

Speaker 1 ([00:11](#)):

[inaudible] [inaudible] open source. We're going to send the [inaudible] [inaudible] settings English. My guest today is going to be Lauren Schaffer. She's a software engineer, the developer advocate at Mongo DB, speaker blogger, Dick Docker, and experts on remote work. Hi Lauren, and welcome to the podcast. Hi, thank you so much for having me. So I like to start just with some questions about you and you share with me what's your go-to cheer up meal.

Speaker 2 ([00:54](#)):

Oh, probably pizza. And I'm really into pineapple pizza right now, which I know is very controversial, but I do enjoy pineapple pizza. Okay. Same here. So the judgment. Good, good, good.

Speaker 1 ([01:08](#)):

I saw on your Twitter that a sub description, you have the uranium Venter. Can you share with me why?

Speaker 2 ([01:16](#)):

Yeah. So I spent several years as a software engineer at IBM and inventing is one of the things that's very important to moving up the individual contributor ladder there at IBM. And so there's a big focus on it. And so I had a lot of fun. I, it was, it was a little scary at first kind of figuring out how to invent things. And it, it sounds like this big process, but I built a team and together we worked together and we would actually have patent brainstorming meetings where we would get together and say, here's a problem. How are we going to solve it? And then we would write it up and get it submitted.

Speaker 1 ([01:56](#)):

Okay. That sounds fun. Yeah. Cause you always think of inventors as like messy people. So do you have like a tidy desk or is it messy?

Speaker 2 ([02:09](#)):

I am a tidy desk person and my, my husband and daughter will come in and put things on my desk and I'll be like, get that off my desk. I'm very into having a tidy desk. Okay.

Speaker 1 ([02:20](#)):

And do you have any productivity hack?

Speaker 2 ([02:24](#)):

Yeah, let's I guess for our house productivity, w this year we started using Asana to track our to-do list. And I, I really liked that because it's a common to-do list that my husband and I can share. And so he can go in and add things and Mark them off, and then I'm not having to like nagging him about it because he has access to the list. You can always see it. And so that's been a really nice productivity booster for us.

Speaker 1 ([02:51](#)):

Okay. And speaking of hacks, I see that you do a lot of conference talking, so going to new places, meeting a lot of people. Do you have any advice or techniques that we could just to jump into conversation with a group that we don't know at the conference?

Speaker 2 ([03:08](#)):

That is a really great question. I'm an introvert. So I have to really psych myself up to go like mingle with people. My favorite go-to question is tell me something that you're passionate about. And so that gives people the option of talking about something they're interested in at work, or maybe their favorite TV show or their favorite hobby. And you get really interesting conversations that way.

Speaker 1 ([03:31](#)):

You're a developer advocate. And could you please talk about your role in what you're doing a day? Because I think that's a kind of new-ish role in, in Latin America. It's not as common and people don't know how to get there.

Speaker 2 ([03:50](#)):

Yeah. So a developer advocate is a relatively new role. So a developer advocate, our job is in the developer community to be an advocate for our company, and then back in our company to be an advocate for the developer. So we're really advocating both ways. And so we, we do that in a few different ways. So we create content, we do things like write blog posts, create sample apps, create YouTube videos, do podcasts, speak at conferences. And then we also try to be the voice of the developer. So we're trying out the new features and saying, I don't know if this is going to work, or this documentation is confusing, or I've talked with developers and this is kind of the trend, or this is where things are a little bit trickier. And we try to bring that feedback back to the company to make our products better.

Speaker 1 ([04:41](#)):

What was your transition into that role? Because you're a software developer, right?

Speaker 2 ([04:46](#)):

Yes. So I spent eight years as a software engineer and I kind of started doing developer advocacy on the side without realizing I was doing it. So my manager was like, Lauren, we need someone to start writing about this feature and talk about our, our latest release. And so I created a blog post to do it. And then the next quarter I was like, let me do a video and give a video tour. And I was like, this is fun. And then my manager told our whole team, Hey, we need to be out speaking at developer conferences. And I was like, I don't know how to do that, but I'm going to try. And like, I was the only one who did it. And I was like, this is amazing. Like the company is paying me to travel around the world. And like, that is so cool. Like I went to Europe for the first time and the company paid for it. Like, that's awesome. Yeah. So I started doing it in bits and pieces. And then I was like, I kinda like this. I kind of like being able to do different things all the time. So I get, I still get to write code, but I also get to do the other pieces that I like as well.

Speaker 1 ([05:45](#)):

Okay. And what would be the skills that we need to invest in to transition to a developer advocate?

Speaker 2 ([05:55](#)):

I think one of the most important skills is empathy. So really thinking through how it makes people feel and listening and not just being like, well, that feature works is designed. Like that's not our attitude. So empathy is really important. Okay. And then like more, I guess, other skills that are important are

writing. So being able to write in an easy, to understand way and public speaking, which is a little scary to get into, but you, you get better every time you do it.

Speaker 1 ([06:28](#)):

Nonetheless. One is, if I ask you to describe yourself, but using only one word, which word would you choose?

Speaker 2 ([06:36](#)):

Hmm, that's a good question. I would say detailed. I, I really like to think about the details of things and making sure that they have that there's a spirit of excellence to them. So I like to go through and make sure that they're really high quality.

Speaker 1 ([06:57](#)):

That's good. And that's in everything you do, or

Speaker 2 ([07:01](#)):

It does span different, the different areas of my life. I think as I've gotten older, I've gotten better at realizing when things don't matter as much. And so, okay. This doesn't need to be like completely perfect, completely excellent. But then if I'm doing something that does matter, I like to make sure that it's very high quality.

Speaker 1 ([07:20](#)):

We're going to start with this subject if that's okay with you, let's do it. Okay. So you had a popular talk called does remote remote work really work? I saw that at [inaudible] last year. That's where we met. Yes. And do you then try to convince people to jump in the remote work lane, but you show ways of how to, how to do that. But now on March of this year, everybody was forced or everyone that was fortunate enough to, to be able to do so was forced into switching overnight to like an office work from home environment. And what that brought is that there's a lot of poorly designed spaces because we're in the kitchen where two or three people are in a, the dinner table with kids around. So the purpose of this episode is going to be to talk about how to, how we can improve the current situation, because none of us, or at least not everybody has like a background in doing so. So I would like to have this Doug bean or the theme of this episode be remote work 2.0, because we're, we're already there, but first let's talk about how you got into remote work. How was your transition into it?

Speaker 2 ([08:43](#)):

Yeah, so my, my transition was honestly pretty hard for me. I'm gonna, I'll give you a little bit of history. So back in 2009, I started a job in North Carolina. It was my first full-time job out of college. And my fiance at the time started a job in Maryland. So we were several driving hours away from each other. And then in 2010, we got married and I moved up to Maryland to be with him. And I began working remotely full time. And I was one of the few remote people on the team. And I knew that I was missing out on hallway conversations. Like I knew when they hung up the phone with me, they were, they were still talking. They were going to talk about their weekend or probably not the Kardashians, but whatever TV show that they were watching. And I knew I was missing out, I didn't have local friends.

Speaker 2 ([09:31](#)):

And my husband was the only person that I saw regularly. The other thing that was hard as I was living with my husband for the first time I picked up his snacking habits and I started gaining weight and I, I really struggled for about six months to adjust. It took me a while to get a rhythm at work, to get used, to not seeing people on a daily basis and to begin making local friends. So for six months it was really, really hard. And now I love it. And I'm a huge advocate for him at work. And I don't really want to go back in an office, but I will acknowledge it was a hard transition at first. Okay.

Speaker 1 ([10:08](#)):

And what would you say was the toughest change for, for that transition?

Speaker 2 ([10:14](#)):

I think it was not seeing people regularly because I went from having local friends to not having them and not really being plugged into the local community. So it was hard to figure out how to make local friends. Okay.

Speaker 1 ([10:27](#)):

And there's like a trend in, well, I've seen it mostly on Twitter where people are starting to share their setups and you can see like two or three monitors and like a gamer chair and all of these fancy things that are not available to most people. So can you talk about your, your setup right now?

Speaker 2 ([10:46](#)):

Sure. So I've been building this up for 10 years. My first year I spent on a card table, just a folding table. I don't recommend it, but I got by, I now have what I call mega desk, which is a desk from Ikea with my monitor, from my work, my laptop sitting beside it, up on a stand and then as well, a personal computer and personal monitor. And it's all here in one big mega desk chair from Costco. I love Costco.

Speaker 1 ([11:22](#)):

That's good. And in not everything has to be super fancy and expensive. Can you talk about like a small purchase that didn't really improve your setup?

Speaker 2 ([11:34](#)):

So I don't know if they still have them, but I Kia used to sell keyboard trays that you could attach underneath the desk. And so, but I did Google and Amazon sells them now. So if you're working from just a regular table, you can get a keyboard tray that attaches underneath your table, and that gets your, your keyboard at the right height for where you want to type. And it's amazing.

Speaker 1 ([11:58](#)):

Okay. And let's talk about the other side. If you have like a thousand dollars to invest in your set up, what would you, what would you get?

Speaker 2 ([12:09](#)):

I would love to try a treadmill desk. Okay. I have no interest in the standing desk. Like standing does not appeal to me, but I feel like if it was a treadmill desk and I was walking, I think I would enjoy that.

Speaker 1 ([12:21](#)):

Anything else that you think we're missing about your transition to remote work that you want to talk about?

Speaker 2 ([12:28](#)):

Yeah. I think one of the things that was hard was being one of the few remote people on the team. And so as I have joined new teams, I've always looked for teams where most of the people are remote. Most of the people are distributed, even if they're working in an office, there's not a cluster of people there. So that we're kind of all in the same situation and I'm not missing out on those hallway conversations. And I think that is one of the nice things about the pandemic right now is everybody's remote. So everybody's having to figure out how to have those conversations online. So we're all experiencing it together.

Speaker 1 ([13:06](#)):

But do I think you have an advantage on all of us because you've been doing it for so long? Yeah,

Speaker 2 ([13:11](#)):

That's true. Yes. I, I have adjusted, I will say the pandemic has still felt like an adjustment to me despite, you know, working remotely for 10 years. It has, there have been other aspects of my life that have been an adjustment. And so I think we're all struggling and figuring it out together.

Speaker 1 ([13:31](#)):

Right. Okay. We're going to talk about some, some downsides. I have a few cases that I would like to go over with you. So you mentioned in your talk that like the open office concept was like the worst thing that could happen because it was full of distractions. So I agree with you. I think the best way to avoid that was with noise, canceling headphones. But for me, I never got those because I get easily startled. So I didn't like people just approaching me without me having any like warning. So I never had those, but I think I was able to be kind of productive in that environment. But now with the pandemic, like I said, at the beginning, I, we feel like the offices. I mean, the, our house is like an open office because at any time anyone can walk in and like I said, people are working on their kitchens on their diner table. So there's no privacy or anything. Do you have any tips or systems that we could set up so that we could try to minimize as possible? These distractions?

Speaker 2 ([14:49](#)):

I think it's, it's a really hard problem. My daughter is four and she was home with us for the first two months of the pandemic. And it was a struggle. So I, I feel you, I feel the pain of that. And I've read online people. One of the suggestions was like, just talk with your kids and explain to them that mommy needs quiet time. And supposedly this works and it, it doesn't, it doesn't work. And at least when they're four, maybe when they're eight, it works great. So I think it's figuring out what works for your family and experimenting. So like the people who said, put a sign on your door, maybe your kids can help you make the sign. So it's, they're involved in it. And if they see it, there they go, Oh, mommy's on a call. I can't go in there.

Speaker 2 ([15:40](#)):

The other thing is to figure out how you can lean on your support system. So when my daughter was home every morning, we would say, okay, here's my meeting schedule. Here's my meeting schedule.

How can we trade off? Whose meeting is going to win at this time? And we kind of worked it out that way, but if you don't have a partner, maybe you have a neighbor who you're comfortable trading kids with. I know it's tricky during the pandemic, but kind of figuring out how you can work through that. Maybe you're in a position to hire, hire help, you know, and I know that that's a luxury, not everyone has, but figuring out how you can trade help or whatever, to just lean on your support system.

Speaker 1 ([16:21](#)):

Okay. And, and what about if you don't have kids, but it's a simpler case if you're with a partner or a roommate and you only have one table that you both share, but the tricky thing is that maybe both of your daily stand-ups are at the same time and you're required to talk at the same time. What, what could we do to minimize the noise and the distractions?

Speaker 2 ([16:45](#)):

Yeah. That's tricky as well. Headphones are crucial. Like you talked about noise, canceling headphones with a microphone, and if that's not working, maybe you can get creative. Maybe one of you can go in the bathroom or one of you can go outside. And I know nobody wants to have a zoom call from the bathroom, but like, I think everybody understands at this point, if it's working, you know, all professionalism's out the window, you know, if it's working, it's working. So get creative today. I was working from the kitchen. I normally work from my desk, but I've done something to my neck. I've been sitting oddly somehow at my desk and I haven't figured out what it is yet. So I'm sitting in a different spot just to try and fix whatever I'm doing with my neck problem. And I was sitting and I was in a meeting with my webcam on, and my husband came through when he started getting his lunch.

Speaker 2 ([17:33](#)):

And so I can see him in the background getting his lunch and you know, it's fine. It's hard. I think when you're doing deep level work to have noise and instruction, like if you're trying to code and there's somebody making a of noise, it's, it's tough. If you're in a meeting to me, if there's somebody walking around in the background, I just go, okay. There's there's somebody walking around in the background. That's fine. Yeah. So use your mute button wisely and, and communicate. I think you just got to figure out what works for you and in your situation.

Speaker 1 ([18:09](#)):

No, there's like another downside that I found in that this is my case that I switched from a vibrant office environment into small apartment instead of having like commute. And then go, go, go get a cup of coffee with your friends and have meetings face-to-face so what kind of systems could we use to prevent feeling isolated from

Speaker 2 ([18:39](#)):

It's a real problem right now? I think a lot of us are feeling that very same way, feeling isolated from people that we miss. And so I think it's about figuring out how you can build connections with people that you know, and also connecting with people you don't know yet. So for people you do know, I know we're in the U S people are doing a lot of zoom happy hours, and I don't know how widespread that is, but my family is spread out across the U S and every Saturday night we get together and we have game night on zoom. So that's how we're trying to stay connected, but there's a lot of creative things you can do. Like, are you in an area where it's safe to go for a walk? Like you have space to go walk. That's important to me. I try to get out every day, you know, can you do a virtual gym class? Is there a local

organization that's looking for volunteers? Cause that's a great way to meet people. So figuring out how you can get connected either virtually or in person and feel psychologically safe doing so.

Speaker 1 ([19:40](#)):

Okay. And yeah, because you mentioned a bit some meetings, but I think that we already spent six to sometimes eight hours in front of a computer. So taking a walk is I think ideal. And maybe have I saw like a tweet earlier today that it said that whenever someone asks you to do like a song called, could you maybe do it like a phone call and get outside and walk instead of standing in front of the computer, that will be a good solution.

Speaker 2 ([20:13](#)):

I love that idea. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([20:15](#)):

And what about another constraint where it's hard for this person to make new friends? So we do attend meetups, but when there's there comes a time to ask questions or anything where we're shy about it.

Speaker 2 ([20:31](#)):

A lot of times I've seen at least with online conferences right now, they have online chats through Slack or discord. And to me as an introvert, that's a lot less scary to just go in and chat that way. So that's nice. And, and especially as an introvert and I'm a little shy naturally, a lot of times I'll say, okay, in this, in this meeting, I'm gonna make one contribution and I try and figure out how I can speak up in one meaningful way. And so kind of pushing yourself a little bit, not nothing crazy, but stepping out of your comfort zone is hard, but could lead to benefits.

Speaker 1 ([21:08](#)):

Okay. And another thing that I think it's a downside right now is that I think video meetings is the new commute in, in terms that it's, it can cause a lot of stress in cankers due to be very tired. And, and that's something real that it's happening, like at 4:00 PM on a Friday, if you're still in a zoom call is you want to just slip for the rest of the weekend. So do you have any tips, techniques or something to avoid exhaustion? Because for example, in when you were commuting, people would recommend you to get an audio book or to switch routes, to do all these kind of hacky things to take the routine out of it.

Speaker 2 ([21:57](#)):

Yeah. So I have a friend who actually, before work and after work, we'll walk around his house just in order to kind of get that mental, you know, pretend that you're going to work. So he would walk around, he would change his clothes and, and do that. I have no interest in doing that. But so what I do is I am very conscious about ending work at, at the end of work. So I pick a schedule that I, I try to stick to. And if every once in a while, things run late and that's fine. But for the most part, I start my day at the same time. And I end my day at the same time. And when I end my day, I physically shut my computer. I turn my computer off and I take my phone and I turn off any email notifications, any Slack notifications, any of that, so that I can do my best to turn off work.

Speaker 2 ([22:51](#)):

And I'm very guilty, but sometimes my husband will look at me and he'll be like, are you thinking about work? And I'm like, yes, yes. I was mentally solving a problem, but I try not to, I try to relax my mind and think about other things so that I don't burn out because I know, you know, companies do want you to stick around, like, you have a lot of knowledge when you've been working there for awhile. And so they want you to survive this, right? So you want to make sure you're, you're really actively preventing burnout. Okay. So if you have kids, I know that I'm a mom of a toddler. And so going directly from work time to immediately trying to move to toddler time is, is kind of stressful for me. So luckily our daycare has reopened. And so she's in daycare now.

Speaker 2 ([23:39](#)):

And so I try to give myself 30 minutes between work and her up. And that's giving me a little bit of time to decompress before half to, you know, go into mommy mode. So if you have that, that blessing of being able to have a little extra time to yourself, take it, don't feel guilty about it and, and let yourself decompress a little bit. The other thing that's been struck I've struggled with during the pandemic is I used to travel about one week a month for work. And so I had a built-in time away from day to day parenting and that's gone now. So EV I'm on mommy mode every day, every night. And so about one or two months ago, my husband and I said, okay, let's each take a night off from parenting once a week. And that has made a huge difference. And I don't really do much. I just go and I'm not home for the daily bedtime routine. And I have felt so much better since, you know, we all need breaks. So you take them.

Speaker 1 ([24:42](#)):

So at the end of your talk, you gave like five tips for, for making remote work, really work. Yes. And I would like to re imagining rematching them for, for our green like version 2.0, so the fifth one would be select the right team. And I would propose that we could switch that to select the right equipment and space. What do you think about that?

Speaker 2 ([25:11](#)):

I love it. Yes. We're all in the teams. We're in a, so let's make it work. Let's figure out how to make this work and how to be the most comfortable doing it. I like it.

Speaker 1 ([25:19](#)):

Okay. And what about equipment? We kind of talk about it that it doesn't have to be all fancy, but what do you think of would be the best to prevent injuries when you're sitting down like in a funky chair or would the height of the monitors is key.

Speaker 2 ([25:39](#)):

Yeah. Making sure the height of your monitors is good, making sure that your keyboard is the right height. You're sitting in a chair with lumbar support, but I know, I know that some of these are luxuries and not all of our homes have space for those things. So do what you can and, and try to get creative.

Speaker 1 ([25:58](#)):

Okay. Yeah, because I seen that you could use like living room cushions for your back and that's something you already have. Have you had any injury or something related to this when you switched to remote work?



Speaker 2 ([26:13](#)):

I, I did not, but the last week and a half, I've had really bad neck pain and I haven't figured it out. I, I stepped away from him for the weekend, from my computer for three days, didn't touch it. And the neck pain went away. And then I came back on Monday and the neck pain came back. So I know it's the computer. I just haven't figured out what I'm doing. I'm sitting wrong somehow and I need to figure it out. So it happens. It happens and you just gotta pay attention. Right.

Speaker 1 ([26:44](#)):

And, and I'm someone that I don't like being like silly in front of my coworkers. So when we had like stretching classes or meditation at work, I didn't do him. But do you find that that's something important for, for sitting at the desk all day? Like having like a stretch routine or similar?

Speaker 2 ([27:08](#)):

Yeah. So my Fitbit reminds me at the end of every hour, if I have not walked 250 steps, it'll be like Lauren, get up and walk. And honestly I ignore it more than I should, but that's a, that's a good intake indicator that I should get up and walk. The other thing that I try to remind myself as if I were in an office and I had to go to a meeting, I would get up and physically walk to the conference room. So it's okay to take two minutes and walk around your house and clear your head before sitting down to a meeting. And so that is something I do try to do is, is get mentally set and, and clear my head a bit. And it's so easy to get sucked into Slack conversations and things before meetings. But if you can try to remember set like a few minute reminder before your meeting to get up and move,

Speaker 1 ([27:54](#)):

Right. And also something regarding the space. Like if your only option is to be in the dining room table, maybe bring closer to a plant or a flower too, to make it a bit more lively. I don't know. Do you have any act like that?

Speaker 2 ([28:15](#)):

I like to keep a window open so that I can see outside. I can see people walking by and that makes me happy.

Speaker 1 ([28:23](#)):

Okay. D number four is be productive. I didn't make any changes to that. So if you want to go through suggestions.

Speaker 2 ([28:33](#)):

Yeah. So it's really important to try to do your job every day. And I guess, let me, let me couch this just by saying like there's a lot going on right now. And if you're struggling to work from home, if you're struggling to be productive, it may not just be the working from home part. It could be all of those other factors adding up. And one of the things that I really appreciated about my management team when the pandemic first hit is they came to us and they said, look, we know you, weren't going to be as productive right now. That's okay. Do what you can. We want you to make it through this in the long haul. We don't want you to burn out. So give yourself a little grace. It's going to be okay. You may not be as productive right now. And that's fine, but let's talk about how we can try to be productive.

Speaker 2 ([29:20](#)):

So what I do at the beginning of my day is I go and I look at my task list and I pick what's the most important things that I want to work on. So I usually try to pick two or three things that are important. And I, and I focus really hard on those. And the nice thing about that is that I'm not focusing on. Maybe what's most urgent. It could be, it could be what's most urgent, but could also be what's most important. Cause I want to make sure I'm giving myself space in the day to work on those big projects, the things that matter. So pick those things, work on them really hard and then move on to something else.

Speaker 1 ([29:55](#)):

Right. And organization is key in that, right? Yes. Yes, definitely. Why do you do it in the morning instead of doing it before closing your computer the day before

Speaker 2 ([30:09](#)):

That that is my preference. I like to come in and just see what I have to get done, but I think there's definitely in the evening would be another great strategy before I closed my computer the night before I do usually check my calendar to see what's on there so I can start mentally prepping for whatever's coming my way. So I think whatever works for you.

Speaker 1 ([30:32](#)):

Okay. Tip number three is communicate with your team. And I think that's even more important now than before, especially for a lot of people that had like relied on face-to-face conversations. And do you have a, can you share with us what, what that means or how can we be better at communicating with our team?

Speaker 2 ([30:57](#)):

Yeah. So one of the things that I'm going to shamelessly borrow from nor Denzel, this was one of her tips was she suggested that we be great PR agents for ourselves. And I love this idea because we need to make sure that we're controlling the message about what we're saying about ourselves, because people really only know what we tell them. So if someone comes up to you and says, Oh Lauren, great job on this presentation you did. And I said, Oh, well, I kind of screwed up this part and I fumbled this. Then that's what's in their mind. Right. But if you just say, Oh, thank you so much. It was a pleasure to do. You're being a great PR agent for yourself. And that's good if someone gives you a compliment forward it onto your management team. So they know if you do something great, let your team know, let your management team know so that people are aware of what you're doing. Cause the last thing you want is for you to be working really hard and nobody to have any idea that you're doing it. So doing good work is important, but also making sure that people know about it is also important. Okay.

Speaker 1 ([32:03](#)):

Okay. And one question I have about this subject is that many of us are being onboarded to new teams. So of my last year I have like a week long of face-to-face conversations and we went to lunch together and all these things that right now are not possible. So how can this relationship be formed when you're being onboarded, virtually?

Speaker 2 ([32:31](#)):

So a couple of different suggestions. My mentor several years ago suggested that when I joined a new team, I set up 20 minute meetings with everyone individually on the team. And I was a little scared of this just to be upfront with you. It seemed like, Oh, what if I'm bothering them? They don't have time for this. This is going to feel awkward. And everyone said, yes. And then everyone was like, thank you so much for setting these up. So people want to get to know you. So don't be intimidated. Just, just do it, just try it and tell them a little bit about your background and you know, something personal about yourself so that they have something to kind of talk to you about, like give them, give them something interesting and then ask them as well about themselves. And if it goes, well, you can always talk longer, but if not, that'll probably take 20 minutes and then thing they know what you're doing and you know what they're doing. And so you've already built a little bit of a personal relationship. And once you have that personal relationship, it's so much easier to go and say, Hey, I got stuck on this. Can you help me? Or I don't know who to ask. Like, do you have any idea? So start building up those relationships right from the beginning.

Speaker 1 ([33:39](#)):

Oh, okay. That sounds great. And how can we be better at communicating at Slack? Because right now I think at least, I don't know if it's my company or everybody, but we have like a hundred channels. It seems, and everybody is tagging you in some places in how can we kind of declutter our Slack and be better at communicating there.

Speaker 2 ([34:05](#)):

You know? So I actually really like having a lot of channels. So to me that's really handy. Cause I know that in my channels with my small individual team, I can talk about everything that's going on and we can be, we, we can be very informal with each other. And then in the bigger channels, I am going to be asking, giving shorter updates or like asking bigger questions, but I'm not going to be just chatting about what I did this weekend. And so being kind of aware of how many people are reading your message and how much you're cluttering up. Those big channels with everyone is, is good. But yeah, I think I would always err on the side of over-communicating than under communicating.

Speaker 1 ([34:49](#)):

Okay. That, that makes sense. The tip number two is to travel and you focus that into travel to meet your coworkers. So we can reimagine that one to start getting out of the office and the offices on quotes because it's your home. So what can we do there?

Speaker 2 ([35:15](#)):

So I think just figuring out what you feel safe doing outside of the house is really important and what you and your people, you're going with your family members, your friends with they're comfortable with and, and taking advantage of nice weather. So my family we've started doing take out and then we'll eat in the back of our car instead of eating in the restaurant. So figuring out what you feel safe doing, and what's fun, just go for it. And I think one of the suggestions you have is start a new hobby. And, and I love that like, like try something new. It's, it's really easy to kind of get into a feeling kind of down or kind of stuck like, and like, Ugh, so much has been taken away from us. So I love the idea of starting a new hobby and that's awesome. Have you started a new hobby?

Speaker 1 ([36:05](#)):

We didn't start, but we got back to it. My dad has like this 2000 pieces puzzle and it's like a, the box was, has been sitting on our house for, I don't know, five years. So we finally opened up,

Speaker 2 ([36:24](#)):

I've been doing a lot of puzzles as well. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([36:27](#)):

And do you, what do you do with them after they're done?

Speaker 2 ([36:31](#)):

I keep them for like two days and then I smashed them back in the box.

Speaker 1 ([36:36](#)):

Right. This is like a big hobby for, for my dad. So he actually learned how to glue them together and put like a plastic cover. Nice. Okay. Your last point would be to actively prevent burnout in and I think this is even more critical in lockdown. So what can you share with us about that?

Speaker 2 ([37:01](#)):

So I think the most important thing is to try and keep a schedule that works for you. And so for me, I like to do all of my work in, you know, a solid eight hours and then, and then be done. I know a lot of parents are working split schedules right now, which is really tough, the context switching, but they're making it work. And so finding a schedule that works for you and being able to give yourself downtime is, is crucial. So turn off your computer, turn off your phone notifications and really take a break at the end of every day so that you aren't burning out.

Speaker 1 ([37:36](#)):

Okay. And there's like you mentioned in your talk a bit, there's like this feeling in Latin America, that if you're not at work, I don't know, eight to nine hours you're slacking off and you are setting a bad example or you're, you're not a good employee in that is even like, it grows when you're remote, because you mentioned it. If people are not seeing constant updates of you, that it's stressful for you to imagine what other people think and how you're being lazy or a but employee. So how can we prevent that?

Speaker 2 ([38:21](#)):

So when I'm online, I try to be pretty responsive to people on Slack so that they aren't wondering what, what is she doing? And I think that this is maybe shifting now that more people are working remotely. I think people are starting to understand, Oh, if they're not responding, maybe they're just trying to get some deep work done. Like maybe they're in the middle of coding and that's fine. So if I know that I have to do deep work, then sometimes I will actually just put in Slack a note and I'll say, I'm working on XYZ and I'll turn off notifications just so people are aware. That's why I'm not responding. I, I like to think that hopefully the tech industry is starting to move towards results rather than time checking. And it's, we're not there yet, but I like, I would like to think that we're moving in that direction, that hopefully my work speaks for itself, that I'm getting the results done. And you don't need to worry about when I'm working, but I'm making sure I'm getting my job done. I'm working with my manager to make sure I we're both on the same page about what my targets are. So there's no surprises at the end that they

were expecting something or you know, that I miss some Mark and being very clear about expectations. And as long as those expectations are being met, we're all in a good place.

Speaker 1 ([39:43](#)):

Okay. That, that makes sense. I see your last point here in that could be a great closing if that's okay with you. I just want to jump in with one last question about how could you be a better manager right now that your team is completely remote? How can you support them and get them excited about work without micromanaging or wanting updates every five minutes?

Speaker 2 ([40:13](#)):

So, w I think I mentioned this earlier, one of the best things that my management did for me was right at the beginning of the pandemic said, look, I know you weren't going to be as productive right now. And that's okay. And that was something hard for me. Like, I felt like I was being a bad employee because I knew I was being less productive. And so for them to say that and to say it more than once, like that was huge for me. So acknowledging that things are tough and people are going through things and that's okay. And you care about them as people, and you want them to come out stronger on the other side of this is huge. Okay. The other thing that's really helpful as far as like being productive is having one-on-one. So on a regular basis, I really like to have a weekly one-on-one.

Speaker 2 ([40:57](#)):

And so every week I tell my manager when I did last week, when I'm going to be working on this week, and then what's on my mind. So things that I'm like I'm struggling with or things that I'm concerned about, or like I'm looking ahead and I think this could be a problem. And so that helps us all set expectations of, of targets of what I'm working on. And so, as long as expectations are being very clearly set, I think that makes a huge difference. Also, one of the things that's really nice about my company is they have a focus on mental health. So we have mental health benefits with different companies that we can get counseling, or we can do meditation or things like that. So making employees aware of options and you don't have to do it in a, like, I think you need this kind of way, but like, I just want to make sure you're aware of these options and supporting people through that.

Speaker 1 ([41:49](#)):

Okay. Do you have any general advice for, for everybody that's struggling a little bit with, with the transition. I know we've been, it's been a few months, but some people are doing it wrong or could be, could be better at it.

Speaker 2 ([42:06](#)):

Yeah. So if you're struggling with the transition to remote work or you're feeling unhappy or feeling a little depressed, I encourage you to talk to a therapist I've been working remotely for 10 years and 2020 has still been really hard for me. There's so many complicating factors. It's not just the transition to your own remote work. It's the worry of catching the virus it's dealing with having the virus or your friends or family, having the virus. It's the change in how children are going to school. It's the job loss and the financial worries. It's your canceled plans and the sadness that goes along with that, it's that feeling of isolation. It's the systemic racism. It's the worry about politics. It's our whole lives being turned upside down and shaken. A couple of months ago, I decided to speak with a therapist for the first time in my life. I was having a hard time coping with all of the change. And I spent a whole day crying about something very silly that happened. And I was like, I'm not crying about this silly thing. I know I'm crying

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about everything that's going on right now. And so the therapist really helped me work through it. So if you're struggling, reach out and get the help you need, you know, you're not alone. You're not the only one struggling. We all are.

Speaker 1 ([43:30](#)):

[inaudible] Lauren Schaffer and [inaudible] [inaudible], [inaudible], [inaudible].