

## THE RECORDER

### Women Leaders in Tech Law, Intellectual Property Honoree: Michelle Ybarra, Keker, Van Nest & Peters

By ALM Staff

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**M**ichelle Ybarra, partner with Keker, Van Nest & Peters, is among the recipients of the The Recorder's 2025 Women Leaders in Tech Law, Intellectual Property Award. Read a Q&A with her below.

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

KVP was tapped to lead the trial strategy in multiple high-profile copyright cases involving generative AI. We are defending the client in 8 cases, and I've have had the honor of leading one of KVP's largest teams ever as we help the client navigate a labyrinth of strategy calls, briefs, hearings, and depositions—all with an eye towards trial on novel issues of first impression. Those cases have been a sprint, but deeply rewarding. I've also had some big wins in my longest-running patent cases this year; we are defending a premier technology company in a set of competitor cases that started out as 17 patents, and now is



Courtesy photo

**Michelle Ybarra of Keker, Van Nest & Peters.**

down to 4. The team has invalidated 13 patents to date, and we are preparing to try the remaining ones in June. These kinds of bet-the-company cases get me out of bed in the morning, eager to work alongside my exceptional clients and colleagues.

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

Your client's problems are your problems too! Know their business and pain points

inside and out. That can mean blocking off time to sit down and study the technology, away from the daily grind of meetings and calls. It is critical to make this effort early so that you are conversant in the technology from the start. Don't be surprised if you find yourself to be the only woman in the room—and don't let it dissuade you from sharing ideas. Men don't have a monopoly on excellence in this area, so speak up, credibly and confidently.

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

My cases often involve new technologies or untested areas of law. Having thought

partners on those issues is critical. You want folks who will help you pressure-test the strategy. That might mean engaging a colleague to do an aggressive mock-cross of a witness; conducting an early focus group to see how certain themes may land with a jury; or listening to nonlawyer friends and family about how they are using or perceiving a new technology. I also gain invaluable insight from putting myself out there in the legal community; I speak on multiple panels each year regarding tech law issues, including at the Corporate Counsel Women of Color annual conference. Although it's hard to make time for those engagements, the exchange of ideas and relationships that result from them never disappoint.