

# Upgrading Hardware Tech for New Workplace Norms



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Welcome to Thrive, a Paychex business podcast where you'll hear timely insights to help you navigate marketplace dynamics and propel your business forward. Here's your host Gene Marks.

**Gene Marks:**

Hey everybody and welcome back to another episode of Thrive. Today I'm going to be speaking to Lindsey Greathouse. She is the director of SMB marketing, SMBs, small and medium size businesses, marketing for Lenovo the hardware company. They make laptops, they make hardware, they make computers, they make desktops, they make tablets. I'm a Lenovo user so just full disclosure there. Lindsey and I had a great conversation about the future of hardware, where it's going, some of her thoughts on what has changed at Lenovo since she has been there for the nine years that she's been there. And what types of hardware are small businesses buying nowadays, particularly in this hybrid environment of working from home and working from the office and different people having different needs. If you're looking for hardware for your business to equip your employees, whether again, it's a tablet or a laptop, or it's a desktop, this is the person that markets this type of stuff to small, medium size businesses.

**Gene Marks:**

So you're going to want to listen to her advice. So stay tuned, we'll be back in just a minute with Lindsey. And before I let you go, if you are interested in pitching me any products or things that you would like to talk about, topics for future episodes of this podcast, please feel free to go to [payx.me/thrivetopics](https://payx.me/thrivetopics). That's P-A-Y-X.me/thrivetopics and give us your topic ideas. I'm more than happy to entertain them and maybe devote an entire episode to them. So, okay, enough about that, let's get to Lindsey and the conversation that we had. We'll be right back with her.

**Gene Marks:**

Yeah, I've got Lindsey Greathouse here. Lindsey is the director of global SMB marketing at Lenovo. So first of all, Lindsey, thank you so much for joining us.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Thank you for having me. I'm thrilled to be here.

**Gene Marks:**

How long have you been with Lenovo?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

I am coming up on nine years with Lenovo.

**Gene Marks:**

Who works for a company for that long?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

I know. It's funny, I was interviewing someone today and I said, when I joined Lenovo, my goal was to add tenure. I have an agency background and so I wanted to be at my next place for at least five years. And I would never have imagined that I would almost be twice that long, but I love it. And it's a company that just really supports the growth of its people. So I don't have any plans to leave anytime soon.

**Gene Marks:**

That's great. And you've been on the marketing side for the entire time.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

I have, yeah. I started my career agency side coming up on 15 years ago. I actually graduated in the early stages of the great recession. And so I was reflecting on this earlier today and laughing because I actually found my first job on Craigslist.

**Gene Marks:**

They actually hire a lot of people off for Craigslist. There's nothing wrong with that. I mean, a lot of homicidal maniacs as well so you have to be careful, but you know.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

You have to learn how to filter it out, but quite a different world. And my first job was for a very small agency and I joined the agency and I think maybe one to two weeks later, the head of the agency sold the business, my boss left. And so it was just this time of really exciting transformation. And somehow we had this very large pharmaceutical client on the PR side. And so I, through the next year to two years, I was able to grow the relationship on the digital marketing side. And so I was responsible for everything at one point from billing to paid search strategy, we developed a mobile app, we managed their website, and it was all pharma. And so I was just constantly and voraciously learning about the industry. And I think that's when it first ignited for me – like I loved the idea of owning many aspects of the business and watching it come together. And so I think that's where the passion for SMB really started.

**Gene Marks:**

You and I — and maybe we will have a whole separate conversation about marketing itself — I know for a fact that my audience, I mean ... we're talking to a lot of small business owners. Everybody's interested in getting leads with their businesses and growing their businesses. And here you are, like an experienced, you're director of marketing for SMBs for like this huge company. There's a lot of things that you could teach our audience about marketing. We're not going to talk about that today, okay? But I would love to down that road with you. Lenovo. First of all, how has — you've been there nine years — how has the company and the technology changed since when you first joined?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

That's a great question. That's a great question. I joined back in 200 – very early 2013. And my role at the time was to manage the email program, the email marketing program. So I very closely worked in collaboration with the e-commerce team and learned a lot about our portfolio. And what I've been so excited about and one of the reasons that I've chosen to stay with Lenovo and continue to invest in myself

is because of the strategy that I've seen this company take and how Lenovo has really diversified its portfolio and how Lenovo really constantly innovates with purpose for their customers. Everything from small features and sort of functionality within the actual devices to actually acquiring, like we did, data center groups, a mobile phone provider, right? And then even this year, we announced the formation of three business units. And we've been very focused on how we deliver a unified experience to customers across those business units ever since. I've just seen Lenovo really at the forefront of driving digital transformation and intelligent transformation for the world. And that's exciting.

**Gene Marks:**

So you work with small, mid-size businesses. Those are SMBs. What are they buying from you guys?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Oh, everything. I mean, literally I call myself the sandwich segment, although I probably shouldn't say that because SMBs are the most diverse. And we look at SMBs globally. I mean, it varies by market –maturity really plays a factor there too. But you have SMBs buying every which way and buying everything, because you can have a highly sophisticated small business focused on research engineering and development that requires the most advanced security and technology to deliver what they need to do. Just to a very, very less, much less sophisticated, let's say, small business, but equally important. And so we see it really range. And as a result, we have to be very familiar with all of the solutions that we offer to our SMB customers.

**Gene Marks:**

Right. Lindsey, the market, I have some work-from-home questions I want to ask you, but the market for hardware, when I go to my clients, there's desktops, there's laptops, there's tablets. It's become more and more commoditized over the years. It's tough when you, you know, people say like, "Oh, I just want to buy a new laptop, go out and find the best price." And there's a lot of different places where you go shopping. I myself like always buy the ThinkPad, because I'm just used to it. I'm familiar with it. It's served me well. I feel like it's reliable. That's just my personal experience. How do you differentiate when you're competing against all these different types of devices that are out there, how do you say like, "No, no, no, you should be coming to Lenovo because ..." why?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

A great question. And it kind of goes back to your earlier question, which is how have we seen the technology evolve? I mean, you're right. More and more, you see technology as a commoditized market and what differentiates in any commoditized market is how you deliver and how you ensure customer utilization and satisfaction and so, service. And we're focusing much, much more as a company on delivering the best services and solutions for our customers. And again, in terms of the differentiators, I've had the privilege to work with a lot of teams on helping to really clarify and define just that point. And Lenovo is so differentiated in market because of the breadth of the portfolio, but also because of our footprint and our origination story and how we think about technology and then how we are really well poised and positioned to continue to innovate with purpose for customers and then to deliver that technology through whatever route to market you prefer to shop. And that makes us quite distinct in the marketplace.

**Gene Marks:**

That's great. So, Lindsey, have you seen ... obviously there's been such a huge explosion in people working from a home because of COVID. How has that impacted your business? What have you seen from your small business customers?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Yeah, it's a great question. Over the last two years, doesn't it feel like we've all been part of a social experiment?

**Gene Marks:**

Yeah. Still are.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

We still are, right. And there's sort of no end in sight. I saw a meme this morning that was like, "I remember when I was so worried that this pandemic was going to last for three weeks." And I remember that — like I remember the conversation that I had with someone because I was so worried about my team and how are we going to be productive working remotely for weeks, let alone months, let alone years. And so what we've seen is a couple of interesting things. I mean, first and foremost, Lenovo commissions its own research on a lot of these topics. And what we've seen through that research is that 90% of respondents want, still, some sort of access to an office space for meeting together, for completing certain tasks that we haven't quite cracked the nut on our ability to do that virtually, right? Brainstorming, creative tasks, other things like that. But 60% want to work from anywhere or from home more than half of the time.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

And what's super interesting is, you think about the collaboration tools that we're all just so deeply familiar with. And I was so worried about these collaboration tools reducing my own team's productivity, but 66% of people have said that actually they are more productive and more efficient using these tools. And so what that tells us is that the future is hybrid. And if you think about any SMB customer, it's really about, as the remote workforce expectations change and their preferences become hybrid or remote work, an SMB's success really hinges on its ability to deliver productivity from anywhere. And so that becomes about implementing reliable — you talked about ThinkPad and that's what ThinkPad is known for — but how do you implement reliable technology at scale? That's really key for any small business, not just in recovery, but as you think about thriving and what comes next.

**Gene Marks:**

So I have this Lenovo ThinkPad and it's on my desk in my home office. And then I have this ... I have a Dell laptop that I use when I kind of travel, when I'm out and about, okay? So the Dell laptop is getting older, so I'm going to probably have to replace it sometime this year, okay? Sell me on why I should replace it with a Lenovo laptop. What difference would that make if I were to get a Lenovo laptop versus some other brand?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

A great question.

**Gene Marks:**

I know, just put you on the spot because now's your chance. Because if you can sell me, sell my audience and I'm only saying this while I give you some time to think about this is that I've been a long-time lover of Lenovo products. And again, my main device is the laptop on my desk, which is my Lenovo laptop, but I do need something lighter that I can travel with, I can whatever, but should I be like, "Hey, you know what? It would make more sense for me to get a Lenovo laptop for travel because ..." why?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

So, you've said it yourself, you love your ThinkPad for its reliability. And if you manage a small business, business continuity is critical. I mean, that's time and money every time you have to service a device that isn't meeting the standard of reliability that you need. If you are thinking though about purchasing from us,

I would say — in addition to the technology being the most reliable, I mean, award-winning for innovations — I would say you want to consider who you buy from in the relationship that you have. Any fail-safe strategy that you design for your technology as a small business leader, you should be really heavily about security, collaboration, productivity, and then also, communication.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

And I think that goes two ways. That's like, you with your own team and your own business that you support, but also what you should expect of the partner that supports you. And so with Lenovo, we have really strong capabilities to act as an advisor for small businesses within our own teams. And then we have a vast partner network, and we actually just announced Lenovo 360, which is a global channel partner framework to help enable even simpler access to our whole portfolio of tech for our customers, and for our partners. And through our partners, we're able to deliver that ecosystem of solutions to SMBs of any size.

**Gene Marks:**

Yeah. You bring up the partner network. And that really is a really important thing. I mean, if you're a small business and you need service or support or you need repairs, having even a local partner to go to is a really big deal. Do you have any thoughts, kind of curious, in the news, there's been a lot of movement towards right to repair, like iPhones now are going to be opened up a little bit more where people, you can bring it to a repair shop. Microsoft just announced that people can actually, you know — oh my goodness, get repairs on their Surface devices locally — that's over time. I got to imagine though, that if you're working at Lenovo, you're like, "Well, duh, we've been doing that for years," right?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Yeah. It's another one of the differentiators is our investment in R and D has been just unparalleled and it's really about open access. And so, so many the innovations that we've brought to market have not been necessarily Lenovo proprietary, but open and so, right to repair? All for it. I think that's an expectation that you should have as a consumer of your technology.

**Gene Marks:**

Yeah. And it's like you've been there anyway. Now this is obviously being shown in January so a month ago there was this viral video of Tom Brady taking his Surface tablet and throwing it down onto the ground after a loss. How great was that? No, you don't have to answer it. It's fine. [Laughter.] Anyway, so let's talk about the future. Okay. So we've got tablets, we've got laptops, we've got desktops that we're using. We've got phones that we're using as well. Lindsey, for your customers that are looking forward over the next three or five years, we talked about how Lenovo has changed since you started there. Let's hope you're still working for Lenovo — and no reason to think you wouldn't be for another 10 years or so at least — where do you think the industry is going? What types of device in hardware do you think your small business customers can look forward to using?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

I think if we're talking trends and predictions around solutions, services, technology, I think there's a couple things to pay attention to. I think most importantly, what we've learned over the last few years is that the technology that we're using, while it must deliver enhanced productivity, it also has to deliver connection. We have to make sure we feel really connected to the people that we're working with. And it's something that's affected, not just our work lives, but our personal lives too. And so we see this happening today and I think you can expect that there will be continued innovation and evolutions, but a focus on how our software, whether it's third party or whether it's embedded, how it improves the connection aspect of the

experience with technology. Today we've got AI based smart features that quite literally help mute out some of the distractions that take us away from our work, our virtual work.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

And I think that will continue, right, the digital transformation, the speed at which that's taken us. I think that that has been surprising in a good way to everyone. And so I think that that will just continue over the next few years. I also think that you'll see more and more flexibility and scalability through technology. Again, you'll also see cybersecurity and the focus on really protecting data. Again, thinking about how people are really using and experiencing their technology, it's not just within the walls of their place of work, it's literally within their homes and so security and the increased risk of a distributive workforce, I think, is another thing that we've seen. And more and more, you can expect that small businesses will need to continue to provide safe technology solutions with embedded security features. And they'll also need to be training their workforces on all of the risks and really best practices around maintaining that security.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

I think the last thing that I'll just say, and this is really, really interesting for us, is that we've seen more and more as-a-service emerge as a consumption model for small businesses. And why that's exciting is because it enables access to a breadth of technology that heretofore, small businesses might not have thought that they could access. And it enables that at a very affordable cost with a very affordable cost structure. And so as-a-service and subscription-based models will continue to increase that access and I expect consumption will increase as well.

**Gene Marks:**

That's great. So hardware, laptops, desktops, I mean, they're not going anywhere. I think they're going to be part of our lives for a long, long time. Don't you agree?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Gene Marks:**

I agree. And one final question — just again, looking forward — do you have any thoughts on any potential changes to hardware, the environment, or that Lenovo might be involved in when it comes to the metaverse that's being talked about recently, and this is, you know, hologram technology, alternative technologies where augmented reality, is that? Do you hear talk of that as well among R and D at Lenovo because these things will very much affect small businesses in the future?

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

Absolutely. I mean, yes! And so I would say we are already discussing how those changes and how those trends will shape the way that we experience our world. And I think some of the exciting announcements have absolutely helped to accelerate those discussions. One of our leaders said recently in an interview — and I loved this quote — the best technology, the best innovation is invisible. And so as we think about more and more what could this world look like and how might we need to experience this world through technology, I think it really comes down to how do you build and design a strategy today that enables flexibility? And so important to that too, as you see the consumption habits of the work force evolve, comes down to employee experience. And right now retaining and attracting talent is so critically important that as we think about the innovations that we personally invest in, in research and development, and that we know our customers are asking for, it really comes down to enabling what will be that seamless experience with how folks interact with technology in the future.

**Gene Marks:**

Lindsey, thank you so much. Lindsey Greathouse is the director of global SMB marketing at Lenovo. Great information. Appreciate you joining us very much and thanks, and hope those stockings stay up all throughout the year.

**Lindsey Greathouse:**

They just might. Thank you so much, Gene, for having me. It's been a pleasure.

**Gene Marks:**

Thank you.

**Gene Marks:**

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**Announcer:**

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