

Background

The Daily Huddle is a fundamental coordination practice that keeps people alerted to the current state of planned work and how that work may have been influenced by unplanned events. For project teams implementing the Last Planner System® the Daily Huddle serves as an initial step to learning to plan work more reliably. This guide is provided to identify the essential components of a quality daily huddle along with additional actions that strengthen the value of the practice.

While a Daily Huddle may be held at any time during the day, morning huddles provide an opportunity to tier huddles so that problems and obstacles can be quickly communicated throughout even a large organization. Serious challenges that require the attention of people at the most senior level of an organization have an opportunity to be addressed the day they are identified. Cleveland Clinic has provided a video describing how tiered huddles work in their organization.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX-rHmwTjxQ>

The Last Planner System prescribes that project “Last Planners®” participate in the Daily Huddle. In the design phase of a building project this usually includes project managers for the architect and different engineering consultants supporting the project. It may also include construction professionals supporting the design work. In the construction phase this usually includes a construction management superintendent and superintendents and foremen from each of the trade contractors active on site that day. For purposes of this guide these Last Planners are called “group leaders.” This project coordination huddle is an essential component of the Last Planner System.

The following portion of the guide identifies Daily Huddle practices at four different levels.

Essential: The minimum required practices for a quality Daily Huddle.

Experienced: Additional practices that experienced project teams incorporate into their Daily Huddle.

Expert: Practices that support learning throughout the project and the organizations that are part of the project team.

Exceptional: Practices that support rapid learning resulting in an exceptional level of planning and execution expertise.

Essential Daily Huddle Practices

- Group leaders meet for 10 to 15 minutes to review the plan commitments for the previous and current day. Taking turns, each group leader reports whether the previous day's commitments to start and complete work have taken place as planned, and their expectations for the successful start and completion of work planned for that day.
- For work that does not start or complete as planned each group leader reports their assessment of the cause for the variation from the planned work. They also address how they are addressing this variation to work back toward completing the plan for the week and request any help that they need from other group leaders.
- A person supporting the group records the number of tasks completed as planned, along with the assessment of plan variation causes for future learning. Some project teams may be using software applications that allow group leaders to enter this information directly. The weekly percentage of planned tasks completed as planned is recorded as a Percent Plan Complete for the week, an indicator of near-term planning reliability.
- Group leaders note any concerns that the other members need to know. Concerns that require extended conversations should be tabled until a time after the huddle.

Experienced Daily Huddle Practices

- All the Essential practices.
- Group leaders report all unplanned work their groups performed the previous day. This information is recorded to understand how unplanned work may be affecting the performance of the team. The amount of planned work as a percentage of total work performed each week is recorded as Tasks Anticipated for the week, an indicator of near-term plan quality.
- The group leaders meet at a huddle board. Information on the huddle board includes a work plan for the current week, a current lookahead plan, space to record identified constraints and other concerns, and a space to record unplanned work. Other information such as maps, plans, and charts important to the work of the team is maintained on the board. For group leaders working in different locations this board will be maintained online.

Expert Daily Huddle Practices

- ❑ The project and the organizations supporting the project institute tiered huddles, beginning with the group leaders huddling with their group members before the project Daily Huddle. As examples, a project manager for an architect may meet with the other people in their firm working on the project, while a trade foreman may meet with the people on their crew installing work. This provides group leaders with firsthand information about the work they can bring to the primary project Daily Huddle.
- ❑ Following the primary Daily Huddle, a representative from the huddle meets briefly with other project stakeholders. This huddle may include other managers and project executives from the principal firms responsible for the project, along with key customer stakeholders.
- ❑ Some project teams may have multiple concurrent primary Daily Huddles. For example, during the construction of a high-rise building there may be a huddle on the upper floors of the building, a separate huddle in a basement mechanical area, and a third huddle supporting exterior site work. There may be a concurrent design huddle for pending interior finishes. A representative from each of these primary huddles should meet in the later project-wide huddle described above. Customer stakeholders should be invited to these project-wide huddles.

Exceptional Daily Huddle Practices

- ❑ Following every primary Daily Huddle, a person takes responsibility for developing an understanding in the form of a report of every plan variance identified in the huddle. The purpose of this understanding is to promote rapid learning that results in higher quality work planning.
- ❑ The person responsible for that day's report meets with each of the group leaders reporting a variance. Together they assess how the plan variance may have been avoided and develop a proposed response that group leaders can reference when preparing future weekly plans. In cases where the variance involves multiple group leaders, such as when incomplete predecessor work resulted in the variance or there was a directive to prioritize other work, it will be helpful to confer with the other people with knowledge related to the cause of the variance.
- ❑ The report should have a brief description of the plan variance, its cause, and the recommended response. Developed daily, the report will be less than a page and require about an hour to prepare.
- ❑ The report should be distributed to group leaders that day. There is no need for group leaders to keep the reports as reference documents. Once read they serve the purpose of building each group leaders tacit knowledge relative to planning.