

WOMEN LEADERS IN TECH LAW

SAN FRANCISCO – After the events that have rocked Silicon Valley this year, are you more or less hopeful about the prospects for women in the tech industry?

That's the question that we put to all 65 of The Recorder's Women Leaders in Tech Law this year.

From a viral blog post about Uber's culture, a Google engineer's internal memo suggesting women are biologically less apt to succeed in technical fields, and allegations of harassment at some of the Valley's most prominent VC firms, this year's biggest tech stories are a reminder of the challenges that women still face in the field.

But the response from our honorees was a resounding chorus of optimism. They pointed out that you can't address a problem until you define it and that sunshine is often the best disinfectant.

As lawyers, advocates and advisors, they also have a special role to play in helping the tech industry take on issues of discrimination, bias and harassment. They have tackled some of the industry's biggest courtroom challenges, negotiated market-moving deals, and helped protect the industry's most valuable intellectual property assets. Given all these accomplishments, the optimism is understandable.

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SUSAN MAC CORMAC

Morrison & Foerster

Susan Mac Cormac led Morrison & Foerster's representation of SoftBank Group and the SoftBank Vision Fund in multiple investments, including a record-breaking \$7.7 billion investment in ride-hailing app Uber, the largest private tender offer in U.S. history, and the \$4.4 billion investment in WeWork Cos., which was the largest private tender offer until Uber.

Name a lawyer whose work you admire and why?

Joan Williams. She is a pioneer in examining how we think about all kinds of diversity—gender, racial and socioeconomic—and how we address the biases that all of us bring to our practices every day.

What's the best part about working in the tech sector?

Speed and power of innovation.

What's the biggest challenge?

Speed and change associated with innovation.

What's one area of technology that you're most excited about and why?

Deep decarbonization (removing carbon from the atmosphere).

What piece of advice do you give to lawyers considering a career in tech law?

Find your passion and a way to integrate it with your practice.

What's one way technology has made your life easier?

Greater flexibility to see my children.



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

Susan Mac Cormac, Partner,
Morrison & Foerster

One way it's made your life more difficult?

Much more difficult to have "down" time.

Name an important opportunity you got early in your career and what you did with it?

Rob Townsend recommended that I be the primary corporate counsel for the Stewardship Council (nonprofit spin-out from PG&E managing 140,000 acres of land in California). I used it as an opportunity to not only apply my own learnings related to corporate governance, but also to learn from the board members, all experts in their respective fields, about the intersection between corporate law and environmental sustainability.

What's the best piece of career advice anyone ever gave you?

Work-life balance is a myth. You can't "have it all." All you can do is your best, and if you are a mother with a big career, you will have to make sacrifices.

No. 1 survival tip in a work crisis.

Do not immediately react. Pause for at least 10 seconds before you respond.

How far has the tech industry gone toward tackling its gender gap since you started practicing?

Not very. Honestly, I have seen change at the entry level but particularly in law and business at the higher levels, I have seen a lot of initiatives adopted but none that have been terribly successful.

What's one way you've had to change your thinking toward practicing law to succeed with tech industry clients or in-house at a technology company?

Always connect the legal advice to strategic advice.

Ross Todd