DAVID J ANDERSON SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Make The 4-Day Work Week **Work**

This document takes a closer look at the four-day workweek trend and how Kanban practices and principles can help organizations make this transition a successful one. It focuses on creating alignment through shared purpose, collaboration, social cohesion, and service-oriented organizations.

Written By: Anna Radzikowska

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Focus on "Why?"

The Post-Covid World: Create Alignment Through Shared Purpose!

We have all realized that the changes are inevitable. The coronavirus pandemic and all its implications heavily hit the way we work and run our businesses.

What some of us might have expected, what we can clearly see now, is that after 2 years of working from home or a hybrid style of working there are:

- Problems with physical and mental exhaustion
- Mental distance from the value of the individual's work and effort
- Emotional and cognitive impairment
- Up to an almost 600% higher burnout risk
-

The tactical choice to try and maintain normal workplace interaction via technology connections could not be sustained.

Work-Life balance

The idea of helping people better manage their work-life balance by switching from a 40-hour/5-day work week to a 32-hour/4-day work week wasn't anything new.

It sparked in 2017 but emerged during the pandemic and seems it will stay with us for longer, changing the work environment and approach to knowledge work. As "4 Day Week Global" says, "COVID-19 made it clear we can find a better balance between work and life. 85% of U.S. adults already approve of moving to a 4-day week."

Unsurprisingly, when asked, most people will choose to work fewer hours for the same pay. However, the tricky part is in the third element of the so-called "100-80-100 model". Productivity should be maintained at the previous 100% level.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

"Why Do We Collaborate"

In a series of articles from spring 2020, David Anderson described how we can use Kanban concepts and work approaches early on in the pandemic. Two years later, we are revisiting these articles to share them again. This time, adjusting them to the new reality.

In the beginning, we counted the days. As the days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, we recognized that the world is changing forever. We recognized that we need to start thinking differently about work, organization, and leadership. We cannot try to blend the existing ways of leading and working with the new reality of a remote workforce. It is impossible.

We had to learn to view individual remote workers as service providers. Each person operates a well-defined service and responds and interacts through a well-defined service interface. This permits them autonomy and the freedom to disconnect for significant periods of time to work in isolation. As leaders, we must not seek to drive social cohesion and effective collaboration through a sense of team identity and peer pressure, rather we must up our game and create alignment through shared purpose. There needs to be a shift away from "who we are" as a group toward "why do we collaborate".

Weakened Social Cohesion

When we look at organizations with lower maturity levels (Maturity Levels 1 and 2), what we can observe and experience is a strong sense of shared identity. It can take two forms:

- A group of individuals who sit together and feel an affinity and a shared identity, but work separately on similar tasks
- A true team of individuals who work collaboratively on a single task toward a shared goal. They share an identity and a purpose

The culture is tribal and focused on the identity of the team and status within the team. Trust exists within the team, but there is little comprehension of the world beyond the team and little cooperation with another team.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Closely cooperating team members may have very strong social cohesion. Social cohesion describes the strength of the affinity in a social group—how tightly knit they are. Think of social cohesion as the gravity of an organization.

If the cohesion is high, the gravitational force is strong, and the group attracts new members.

In our new reality, even these fragile foundations were shaken. Employees might still be connected to one team through organizational structure or administrative requirements, but they started to work more individually. Still, a lot of organizations fail to recognize this fact and prefer to keep pretending as if nothing changed.

We need to realize that new employees will not have the opportunity to bond with fellow team members in the traditional manner. ex. around the water cooler and coffee machine in the office recreation space The new world of work consists of a loosely affiliated group of individuals sitting at home juggling their work with children, pets, and domestic chores. As leaders, we must give meaning to their work lives through a shared sense of purpose and an understanding of how they individually contribute to the greater whole.

> Pragmatically, we need to accept the weakened social cohesion and the reduced levels of social capital that will come from the changes in our work habits.

Focus on Service

Customer-facing requests need to be accepted by someone responsible and accountable for taking the customer's order and ensuring it is fulfilled. Traditionally, we might have called these people project managers, producers, or account managers. Generically, we might now call them (customer) service delivery managers (SDMs). These SDMs become the conductors who orchestrate work over a network of interdependent service providers internal to the firm to achieve a shared purpose; to complete the customer's order and deliver it to them.

> Everyone is a service!

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Everyone is a service and every service needs a cleanly defined service interface:

- What is being requested? The work product? The item to be delivered?
- What are the expectations for that product in terms of delivery time, predictability, timeliness, quality, regulatory compliance, convenience, (re)configurability, and price?
- How might it vary against different threshold levels of the other attributes?

Behind these expectations, there will be a customer purpose and a set of risks that they must manage. Without a doubt, they wish us to be a trustworthy vendor. They want to take delivery of the item they requested and have their expectations of it met in full.

Effective leadership in this new world of work will create alignment through shared purpose.

> Do not try to bend the old ways of leading and working toward the new reality. In this new world of distributed 4-days remote working, it matters more, "why" we are involved, than the "who" we are part of.

Focus on "Why"

Alignment must come from a focus on "why". We must move away from leadership by identity and team membership. How?

- We must organize our business as a network of services
- Each remote worker must offer a well-defined service interface
- Managers must become the conductors who orchestrate work across an interdependent network of services to compose together meaningful work products and acceptable customer deliverables
- As leaders in this new world, we must lead with purpose and communicate context
- We must move away from leadership by identity and team membership
- Peer pressure, and a deep human desire to belong to have status, and recognition through membership of social group expectations, must be replaced by shared purpose and dignity from delivering a job well done

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Service Oriented Organization

Service Delivery Principles

We are going to revisit David Anderson's blogpost Leading during a Time of Quarantine: The Service-oriented Organization (SOO).

As previously mentioned, the post-pandemic world where the idea of 4-day workweek emerges rapidly requires leaders to shift from leadership by identity towards leadership by purpose

> What matters more, is "why" we are involved, than the "who" we are part of.

If we say that in this new organization each individual is a service and we need to organize our business as a network of services, it's worth starting with understanding what service is.

To do that, let's first examine the **Kanban Service Delivery Principles.**

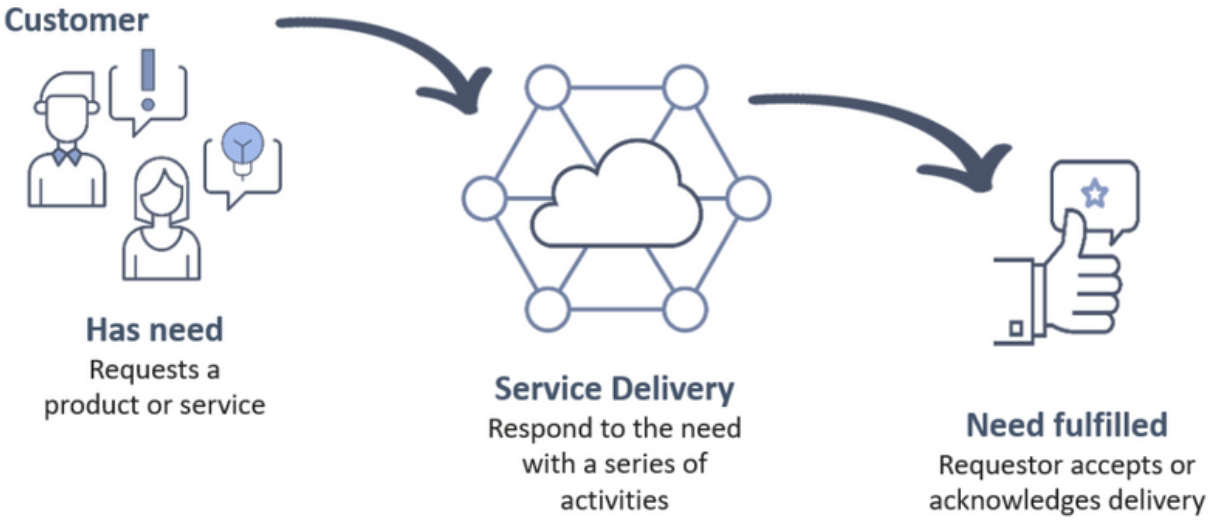
Kanban encourages you to take a service-oriented approach to understand your organization and how the work flows through it. This service-oriented organizational paradigm is based on the idea that your **organization is an organic entity consisting of a network of services**, each of them living and breathing, and evolving. **Customer requests flow through this network of services**. If we are to improve service delivery, improvements should be guided by a set of principles. These principles may not be utilized early on by organizations as they may not have developed or evolved a service-oriented or customer service mindset as part of their culture.

The service-oriented principles are:

- Understand and focus on customer needs and expectations
- Manage the work; let people self-organize around it
- Regularly review the network of services and its policies to improve outcomes

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Understand and focus on customer needs and expectations



The customers are at the heart of our process. They bring requests, which we fulfill through the set of service delivery activities until the service or products are considered as completed and satisfying customer needs.

Hence, it is important to not lose the track of the customer requirements for our service and and keep communications and dialogue open. Delivery teams but also discovery teams shouldn't be just order takers. They need to look proactively for understanding the customer's purpose and satisfying it.

Manage the work; let people self-organize around it

It may be sometimes just a change of wording used, but it is important to focus in work and discussion on the process itself and not on the people doing it. E.g., when a defect was detected, you do not look for an individual to blame. Rather you ask the questions:

- Why did it happen?
- What did really happen?
- What was the impact?
- What can we do to avoid it in a future?

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Although Kanban may seem very dehumanized by focusing on the process and not people, this principle makes it even more human-centric: in Kanban, we give people space by removing the burden of constant focus on their actions, sometimes the burden of micromanagement and finger-pointing. We trust that experts, who we hired, are capable and knowledgeable enough to perform their duties and we switch our focus to improving the process instead.

Regularly review the network of services and its policies to improve outcomes

We are not isolated islands. In most of the cases we work with other people, and we are dependent on them – or they are dependent on us. There is a network (a web) of correlations between different services, which can be managed by establishing feedback mechanisms in the form of regular cadences.

This network of services in your organization requires regular review altogether with accompanying policies to make sure they reflect reality.

The future of the organization is service-oriented!

In these times of unprecedented change organizations are having to move more quickly, take faster decisive action, reorient and reinvent themselves for survival. More than ever businesses are discovering their need for agility and innovation because of this increase in pace, to keep up and stay ahead.

Crisis situations give many people the opportunity to shine, to show their leadership and express skills, capabilities and behaviors that were never in their job descriptions. Companies are discovering their real leaders.

Organizational management skills are needed now more than ever in our lifetime. In a work from home (WFH) world, we're discovering that:

- The networks built upon the tribalism will not strive.
- We should lead by communicating shared purpose.
- Each employee at home has become a service provider.

In a world shaken by crisis, where there is likely no return to the old ways, the future of the organization is service-oriented.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

> While leadership and innovation are admirable and required qualities in a crisis, they count for little without an ability to execute.

A precedent: Feature-Driven Development (FDD)

In the field of large-scale business agility, it turns out there is already an archetypal example of a dynamically reconfigurable organization, designed to rapidly respond to emerging demands and uncertain requirements. Built by Jeff de Luca, a director of IT at United Overseas Bank in Singapore in 1997, his organization reinvented the bank's lending system. Their doctrine was named "Feature-driven development" (or FDD). We can learn a lot about the future of organizational design from a project of 50 plus people, more than 20 years ago. In 1997, we lacked the language of service-orientation with which to describe the processes and organization on the PowerLender IT project at UOB.

Every programmer, every business analyst, several other specialists such as user experience designers, and a team of testers all provided services which were dynamically orchestrated feature by feature over 2 years to completely replace all the bank's lending operations with a single integrated IT platform.

It all started with a map of the territory, a model of the lending domain and the system requirements. The map was then carved up with different sections of the code allocated to programmers as "class owners." The concept was simple and intended to maintain code quality and design integrity. Each "owner" would deeply comprehend and understand what that section of code should do, and they would ensure, the proper "coupling" and "cohesion" (technical terms in software engineering) to ensure design integrity and long-term maintainability of the system architecture and code function.

> The entire project is viewed as a large collection of features for delivery.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

FDD made a trade-off that was unfashionable amongst programming methodologists – it traded flexibility of the workforce, for internal code quality. Unlike, Extreme Programming (XP) which was also coming into fashion at the time, FDD gave ownership of sections of the code to individuals. In Jeff de Luca's world it was considered easier to coordinate people than to maintain the quality and integrity of the code.

XP took the opposite view, let the people have the freedom to roam the entire codebase. This created flexibility amongst the workers to take any new request that came along. They could move quickly. Collocate the team for easier communication.

Instead FDD used the domain model to facilitate communication. XP assumed that code quality was easy and coordination of humans to work together was challenging. While the XP approach came to dominate the IT world in the past 20 years, through its more corporate mutation of Test-driven Development (TDD), there remains plenty of evidence that code quality is not easily maintained, and design and architectural integrity remain challenging for programmers the world over.

In FDD every programmer provides a set of design, coding, and unit testing services, for their territory within the overall map of the system and its business domain. Every analyst provides a feature-oriented requirements explanation and elaboration service, and every tester, a feature-oriented integration testing service. Specialist dependent services such as system architecture, data-base administration and user experience design are called upon when required.

The term "chief programmer" was used in the FDD literature to describe someone who was responsible and accountable for the design, development, testing, and delivery of a given feature. Today we might better use the language of service provision and call that person a Feature Delivery Manager (FDM) where the service provided is a Feature Delivery Service. An FDM would use their knowledge and experience to quickly assemble the team required – essentially orchestrating the set of service providers needed to cooperate and collaborate to complete the needed work.

> Individuals working from home must have clearly defined service interfaces. There must be no role ambiguity. People want to know what is expected of them and how to perform against expectations.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

The feature: its requirements, its user expectations, and delivery criteria defined the shared purpose for a "feature team" – an orchestrated set of service providers who collaborate to make it. While the greater grand vision and mission of the project, to integrate the consumer, commercial and corporate lending systems enabling UOB to make faster, better lending decisions, to be a more agile bank, gave the entire project team of more than 50 staff a shared purpose to drive alignment, trust, pride, achievement, and collaboration. Everyone wants respect, status, recognition, and dignity in their work. The foundation of happiness in the workplace is a set of unambiguous well-defined service definitions. And in this new WFH world, we need these service definitions at the granularity of individual workers.

While this sounds onerous and cumbersome, it need not be. FDD has shown us that it is perfectly possible to have large-scale business agility enabled by a set of (micro-) services performed by individuals. What is needed is a map of the territory and a set of cleanly defined service interfaces for every provider in the network.

Reinvent your workplace as a service-oriented organization (SOO)

Rapid reinvention, true business agility and the resilience to cope gracefully with unfolding events and emergent conditions, comes from a flat, service-oriented organizational structure. Managers must develop the skills to quickly orchestrate sets of services to deliver any and every request. They must lead by communicating purpose and context to align sets of service providers asked to cooperate and collaborate at a moment's notice and for the briefest of time. Rapidly reinvent your workplace as a service-oriented organization (SOO) with managers who orchestrate sets of service providers to deliver customer-valued work.

Do not try to bend the old ways of leading and working to the new reality. In this new world of distributed, 4-days, remote working, it matters more, "why" we are involved, than the "who" we are part of.

> If you want to relieve your people of endless tiresome hours of video conferencing from their homes, the nature of work must change.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Design your service

Let's revisit David Anderson's blog post Managing in a Service-oriented Organization: For every service there should be a Kanban system.

The Kanban Method brings the answers to post-pandemic questions

In this article we cover how you can improve the management and effectiveness of your organization by introducing Kanban systems at every level, from the individual at home, through to the customer-orientated products, service programs, and portfolios.

Understanding the concept that your organization is a network of independent services; it makes sense that for every service, there should be a kanban system!

This article shows you how to see services and how you might design a kanban system to manage each service.

In the modern world economy, some countries generate as much as 80% of GDP from the services sector. Yet, when talking with employees and managers in those businesses, they often fail to understand that they are in the services sector. **For years, these businesses have persisted in using management methods developed for tangible goods and physical environments:** they manage using paradigms from factories and civil engineering projects, using metrics, and incentives designed for manufacturing industries.

> For every service, there should be a kanban system!

The pandemic reality and the directive to work from home (WFH) has finally made it abundantly clear – if you can WFH, you aren't dealing with a physical environment, and tangible goods, instead you are a professional services worker, and working independently and remotely, makes you a "service of one."

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Since 2008, David Anderson has been teaching an approach to working, managing, leading change and organizational design. At its core, the Kanban Method, as it came to be known, was always about improved service delivery, meeting customer expectations, shorter time-to-market, and greater predictability. Its primary mechanism is the use of virtual kanban systems (a counter-intuitive idea adapted from the manufacturing industry).

Kanban systems in factories limit work-in-progress (WIP) and signal "just-in-time" replenishment.

At its core, the Kanban Method recognizes that humans have a limited mental capacity – too much multi-tasking, too many things open and unresolved, leads to stress, anxiety, poor quality and long, unpredictable delivery times.

Overburdened individuals, working in overburdened systems, perform poorly, and are viewed as untrustworthy by customers, disappointed by unpredictable lead times and deficient quality.

> In professional services firms, **virtual kanban systems limit work-in-progress and prevent individuals, teams, departments, and larger organizational units from becoming overburdened.**

Service of one

Each service, regardless of its level in the hierarchy or position in the network, has someone playing the role of service delivery manager – the person responsible and accountable for taking the customer's order and ensuring it got delivered. At the level of an individual working from home, their "service of one" is owner managed.

An individual kanban board

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

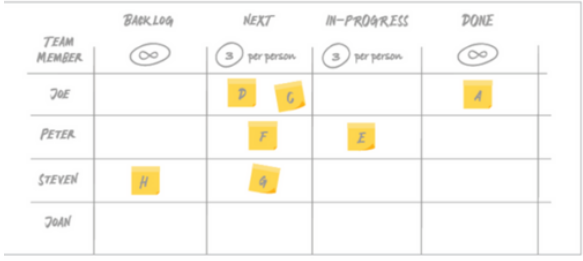
Working individually, start with visualizing your personal work by the means of an individual kanban board. The process may be very basic like the one depicted in the picture.

It is important to create the Next column, which relieves you from overburdening or feeling crushed by the large number of tasks you have in the backlog, to lets you focus on those tasks that are In Progress and complete them without losing time due to multitasking.

The pattern shown below is particularly useful for geographically distributed teams. This is what we call an aggregated individual kanban board:

- It clarifies what every team member is working on.
- Provides visibility to the work carried out by several people.
- Reduces multitasking and individuals' overburdening.
- Each person handles their own work items (tasks) visualized on the individual's swim lane.

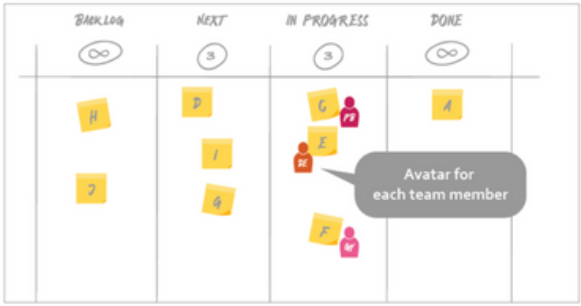
An aggregated individual kanban board

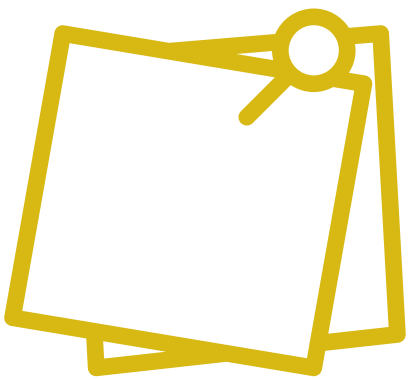


The pattern which we call team kanban board looks very similar. It gradually shifts the focus from managing workers to managing work.

Swim lanes are released to help managing other elements of the process (e.g., different work item types, sources of demand, features, projects, etc.). To indicate who is doing what you can use avatars. They show the current focus. Each individual may have more than one avatar. The number of avatars per person usually corresponds to an agreed per-person WIP limit.

A team kanban board



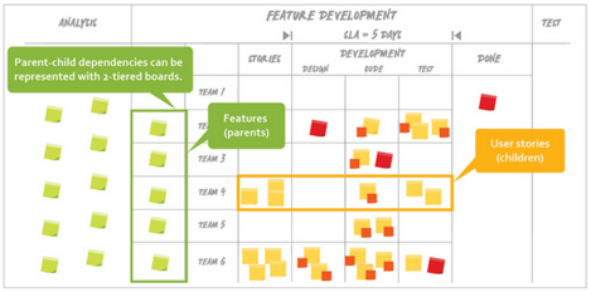


Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Design service delivery

Regardless of the scale, the approach to developing kanban systems and the boards which visualize their invisible work and workflow is the same. Your organization is a network of services and for every service, there should be a kanban system!

The board in the picture shows the kanban system used to manage a project at Corbis in Seattle in 2007. This project had ~$11 million USD budget and employed around 55 people in total, roughly half of whom were software developers.



Kanban Board Visualizing a Network of Services

The green tickets represent customer-requested features, described in the project scope and requirements, while the yellow tickets, averaging 22 per green ticket, represented a finer-grained breakdown producing units of work more readily consumed by programmers and testers. The work displayed on the board represents about 1/5th of the total scope of the project or about $2 million USD of WIP. Each green ticket represents around $100,000 of work on average and thus each yellow ticket around $4,500 of work on average.

The project is organized into 5 software development teams: each of these provide a feature development and testing service. Each team has a row in the middle of the board. The fine-grained work items represented by the yellow tickets are known as user stories. So, these rows on the board represent a user story design, development and testing service.

Shown in the column on the left, requirements are analyzed by a team of systems analysts who break the green tickets up into the smaller units of work represented by the yellow tickets.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

These analysts, offer a feature analysis service. To the far right, the column of the board barely visible in the photograph, there is a system integration testing service where the collected completed features are tested together for the harmonious functioning of the entire IT application.

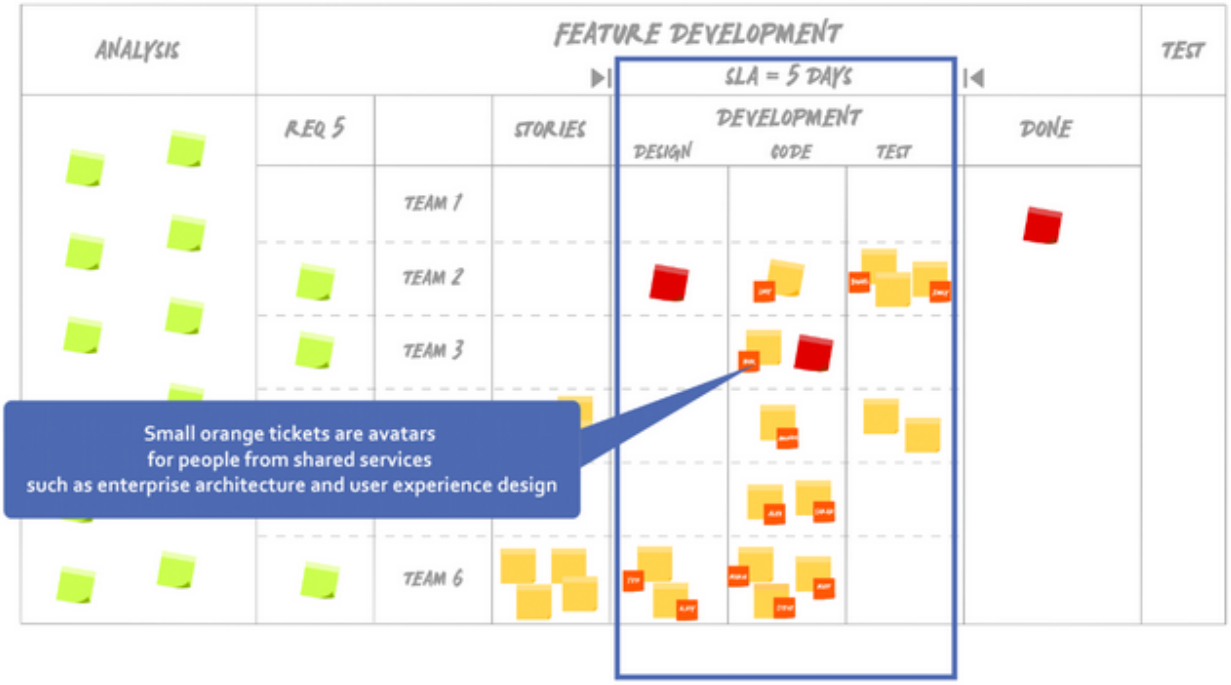
Each row of the board, for each of the 5 development teams, represents in itself a kanban system. This one single board displays many kanban systems, some of them contained within others. The whole board visualizes a network of services. The whole board views the project as a service, flowing feature requests through analysis, development, testing and eventually deployment. Each development team row, views each of those teams as a service, within the project as a service.

The analysis column views the analysis team as a service. And the system integration testing column views that also as a service. The project service is constructed as a chain of services and also invokes a whole host of other dependent shared services.

The column labeled “resolved” indicates a testing service at a vendor based in Chennai in India. These testers offer a user story testing service, and they operate as a shared service. That is to say that the testers in Chennai are not assigned to teams in Seattle. Instead, the whole pool of testers is available to test work that becomes available to them. This team in Chennai would treat the 5 development teams in Seattle as their customers. They, in turn, may have a team kanban board and use rows or colors of tickets to signify which “customer” the test request had come from.

If they only service this one project, then they only have these 5 customers to worry about. If they also service other projects, then they might need to use colors and rows on their board to separate out different projects and customer teams within projects to enable them to visually track the source of any specific request. A column on a project Kanban board in Seattle might be duplicated (or ghosted) as a whole team kanban board in Chennai.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work



The small orange tickets decorating the middle of the board, have names of individuals. On this project, these people were typically from specialists' functions such as systems architecture, database administration, or user experience design.

In traditional project management, these people might be assigned to the project using a technique called "matrix management". This is widely known to be inefficient and often leaves the individuals underutilized for long periods of time.

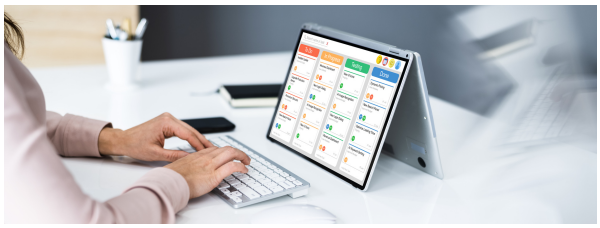
Operating specialist functions as shared services, where they serve this, and other projects are much more efficient and keep the individuals busy with demand from a collection of different sources:

- Each of these individuals represented by an orange ticket, a shared service of one, can have their own personal kanban board.
- They can treat different projects, or teams within a project, as different customers.
- What is shown merely as an avatar decorating a ticket on the main project board, can manifest itself as a ticket on the individual's personal Kanban board.
- This whole project board actually visualizes a total of at least 12 enterprise services: some are shared at a project level; some shared at an enterprise level; some are dedicated to the project; and in the entirety, the whole project is a service.

Make the 4-Day Work Week Work

Online boards

Finally, this article has used illustrations of physical Kanban boards.



These have been wildly popular since 2007 as part of a general trend to collaborative team-centric working over the past 20 years. However, there is an irony to all of this, as the very first implementations of Kanban, with Microsoft in 2004, were done with geographically dispersed organizations, and the Kanban system was implemented with a software tracking tool. Suddenly, the true value of using kanban software tools is being recognized. When your whole workforce is distributed, you need virtual kanban tools not just physical boards.

To implement a service-oriented organization, where each service is managed with a kanban system, you need proper software designed for the task. We recommend only **Swift Kanban** or **Kanbanize** as tools that properly implement the necessary features. If you must use a legacy work tracking tool such as Jira, we recommend that you augment it with a metrics and reporting dashboard. For this we only recommend **Nave.**

Author: Anna Radzikowska