

Wendy Pfeiffer

You had to be, as Hamilton would say, you had to be in the room where it happened and then otherwise you'd hear about it. The decrees would be handed down and you'd go off and you'd do whatever they had decided in the room.

Jason Lopez

For our purposes in this story, the room at issue here is a physical location... the workplace, between the hours of 9 to 5, Monday through Friday. If you're an employee of the company but working remotely, you probably miss out on birthday cake, company news and work initiatives.

Wendy Pfeiffer

Many of us of my generation feel like you can't really have an innovation session unless you're all sitting there in that conference room and you're whiteboarding together and you're throwing ideas around when you're all in the same physical place, same physical time. That's synchronous work.

Jason Lopez

Wendy Pfeiffer is the CIO of Nutanix. This is one of five brief Tech Barometer podcasts about Nutanix IT's shift to hybrid work.

Wendy Pfeiffer

But we've had massive global disbursement of our employees. Interestingly, always at Nutanix for example, about 30% of our employees worked remotely from our hub offices, and so we always had this need to enable asynchronous work, but we and many companies did it really poorly. We have such time zone displacement and such geographic displacement that it isn't possible to have all of the collaborators and all of the decisions both co-located physically and co-located in time together. How on earth do we make decisions? Do we work together hundreds of engineers on the same code set? How could we make a synchronous work productive?

Jason Lopez

One way to enable asynchronous work is to break down the work itself into smaller tasks and assign those pieces individually.

Wendy Pfeiffer

This is actually a very non-productive way to work, particularly if you have knowledge workers on whom you're relying for creativity and innovation and so on. Really what we need to do is we need to make sure that anyone in any location, in any time zone, at any place or time, can get access to work in process and can contribute using all of their capabilities.

Jason Lopez

The format for making sure anyone can contribute is the meeting.

Wendy Pfeiffer

In order for us to all be in the same room at the same time with folks being remote from hub offices, we need some meeting space and it's a virtual meeting space. Yes, I might be sitting in a conference room, but there will be some participants who will not be sitting in that conference room who also need a voice. Sort of getting everyone in the same physical space requires one of our anchor technologies, Zoom.

Jason Lopez

But it goes further than this. Nutanix used to insist that people in different time zones show up to meetings at just about any hour of the day, interfering with their personal lives and reducing productivity.

Wendy Pfeiffer

That's unattractive to workers in regions that used to handle operations 24/7 for a lot of larger companies in the US and Europe. Now we need to enable the work to happen in time chunks as well. One of the things we're doing at Nutanix is we're augmenting our meetings with self-documenting and recording. There's a new technology from a company called Huddle ai, huddle.ai, that is now showing up in Zoom. We've been working with them for a couple of years. It's now available in the Zoom marketplace. We're going to be enabling Zoom with this huddle ai. What Huddle AI does is it takes those comprehensive notes and minutes that we all declare we're going to do when we have meetings, but we kind of don't, and it also creates automatic recordings of important moments in those meetings and it also identifies all of the speakers and all of the participants in the meetings. Even if they're sitting around a table in a conference room.

Jason Lopez

If you're in a different time zone later on, and you want to experience the meeting, when you view the recording, you can know who's speaking, important moments and decisions are highlighted and documented.

Wendy Pfeiffer

Huddle creates access to all of our other applications that allow me to, for example, add my notes to the Google Doc or to the Lucid Spark doc that we were creating in the meeting and continue with the multitude of documents that we might be using to collaborate and share around. The second thing we're doing is we're augmenting our meetings with persistent discussion workspaces and we are looking at Discord, a technology from the gaming world. What Discord allows us to do is it allows us to create continuous persistent workspaces that are topical where anyone in the company can join those workspaces and can interact in the currency of that workspace, can gain reputation in that workspace, can share content in that workspace. In the workspace persists 24/7, 365. If I'm in it and I'm a user of Nutanix product and I'm frustrated with an element of the interaction design in say, Prism Central, I could show up in the Prism Central Discord workspace not as a contributor to Prism Central product per se, but as an expert in using that product. I may not even have to say who I am. I can just call myself it ninja, but I can share my experiences interacting with the product in a way that's not personal, that's not political, but that helps to augment that product.

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This is not everything, but these are small, that we already have the ability to do this. We already have the anchor technologies, we already have the tools, we already have these work patterns in place, but just tuning these experiences even a little bit more really matters. If you look at helping 7,000 members of an asynchronous workforce shave, say 15 minutes off of their day every day by not having to try to discover what happened in that discussion last night while I was sleeping, but to have that available to them and referenceable and documented, that's a huge productivity enhancement for that person and it also allows them to contribute, which is really what we want.

Jason Lopez

Wendy Pfeiffer is the CIO of Nutanix. This is one of five podcasts on the future of how IT teams work. At Nutanix, that future is a shift to hybrid work. This is the Tech Barometer podcast, produced by The Forecast. Look us up for more in this series with Wendy at theforecastbynutanix.com.