

## THE RECORDER



### WOMEN LEADERS IN TECH LAW WINNERS (LITIGATION):

Michelle Ybarra



Michelle Ybarra of Kecker, Van Nest & Peters.

Michelle Ybarra is a partner with Kecker, Van Nest & Peters.

#### **What's your proudest professional achievement of the past year and why?**

Late last year, I returned from parental leave following the birth of my daughter to two cases in pretrial. These were important cases for longtime clients that I had spent years developing, and the trials were scheduled back-to-back. I went immediately into trial prep mode, flying across the country to prep witnesses and experts and to argue pretrial motions in court. It was like going from 0 to 100 mph in the span of a week: challenging and exhilarating all

at once. Being able to return and hit the ground running at the top of my game was a huge accomplishment—also one made possible by my clients' and case teams' support. We settled one case on the eve of trial, and the second, a 12-patent case in which I represent Netflix, was continued to January.

#### **What's one piece of advice you'd give to a woman starting out in tech law?**

Know your clients and their problems, and make them your problems too. This is especially important when you're dealing



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with a new technology or product. It's critical that you do the work to understand the issues from the ground up. That can mean different things depending on the case. For example, with my video game clients that can mean playing the games myself to understand game display and mechanics. Or for more complicated products, working with an expert to break down how something works so that you understand it. At the end of the day, being an advocate for a tech client requires you to be able to explain the product and the business to a judge or jury. The sooner you are comfortable doing that credibly and effectively, the better.

**What is a group or tool that has helped you grow in your career or contributes to the development of pipelines for women leaders in tech law?**

My clients have been critical to my professional success. Tech companies often litigate complicated issues in novel areas of the law, and there is no playbook for a lot of the cases I handle. That means drawing on experience and judgment to identify the best path forward, and having clients who will put their trust in you to guide them through uncharted territory. I have been fortunate to represent great clients who have trusted me to tackle their thorniest problems, even when doing so means adopting an untested or creative strategy. Those wins are the most special, and perhaps the most formative of my career. I've led our firm's participation in the Corporate Counsel Women of Color annual conference, and it's a meaningful organization that's led to valuable networking opportunities.