

SARA TERHEGGEN '07

BRIDGING SILICON VALLEY'S GENDER DIVIDE

When Sara Terheggen '07 scans Silicon Valley, she sees inspiring advancements, extraordinary innovation—and too few women.

According to recent studies, women hold only 18 percent of Silicon Valley tech positions. And 69 percent of the time, men receive higher salary offers than women for the same positions. Terheggen, a corporate law partner at Morrison & Foerster, wants to level the playing field.

“While tech companies have begun to respond by hiring more women, they still fail miserably at support and promotion,” she says. “Addressing these inequities extends beyond just providing ‘family-friendly’ policies.”

As a California delegate to the Vision 2020 Campaign for Equality, a national effort to advance women’s economic and social status, Terheggen developed a think-tank series that focuses on increasing the number of women in leadership positions. She also serves on the 100 Women in Hedge Funds’ Global Association Board Advisory Council, chairing events that feature senior executives from top corporations and philanthropic organizations.

“I want to improve resources and networks for women, because they have fewer opportunities,” she says. “There’s also such a dearth of women at the most senior levels.”

Terheggen has advised on transactions with an aggregate value approaching \$100 billion while assisting clients in tech, finance, private equity, life sciences, and retail. The biggest misconception about corporate law? “The idea that seniority breeds success,” she says. “We need to jettison this mentality. Compare it with today’s young tech company CEOs—they didn’t reach the C-suite based on how long they’d been working; it was about raw talent, intelligence, and a drive to achieve.”

Her achievements—both professionally and in the community—have been recognized by the University of Oregon, *The Recorder*, *Super Lawyers*, *Silicon Valley Business Journal*, and Public Counsel.

Terheggen’s extensive community work includes serving on the Boalt Hall Alumni Association Board of Directors. In that role, she strives to help build alumni support amid shrinking state budgets, sustain Berkeley Law’s diversity, and uphold its programmatic excellence.

“The school has always been a place where people from different backgrounds can come together to get things done,



even in the face of obstacles,” she says. “Our board has an ongoing responsibility to ensure that doesn’t get lost.”

As for ensuring that her gender will gain a stronger foothold in Silicon Valley, Terheggen remains resolute—and cautiously optimistic.

“There’s much work to be done, but I’m hopeful about the prospects for change,” she says. “Some organizations are showing signs that they get it—that lip service just isn’t going to cut it anymore.” —Andrew Cohen