

FWA and Ford & Harrison Explore “Outing Sexual Harassment in the Financial Services Industry – Bubble, Boundaries, Backlash?”

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Last Thursday evening (2/8), over 80 members and guests of the FWA and Ford & Harrison LLP, men and women, explored the current dynamics around sexual harassment in the financial services industry. Four eminent panelists explored the history and context of acceptable behavior and norms in this high stakes, high octane industry, offering diverse, candid perspectives and guidance on what C Suite executives, HR Departments and individuals can all do to ensure that addressing sexual harassment in the industry is not just a bubble but an imperative that leads to long-term, meaningful change for women and men:

- **Victoria Berger-Gross**, formerly chief human resources officer of Tiffany & Co and of Lehman Brothers, noted that men, previously untouchable, are finally being brought to account, even in places where bad behavior was considered part of the job description, such as bank trading floors.
- **Rebecca Blumenstein**, deputy managing editor of The New York Times, pointed out the generational issues that are at play, with older women saying “move-on, it’s always been there,” and millennials, who think they are further along in workplace culture, saying this is a “front and center” issue for selecting where to work.
- **Bruce Fritch**, national consultant to CEOs and boards of Fortune 1000 companies, emphasized the strong cultural norms that stand in the way of change, noting that at the intersection of wealth and power, there is still self-denial and arrogance. He noted also that corporate boards need to have equal representation of men and women and ensure

accountability for sexual harassment, and that CEOs and top executives set the behavior that their employees emulate.

- **William Cohan**, noted author and media correspondent covering the financial industry, observed that Wall Street won't change until a guy is marched off the trading floor, not to "spend more time with his family" but with an announcement that he was a sexual predator.

FWA Men's Alliance Co-Chair **Stephen Zweig**, an attorney at Ford & Harrison specializing in employment law who has represented women who have been sexually harassed, moderated the panel. Drawing on his expert view of the employment landscape, he observed that backlash is already an issue, with fewer men choosing to mentor women or take them to outside events that would benefit their careers, and calling on men to resist this backlash.

Offering inspiration and a call to action, the panelists concluded by encouraging the audience to act as "peaceful anarchists" and take their message straight to those in authority, observing that there is power in numbers and there is already real change occurring as perpetrators of sexual harassment lose their jobs while the targets of their harassment are still there.

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Bruce Fritch | Strategic Snapshots