this system or adding context and priority to an existing system, you can get closer to mapping out the life you want and doing what is most important to you.
3. Remember there are only two rules: Visualize work and Limit WIP.

Thanks for attending!

Any Questions?