Elements of
Successful Daily Huddles

A daily huddle is not like a typical meeting. It is short, everyone stands, and everyone talks. Think of it as the "huddle before the play". You're getting ready for action. The overall purpose is to align what each team member plans to do with what the team needs. To prepare, think through what important work you need to get done for the day, and what work you got done yesterday.

Each person in the huddle should quickly cover three things:
1. Did you accomplish what you said you were planning to do at the previous huddle?
2. What work are you planning to accomplish today?
3. Ask the team, "Is there anything anyone needs from me?".

The end goal is to align the work you need to accomplish with the work that the project and others need. If priorities are in doubt, trying ask, "What's best for the project?".

*The huddle should last between 5 and 15 minutes, it is not a long drawn out affair. **If it runs long, it is likely one of the following reasons***:

1. **Problem Solving**. You don't problem solve in a huddle, you're checking in and moving on to the work of the day. If a problem *has* to be solved, gather the necessary players and discuss after or at another time. But don't hold up the rest of the team.
2. **Late Arrivals**. If you have people arriving 5 minutes late to a 5-minute meeting, you just doubled your meeting time. Ask the team, "When can everyone meet?" to ensure you have a time that works for everyone and then ask them to remain accountable to the team and show up. On time.
3. **Too many people**. An ideal huddle is 8-12 or fewer people. Ask yourself, does the work people are doing directly affect each other on a daily basis, or can they be split into smaller functional teams? However, it can be beneficial to have "drop-ins" that don't regularly attend, either from other departments or executives.
4. **Jabber jaws**. If one or more people tend to go on for too long, try setting time limits for each person of 1-3 minutes, or just reminding them to stick to the essentials.

Where & How to Hold Them

Face to face is best, but if that's not practical, try a Zoom, Skype, or other video conference. If that doesn't work, use a text or Slack thread. Ask to have people contribute between a set time each day, perhaps between 7:30 and 8:00am, so communication flows. If you are in person, consider using Kanban boards, which are a simple and effective way to visualize work to the team. **But, the most important thing is simply to hold them**. Daily Huddles increase the flow of communication on your team and align your team's efforts. And an aligned team is one that is an effective team. **Few things will boost team productivity like a well-run Daily Huddle!**

How to use Kanban

What is Kanban?

It is a visual representation of work to be done, allowing work to be completed as it is needed, or *pulled*. If you've been to a sushi restaurant and filled out your order on a menu checklist, you've used a simple Kanban. It allows you and your team to see work as it flows from a backlog, to being worked on and then is completed.

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Basic Elements

- **Backlog**. Your backlog is all the work you need to get done. If your project or need is small, it may span the entire effort. If large, you may just have the tasks required to complete the next major task, milestone, or what's coming up in the next two week period.

- **In Process**. Once a team member begins work on a task they put it in this column so everyone knows! If tasks typically have multiple steps you can sub divide this category. For example, if there is a "Review" for each task, you might add "Doing" and Review" sub categories.

- **Done**. Once a task is 100% complete, move it to this column. Team members should agree that the task is complete.

- **Team Size**. The ideal is 7 people (+/- 2). More than that becomes complicated to discuss and view on one board, leading to less productivity! Less is generally OK. You could make a Kanban just for your work, but it is most powerful when used in a small group.

- **Daily Huddles**. Answer these 3 questions and move on: 1) What work has been completed? 2) What are you working on? 3) What do you need from others? A daily huddle should last 5-15 minutes and is NOT a place to problem solve, it is just the huddle before the play!

To make your Kanban Board, draw lines on a white board for your columns or put masking tape on the wall, or use giant sticky flip chart sheets - we love em! Large or small, basic or elegant, keep it visual and keep it simple!

Principles and Key Ideas

Make Work Visual. Have you ever completed a task and not been sure what to do next? Or what is important? Visual work reduces the guesswork and helps align priorities.

Small Batches Increase Flow. Are you working on a task that is multiple days in duration? How can you break that down into tasks that don't take longer than a day or so? Reducing large tasks into smaller tasks enables teammates to identify what they can help with. If you break that larger task into 3 smaller ones, after the second one is completed perhaps someone can begin another task, which also increases flow. Speaking of which….

Do Work That Releases Other Work. Perhaps a team member needs a review of a report or a backcheck on some calculations. If a task is holding up someone else, make it a priority!

Reduce Work In Process. Work that is half-done doesn't help anyone. Identify a limit for your team that makes sense and don't allow more activities than that to be in progress. If you exceed the limit… the team should swarm to help move things past the finish line and/or discover what the bottle neck is!