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3 SPEAKERS

Jason

Heather

Chris

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:28]

Hey, everybody. Welcome back to the Thunder cast. This is episode five, and we have a little bit of a different show for you this time around. And some of the reasoning for that is we have a completely different crew with us today. Ryan is on. He's enjoying some PTO and Alex is recovering from the flu. And so they're both taking a break from the show this week. Instead, we have the amazing duo of Heather Ellsworth and Kris Aquino.

[00:01:03]

Hello.

[00:01:04]

Hello, Heather. Welcome to Thunderbird.

[00:01:07]

So glad to be here. Oh, my God.

[00:01:10]

So you at the time of recording, you started about a week ago, a week and a half ago.

[00:01:17]

A week and a half ago. Yeah.

[00:01:18]

So I have two questions for you. The first question is, what is your role at Thunderbird?

[00:01:24]

My role at Thunderbird is a developer relations engineer specifically on tooling. So my first gargantuan task that I'm kind of tackling is how can we clean up and fill in gaps of the documentation. Thunderbird is a wonderful project and we need to make sure that those docs are in shipshape order so that everybody can easily contribute.

[00:01:52]

That alone seems like a giant undertaking.

[00:01:56]

But a fun one.

[00:01:57]

Not everyone would say that. Heather. Not everyone would say that that writing and organizing documentation is like the time of their life. But we're so happy that you're loving it. Now the big question is, and this is something that I subject everyone to who shows up to the show for the first time. Okay. I would love to hear about your origin story. And what I mean by that is like the the first time that you remember falling in love with open source or with Linux or with technology. Just what what really captured you and kind of got you on that path.

[00:02:37]

Yeah, good question. Well, once upon a time I was a physicist and Linux was just what everybody used to do, data analysis stuff because nobody wants a million putty windows. So I got a laptop and I sat down one night and I was like, I'm going to install Ubuntu and figure this out. And it was pretty easy and it's pretty straightforward. And the whole confidence manager thing kind of blew my mind because you could have like the rotating cube and all of this. This was like with Ubuntu 704. Um, and so yeah, I really used it a lot. I found it a lot easier to use. I loved that I could dig into a problem because the logs are right there and you can google your problem and just go from there. I didn't really understand open source though, so I dropped out of the PhD program in like 2011 and started working for HP. And eventually in 2015 I went to Linuxcon for the first time and I remember I wanted to go into this big plenary session, but I got there kind of late and there was no room. And so I was just kind of standing at the doorway and the booth. Right next to the doorway was the Free Software Foundation. And so these guys are chatting me up and I bought Richard Stallman's book Free as in Freedom. And I took it home and I read it and I was like, Wow, this is so great. And so then I read Cathedral in the Bazaar and I was like, I get it. I totally get it. And from that point on, I wanted to make a career out of like free software. But because I don't come from a traditional computer, you know, engineering background, I take a ton of notes. And so I write a lot of documentation for myself because there was a pretty big learning curve there. And then I found that it was useful for others.

[00:04:38]

So that is such a smart thing to do. I never when I started my my Linux journey back in 2018, like five years ago, I really would have benefited from just a heap of notes because I found myself going to a bunch of different Linux distributions, trying out a bunch of different software. But I was repeatedly running into some of the same hiccups, like whether it's, you know, audio or like how to update the system or a graphics bug or whatever. And I wish that I would have actually taken notes on my experiences so that I can just so I could help myself, you know, and, and then eventually help others, which is that's awesome. Heather Yeah.

[00:05:21]

Yeah. I shot myself in the foot many, many, many times and had to do re installs of Linux over and over. And finally I was just like, let me just write this down. So I stopped doing this and I have just amassed this like giant file of my personal notes. And then as I, you know, was given various projects in various software engineering roles, I just wrote everything down with the idea of if a brand new college hire comes in and is given this project, I want to give them the notes and they don't need to talk to me anymore because they have everything.

[00:05:57]

Can I can I just be like a total geek for a second and say, I don't know if everyone has seen the Star Trek Generations? I think it was Star Trek Generations movie. Yeah. Tng Yeah, it was either that or first contact. I don't remember which movie, but data. I just think of this when I think I don't know why I think about it, but data like gets his emotion chip and he's like, I just love scanning for life forms. Life forms do little life forms, and I love installing Linux. I'm the weirdo who like gets excited and happy and singsongy about installing Linux. I love the process of installing a linux distro. I don't know why I'm just a weirdo.

[00:06:39]

Chris Yes.

[00:06:40]

Also welcome to welcome to the Thunder cast and you know, belated welcome to Thunderbird. When did you join the team?

[00:06:48]

April 12th.

[00:06:49]

April 12th. So not that long ago. And what's your role?

[00:06:52]

I'm a full stack developer on the brand new web services team. Okay, so not that new new to me. It's new to Thunderbird.

[00:07:00]

And I think it's pretty it's very new to our listeners, though, and our audience. I mean, we just recently kind of hinted at the Thunderbird services that we're going to be developing and we have mentioned Thunderbird send people pretty much understand that it is us resurrecting Firefox send, but that's all they know. And you are here too. Well, not only you know to to join us in all the conversations we're going to have, but also to give us a little more insight into what Thunderbird send is and how it works and all that good stuff and what people can look forward to, Right?

[00:07:35]

Yes, I can do that.

[00:07:37]

You also have to tell us your origin story.

[00:07:41]

Oh, all right. I. I racked my brain for this one, but I found it. I found the the origin, the the inception. Um, so way back in the 80s, um, my older brother, one of my older brothers, begged my parents for a computer. So we got a computer and they bought video games on these things called floppy disks.

[00:08:07]

Floppy. What now is that the is that when you 3D print the save icon. Is that what's that Is that what you're talking about the 3D printed save icon.

[00:08:15]

Pretty much exactly that. Yes. Okay. Yeah. So my origin story involves figuring out how to cheat at video games and.

[00:08:24]

Oh, that's.

[00:08:25]

Rad. Basically, I found out that I could replenish like a dungeon or whatever, like with all the treasure and magical items of which usually there was only supposed to be one. I would just make a copy of the resource disk, put it in there, and then I would have a brand new dungeon with that super magic item, just like, wow available. Yeah, it was all downhill from there.

[00:08:50]

What a what a noble cause. What a noble cause that was. Yeah, yeah.

[00:08:55]

Extra loot. Um, but then. This sort of the second phase was I went to a weird high school that happened to be on a college campus. So we had okay, so another throwback term Ethernet in our dorm rooms. This is how long ago it was. It was we had a fast connection to campus. We had a T1.

[00:09:18]

I had a T1 Ethernet connection.

[00:09:20]

Me too!

[00:09:21]

I remember thinking T1, that's like the dream.

[00:09:24]

That's like so fast. Now, do.

[00:09:26]

Dorm rooms not have Ethernet anymore?

[00:09:28]

They do, but now they've got like gigabits as opposed to hundreds of kilobits or whatever at T1 was Right, right. But yeah, yeah, yeah. So I arrived at this high school and the other computer nerds were running around with these massive boxes of floppy disks. And I found out what they were doing was they were putting something called Linux, like the installer disks onto what, like 2 or 3 dozen floppy disks. And that's what you needed in order to get it running there. There was no automated installer. You made the disks and then you manually by hand stepped through all the commands, feeding it the correct disks at the right time. Um, back then I did not love installing Linux, but. But once I got it running pretty great.

[00:10:18]

I can I heard that they would have like install parties back then where a bunch of people in a community would get together and like learn how to install Linux.

[00:10:26]

Yeah, that was, that was basically like the third floor of, of my high school dorm.

[00:10:31]

So do you do you still run Linux as your daily driver?

[00:10:34]

I do. I do. I run Linux on like most of my machines.

[00:10:38]

So we're all driving. We're all daily driving Linux right now. That's, that's really cool. Yeah.

[00:10:42]

What flavors of linux are you guys daily driving?

[00:10:45]

I'm on Debian.

[00:10:46]

Debian Debian testing. Okay. I'm on kubuntu 2304.

[00:10:52]

And I'm on nixos which.

[00:10:55]

Oh I keep hearing about that.

[00:10:56]

You know per the matrix channel there are a number of folks who dislike Nixos for reasons that I don't understand and I haven't bothered asking why yet, but I dig it. It's, it's, I recommend it for anybody who's like tired of hunting down how to configure things. It's kind of amazing. Your configuration file is a big program, so if you have any incorrect options, it will not it will not, you know, configure the system that way. That's all I'm going to say.

[00:11:30]

All right. So we're going to get we're also going to get back to a feature that I think we did in the first or second show called Geeking Out, which is I mean, we do that all day. But but I think it's important for us, especially especially with today's main topic being remote work, I think it's really important for us to to kind of acknowledge and talk about something outside of work that got us really excited this week or in the last couple of weeks. That can be a hobby that you enjoy, a show, a hike, whatever. So let's kick it off with Heather. What are you geeking out about?

[00:12:08]

Um, yeah, I've been kind of obsessed with the show recently on Netflix called Sex Education. Um, there's only three seasons right now. And the fourth one, the final season comes out in two days. It's on my calendar. Uh, when I was finishing season three, by the end of it, I was eating Cheez-Its and drinking bourbon and like, sobbing and laughing, and it was amazing.

[00:12:32]

Um.

[00:12:34]

That sounds like a roller coaster.

[00:12:36]

It was.

[00:12:37]

I mean, it just. You laugh and you cry.

[00:12:39]

It's so wonderful. And they do such a great job with, like, you know, the spectrum of relationships.

[00:12:47]

I, I.

[00:12:48]

Had a similar experience with a show called Shrinking on Apple TV with Harrison Ford. And that guy from How I Met Your Mother, I can't remember his name, the Jason Segel, Jason Segel, thank you. Yeah, they're both in it. And it's it's the writing on it is so sharp and so real, but it's also a comedy. But it's that same thing where you're, like, laughing at someone's misfortune one second and then just bawling because it hits so close to home at the same time. So, Heather, what's the like what's the basic premise, though? Like in a sentence or two, What's the show about?

[00:13:21]

It's about this like high school in England somewhere. And the gal from, uh, X-Files.

[00:13:30]

Gillian Anderson Did I say that right? Gillian Anderson.

[00:13:33]

She's a sex therapist and her son goes to this high school and he kind of starts being a sex therapist to the other high school kids and helping all the kids, like, navigate, you know, in high school sexuality and the things, you know, it's really, really well written, well acted. They do a great job with, like, diversity.

[00:13:58]

Um hm.

[00:13:59]

Great tackling tough subjects, but also being incredibly witty and funny about it.

[00:14:07]

That's a really tough, tough balance, I bet. Yeah. For for writers and actors to. To maintain.

[00:14:13]

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:14:14]

It's it's it's really good.

[00:14:15]

Chris what about you?

[00:14:17]

Also a very good question. Jason Um, I.

[00:14:20]

Kind of sprung this on Chris I know. So it's my bad if you don't want to answer it.

[00:14:23]

I got it. I got it. All right, So, um, speaking of remotes, um, I've got is this.

[00:14:32]

Is this going to be punny?

[00:14:34]

Um, that's the end of the puns, I promise.

[00:14:37]

Okay.

[00:14:38]

I have an Apple TV, right? My wife and I have this Apple TV, and it's the one. If you if you look it up, it's like the first generation Siri remote and it's awful insert expletive here. It's awful because it's got this weird slidey touch swiping surface, which is terrible. It's not what you want when you are staring at a thing and you want to use a remote, you don't want to have to look at the. Anyway, sorry, I digress. This is not about user interfaces. This is about why the remote is terrible and how I replaced it with a Logitech project, a product called a Logitech harmony. Right. It's an all in one remote talks to all your devices. Ours is dying. So I'm replacing, I'm trying to replace it with a Raspberry Pi that we've connected one of those like you get on Amazon, it's a super cheapy handheld remote that also doubles as a keyboard, right? So it's on on one face. Looks like a remote with hard buttons. Flip it over keyboard with actual real buttons.

[00:15:40]

Slick That's.

[00:15:42]

Awesome. So the keyboard is is wirelessly connected to the Raspberry Pi. And the Raspberry Pi is paired via Bluetooth masquerading as an Apple TV friendly Bluetooth device. So that's that's what I've been burning some hours on. This is my obsession because literally I spent half of Sunday on this fighting Bluetooth driver issues just to get it to pair. So that's this is actually to be continued. The the obsession is ongoing.

[00:16:13]

And we're going to have to you're going to have to come back and keep us posted then.

[00:16:17]

Indeed.

[00:16:17]

Have you ever done have you done any other projects with Raspberry Pi?

[00:16:20]

Yes, several, many plenty, including. So I do a lot of like barbecue smoking in my backyard. And I sort of one gets tired of frequently checking the temperature and adjusting vents and things over a 14 hour period. So what you do instead is you get a Raspberry Pi and and you you automate the activation of fans that blow air over the coals while, you know, reading the temperature so that you know when to back off the you know the fan there are more but maybe we save that for another podcast.

[00:16:59]

Okay so Thunderbird after Dark needs to happen.

[00:17:01]

So hang on. So that like inspired me to talk about my recent Raspberry Pi project because I had two weeks off between jobs, so I set up something not as fancy as that, but I wanted a temperature sensor in my backyard because the weather will tell me what the temperature is going to be, but it never tells me what the temperature was and it doesn't tell me what that actually is at my house. So I wanted to start recording that and plotting it over time. So Matplotlib for the win.

[00:17:33]

Nice Matplotlib. Wow, you guys are really geeky. I'm impressed. I'm very impressed. Well, okay. Mine's not as geeky, but it's actually, it's. It's almost a confession, but I'm so happy about it that I had to share this. So I am 47 years old and I have been playing guitar and writing songs since I was 16. Last week I got my first guitar amplifier. Wow. My first ever. And so I know it's insane. It sounds insane for someone who's been basically dabbling in music for 30 years writing music. Um, but I didn't get serious about recording my songs until about eight, nine years ago. And at the time that I started recording my songs, I was getting into a quote unquote game. I'm using air quotes called Rocksmith. And Rocksmith is a lot like rock band The Game, but Rocksmith kind of gamifies learning guitar. And so there's like these arcade games that you can play and it detects you use a real guitar for it and it, it just detects everything, harmonics and bends and, and palm mutes and, you know, all the technical stuff that you do as a guitar player. And I just, I realized I can just stick this cable because it comes with like a I was telling Heather about this earlier today.

[00:19:03]

It comes with a cable that you plug into your guitar and a USB that you just plug into your PC. And it's universal. It works on any OS. And so I've always just used software amps or, you know, or post-production effects and just kind of never felt the need to have a guitar amp. And I finally felt the need and I got this thing. It's a, it's a boss katana mark two and it's called a modeling amp. And this is, this is like a completely new world for me because I didn't understand that. Amps That you don't need pedals anymore to get effects, right? This amplifier has like 60 built in but it's. Sounds like I did the whole Michael J. Fox thing. I know it's only a little tiny amp, right? But. But I did the whole Back to the Future Michael J. Fox thing, and I turned everything as loud as I could. And like, my first chord is just a just a solid E chord. And it, it blew me away. It just felt, you know, it felt great. It felt invigorating to hear that coming out of an amplifier instead of, you know, a software effect in my headphones. So I'm hooked now. I'm hooked.

[00:20:15]

That's awesome.

[00:20:16]

Let's get into because we're running a little bit long on the banter, which is which is fine. It's fun. All right. So the meat of our the meat of our topics today, we're going to talk about Thunderbird send and we're going to talk about and offer up some some tips and software suggestions for people who are working remotely. Before we do that, though, I just wanted to run down a couple fast updates about Thunderbird one to let everybody know that we have enabled manual updates. So if you're on Mac OS or Windows and you're running Thunderbird 102, you can go into your app menu and then select about Thunderbird and you'll see that there will be an update waiting for you. You might have to check for updates, but it should just say, you know, upgrade to Thunderbird 115 So that's enabled. And then in a week or two we should be turning on automatic updates so that you won't you won't have to mess with the manual upgrade path. Now for Linux users, as you as you probably know, the story is a little bit different because there's very it's it's largely up to your Linux distributions maintainers when they include the updates in their in their software repositories. But that brings me to the fact that we recently took ownership of the Thunderbird flat pack. And so we're going to keep that nice and fresh. Now it is our our recommended installation method for Linux users and we also have a package in the Microsoft Windows Store as well that that landed a couple of weeks ago. So a lot of options for all of you no matter what. What OS you're on. Now. Thunderbirds. Send Chris, give us bring us up to date and tell us what it is and kind of how people can expect to use it in the future once it launches.

[00:22:16]

Absolutely. Okay. So as you alluded to earlier, we have resurrected the old fire Firefox, Mozilla, Mozilla send. Right. Which once upon a time was a free service that you could use to send a file or files to people. It was all end to end encrypted. That was great. They they retired the project some years ago and when I was hired, this was this was my this is it continues to be my first project. We have retooled a lot of things. We've beefed up the encryption and. We've thought of a number of different ways that you can use this. I'm going to throw out some use cases before I talk about any of the other technical details. But one really obvious use case is, hey, why don't we just why don't we just make it so that Thunderbird itself can send large attachments? Using it doesn't even matter who your your email provider is. Some email providers have very low threshold for upload size for attachment size. Others have very large ones, but they do something sneaky like they'll actually upload it to their version of cloud storage. So that's that's kind of what we're we're just going to fix that. We're going to make it so that a user can attach things to their emails and know that. On the server. It is unreadable by us. Only the recipient will be able to decrypt it. We're going to start with just some basic password based decryption, which, you know, that's not 100% secure because somebody could just put the password in the email. But for for users who are like, well, you know, I definitely don't care about this cat photo being seen by anybody else. So, you know, whatever. Yes. Here's the password in the email. On the other hand, you know, maybe you're sending sensitive medical or like other like government documentation and you you then use some other means of communicating the password to the recipient.

[00:24:29]

But that's not all right. This whole, like, ability to encrypt content and decrypt it only on the client, the server is acting merely as like a, you know, a relay of the content. And, you know, what can we do with that? So we have started a couple of prototypes, one of which is a simple chat application, right? So end to end encrypted chat. That seemed like a really obvious application for it. But what's interesting about the way that we've structured the the code is like, okay, so okay, we can do conversations. That's interesting. And conversations can well, it's not text that we're storing. We're still just storing encrypted files on the server and then relaying it to the recipient who decrypts it. It just so happens that the files contain the text of messages. We then thought, Well, what if we, instead of conversations these are just buckets of encrypted files where participants are able to put things in the bucket and decrypt them. You get you get things like file storage, right? Files and folders instead of conversations and messages. So again, we're those are those are three applications of this, the technology that we inherited from Mozilla. Um, it's really exciting. I'm jazzed about it still. And you know, we, we have cooked up a few other ideas that are, I mean, they're kind of wacky. So we're I'm not going to talk about them now because when Ryan and I get on a Zoom call, we just start dreaming up like crazy, crazy ideas, many of which have no market viability and would be useful to no one. But maybe me or maybe Ryan.

[00:26:22]

You can't you can't tease us with one of those crazy ideas since they since they won't ever come to market or anything. I'm just curious. You don't have to.

[00:26:30]

Yeah. No, no, no. Well, we had talked about. Wouldn't it be great if you could take notes on email threads so that your notes were contextually aware of what email you had visible that's currently in Thunderbird?

[00:26:45]

That's a really cool idea. That's not. I mean, that's a great idea.

[00:26:49]

I'm glad you like it. We also thought.

[00:26:51]

Like.

[00:26:52]

We also thought, well, wouldn't it be great if, you know, notes could be collaborative? So you now it's almost starting to sound like, well, why, why are you writing things in a note that should just be in the email thread? Well, sometimes you want to take notes that are just for yourself and you want those to be again stored in some encrypted fashion so that other folks cannot pry into your thoughts. But yeah, so that was the notes, the notes idea. That was one.

[00:27:22]

Heather, you had a question?

[00:27:23]

Yeah, yeah, I have a question. So as far as like the file storage aspect goes, what are kind of the size limits there?

[00:27:30]

We have not determined that yet. Okay. So we're still, as I like to put it, that's all business stuff for Ryan to figure out.

[00:27:40]

And I'm curious, like how how long is it? Does it stay stored?

[00:27:44]

Another good question. Right now we're thinking like indefinitely. It just stays there until the user deletes it or deletes their account. But ha ha. One of the features that we talked about for the encrypted chat, for example, is that like other popular solutions, you could have messages that expire or the file upload. You want to send somebody something kind of in an encrypted way. Sorry, my cat is yelling, I can hear it. You can't hear it. Um, using the the model of I want to send something from my computer to another person, but I only want them to be able to download it once. You can set an expiration.

[00:28:26]

Nice.

[00:28:27]

Now I have a question and I think I am basically going to be the the audience proxy here because I know that when we release this, when we start talking more more widely about Thunderbird, send one of the biggest questions will be how are we going to discourage or deal with abuse, people sending malicious files, illegal photos? Has there been any discussion about how to avoid that kind of use?

[00:28:57]

Yeah, there there has been a good bit of discussion and some really, really solid ideas about approaches that we can take. We're definitely sensitive, sensitive to that. So one of the mitigating factors will be well. We will limit file upload to subscribers. As I understand it, this is intended to be like a pro account feature, whatever we're going to call that in the future. This will be one of the things included in the package. And so, you know, if, for example, somebody flags the content that you've sent them, I mean, which is kind of silly, like I receive something and I think it's offensive, why did they send it to me in the first place? But at least we would have some accountability there. We can. We know even though we can't see the contents of a file, we know that if it has been flagged, well, the uploader was this user. And so we, you know, take appropriate actions also. There are there are means by which you can you can check the encrypted files like there's some hashing like you can you can check like a file hash, compare it to a big database of objectionable content, which will catch hopefully some or a lot of things that we might not want being sent through through our network. Yeah, I think those are the first two and probably very, very good approaches.

[00:30:26]

Yeah, it sounds like it. I mean, that's certainly a sensitive topic and there's going to be a lot of discussion that goes on and probably a lot of adapting. I do want to say one thing. I know that some people might bristle at the idea that, you know, we're going to explore a subscription fee. The main reason behind that is servers cost money. And this is an endeavor that's kind of a first for us because we typically have not been an organization that needs servers, right? Public public facing public operating servers for things. So but I will also say that having that server infrastructure opens up a whole lot of possibilities for us, which is really exciting. Oh yeah. Do you have any other questions about it?

[00:31:18]

No, I think that's I think it's a really exciting feature that I look forward to using. In fact, we're going to use that to kind of share these audio files a little bit later.

[00:31:30]

That will make a total of five users that I know of.

[00:31:33]

Yes. It's not ready for alpha or beta just yet. Nope. Yeah, but you know, it doesn't really have a UI or anything right now, so.

[00:31:44]

Nope.

[00:31:45]

But we're getting there. We're getting there. Well, thank you, Chris. So let's talk about remote work. It's something we all do. Thunderbird as an organization, I should say as an organization, we are 100% remote and I believe the majority of Mozilla is also remote. So what we wanted to do is just present some some tools, some tips, some tricks that have made our own remote work experience smoother and more productive and have it kind of a general discussion around that. And we also asked you, everyone listening to submit your own ideas and suggestions. And so we're going to read a couple of those that you sent to podcast at Thunderbird dot net. After that, we'll probably say goodbye and get out of your hair. So let's start. So in the in the show notes for this episode, I'm going to link a video that Mozilla published called Working on Distributed Teams at Mozilla. It's about A67 minute video and that has a wealth of great ideas and approaches for for remote work. So make sure to watch that. But we've got our own list and I think we'll just go around around the virtual room and and talk about those. Heather, do you want to kick us off?

[00:33:16]

Yeah, Um, setting your working hours in a shared calendar. I know at MglA we use Google Calendar, which is very good at that setting remote working hours. But then also when you schedule meetings with people, be mindful of their working hours because we're often across time zones. Yeah, that's a, that's a useful way to communicate when you are at your virtual desk and when you're not.

[00:33:44]

On that note, I really, really appreciate it when somebody adds their the time zone that they're in like to their username in, in Slack or. Well I think Slack has has the ability to actually show where the you know where the person is and show their working hours but especially in applications like element you know any any kind of matrix software. Uh, I've started adding my time zone into my username so that at a glance people know, Oh, he's Pacific time. So it's probably, you know, outside of his working hours or it's probably okay to reach out to him now. And, and I noticed that Lisa also adds it to her email signature. That's also a good approach because it signals and reinforces when you're available and people need to see that a few times and then they and then they know they understand. When's the ideal time to reach you? And for a global team like ours and like many others, it's really, really important.

[00:34:48]

I'm going to piggyback on that one before I jump on to the next item on my on my phone, I have added so my my clock widget that lives on my phone, apparently I can add multiple locations so it will show me the time where I am and the time in specific locations like I've got. I've got a West Coast clock. I'm on the East Coast in the United States. I've got, I think London, Berlin and New Zealand. And I'm smart specifically because the the team that I'm on where the teams that I the people I interact with are in one of these four time zones. So at a glance I know like, nope I can't can't ping Andreas right now because he's in Germany and he's sleeping.

[00:35:42]

And I'll piggyback on that and then I'll let you jump back into to what you wanted to say. This is good. So we're kind of like having ideas spring out. Now, don't ping people on the weekends. I have. I know I've done it. I have been guilty of that. But I try to make a habit of not doing that. Like instead I think it's because, you know, when you're in a really close working team like ours, I mean, we're all we're all very passionate about what we do and sometimes it's actually difficult to take the time off because we enjoy doing what we're doing. But for the mental health, you know, it's it's important to have that that time off. But what I'm trying to say is that like, if I receive a message or a question from someone on the weekend, I will want to reply to it. But we need that space. You know, we need that partition between our work life and our our personal time. Just be mindful of of when your colleagues are working, when they're around, when they're in front of their computer and when they're off.

[00:36:42]

To.

[00:36:43]

Be a little bit of a devil's advocate. There isn't that kind of the beauty of asynchronous working is like, Oh, I have a thought, I'm just going to put it here. And I just trust that that person is not paying attention on the weekend. They've turned off those notifications.

[00:36:57]

That could be. Maybe that's another tip, though, right? Maybe it's because I don't I have my notifications on all the time. When I fire up my Linux system element loads up and Joplin loads up and Thunderbird loads everything loads up. And I always forget just middle click to do not disturb. I never do that.

[00:37:15]

Do not disturb is your friend.

[00:37:17]

So I recognize your devil's advocate approach. And then I. I. I see your devil's advocate approach and I raise you. I raise you the suggestion of turning off notifications on the weekend and separating what applications you have active more piggybacking.

[00:37:38]

Sorry, this is. I'm just going. No, this is good.

[00:37:41]

This is good.

[00:37:41]

Yeah. So I was at a I was at a local meetup last night and my my friend showed me like what he does on his Android phone. I don't know if iOS devices have this or not, but you can set up a work profile and in that work profile you can install specific applications and you can put the work profile on a schedule, right? So you can either manually turn them off. That's, that's what I do. But he does his on his schedule so that his work profile with all of his work apps, including things like Slack and his work email those turn on at a certain time when he's like half an hour before he's clocking into work, as it were, and then it turns off at like five, 530 or whatever. But he literally cannot receive notifications during non working hours.

[00:38:30]

So that's smart. Yeah, I will say that that is super, super smart, but it has some it has some nuances that I need to talk about. One of the advantages is that if you set that on iOS, it's called a focus. So you can have custom focuses work, do not disturb, sleep, whatever, and that instantly syncs with your if you're using macOS, that syncs with macOS. So if you're doing your work on a mac, that's a really nice tool. If you have if you have an iPhone, I don't know if Android if it like can sync up with your with a Linux system or a Windows system. I don't know if that's a possibility. It's useless. To me because I refuse to do any work on a phone. And I wish I wish that Linux, for example, had that kind of custom focus profile. It's really cool because what I do use on my iPhone is I just call it workout focus. And when I hit so when I start a workout, the background changes to like a photo I took of my bike and it only shows me like music apps and it's you know, Do not Disturb gets activated for anybody except like my mom or, you know, anybody who would maybe need to reach me in case of an emergency. So really, really, really convenient. But I wish those tools were available on desktop operating systems as well.

[00:39:53]

I will cook you up a solution. We'll talk about it some other time.

[00:39:56]

Yeah. All right.

[00:40:01]

All right. I'm going to I'm going to I'm going to get back to the back to the list. Back to the show notes. I really like this next suggestion. I also really wish that I did it personally. Simulating a commute, right? Like getting going for a bike ride, walking around the block. Or even. Just like walking out of the house and then back in. I had a former coworker who used to do this. His his office was set up in his garage and he, instead of using the kitchen slash garage door. Right. He would make himself go like he'd get dressed and he would walk out the front door and then into the garage. That was his routine and it really worked. I like this as a like a physical means for separating your home life and your work life. Mhm.

[00:40:53]

That's tough. You know, I, I just recently, it took me so long to get into this habit and I'm still working towards perfecting it. It's, you know, very difficult for me to do, but I'm trying to have a work system, a work PC and a non work PC. Even if they're running the same operating system, it's just, okay, this is for work and this is not for work. And it's all about You're right though. It's all about having those those physical representations of, you know, your work and home life.

[00:41:28]

I can definitely say that having separate machines for the different the different contexts is very important and powerful. I, I have a work machine and I have multiple personal machines for different things that I try to work on. These are I don't have like, you know, half a dozen, \$2,000 MacBooks or anything like that. These are like \$100 Craigslist, nice laptops.

[00:41:57]

I tried to do that and I couldn't because then I found myself looking two laptops to the co-working space.

[00:42:03]

It's just like.

[00:42:04]

It's it's tricky. It is tricky.

[00:42:07]

Also, I couldn't really get used.

[00:42:08]

To Mac OS Linux is my you know what when I get a framework 16

[00:42:14]

Inch.

[00:42:15]

Ooh.

[00:42:16]

Mhm. Mhm.

[00:42:18]

Oh yeah.

[00:42:19]

Then I can have a work Linux laptop and a personal Linux laptop.

[00:42:23]

Where are we.

[00:42:25]

Oh I'm ready to talk about the next item.

[00:42:28]

Because.

[00:42:28]

I'm passionate about this one. When I was a new remote worker like, ooh, I don't know, seven years ago or something, I found it really difficult. I would go down the route of an investigation and spend all day doing it. So I found that if I take a kitchen timer and just set it for like two hours or whatever seems reasonable, and then at the end of that timer, I either provide an update to the stakeholders or I ask for help. And it also because I'm a very competitive person, because I see that countdown timer in front of me, it makes me go faster and like stay focused. Now if you do this constantly, then you're going to kind of go crazy. But whenever you need that, that additional focus for specifically a task that you don't know how long it's going to take, that can be really helpful.

[00:43:22]

Time is tricky when you work from home. I'm the same way. I tend to go down rabbit holes. You call them investigations, I call them rabbit holes.

[00:43:33]

But but like, you know, if someone is like, here, I want you to take this application, this package you don't know anything about and fix this bug. Why are the tests failing? And you're like, I don't know. I don't know. Erlang Let's go learn a little bit what's going on. It can become a rabbit hole, but it's also a type of investigation, right?

[00:43:53]

Like right, of course. Well, I'll do the next one. And this is actually Heather's idea, but this is just the way we're rolling. So use a mind map application like Cherry Tree or Draw.io to keep track of what you've done.

[00:44:09]

I love Cherry Tree so much it is like one note, but for linux I believe it is available for for Windows and Mac as well. You can have any amount of nodes and sub nodes and it's just like a kind of rich text. You've got bullet points, you've got checkboxes, you can do some basic highlighting and font actions there. And you know, for most of us, at some point you're going to be asked, what did you do this month or this.

[00:44:38]

Quarter or this year?

[00:44:40]

And you're going to go, I don't know. So if you have this kind of history, this record of like even if it's just one thing, this is what I did today, you can kind of go back and reference that.

[00:44:50]

It's also I mean, it's not just for accountability either. I think it's it's really healthy for you to be able to look back on your day and and instantly, you know, glance at oh, look at look at what I accomplished today. That's great.

[00:45:04]

There is a cherry tree Deb or flat or snap. Probably an RPM too. I don't know.

[00:45:10]

Draw.io is another one that's open source and web based. So that's a that's a good option too. We'll have all of these any software that we're talking about or videos they will be in the show notes at Blog Thunderbird dot net. Chris Yes, Throw the next one at us. Yeah.

[00:45:27]

I think it's easy to forget that we're working with other people, other human beings, so a very nice human thing to do. Is to say good morning or or as we do on our matrix channel, we do variations on time zone, appropriate greetings that we just spam out. Usually they're in there getting to be where they're written in increasingly obscure programming languages, which I love. That's so great. Yeah, I love the whole it makes it fun.

[00:46:01]

Like, how creative can you say know? Good morning. I love it.

[00:46:05]

It's kind of the highlight of my my morning is popping in there and just seeing everyone's random weird nerdy greeting.

[00:46:15]

And maybe this is not an idea that managers will like, but I'm a manager and I like it, so I'm going to roll with it. Consider creating a dedicated channel in your your chat software of choice wherever your team engages just for talking about non-work stuff. You know, kind of as like a virtual water cooler. Yeah. Obviously, you can you can monitor that and make sure that if someone's like constantly chatting in there all day, clearly they're not getting work done. But it's, it's, it's, you know, it's healthy to have that space to engage with your coworkers about stuff that's not about work. And that's also a great place to have fun with your with your time appropriate greetings.

[00:46:58]

Yep.

[00:46:59]

Totally agree.

[00:47:00]

On that.

[00:47:01]

Note.

[00:47:01]

Alex might be missing from this episode, but his spirit is still here because he has given me a list of very important things. I'm just going to read it in Alex words. These are these are tips for managers. So some of this may not be relevant for everyone listening, but there are some really good takeaways here. He says, I hear a lot of the same complaints from other managers in the industry. Like, I don't know if people are actually working, and the usual response is to have 20 meetings a week or set up coworking co-working hours on Zoom. I think those are BS and it highlights a lot of shortcomings from manager. Now here are his tips to combat that. Have once a week small team meetings with people focused on the same effort. So in our case, you know, front end back end marketing UI, things like that. These are better than larger full team meetings because you can keep the conversation focused and it gives room for some off work chatting before and after the meeting. Next one schedule deadline and deliveries with your employees. You can easily measure productivity and quality of work by scheduling sprints and hard dates and then adapt if things are done quicker or slower. But there's no there's no need to be a helicopter parent. This is the first time I've heard that phrase. Have you heard this phrase? Heather Oh yeah.

[00:48:26]

Helicopter parent What does that mean?

[00:48:27]

And I try to not be a helicopter parent. It's like when you're always you're always hovering. So like someone that is always with their child everywhere in the playground, it's like, just step back and let them be a kid. Don't be a helicopter parent.

[00:48:40]

Gotcha. Thank you. Next one from Alex. Trust your employee. If you feel the need to constantly check their screen or ensure that they always have their online status on for eight hours straight, then there's something wrong with your process. Or you don't trust the person that you hired, which is another issue altogether, Right? It's true, though. It's true, though, like trust the people that you hire that they're going to do what you hired them to do. Keep the meetings to a minimum. Yes. Amen. Make use of shared documents and written communications rather than just a quick call because it's less disruptive. And I wanted to add a little bit of flavor to that, that it's it's really cool When we have meetings that have agendas like going in, we know all of our talking points or we know what we're going to cover and we know that when we've reached the end, the meeting is over and we can just end it early. It doesn't have to last a full hour. Next tip from Alex. Don't bombard them on Slack or Matrix every few minutes. If you have a question or you need to sync up, reach out via email first. If it's after hours or schedule a meeting for the next day, Instant messaging can be very disruptive.

[00:49:51]

Yeah.

[00:49:51]

And it's, you know. Yes. Even though like, as Heather argues, it is a synchronous communication. But. Sometimes people feel compelled to reply right away and it might disrupt what they're what they're working on, what they're actively engaged in.

[00:50:04]

Especially like during working hours, because you are sitting at your computer and you are going to get that ping. Definitely agree. Now, I will say that some newer companies with younger employees reject email, which maybe that's not our audience, because.

[00:50:21]

This is the thing we kind.

[00:50:23]

Of we kind of do email over here.

[00:50:25]

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's kind of into that. Um, but some, some companies just don't do email. That's so strange to me.

[00:50:34]

It is strange. It's this totally foreign concept to me. Like, who doesn't? How do you function without email?

[00:50:39]

I'll never die.

[00:50:40]

No matter.

[00:50:41]

What little Let's hope not. You have.

[00:50:44]

All right. Alex's last tip Enable them to have meetings with each other. The manager doesn't have to be present, and people working on the same project should feel empowered to schedule their own meetings and then share the notes with their manager at the end. That improves collaboration. It creates a feeling of teamwork and it removes the quote We have to do this because the boss said so. Kind of feeling. So thank you, Alex. Much appreciated. I'm glad that you had the time to send us those because they're very, very valuable tips.

[00:51:14]

I can feel Alex's presence despite his absence.

[00:51:18]

And he and Ryan were both really bummed that they because, you know, they love doing the show and they were both bummed that they So we shouldn't I should have said at the top of the show, let's not have too much fun so that when they listen to this, you know, we should have been like all bland and boring. And I'd be like, Wow, you sure needed me on that show. Too bad I wasn't there. Just kidding, guys. Just kidding. Um, where where are we at? Do we have any more tips? Just off the top of our heads. Um, because I've got I've got a really good one from Pedro who sent his tip to podcast at Thunderbird dot net. You guys can do that too. And this is cool. This riffs on a little bit of what we talked about. I'll just read, I'll read his email, here's my \$0.02 on productivity. Turn off most app notifications and keep only emergency contacts and loved ones, you know, coming through during work. Use Thunderbird and only enable notifications for the accounts that are really needed. Now this this is a bit of a gotcha. Because I don't think this is a feature that we currently have enabled, but it's a feature that we want to build. I can tell you that's a feature we want to build per account notifications. So I don't know if that if he's saying that like requesting it or if he has some secret way that he's doing that. I'll have to I'll just circle back with him and ask. Apply flexible Pomodoro breaks. Have you guys heard of Pomodoro breaks? No. Okay. Well, we're all learning something today. See? Thank you, Pedro. Pomodoro break. Pomodoro is. And I'm probably butchering the pronunciation. It is Italian for tomato.

[00:52:58]

So it's the it's the Pomodoro technique of working. And this is this is kind of the outline of it. You get a to do list and you get a timer. We have those. You set your timer for 25 minutes and you focus on a single task until the timer goes off. And when the timer goes off, you mark off one pomodoro and record what you completed. Right? So this is bringing together all the tips that we've kind of already talked about is just structuring it better. So when your session ends, you mark off one Pomodoro record what you did and you take a five minute break and then after four pomodoros or four tomatoes, you take a longer, more restorative 15 to 30 minute break. And this helps break down complex projects. It makes you feel more productive, it does make you more productive. You can lump smaller tasks together and it's it's just a smart way of not not going down those rabbit holes, not spending all day on those investigations, feeling accomplished, not feeling stressed out and anxious because you are not taking breaks. And it is good for people who might be distracted by, you know, things that kind of derail their workflow, their work day, people who consistently work past the point of optimal productivity or have lots of open ended work or really like tomatoes. So and I guess this was this was invented in the 1980s by Francesco Cirillo. Cirillo. Cirillo. I'm not sure how to pronounce it. Cirillo was struggling to focus on his studies and complete assignments, Feeling overwhelmed, he asked himself to commit to just ten minutes of focused study time. Encouraged by the challenge, he found a tomato shaped kitchen timer and the Pomodoro Technique was born.

[00:54:52]

Oh, interesting.

[00:54:53]

So thanks, Pedro. Like we all learned about what the Pomodoro Technique is today.

[00:54:58]

If you do the Pomodoro technique, then it helps you catch up on your work.

[00:55:03]

(laughter)

[00:55:06]

I don't know. I guess your mileage may.

[00:55:09]

Vary.

[00:55:12]

During the longer Pomodoro breaks, Go for a walk. If you work with your spouse, enjoy a break together. Do one thing at a time. Pedro says We were not built for multitasking, and I'm not. Some people are. I'm not. Last but not least, convince your Now this is this is not no product placement. This is unsolicited. This is his idea. Last but not least, convince your employer to use Mozilla hubs. I'm so tired of the lifeless Google meet zoom teams low interactivity zombie meetings and he closes with Thank you for all your hard work with Thunderbird.

[00:55:48]

Awesome. Nice list Pedro.

[00:55:50]

Hey, do either of you want to read the one from Mike? Yeah.

[00:55:53]

Mike says. First off, let me thank the entire team for version 115. That's supernova. It is beautiful, isn't it? What an incredible piece of software. Thank you, Mike. And he says, I've been working remote for about a decade, and the biggest lessons I've learned are, number one, keep the cameras on. It keeps people focused on the call. I do tend to agree with that. To dress code. Dress semi-professionally, it'll adjust your mindset. Three is a dedicated workspace. Don't work from the sofa or kitchen table. Just don't have a space with a door that you can close and leave work at work. Not everybody can do that, but it's great if you can. Number four commute. And we did kind of touch on that earlier. Try to start and end your day with a walk, even if it's just around the block because it'll give you a chance to get in and out of the zone. Number five, I totally agree with this splurge on a great chair and peripherals.

[00:56:57]

Yes.

[00:56:58]

I have like a sit stand desk that I spend a lot of money on and do not regret it. And last but not least, having a work dedicated machine is great for segregation. I use synergy by Seamless to share a mouse and keyboard between work and personal machines. I tend to have work plugged into a second display and my personal off to the side.

[00:57:21]

I can vouch also for synergy. I used it for a while. I was kind of in a temporary living situation and I just had my I had my my Linux machine and my Mac and I needed two monitors. I need either a large monitor or two separate monitors for my job. And so I just had both the laptops in front of me. And I was basically I had all the same apps across Linux and Mac OS, and I was just using synergy to use my my external keyboard and mouse just seamlessly between both systems. And it really it really did kind of start to feel like just using one OS across two different laptops. That's pretty cool. Pretty cool solution. It's like 25, \$30 one time, one time fee and you can use it for up to three machines.

[00:58:08]

Nice.

[00:58:09]

Does it do like clipboard sharing too?

[00:58:12]

It does do. Clipboard sharing. Yeah. Yeah, it does. Clipboard sharing. You can you can customize the orientation you can have you can choose which machine is the server and which one's the client. And it's great. It's really great.

[00:58:27]

Nice.

[00:58:28]

Highly recommended. So thank you, Mike and Pedro, for sending us your thoughts. You can talk to us on the Fediverse. We're on Mastodon. We are on the Social Network, formerly known as Twitter. We have a subreddit. We've got matrix channels where you can get help matrix channels where you can just chat with us. We're going to have links to all of this stuff in the show notes, including a link to Mozilla Connect, which is what we use When you have some ideas or feature ideas for Thunderbird that you want to tell us about and discuss, we encourage you to go to Mozilla, connect and post them there. I did want to mention one last thing is well, I've been on a mission lately to remind people that you don't have to be a programmer to contribute to your favorite software. Even something like testing the beta and giving feedback on it makes you a contributor to Thunderbird sharing uh boosting something on Mastodon like you're helping. You're helping with the marketing and social efforts, right? You're a contributor. I mean there's, there's so many different ways. There's, there's advocacy, there's documentation, there's translation. There's so many other ways to, to help out with Thunderbird and all of your other favorite open source projects. And I've got a blog post about that that I'll link to in the show notes as well about how you can contribute without knowing how to code and that is our show. That is episode five of the Thunder cast. And we made it. We made it through Yay. And it's everything was everything was perfect and no one stuttered and no one said dumb things at all, especially me. I didn't I didn't edit anything at all. And what you're hearing is like directly from the recording, just straight to you with no editing at all. So but no, in all seriousness, thank you both for for being here. It was really fun.

[01:00:27]

Yeah, Thanks.

[01:00:28]

For having me.

[01:00:29]

Yeah, well, we will be back in two weeks for episode six. And until then, on behalf of the entire team, I want to thank you for listening. Thank you for using Thunderbird. Thank you for supporting open source. Thank you for being awesome. And if you get a chance, go upgrade to 115. I think you'll really enjoy what's there. So until we chat again, everybody take care and take care of each other. We'll see you next Time. Bye Chris. Bye Heather.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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