

# What is Lean Coffee?

Lean Coffee is a structured, but agenda-less meeting. Participants gather, build an agenda and begin talking. Conversations are directed and productive because the agenda for the meeting was democratically generated.

## Tools for a Lean Coffee

Here's what you need:

- 1) A pad or two of sticky notes (3"x3" is fine)
- 2) Something to write with (*Pro-tip: markers work well because they're visible from farther away*)
- 3) A timing device (eg. any smart phone)



## How it Works

The steps are simple, straightforward and can be modified depending upon the situation.

- 1) Select a theme. (optional)
- 2) Write topics onto sticky notes, one topic per note. There is no limit to the number of topics. (*Pro-tip: keep the words per card to a minimum for readability.*)
- 3) Set up a personal kanban board with three columns: **To Do**, **Doing**, **Done**. (*Pro-tip: add a fourth column ("Actions") to collect action items as they come up.*)
- 4) Spend a few moments introducing each topic, sharing a sentence or two describing the idea on each card.
- 5) Vote. Each participant gets three dot votes (or more – you choose). You may cast all your votes on one topic or spread them across multiple sticky notes.
- 6) Rank the more popular topics higher in the backlog (the "To Do" column).
- 7) Now that you have an agenda, move the top item into the middle ("Doing") column.
- 8) Set the timer for five minutes – or whatever length the group determines is reasonable. This is the **initial** timebox for discussion.
- 9) When the time limit is reached, hold a simple Roman Vote (thumbs up, sideways or thumbs down) to see if there's interest in continuing the discussion. If so, set the timer for a shorter duration (eg. three minutes) and continue discussing. You can repeat this step as many times as necessary until the group loses interest in the topic.
- 10) When the topic runs out of gas, move its card to the right ("Done") column. Bring the next highest card over from "To Do" into "Doing" and repeat the process.
- 11) At the end of the session, reserve time to elicit key take-aways and/or action items from the group. This is usually important if you're using the meeting to drive decisions or create work. (*Pro-tip: taking a photo of the board or any artifacts, diagrams, sketches, mind maps, etc. is handy*)