
WilmerHale Hosts Female Founders Networking Breakfast in Boston

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Dozens of entrepreneurs gathered in the firm's Boston office on March 7 for a Female Founders Networking Breakfast, an event the firm has previously hosted in its Palo Alto office. The event featured a panel discussion with three successful female entrepreneurs and friends of the firm —[Maria Cirino](#), co-founder and managing partner of .406 Ventures, [Heidi Wyle](#), CEO of Venti Technologies, and [Judy Habib](#), CEO and president of KHJ Brand Activation.

During the discussion, which was moderated by WilmerHale Partner [Rosemary Reilly](#), Cirino, Wyle and Habib each provided a brief overview of their careers and addressed common challenges faced by female founders and entrepreneurs, best practices to successfully grow a company, and strategies to overcome biases in the workplace.

"Too often I find myself sitting in a room where I'm the only woman," said WilmerHale Senior Associate [Jenna Ventorino](#). "This is not a unique experience for women attorneys and entrepreneurs, but there are small things we can do to respond. We wanted to gather together an interesting group of women and open up a dialogue to address the issues we face and how to counter them."

When it comes to building companies and taking risks, "women, more so than men, have a nagging voice that tells them, 'I can't do this,'" Wyle said during the panel. "Shut that voice up and just let the fire out." Added Habib: "Don't be limited by your self-doubt—you are enough and you can do this."

When faced with conscious or unconscious gender bias in the professional world, the panelists agreed, there is no need to endure it. "If you find yourself in an environment that doesn't encourage diversity or value you, get out," said Cirino. "There are so many other places that do." Cirino also encouraged women to confront male colleagues regarding even the smallest signs of prejudice to make them aware of the behavior and ask themselves why they are treating a woman differently.

The panelists also advised entrepreneurs to hire colleagues who are driven by integrity, authenticity and passion. "Look for people who make the world a better place, love what they do and work hard," said Wyle. Added Cirino: "The more people like this that you have on your team from the beginning,

the better off your company will be.”