



# Successfully Implementing Kanban with Portfolio/ Upstream Kanban

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# Agenda

- Introductions
  - A Quick word from the Sponsor
  - Portfolio and Upstream Kanban – Mahesh Singh
  - Q&A
- 



## Some housekeeping

- ▶ The webinar is being recorded. The recording will be made available.
- ▶ Questions will be taken via Q&A box on the right side of your screen. Please enter your question at any time. We will take as many of them as time permits at the end of the webinar.

# Introductions



➤ Mahesh Singh  
Co-founder,  
SVP Digité,  
Inc.

- Entrepreneur, Lean/ Agile Product Management leader.
- Based in the San Francisco Bay Area
- Co-founder at Digité, Inc.
- AKT and AKC
- As part of his work at Digité, he works with most European and American clients to provide Lean/ Agile training and coaching
- Runs Digité's implementation engagements for SwiftKanban



# A word from the Sponsor

- Digité, Inc. - Pioneer in Web-based Collaborative Products/ Solutions for Geographically Distributed Teams
- Headquartered in Cupertino, CA
- Nearly 1m users in the Americas, Europe, Asia/ Pacific
- Products that cover Lean/ Kanban, Agile ALM, Project/ Portfolio Management
- SwiftKanban/ SwiftESP are our flagship Lean/ Agile products

# Kanban/ Scrumban Software Development/ IT/ DevOps

The screenshot displays the SwiftKanban interface for a project named "SwiftKanban Development 2.0". The board is organized into several columns representing different stages of the development process:

- Ready for development (10/15):** Contains 10 task cards, including "Clone of: Adding restriction for team level license" (DEF1003), "Clone of: Hierarchy view improvement" (ENHC329), "Clone of: For the custom login feature, enable project edit screen" (UST621), "Check the impact of MySQL 5.6 version on SwiftKanban" (TASK463), "General UI/UX usability issues" (ISS133), and "Running jmeter run and analyzing run results for improvement" (TASK340).
- Design (3/5):** Contains 3 task cards, including "Login and slow board loading issues" (CDEF372), "CFD not loading" (DEF1002), and "Swift Build and Junits" (TASK484).
- Coding + Junits (17/18):** Contains 17 task cards, including "Option to import the card directly on the board through expo..." (ENHC363), "Integration of the signup page to be changes from Infusion S..." (ENHC349), "Clone of: ESP enhancements -Risk" (UST611), "Gandiva-Build and junits" (TASK482), "Clone of: ESP enhancement - Portfolio Kanban" (UST610), "Board Chat not working properly in IE" (CDEF368), "Clone of: Part 2-Add card via email" (UST617), "Assigning cards to non team members of the board" (UST607), "DEF8 Child card's progress time line shown improperly" (CDEF387), "Personal Kanban view/landing page for users/inbox..." (UST609), "UI/UX pending enhancements for the new theme" (ENHC321), "Hierarchy Status Report" (UST615), "Extending number of text custom fields" (UST582), "Providing To-Do/Doing and Done view in the Release..." (ENHC359), and "Huawei-UST44 in card's detail page, show the comm..." (ENHC342).
- Development (32/20):** Contains 32 task cards, including "Limit the no of request from a user for webservices" (TASK424), "DEF14 WIP limit restriction fails if only setting the parent..." (CDEF390), "Clone of: Seeing multiple team boards contributing to a com..." (UST608), "Notification panel design" (ENHC331), "Clone of: Huawei-UST41 Board filter provides multiple schem..." (ENHC347), and "Production Server Performance Issue..." (TASK390).
- Done:** Contains 1 task card: "ESP purchasing via website" (UST618).
- Code Review (1/5):** Contains 1 task card: "Project should be renamed to Board throughout the tool" (ENHC301).
- Dev Complete:** Contains 3 task cards, including "Excel enhancement for export in xlsx format" (ENHC353), "Kanban Board is not loading through project edit screen" (DEF382), and "Unable to delete card" (CDEF389).

# Visual Portfolio Management

## Portfolio Kanban/ Enterprise Services Planning

The screenshot displays a comprehensive software interface for Visual Portfolio Management, featuring a Kanban board and various analytical charts.

**Product Themes (7)**

- Ready (3)
- In-Progress (4)
- Done (0)

**Product Themes:** THME15, THME8, THME11

**Parent-child Links:** CAP9

**Backlog / Active / All Cards:** 7 values inside [3/13]

**ESP Module:** CFD, Demand, Capacity, Cycle Time, Flow Efficiency, Aging, Liquidity, CFD Forecast, Scope Forecast

**Capacity Distribution:** # of weeks vs cards per week

**Forecast Distribution:** Probability vs Additional Cards

**Forecast:** 30 day Forecast vs date

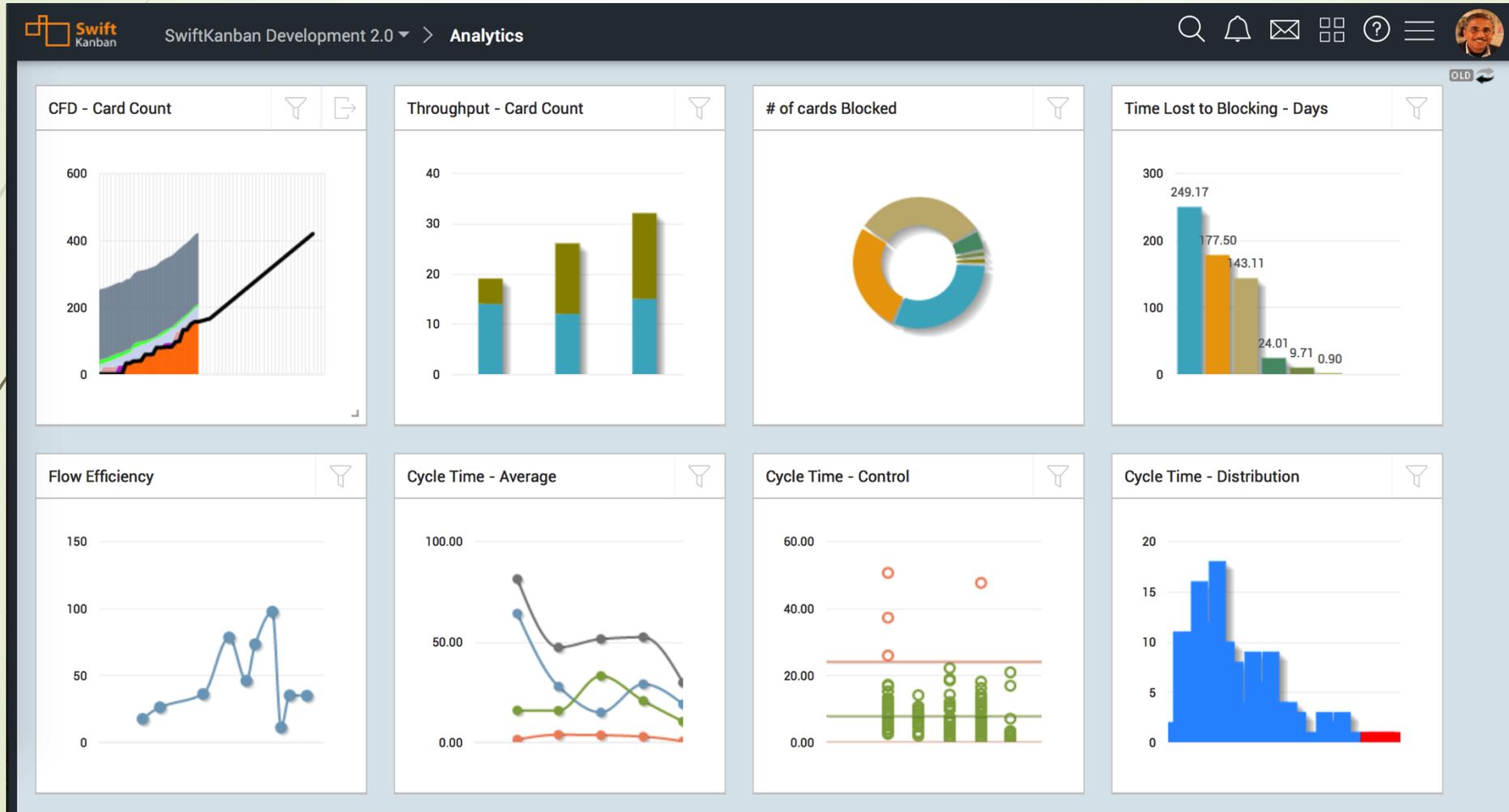
**Temporal Range Filter:** Fri 30 Jun vs Wed 28 Feb

**Filters:** Time unit, Color by, Card type, Class of service, Priority, Size, Value Stream

**SwiftKanban Development:**

| Ready for development | Development    | Validation  | Ready      |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| Design                | Coding + Jumps | Done        | Production |
| Func Automation       | Pending Review | In-Progress | Ganeshha   |
| Code Review           | Dev Complete   | Done        | Production |
| In-Progress           | Done           | Done        | Production |

# SwiftKanban - Analytics



# SwiftSync Integration Platform

Rich ALM/ PPM/ CRM Ecosystem (Over 60 tools)



# Some of our Customers



# Kanban – A Tale of 2 Approaches

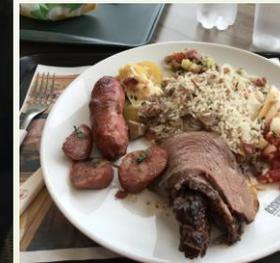
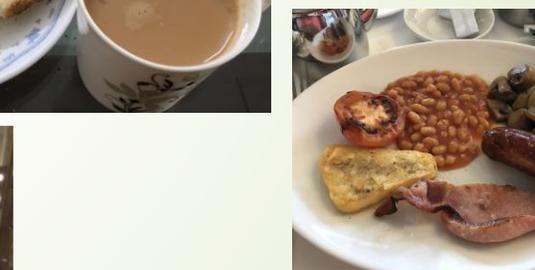
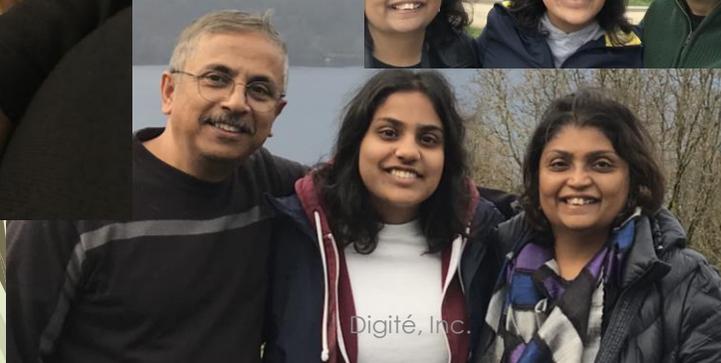
# Our Experience/ Findings

- ▶ Over nearly 10 years - Clear distinction between companies that were succeeding with Kanban and those that weren't
- ▶ Those who stay the course -
  - ▶ EITHER - remain at a very low (visualization-level) maturity – using Kanban/ SwiftKanban as a work tracking/ reporting tool
  - ▶ OR - Go up the maturity ladder quickly and improve beyond their own expectations. They really “get” Kanban!
- ▶ So, we started to dig deeper – and this is that story..

# A bit about me

**Swift Kanban**  
from digité

**digité**  
How work *really* gets done



## Our Observation: Many organizations typically tend to have Weak Implementation

- Proto-Kanban/ Level 0 maturity – mainly focused on visualization
- Adherence to WIP limits - weak
- Lack of explicit other policies – esp. agreements with stakeholders
- Pull was always a ?

# Inevitably, Key Problems Persist, especially in Software Dev/ IT

- High Demand as “management” and business continue to expand demand
- Poor “backlog management” practices
- Interrupt-driven work leading to High levels of context switching
- Overburdening and dissatisfaction returns quickly after initial “Kanban euphoria”

# Our Findings: Disconnected Leadership

- No real involvement/ ownership of the Kanban implementation
- Insufficient funding, insufficient training, leading to lack of deeper knowledge of Kanban in many teams
- Kanban simply being used as a “reporting tool” rather than any improvement

# Was Kanban also growing a Butt?!

Some of the same challenges of Scrum or <Put any “disruptive method” here>

- ▶ WIP Limit adherence
- ▶ Over-loaded Backlogs/ Ready Columns
- ▶ Overloaded/ context-switching team members
- ▶ Mindset/ culture
- ▶ Leadership involvement
- ▶ Temporary change, followed by “business as usual”

Butt, we thought – “There is  
hope....!” ;) )

# Many organizations are succeeding!

- Clearly, Kanban is growing, as is the number of customers we have 😊
- They are doing it the right way!

# Two broad styles of engagement we have seen

- ▶ Type 1: Teams get trained, they define their boards (and/ or create them in SwiftKanban) and they are off to the races. “Business as Usual”
- ▶ Type 2: Extensive Initial Discussion and Focus on “Board Organization”. “How do we design & organize our boards?”

# Some early indicators of Type 2 engagements....

- ▶ Two Noticeable Patterns of Discussion
  - ▶ Top-down Thinking/ design (Aligning Strategy to Execution)
  - ▶ System Thinking Approach (Looking at extended – if not whole – value streams)
- ▶ Better overall “organization”
  - ▶ Org. wide focus on Lean/ Agile (not just IT/ software)
  - ▶ Strong Lean/ Agile COE, team of coaches
  - ▶ Leadership Involvement

# What are they doing different?

- ▶ They are LEADING the Kanban implementation with:
  - ▶ Portfolio Kanban, and/ or
  - ▶ Upstream Kanban



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# Portfolio Kanban

Aligning Strategy to Execution

# Portfolio Management has traditionally been Complex

- ▶ Always a somewhat “esoteric” challenge for most organizations
  - ▶ Strategic Initiatives
  - ▶ Programs/ Projects
  - ▶ Products/ Applications
- ▶ Combination of What-if Analysis of
  - ▶ Financial Cost/ Revenue
  - ▶ Risk
  - ▶ Tasks/ Resources
  - ▶ Opportunity Cost

# Portfolio Management tooling has been Complex

- Domain of senior management/ CXO/ PMO
- Difficult to propagate downwards and communicate to teams
- Highly data-intensive
- Difficult to provide/ track progress (information upwards)
- PMO challenge – keeping leadership updated

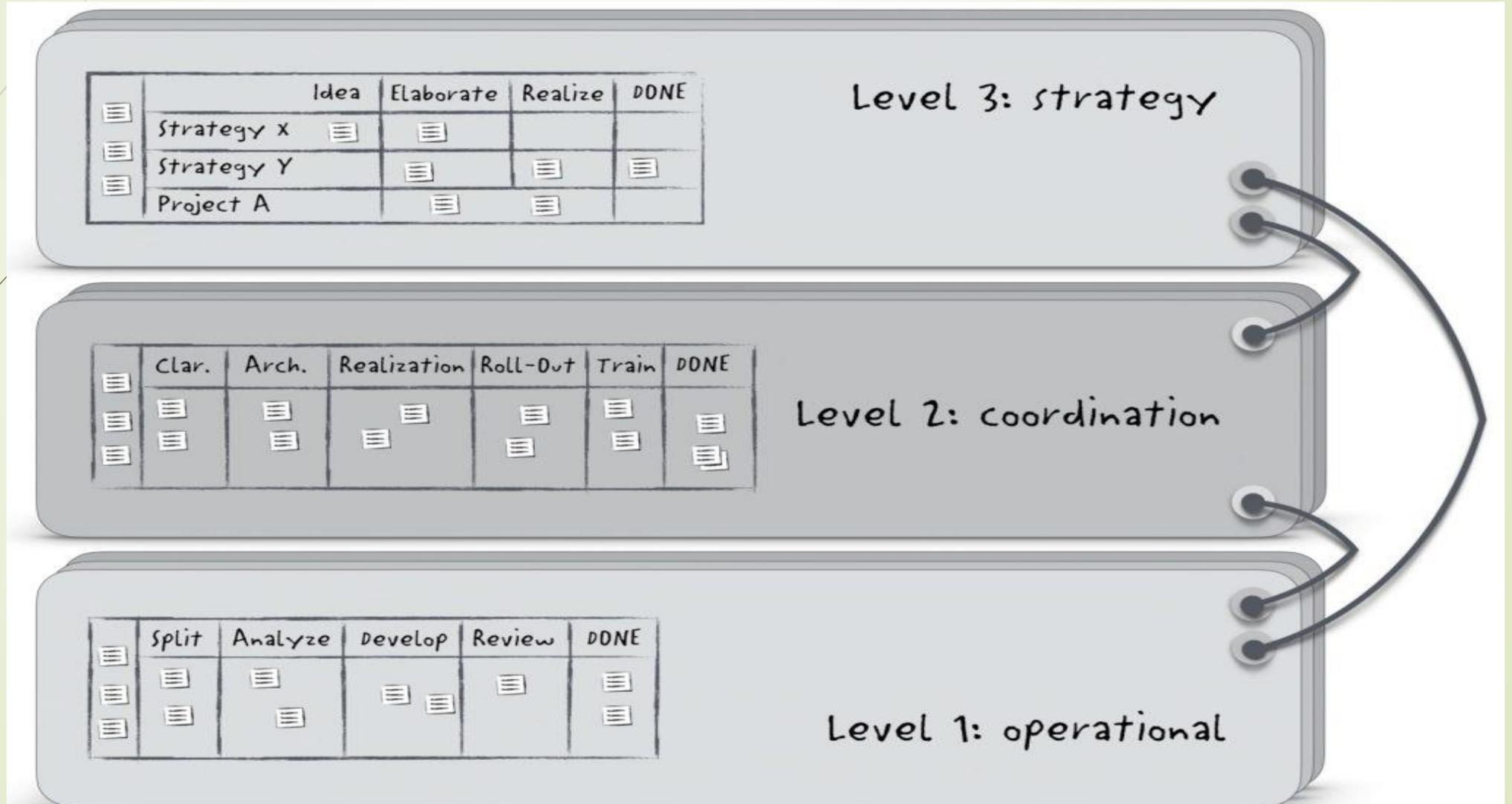
# Enter (Portfolio) Kanban

- ▶ Kanban provides a Simple and elegant alternative
- ▶ Simplified – yet EFFECTIVE – approach to analysis and prioritization
  - ▶ Lead Time
  - ▶ Cost of Delay
- ▶ Visual, hence easy Track & Communicate
  - ▶ A top-down approach to driving organizational priorities
  - ▶ A minimum of 3 levels of Kanban – Strategic/ Planning & Coordination/ Execution
  - ▶ Org. level Lean/ Agile (more often Lean) initiative

# Two types of Portfolio Kanban Implementation

- ▶ Klaus Leopold's Flight Levels
  - ▶ Strategy – Planning & Coordination – Operations
- ▶ Typical Work Hierarchies
  - ▶ Portfolio – Program – Projects
  - ▶ Product Themes – Epics – User Stories
  - ▶ Marketing Themes – Campaigns - Deliverables

# Kanban Flight Levels



# Portfolio Kanban: Simple, Visual and Elegant

- ▶ Apply Kanban at any level
- ▶ Start from Top or Bottom
- ▶ Top-down - At any point where more detail is needed, decompose to a lower level Kanban flow
- ▶ Bottom-up – For any workflow, if abstraction is needed, “summarize” to a higher level Kanban

# Portfolio Kanban:

## OKR/ Goals → Initiatives → Epics



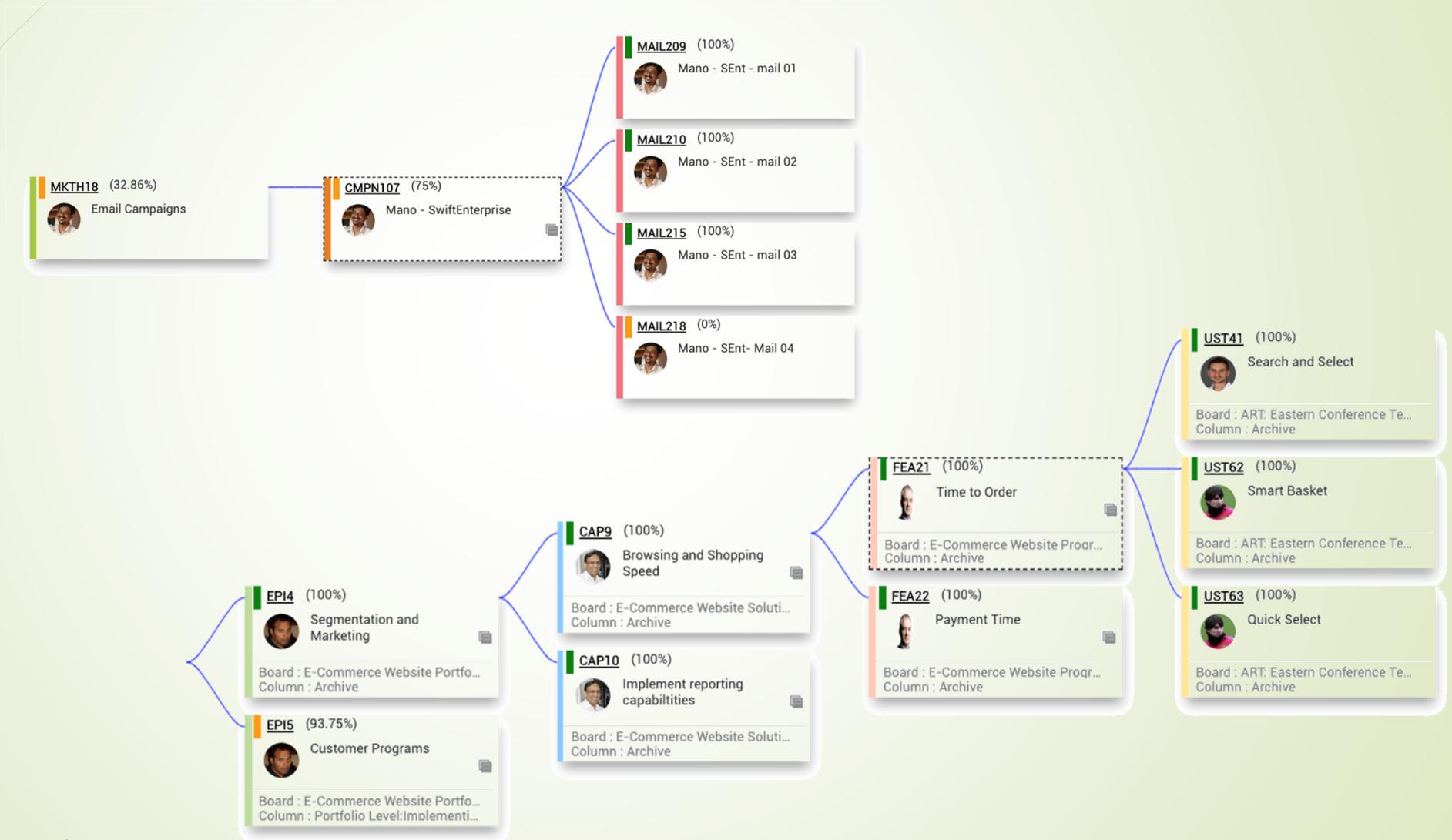
# Portfolio Kanban: Themes → Campaigns → Deliverables

The screenshot displays the Swift Kanban Marketing Board interface, organized into three main levels of detail:

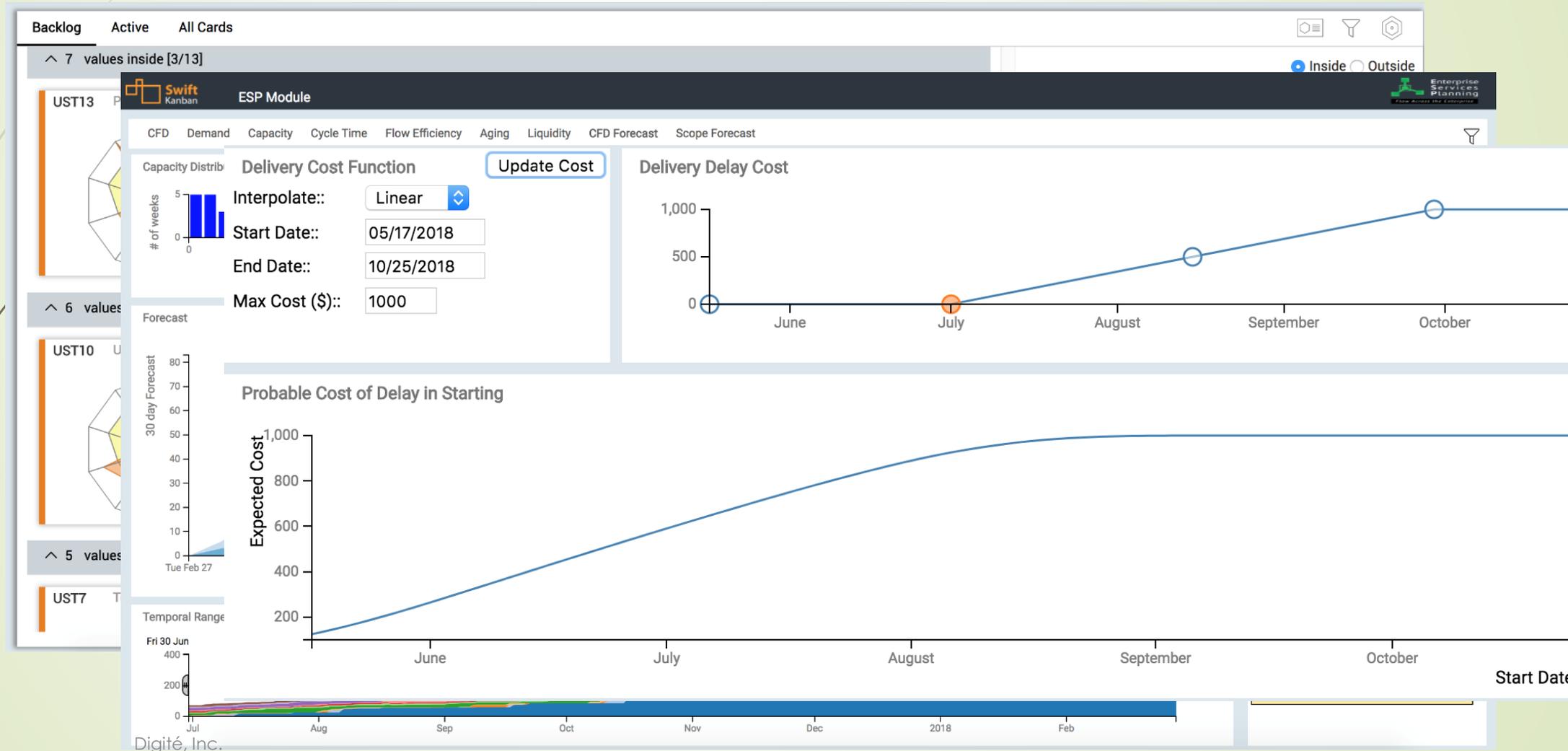
- Key Marketing Themes (5):** Shows a progress bar from 0% to 100%. One theme, MKTH10, is in the 'Ready' column (1 item). Other themes, MKTH6 and MKTH9, are in the 'In-Progress' column (4 items).
- Campaigns (15/5 - 15):** Shows a progress bar. One campaign, CMPN26, is in the 'Ready' column (1 item).
- Marketing Deliverables (99):** A detailed view of tasks categorized into four columns:
  - Deliverables Backlog (14/20 ↑):** Includes tasks like CONT18, TASK9, CONT23, CONT25, MAIL41, TASK10, CONT27, CONT28, CONT29, CONT30, MKTA5, WEB107, NWLT13, and NWLT14.
  - Prioritized (7/12 ↑):** Includes tasks like MAIL27, TASK8, WEB104, BLOG14, SM8, TASK16, and MAIL50.
  - In Progress (20/16 ↑):** Includes tasks like CASE1, CONT20, UST8, CONT21, CONT24, TASK13, WEB108, WEB109, WEB100, WEB118, WEB125, BROCS, CMPT1, MAIL49, WEB128, SM72, MKTR3, MAIL47, WEB134, and MAIL45.
  - Review (11/10 ↑):** Includes tasks like CONT38, WEB119, WEB121, WEB126, MAIL48, NWLT10, WEB130, WEB131, WEB122, WEB83, and MKTR4.

Additional elements include the Swift Kanban logo, navigation menus, search and notification icons, and the footer text 'Digité, Inc.'

# Kanban: Visual Portfolio Management



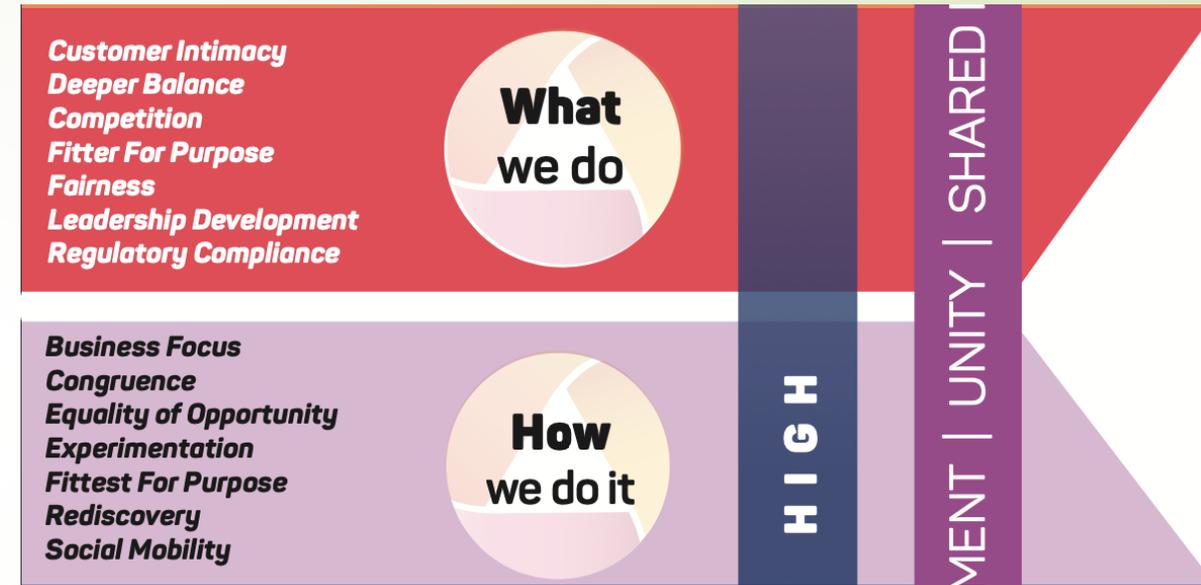
# Focus on Lead Time Performance and Cost of Delay



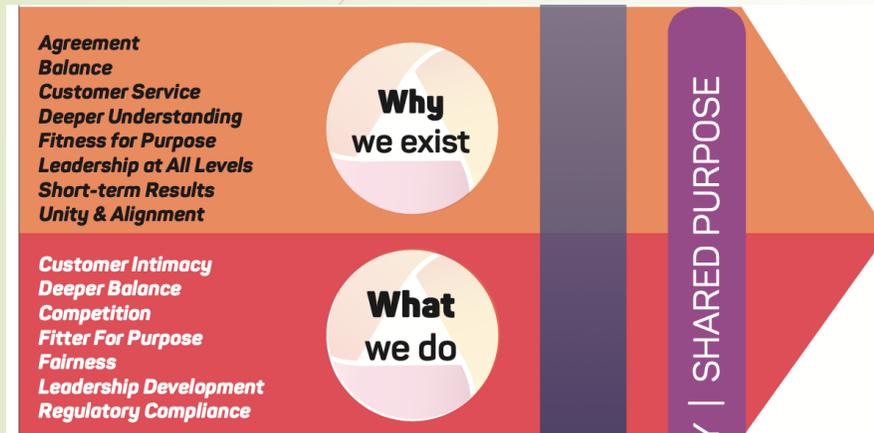
# Benefits of Portfolio Kanban

## Provides Leadership Immediate Value

- Gives an opportunity for leadership and operational teams to “engage” or “connect” and get involved
- Provides leadership an ability to prioritize and manage strategic initiatives in a simple manner (“What is the next (set of) important things to do?”)
- Gives leadership a clear visibility to execution (“How is this initiative being executed?”)



# Benefits of Portfolio Kanban



## Helps Delivery to Understand their Context/ Purpose

- Provides departmental/ business unit leadership an effective way to collaborate across functions and discover/ manage dependencies (“Where are the bottlenecks?”)
- Gives operational teams proper context for the work they are doing (“Why am I doing this?”)

## In Summary:

- ▶ Portfolio Kanban Encourages/ supports KMM Level 3-5 behavior
- ▶ Alignment of Business Imperatives to Execution, Leadership to Teams – CONGRUENCE/ BUSINESS FOCUS
- ▶ Clarity and commonality of Purpose for greater organizational good – DEEPER UNDERSTANDING/ FITNESS-FOR-PURPOSE
- ▶ Greater Buy-in – greater Leadership support to “acts of leadership” shown by middle management and teams



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# Upstream Kanban

# Kanban encourages Systems Thinking

- “Traditional Agile” focused primarily on “Delivery”
- Typical team level Kanban implementations transition from Scrum to Kanban also focus their attention here
- While some are successful, many have stagnated or even failed, not realizing any of the key benefits of Kanban

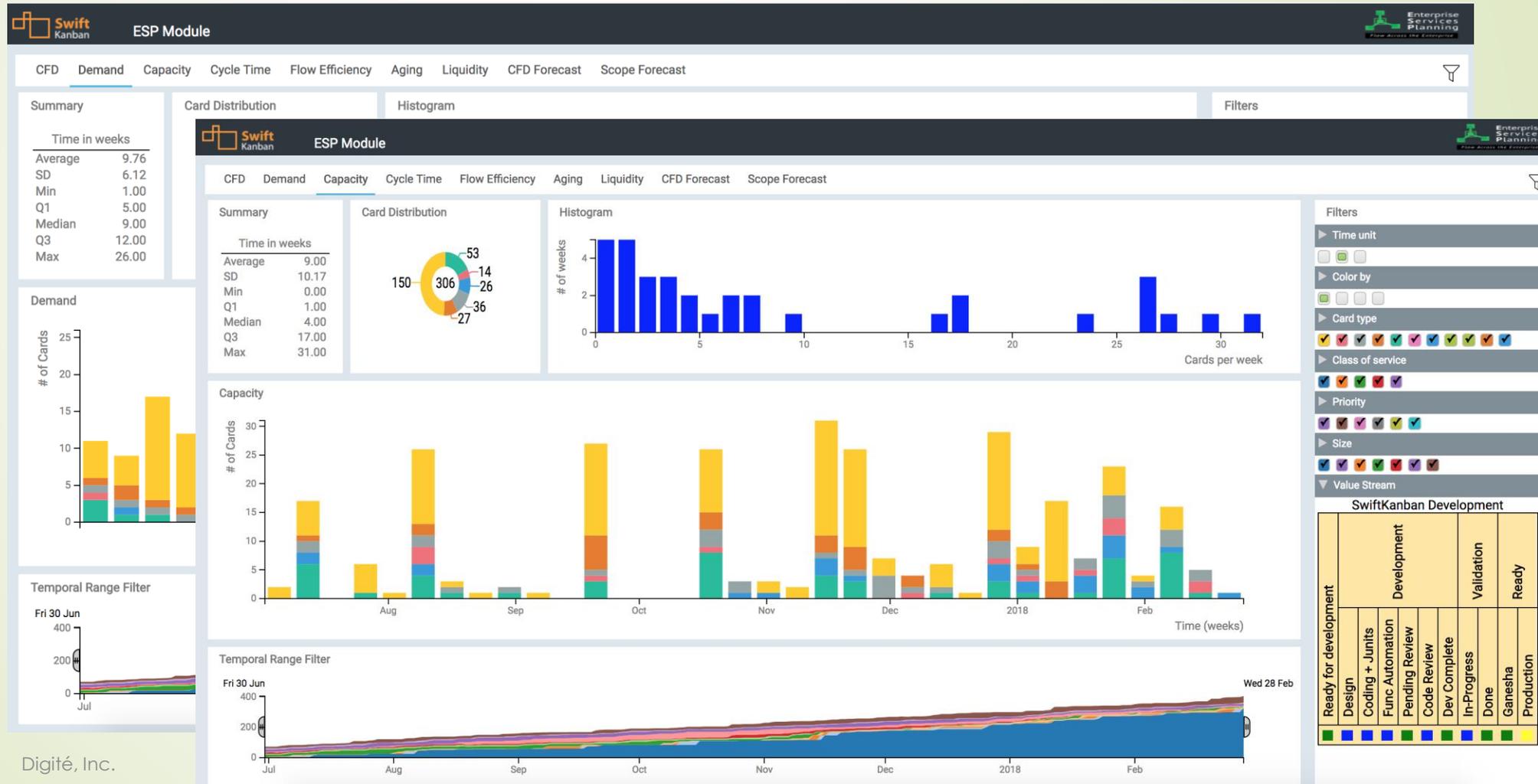
# Early Signs of Who has succeeded

- ▶ Explicit intake policies – agreement with stakeholders
  - ▶ WIP Limits
  - ▶ Level of detail and clarity
  - ▶ Prioritization process
  - ▶ Replacement/ Substitution
  - ▶ Discard
- ▶ Greater attempts at better backlog management
- ▶ Better organized Replenishment Meetings/ Processes

## In other words ...

- ▶ These teams have realized they ALONE cannot solve their problems
- ▶ They need to work with
  - ▶ People they are impacted by (sources of demand)
  - ▶ And people they in turn impact
- ▶ They realize that in order to ensure their own policies work, they need to have explicit agreements (policies) with their stakeholders
- ▶ This enables them to have tough conversations up front about their Demand and Capability

# Demand vs. Capability: Kanban facilitates this discussion



# Stages of Progression

- Stage 1: Visualization own process
- Stage 2: WIP Limits and other internal Policies
- Stage 3: Policies with stakeholders/ customers
- Stage 4: Upstream process visualization on same board
- Stage 5: Upstream Processes on a separate Board

Our own story →

# Stage 1: Visualize own Process

The screenshot displays the Swift Kanban web application interface. The top navigation bar includes the Swift Kanban logo, menu items for Dashboard, Projects, People, and Admin, and user information for Mahesh. A search bar labeled 'Board Search' is also present. Below the navigation bar, a breadcrumb trail shows the current location: Admin >> All Projects >> Kanban Development >> Kanban Board. A toolbar contains various actions: Add Card, Collapse, Board Filter, Modify Process, Activity Log, Legend, Full Screen, and Refresh. The main content area shows a Kanban board for 'Swift-Kanban Development' with columns for Ready (0/5), Develop (0/5), Validate (0/5), and Approve (0/5). The Develop column is further divided into In-Progress (0/3) and Done (0/2). Below the board, there are sections for Defects and Issue, each with a right-pointing arrow icon.

| Ready (0/5) | Develop (0/5)     |            | Validate (0/5) | Approve (0/5) |
|-------------|-------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
|             | In-Progress (0/3) | Done (0/2) |                |               |
|             |                   |            |                |               |

» Defects

» Issue

# Stage 2: Policy and WIP Limits

The screenshot displays the Swift Kanban interface for a 'Development Board'. The board is organized into columns representing different stages of the development process:

- Ready for development (10/20)**: Contains cards like DEF439 (Chrome session timeout), UST283 (Performance on Enterprise Board), UST325 (Aligning Add Traceability view), and UST308.
- Design (4/5)**: Contains cards like ISS76 (IE issue- permanent URL), TASK83 (Card configurability), UST330 (Board printing design), and UST316.
- Coding + Junits (4/10)**: Contains cards like UST327 (Card Hierarchy UX Improvements), UST315 (Card Type change), TASK67 (Blocked - Prototyping for Android Native App), and DEF435.
- Functional Test Automation (0/5)**: This column is currently empty.
- Done (3/5)**: Contains cards like DEF432 (Blocked comment is not coming proper), DEF434 (Print-PDF is not working for special cha...), and DEF438 (There is an error in printing Due date).

Each card includes a title, a description, a priority level (indicated by stars), a due date, and an estimate in days. The interface also features a top navigation bar with 'New!', 'Help', 'Feedback', and 'Mahesh' options, and a search bar labeled 'Board Search'. A secondary bar below the navigation offers actions like 'Add Card', 'Collapse', 'Board Filter', 'Modify Process', 'Activity Log', 'Legend', 'Full Screen', and 'Refresh'.

## Stage 3: Policies with Stakeholders

- ▶ Maximum of 10 new User Stories OR 20 cards in Ready queue
- ▶ The 11<sup>th</sup> story would have to replace one of the 1st 10
- ▶ No Substitutions once a User Story had “started”
- ▶ Min. level of detail expected –
  - ▶ Functional description
  - ▶ UI wireframe/ sketch/ prototype
  - ▶ UX – persona driven navigation and workflow impact

# Stage 4: Upstream Process on Same Board

The screenshot displays the Swift Kanban web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Swift Kanban logo, menu items (Dashboard, Projects, People, Admin), and user information (New!, Help, Feedback, Mahesh). A search bar is also present. Below the navigation bar, a green banner indicates the current project: "Swift-Kanban Development 2.0 >> Kanban Board".

The main workspace features a toolbar with icons for "Add Card", "Collapse", "Board Filter", "Modify Process", "Activity Log", "Legend", "Full Screen", and "Refresh". The board itself is titled "Planning Board" and is organized into columns:

- Ready For Estimation (13/15)**: Contains cards for UST216 (Resizable Pop-ups), UST329 (Filter Card By Due Date), UST241 (Allow a copy to clipboard option), and UST233.
- Estimation (2/15)**: Subdivided into "In-Progress (0/5)" and "Done (2/10)". The "Done" column contains cards for UST182 (Rich Text UI Cleanup) and UST114 (Persisting lane setting).
- Spec Development (12/20)**: Subdivided into "Prioritized (3/10)" and "In-Progress (3/5)". The "Prioritized" column contains cards for UST80 (Onsite deployment Licensing mechanism), UST218 (Filter improvement in metrics), and UST306 (Board Template - Remaining Changes). The "In-Progress" column contains cards for UST286 (ToDo changes), UST282 (Include % completion in Card Carousel), and UST94 (Including Lane selection in Lead time me...).

Each card includes a title, a priority indicator (stars), a due date, and an estimate (e.g., "0 Days", "3 Days", "5 Days", "1 Days"). The interface also shows a "Quick Links" button in the top right corner.

# Stage 5: Upstream Process on Separate Board

The screenshot displays the Swift Kanban application interface. The top navigation bar is green and contains the breadcrumb: Admin >> All Projects >> Swift-Kanban Roadmap Planning >> Kanban Board. A 'Quick Links' button is visible on the right. Below this is a blue toolbar with icons for '+ Add Card', 'Collapse', 'Board Filter', 'Modify Process', 'Activity Log', 'Legend', 'Full Screen', and 'Refresh'. The main content area features a blue header with the Swift Kanban logo and navigation links: Dashboard, Projects, People, and Admin. A second green breadcrumb bar repeats the path: Admin >> All Projects >> Swift-Kanban Roadmap Planning >> Kanban Board. Below this is another blue toolbar with the same icons as the first. The main content area is a list of items, each with a double arrow icon and a text label: General Roadmap, Metrics/ Analytics, Scrumban, Integrations, Enterprise Board, Platform Upgrade, and UI/UX Improvements. On the left side, there is a sidebar with three user cards, each showing a profile picture, a name (e.g., UST97, UST90, UST5), and a 'Priority:' label with three stars.

Admin >> All Projects >> Swift-Kanban Roadmap Planning >> Kanban Board Quick Links

+ Add Card Collapse Board Filter Modify Process Activity Log Legend Full Screen Refresh

Swift Kanban Dashboard Projects People Admin

Admin >> All Projects >> Swift-Kanban Roadmap Planning >> Kanban Board

+ Add Card Collapse Board Filter Modify Process Activity Log Legend Full Screen Refresh

- >> General Roadmap
- >> Metrics/ Analytics
- >> Scrumban
- >> Integrations
- >> Enterprise Board
- >> Platform Upgrade
- >> UI/UX Improvements

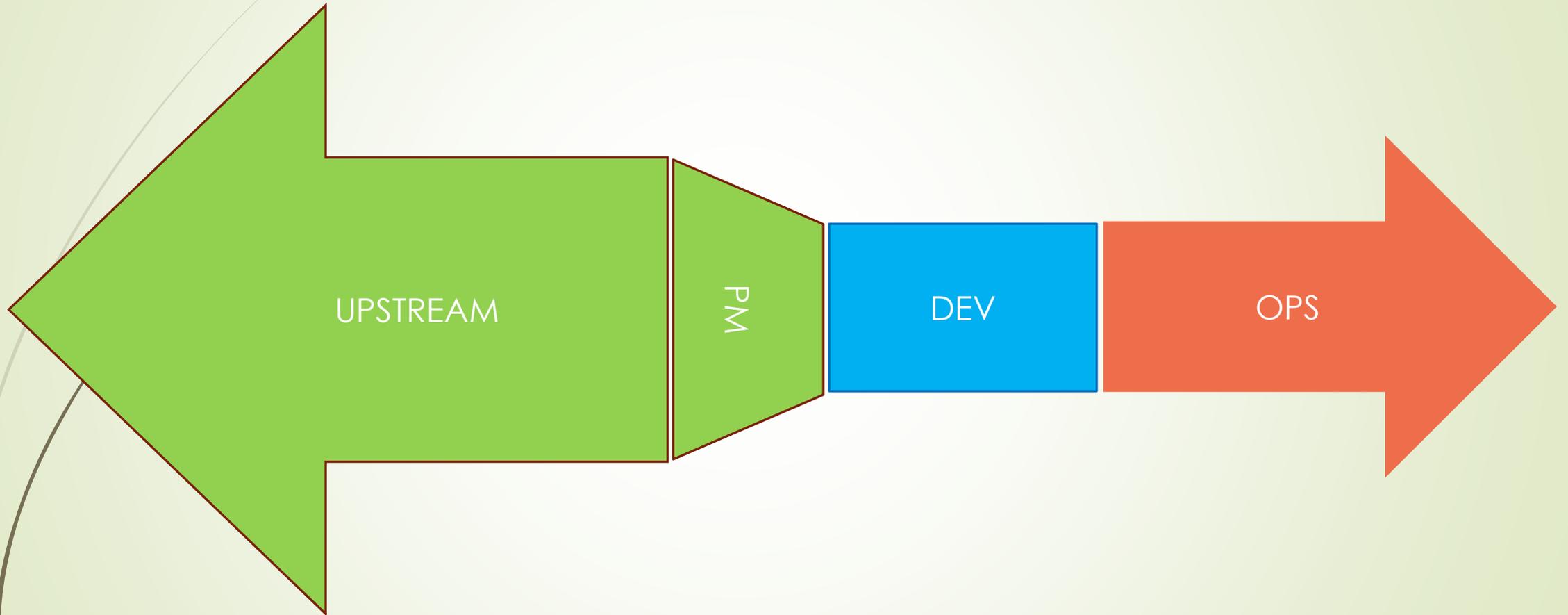
UST97  
Priority: ★★

UST90  
Priority: ★★

UST5  
Priority: ★★

Digité, Inc.

# Upstream is the GREATER Challenge!



# Upstream Kanban gives voice to Product Management & others

- Reveals the complexity of Product Portfolio Management and Backlog Grooming
- Facilitates the collaboration needed between
  - Product Management and further upstream stakeholders AND
  - Product Management and Dev
- Ensures that the RIGHT stuff gets to the Dev team in the RIGHT detail at the RIGHT time
  - Minimizes ABORTs, Maximizes DISCARDs
  - Facilitates 2-Phase Commit better

# Upstream Kanban improves Respect for Policies for Delivery Teams

- Creates greater understanding of Delivery team capacity/ capability
- Helps them respect WIP Limits – both Min and Max
- Gives a better understanding of Delivery Cadence – and hence more efficient Replenishment
- Helps manage the biggest challenge Dev teams typically face – overburdening/ large backlogs
- Ensures a smoother flow
- Provides both sides strong reasons to stay invested in Kanban!!!

# In Summary -

# Portfolio/ Upstream Kanban result in better Kanban implementations

Organizations that have implemented Portfolio and Upstream Kanban have benefited from –

- ▶ Longer lasting Kanban initiatives
- ▶ More effective start to their implementation with greater clarity of purpose
- ▶ Better understanding and use of the basic principles of the Kanban Method helping them move up the maturity curve and become less fragile
- ▶ Not affected by the departure of one or two individuals who might have been the initial champions for Kanban

# Portfolio/ Upstream Kanban get Leadership more involved

Organizations with Senior Management involvement are more likely to –

- ▶ Have great organizational buy-in to Kanban
- ▶ Wider initial adoption of Kanban
- ▶ Better – and lasting – training in Kanban leading to better awareness of Kanban principles
- ▶ Which is probably because of better funding support for Kanban training and coaching
- ▶ Which lead to greater benefits from a deeper – and wider – implementation of Kanban

# Portfolio & Upstream Kanban – Powerful Strategic Tool

*“My feeling is that portfolio and upstream kanban have been especially useful since last month.*

*Because of the crisis, the company had to suddenly change strategies and defined a series of initiatives to navigate through these troubled times. That means a portfolio of initiatives that have to be tightly managed, with status shared across many areas/managers/directors.*

*SK is helping us to do this, and that is a great plus.”*

*- Leila Nakashima, Director – Planning & Strategy, Luiza Labs*

## Upstream Kanban – Critical for Managing (cross-)Team Priorities

*“Having implemented upstream Kanban ..... has helped us tremendously in getting our product management and design teams **involved** in providing much greater clarity of the work to be done.*

*As a result, we are managing our intake much better than before and our WIP is being controlled very well. **So, lead time and throughput have improved much beyond our expectations....** .... management is happy!”*

*- Sr. Program Manager (Engineering), Telecom customer*

# Questions?

# Thank you!

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