

SILICON VALLEY BUSINESS JOURNAL



Latinx Business Leadership Awards: Individual honoree Kristi Nevarez of Fragomen

Editor's note: For its sixth year, the Silicon Valley Business Journal is honoring companies and individuals in its Latinx Business Leadership Awards. Join us at our event on April 11 and help us celebrate these community leaders. Meet one of our individual honorees, below.

KRISTI NEVAREZ

Fragomen

Title: Managing partner, Silicon Valley office

Headquarters: San Jose

Education: Bachelor of science, Santa Clara University; J.D., Santa Clara University School of Law

To what do you attribute your success? Hard work, perseverance, and commitment to relationship-building.

During summers growing up in San Jose, Kristi Nevarez helped organize paperwork at the law firm where her mom worked as an administrator. There were not many lawyers in the office who looked like Nevarez, she remembers, but seeing her mom working there made her feel it was possible for her to enter the field, too.

Nevarez pursued that inspiration and has built a career as a leading immigration lawyer. As managing partner in the Silicon



Kristi Nevarez, managing partner at Fragomen, is one of the individual honorees in this year's Latinx Business Leadership Awards. Here, she was photographed at the Cesar Chavez monument on the campus of San Jose State University.

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Valley office for global immigration law firm Fragomen, she leads an all-women partnership and manages a team of more than 200 people. She advises Silicon Valley companies that rely on her for help understanding immigration policy and forecasting immigration trends.

Her passion for immigration law began during her first year of law school. She was part of a group of Santa Clara University law students that created what became the Katharine and George Alexander Community Law Center, which continues to provide pro bono advice and representation on workers' rights, consumer rights, and immigration rights.

Her favorite part of working with sponsored employees for her corporate clients is that they "are so smart, so innovative, so brave," she said.

"I talk to people every day who have moved from the other side of the world, not meeting their boss, not seeing the campus, not knowing if their kids are going to like the school or if their spouses are going to be able to make connections, and they are taking this huge leap of faith for a chance at the American dream," Nevarez said.

She counts leading an all-women partnership as her proudest achievement.

"More than half of them are women of color, so we come with very diverse opinions and perspectives and experiences, which helps give us a very full, thoughtful way to make decisions in how to manage the office," she said.

Nevarez has long stood out as a humble, kind and empathetic leader to director, investor and author Tricia Montalvo Timm, who first met Nevarez in law school. The two have had parallel journeys since, with Timm building a career as a leading corporate lawyer for Silicon Valley tech companies big and small.

Timm and Nevarez were part of the same study group during law school, which Nevarez hosted at her home. Timm saw immediately how generous Nevarez was, even in the law school environment known for being stressful and competitive.

"She created that space where we felt secure," Timm said of Nevarez. "She was vulnerable, which allowed us to be vulnerable. We were all there to support each other."

Nevarez continues to create supportive spaces. These days, she's focusing on preparing space for the next generation of leaders, giving rising attorneys at the firm opportunities to work with different clients, exercise different skills, and be elevated to the next level of their careers.

"I am so proud that I am not the first Latina managing partner in Silicon Valley, because that's a super rare thing to be able to say," she said. "I've recognized it's not really as important to be the first at something, but that you create a pathway for the next so they can be successful, too."