

SILICON VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL

WILSON SONSINI GOODRICH & ROSATI'S ALLISON SPINNER | **W**OMEN²⁰¹⁵ OF INFLUENCE

GLORIA WANG SHAWBER
Contributor

Allison Spinner serves as corporate counsel to the Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology and is a member of several women's empowerment organizations, in her company and out.

She also happens to be a partner at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, where she has worked on more than 20 public offerings, including the IPO for GoDaddy Inc.; the \$75 million Yodlee, Inc. IPO in October 2014; the \$427 million GoPro, Inc. IPO in July 2014; and the \$75 million Barracuda Networks, Inc. IPO in October 2013. She has represented Goldman Sachs, Cole Haan, and the underwriters in Nimble Storage.

Within Wilson Sonsini, Spinner does pro bono work, is active in several committees, mentors female associates, and is a member of its Women's Initiative Network.

Your age: 43

How long have you been at your current company? 17 years.

Job description: I'm a corporate partner at WSGR where I represent tech companies in venture financings, public offerings and mergers and acquisitions. I also represent private equity firms in their investments and investment banks in their underwriting transactions. I currently co-chair WSGR's Career Development Committee and serve on the board



Allison Spinner,
Partner, Wilson
Sonsini Goodrich
& Rosati

What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning? I wake up early to get ready for work and then make breakfast for my sons. I take my older son to school and that's our time alone to talk about the day ahead.

of directors of the WSGR Foundation, an investment vehicle through which the firm supports community organizations in the Bay Area and beyond.

Company description: Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati is the premier legal advisor to technology, life sciences, and other growth enterprises worldwide. The firm represents companies at every stage of development, from entrepreneurial start-ups to multibillion-dollar global corporations, as well as the venture firms, private equity firms, and investment banks that finance and advise them. The firm's broad range of services and practice areas are focused on addressing the principal challenges faced by the management, boards of directors, shareholders, and in-house counsel of our clients.

The number of years you have been in your line of work: 18.

Current civic/community involvement: I've been involved with Second Harvest Food Bank and co-chair of WSGR's annual Stand Up for Kids campaign for children.

What was your first job? I worked at a law firm during high school.

Career path: I worked at a law firm in New York during law school, focusing on litigation matters initially. At the end of my internship I had an opportunity to work on a public offering and found I really enjoyed the collaborative process of working with a company, its bankers and accountants and the other lawyers involved to achieve the goal of completing a successful transaction. I then had a chance to spend a summer at WSGR and found I really enjoyed corporate work for growing companies in the tech space.

Growing up, you wanted to be: An archaeologist.

Biggest whoops? Following the 2008 election, my family and I were invited to visit President Obama in the West Wing. Although I had met the president several times before, seeing him in the Oval Of-

ALLISON SPINNER

Partner
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

Residence: Menlo Park

Education: A.B., political science, Stanford University; J.D., Columbia Law School

ice was different. My sons were 5 years old and 6 months old at the time. The president picked up my younger son and held him in the air. I was terrified that my baby would throw up on the president and his desk. I couldn't say a word, barely smiled for the photo, and nearly passed out when we left the room.

The best advice you've ever received: When I was in my early 20s, my grandmother shared some advice based on over 50 years of marriage with my grandfather. She told me to look for a spouse who would love and support all my aspirations while I supported his, in a true partnership. My husband and I are partners in everything we do and he is my biggest cheerleader.

Your best advice for others: Don't be afraid to go outside your comfort zone and challenge yourself.

Something about you that would surprise others: I'm completely uncoordinated – I can't catch a ball and have two left feet.

What has been your biggest challenge professionally? As I advanced in my practice, my role expanded from pure legal work and project execution to also include business development, business strategy and service on firm management committees. They don't teach these skills in law school so I have learned on the job ... seeking out best practices from my colleagues and clients ... and developing my own style.

You are a woman who has assumed a top leadership role. What needs to happen to get more women in corporate leadership roles? Women in leadership need to continue to take a proactive role in men-

toring younger women. We need to seek opportunities to help the next generation chart a career path that balances their career and personal goals.

What is the biggest challenge facing women who want to take on leadership roles? There are 24 hours in a day and each day involves hard choices about how to spend one's time. With seniority and leadership roles come increased responsibility for not just day-to-day work but also managing others. Staying late at the office with one's team may mean not being home to help a child study for a math test or do an art project. Attending a board meeting for a client may mean missing a school play. The challenge is achieving a balance not on a daily or even weekly basis but over a longer period of time and being comfortable with that.

How would you assess gender diversity in Silicon Valley? (1: Not a problem; 5: We still have a long way to go, baby)⁴

Do you have a spouse or partner at home and if so, does your spouse or partner work? How do you handle household duties? Childcare? My husband is the founder and CEO of a startup company. We divide, conquer and survive. For example, he handles the family finances and coaches the boys' sports teams. I am the homework taskmaster and family fun coordinator. The boys have a nanny who helps us juggle everything.

Your favorite gadget: iPad with Logitech keyboard.

What do you know how to make? Matzo ball soup.

What keeps you up at night? It's hard to turn work "off" and I often wake up at night thinking about a project for a client or a complex issue. Sometimes the best ideas and solutions come at 4 a.m.

Where may we likely find you during your downtime? Cheering my sons on at their sports games.

Your guilty pleasure: Watching "Downton Abbey."