

## IWL Commentary on the Ellen Pao Trial (March 2015)

Rayona Sharpnack, Founder & CEO of the Institute for Women's Leadership

### March 31, 2015 on Twitter



### March 28, 2015 in VentureBeat (and TechTelling.com)

By Mark Sullivan

Title: Employment Attorneys Differ on the Legacy of Ellen Pao Case

Link to article: <http://venturebeat.com/2015/03/28/employment-attorneys-differ-on-the-legacy-of-ellen-pao-case/>

This point is repeated by Institute for Women's Leadership CEO Rayona Sharpnack, who said she's worked with 10 female executives in circumstances similar to Pao's over the past 3 years, and all of them eventually decided to walk away from filing a lawsuit.

"For every one courageous female leader who is willing to fight for retribution in the courts, there are a thousand more who walk away in silence," Sharpnack said in an email response to VentureBeat. "In the year 2015, it seems insane that we as a nation are still struggling with the inability to surface and remove both conscious and unconscious forms of discrimination like the ones Ellen Pao revealed at Kleiner Perkins."

### March 29, 2015 in Mashable Media Hit

By Patrick Kulp

Title: 5 Things We Learned About Silicon Valley Culture from the Ellen Pao Trial

Link to article: <http://mashable.com/2015/03/29/ellen-pao-trial-recap/>

Rayona Sharpnack, who runs a consulting agency called the Institute for Women's Leadership, told *Mashable* that these less obvious acts of discrimination can be just as insidious as blatant sexism, but aren't as easy to prove — especially in an environment where interpersonal skills define success.

### March 28, 2015 on IWL Blog

By Rayona Sharpnack

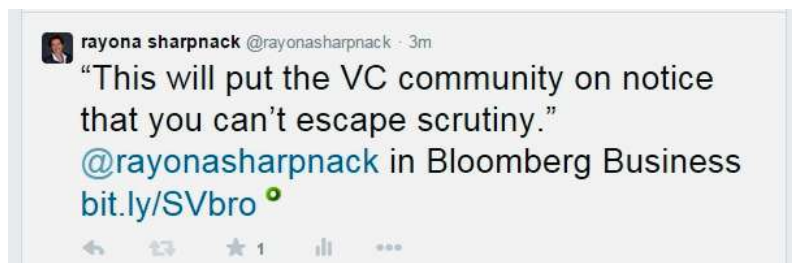
Title: Spreading Gender Partnership Far and Wide

Link to Blog: <http://womensleadership.com/spreading-gender-partnership-far-and-wide/>

"I think today is a good day to talk about Gender Partnership, especially after the disappointing verdict in the **Ellen Pao/Kleiner Perkins** lawsuit yesterday in Silicon Valley. Whatever else the facts in the case were, it was clear that Pao's colleagues did not treat her like a trusted member of their team. If you ask other women in business, they will say this is often the case. If you ask men, some will say they don't feel that the women in their company treat them like trusted partners either."

"It's time to move beyond any unconscious or merely unspoken ill will or bias and make the commit to Gender Partnership. Not gender equity, gender equality, or even gender balance. To me, those terms have an unfortunate hint of separate but equal. My vision is for full Gender Partnership, where all of us bring our diverse talents and skills to the table in the service of a common goal. Where all voices are respected and all are heard..."

### March 28, 2015 on Twitter



### **March 27, 2015 in Bloomberg Business**

By Sarah Frier & Eric Newcomer

Title: Pao Verdict No Vindication for Silicon Valley Bro Culture

Link to article: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-27/pao-verdict-no-vindication-for-silicon-valley-tech-bro-culture>

The gender imbalance in venture capital has become a topic of conversation. The percentage of women investors has decreased since the Internet boom, to 6 percent last year from 10 percent in 1999, according to Babson College.

“This will put the VC community on notice that you can’t escape scrutiny,” Rayona Sharpnack, chief executive officer of the Institute for Women’s Leadership in San Rafael, California, said after Friday’s verdict. “Any time these issues get aired it moves us closer to cleaning things up.”

### **March 26, 2015 in Bloomberg Business (and on MSN.com)**

By Laura Colby

Title: Kleiner Sex-Bias Case a Watershed Moment for Women

Link to article: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-26/kleiner-sex-bias-case-a-watershed-moment-for-women>

Pao’s suit against a venture capital firm is important “because it goes after a segment of companies that typically aren’t held to account like the bigger corporations,” said Rayona Sharpnack, chief executive officer of the Institute for Women’s Leadership in San Rafael, California.

“This is supposed to be a hotbed of innovation run by the next generation,” she said. “Still, the power base is made up of 50-plus white males.”

### **Simply Unaware**

Sharpnack and the other women were attending a conference in New York organized by Catalyst, a nonprofit that advocates for more opportunities for women in business. At one of the event’s sessions, Mike Wirth, an executive vice president from Chevron Corp., recounted how he once selected white males for a management team of nine people. He was simply unaware of the group’s lack of diversity, he said, until female and minority staffers pointed it out.

### **March 25, 2015 in San Jose Mercury News: Business**

By Heather Somerville

Title: In Male Venture-Capital World, Women's Experiences Range from Successful to Harrowing

Link to article: [http://www.mercurynews.com/business/ci\\_27785023/male-venture-capital-world-womens-experiences-range-from](http://www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_27785023/male-venture-capital-world-womens-experiences-range-from)

Yet, after complaining about a male colleague who harassed her -- the same man at the center of Pao's allegations of retaliation -- Vassallo was initially passed over for a promotion in 2011. She did finally get one, but only just before she was quietly let go in 2014 when the firm downsized. Venture capitalist Ann Miura-Ko told the New York Times Magazine that Vassallo's firing was "a travesty."

"Trae (Vassallo) is another brilliant woman who found her way (in venture capital) and when she did experience harassment, she spoke up," said Rayona Sharpnack, who counsels female executives at tech companies such as Google and Apple. Not all women do, though. "Some women tell other women 'Guys do guy stuff. Get over it.' It's interesting that these women can have such different experiences."

### **March 25, 2015 in Law360**

By Erin Coe

Title: 5 Lessons for BigLaw From The Kleiner Perkins Case

Link to article: <http://www.law360.com/articles/634873/5-lessons-for-biglaw-from-the-kleiner-perkins-case>

Law firms should focus on revamping their culture by informing women how they unconsciously disempower themselves, educating men how they unconsciously build boys' clubs and addressing institutional barriers that exist, according to Rayona Sharpnack, founder of the Institute for Women's Leadership.

"What companies and law firms can do is invest more in building a culture of gender partnership, rather than investing in keeping [the same culture], where you end up paying out millions and millions of dollars in litigation," she said. "It might cost a million dollars to do a real culture change around gender partnership and the full equality of men and women and require a little bit of time investment. But compared to paying out for a lawsuit or being dragged through the wringer like Kleiner Perkins ... it seems like a pretty modest investment."

### **March 20, 2015 in Biz Women: the Business Journal**

By Hilary Burns

Title: We Asked, You Shared: How Men Should Help Solve the Tech Industry's Diversity Problem

Link to article: <http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/bizwomen/news/out-of-the-office/2015/03/we-asked-you-shared-how-men-should-help-solve-the.html?page=all>

"Engaging men in the fight for gender equality is the single biggest leverage we have. Men control the power in government, commerce and academia. When we stop blaming them and start engaging them, we have taken the single biggest step toward full gender partnership!"

- Rayona Sharpnack, founder and CEO of the Institute for Women's Leadership

### **March 20, 2015 on IWL Blog/Twitter**

By Rayona Sharpnack

Title: It's Gender Trial B-I-N-G-O and the Ellen Pao Case

Publications represented by journalists who interacted with the bingo card post on Twitter: Fortune Magazine, Wall Street Journal, Wired, Business Insider, The Recorder, SF Chronicle, USA Today, TechCrunch, Silicon Valley Business Journal

Link to Blog: <http://womensleadership.com/its-gender-trial-b-i-n-g-o-and-the-ellen-pao-case/>

"The unfolding of the Pao/Kleiner Perkins sexual discrimination and harassment case in Silicon Valley is like playing a game of Gender Bingo... If we could just get companies to see through their blind spots we wouldn't have to watch these soap operas!"

"If you want to play along, we have created some bingo cards for you. Now find yourself a caller, some balls (NO double entendre intended), and a bingo cage to whirl them around in, and you're all set."

"Click on the card below to download an entire set of **Gender Bingo – Ellen Pao cards** cards. Print out the pdf, and then it's "Eyes Down!" as our British friends say."