Wendy Pfeiffer
Context switching is actually the least productive human activity. Some people struggle with stress and anxiety because they're not good at context switching.

Jason Lopez
Wendy Pfeiffer is the CIO of Nutanix. This is one of five podcasts about Nutanix IT's transition to hybrid work.

Wendy Pfeiffer
When we think about hybrid work, it's all about the human being. Switching from context to context.

Jason Lopez
It would be easy enough to call it "change." But there's more to it than that. Context switching is the phenomenon of moving from one unrelated or unfamiliar environment or task to another. New parents starting a family, that's a big context switch. Or what about schooling, when we go from elementary school sitting in one classroom all day, but as we get older we have take individual classes in different rooms. And so recently, over the past couple of years, the pandemic pushed a context switch on many workers.

Wendy Pfeiffer
When I'm at home in my home office, I sit in a particular kind of chair. I have a particular kind of lighting. My laptop computer is connected to a network that's coming to me over public internet. In the physical office at work I go to a cubicle, it's a different desk set up.

Jason Lopez
It's estimated that only a very small portion of the population thrive on context switching, less than 5 percent. Most people experience mental, emotional and even physical stress.

Wendy Pfeiffer
It happens a hundred percent of the time. Even when I go from zoom meeting to zoom meeting, when I am simultaneously reading Slack messages at the same time that I'm having a conversation with you, there's a part of my brain that needs overhead energy in order to do that. And the more uncomfortable that is, the longer it takes us to change the mindset to sort of allow some of that stress to recede.

Wendy Pfeiffer
The nature of the universe has changed for them.

A couple of decades ago digital natives were born, and they grew up with the internet. And now they're here in the workplace.

Wendy Pfeiffer

They have been acculturated in the multi-verse, it's natural for them. How do I make the workplace show up that way for those workers and enable productivity for my multi-generational workforce in the context of the workplace and and how do I do things I can do? I have two things that I'm focused on this year to reduce context switching. The first is that I'm anchoring the workspace for all of our employees. We now have a standard laptop build and setup. And if you are switching from being in your home office to being in a physical office, a hub office, or to being on the road with your laptop, our goal is for it to function exactly the same way for me to be able to connect to the docking station the same way to join the network automatically without having to do some uncomfortable different thing for my applications to show up the same way and the same context whether I'm on my mobile phone or I'm on the customer's network for the VPN to work the same way.

Jason Lopez
It even comes down to how screens size on different monitors, so that no matter what the environment your settings are automatically detected. Wendy is a big fan of Kindle, which is built around a limited mission, the reading experience. But it does it quite well behaves consistently across a variety of environments.

Wendy Pfeiffer
And so how do we make the work laptop like my Kindle? I wouldn't think of being in any work context without that. That it always knows not just where I am but what I need and who I am. That's what we want. So we've chosen that device. It's maybe not the most modern device, but it's something we have. So we just want the laptop to get better and better and better at sort of being like the Kindle.

Jason Lopez
Secondly, Nutanix IT aspires to agnostic workflows using a tool called Move Works AI.

Wendy Pfeiffer
Move Works is the technology behind our Tool X Bot. But the thing about Move Works, it's a natural language processing tool. As an employee, whether I'm using email or I'm on our simpler intranet side or I'm in Slack if I need help, Bot is listening to my utterances for help and is responding by either automatically doing the thing I need or giving me access to knowledge articles to enable me to do the thing I need. That's sort of how we've used Move Works to this point.

Jason Lopez
But there's more that Wendy wants to get out of Move Works. It has a chat bot that's conversant in multiple languages.

Wendy Pfeiffer
Why should someone who speaks French have to ask for IT help in English while they're working from home or on the customer's site? Why couldn't they ask for help in French and get the help they need? Why do they have to get their password unlocked? Only when the team in

the US is working, why can't they get that password 24 7? So we're using Move works to create this as ubiquitous as possible experience for our employees who have become globally dispersed. We had employees working in 16 countries five and a half years ago that I supported today. We have active larger cohorts of employees in 61 countries. So how do we enable that? Especially because a huge context switch for an employee who's sitting in their home office in Spain working with Spanish customers and Spanish partners and so on. A huge context switch for that employee is to have to switch to English in order to do the work necessary to say create the quote.

Jason Lopez
Wendy thinks this automation is a big deal because it enables more and more of a location agnostic workflow. It's a capability you see on Star Trek.

Wendy Pfeiffer
We're trying to enable the universal translator. So you maybe don't even have to think, wow, I'm speaking in English and he's speaking in clinging on. How can we both understand each other? It's cuz that Universal Translators end play, there's lots of different Star Trek series and one of them is called Enterprise and it's the very first, it's the early days of Star Trek and they're just working out everything. They don't have the transporters working right? And there is no universal translator yet. There's this ai, they're training and there's a woman who is one of the officers on board who knows something 22 languages. They take her on every mission and then she's trying to train the AI and it later becomes the universal translator. In the first couple seasons of Star Trek Enterprise, when the aliens speak on the show, you can't understand what they're saying and there is no translation. Three years into the show now it sounds like they're speaking English, but every now and then the system breaks and then you hear them talking in the other language and you're like, What the hell? And everyone, all of the characters are going like, what are they saying, Uhoh, are we going to die or are we friends? And so it's that thing. We want to reduce that. And the employee experience.

Jason Lopez
Wendy Pfeiffer is the CIO of Nutanix. In this brief series: the future of how IT teams work... Nutanix IT's shift to hybrid work. This is the Tech Barometer podcast, produced by The Forecast. You can find more in this series with Wendy at theforecastbynutanix.com.