

Kanban Rules of Engagement

Kanban stands out in Agile project management for its simplicity, flexibility, and emphasis on visualizing work and optimizing flow.

These six rules of engagement help teams unlock Kanban's full potential.

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The 6 practices of Kanban





Visualize Your Workflow



Create Visual Representation

Display work items moving through different process stages on a Kanban board.



Organize by Stages

Divide board into columns representing workflow stages.



Track Individual Items

Use cards or sticky notes for individual work items.



Gain Insights

Identify bottlenecks and make informed decisions to improve flow.



Limit Work in Progress (WIP)

Focus on Completion

Complete existing work before taking on new tasks.

Prevent Overloading

Avoid multitasking to maintain quality and efficiency.

Maintain Steady Flow

Reduce lead times and improve predictability.

Optimize Productivity

Adjust WIP limits based on team capacity and throughput.

Manage Flow



Prioritize Work

Base priorities on customer value and urgency.



Monitor Progress

Track cycle times and visualize queues.



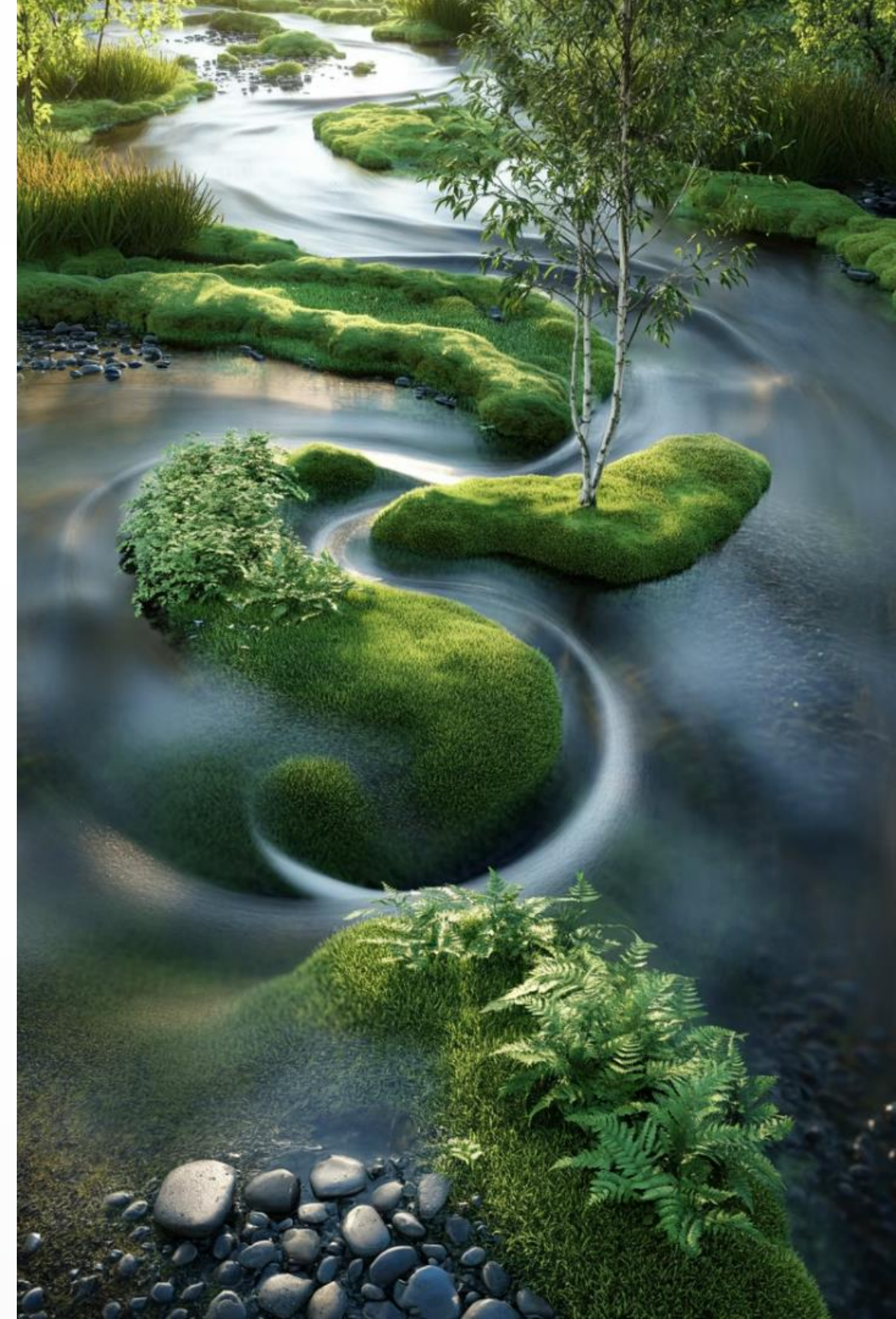
Address Bottlenecks

Identify and resolve blockers promptly.



Deliver Value Faster

Improve predictability and customer satisfaction.





Make Process Policies Explicit



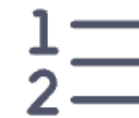
Define Rules

Document guidelines governing how work is done.



Clarify Definitions

Create clear definitions of "done" for tasks.



Establish Criteria

Set standards for prioritizing work and quality.



Promote Transparency

Foster consistency and alignment within the team.

Implement Feedback Loops



Improve Collaboratively, Evolve Experimentally



Identify Opportunities

Collaborate to find areas for improvement.



Test Hypotheses

Experiment with process changes.



Implement Incrementally

Make small, manageable changes.



Adapt Continuously

Respond to changing needs and challenges.

Kanban Board Structure



Benefits of Kanban





Managing the Kanban Board

Maintain Consistent Structure

Once team agrees on stage lanes, make minimal changes. Only project manager or product owner should modify columns.

Add New Stories Properly

Any team member can add stories. Use format: "As a [user], I want [goal], so that [benefit]." Include acceptance criteria.

Review and Prioritize Regularly

Hold backlog grooming meetings to estimate and prioritize. Size stories using T-shirt sizing or Fibonacci sequences.

Story Workflow Process



Developers select highest priority stories, complete them, then move through peer review, testing, and product owner approval before marking as done.

Handling Blocked Items



Identify Blockers

Move blocked stories to dedicated lane.
Clearly note why the story is blocked.



Team Collaboration

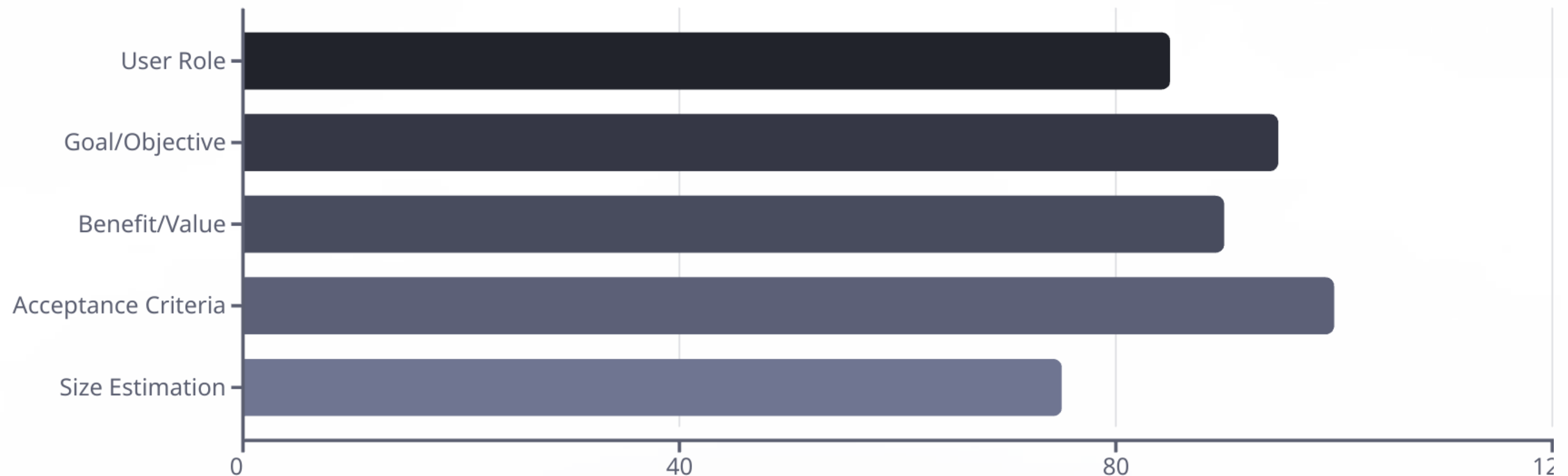
Encourage team members to assist in
unblocking stories.



Gather Information

Collect details from stakeholders about
issues preventing task completion.

User Story Format



Effective user stories follow the format: "As a [type of user], I want [a goal], so that [benefit]." Acceptance criteria are essential for completion verification.

Estimation and Prioritization

2-4

Weeks

Typical sprint duration for Kanban teams

5-8

Stories

Optimal WIP limit for average team

13

Fibonacci

Common sizing sequence
(1,2,3,5,8,13)

3-5

Sizes

T-shirt sizing options
(S,M,L,XL,XXL)





Mastering Kanban:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Visualize Workflow | Create visual representation of work stages |
| Limit WIP | Focus on completing existing work first |
| Manage Flow | Prioritize based on value and address bottlenecks |
| Make Policies Explicit | Document rules and guidelines clearly |
| Implement Feedback | Use retrospectives and metrics to improve |
| Improve Collaboratively | Experiment and evolve as a team |

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, mastering Kanban requires understanding and adhering to its rules of engagement. By visualizing workflow, limiting WIP, managing flow, making process policies explicit, implementing feedback loops, and embracing a culture of collaborative improvement and experimentation, teams can harness the power of Kanban to optimize their processes, deliver value to customers, and achieve their goals with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Kanban Methodology

