

A photograph of a modern office interior. The hallway features glass-walled rooms on the left, with black frames and white curtains visible inside. The floor is a light-colored, polished concrete. The ceiling has exposed ductwork and lighting fixtures. The overall atmosphere is clean, professional, and contemporary.

# Why Can't the Tech Industry Decode the Glass Ceiling for Women Executives?

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# Why can't the tech industry decode the glass ceiling for women executives?

*Glass Ceiling Discrimination Blog provides updates and unique analysis about promotion discrimination, sexual harassment, and employment law. It is written by the team of employment lawyers at Zuckerman Law and edited by Eric Bachman, Chair of the Firm's discrimination and retaliation practice.*

Written by [Eric Bachman](#) – 4/27/18

Despite the tech industry's reputation for fostering innovative concepts and novel ways to approach challenges, the industry still has not been able to solve the persistent glass ceiling that prevents women from being promoted into a proportionate share of executive positions.

For example, according to a comprehensive [survey](#) by the AnitaB.org,

*even though women account for nearly 27% of entry-level employees in a sample of 60 tech industry companies (hardware, software, and information services), women comprise only 14% of executives in these same companies.*

While the tech industry is by no means alone in terms of lacking proportionate representation of women in high-level positions, this industry has had more of a spotlight on the problem in recent years and hopefully lessons can be learned from successes (and failures) the tech industry has in addressing this vital issue. The most recent AnitaB.org survey is available [here](#).

## **Common causes and symptoms of a glass ceiling**

According to a Women in the Workplace study released by McKinsey & Co., that looked across various industries, for every 100 women who get promoted from an entry-level position to manager, 130 men advance. The study found that women are less likely than men to advance for various reasons:

- they experience an uneven playing field,
- their odds of advancement lower at every level;
- there is a persistent leadership gap in the most senior roles;
- gender diversity is not widely believed to be a priority; and
- while employee programs designed to help balance work and family are abundant, participation is low among both sexes due to concerns that using them will negatively affect their careers.

Although the precise structure of a glass ceiling can vary from company to company, its discriminatory effects are undeniable and often devastating to those unable to break through it. And according to one report, the average female employee loses \$10,000 per year due to the wage gap between men and women.

Likewise, certain signs exist in companies that may facilitate glass ceiling / promotion discrimination. For example, a lack of an effective mentoring program and tepid, even antagonistic, “tone at the top” views on diversity.

## **How to help break down the glass ceiling in the tech industry**

Certain companies within the tech industry survey sample scored significantly higher than others in terms of representation of women at



all levels of the company, so it makes sense to see if lessons can be learned from these companies.

Tech companies with a better record of promoting women to higher level positions employed three programs that played a significant role:

- Flex time policies, including remote work and flexible hours
- Leadership development programs at both the mid-career and executive levels
- Formal gender diversity training

Of course, tone at the top is paramount as well. That is, company leadership must consistently and sincerely support efforts to break through the glass ceiling.

Another idea, which was included in the Uber diversity and harassment report (authored by former Attorney General Eric Holder), is to tie managers' financial compensation to how well they adhere to diversity and inclusion policies and other ethical business practices. The reports notes that:

*Experience shows that compensation provides a powerful tool for creating incentives for behavior, and reinforcing a company's values. Many leading companies have incorporated similar metrics into the compensation packages for senior executives as a way of ensuring that their compensation practices reward conduct that is consistent with the cultural environment that they hope to create.*

For many people, money is the ultimate motivator and if Uber successfully improves its workplace culture by tying diversity and

ethical business practices to financial gains, then it will be exciting to see what ripple effects this may cause across corporate America.

This concept alone, however, will not be enough and it is important for companies, employee rights groups, and the broader public to keep having this difficult but vital conversation about how to help ensure equal treatment of women in the tech industry and across all workplaces.

### **Hiring an experienced employment discrimination lawyer**

Hiring a proven and effective advocate is critical to obtaining the maximum recovery in an employment discrimination case. Eric Bachman, Chair of the Firm's Discrimination Practice, has substantial experience litigating precedent-setting individual and class action discrimination cases. His wins include a \$100 million settlement in a disparate impact Title VII class action and a \$16 million class action settlement against a major grocery chain. Having served as Special Litigation Counsel in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and as lead or co-counsel in numerous jury trials, Bachman is trial-tested and ready to fight for you to obtain the relief that you deserve.

*Bachman writes frequently on topics related to promotion discrimination, harassment, and other employment discrimination issues at the [Glass Ceiling Discrimination Blog](#).*

*U.S. News and Best Lawyers® have named [Zuckerman Law](#) a Tier 1 firm in Litigation – Labor and Employment in the Washington DC metropolitan area. **Contact us today** to find out how we can help you. To schedule a preliminary consultation, click [here](#) or call us at (202) 769-1681 or (202) 262-8959.*

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