



# Lean Out: The Struggle for Gender Equality in Tech and Start-Up Culture

*Elissa Shevinsky (Editor)*

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Why aren't the great, qualified women already in tech being hired or promoted?

Should people who don't fit in seek to join an institution that is actively hostile to them?

Does the tech industry deserve women leaders?

The split between the stated ideals of the corporate elite and the reality of working life for women in the tech industry—whether in large public tech companies or VC-backed start-ups, in anonymous gaming forums, or in Silicon Valley or Alley—seems designed to crush women's spirits. Corporate manifestos by women who already fit in (or who are able to convincingly fake it) aren't helping. There is a high cost for the generation of young women and transgender people currently navigating the harsh realities of the tech industry, who gave themselves to their careers only to be ignored, harassed and disrespected.

Not everyone can be a CEO; not everyone is able to embrace a workplace culture that diminishes the contributions of women and ignores real complaints. The very culture of high tech, where foosball tables and endless supplies of beer are de facto perks, but maternity leave and breast-feeding stations are controversial, is designed to appeal to young men. *Lean Out* collects 25 stories from the modern tech industry, from people who fought GamerGate and from women and transgender artists who have made their own games, from women who have started their own companies and who have worked for some of the most successful corporations in America, from LGBTQ women, from women of color, from transgender people and people who do not ascribe to a gender. All are fed up with the glacial pace of change in America's tech industry.

Included are essays by Anna Anthropy, Leigh Alexander, Lauren Bacon, Katherine Cross, Dom DeGuzman, Fakegrimlock, Krys Freeman, Gesche Haas, Ash Huang, Jenni Lee, Katy Levinson, Leanne Pittsford, Brook Shelly, Elissa Shevinsky, and Squinky. Edited and selected by entrepreneur and tech veteran Elissa Shevinsky, *Lean Out* sees a possible way forward that uses tech and creative disengagement to jettison 20th century corporate culture: "I've figured out a way to create safe space for myself in tech," writes Shevinsky. "I've left Silicon Valley, and now work remotely from home. I adore everyone on my team, because I hired them myself."

## Lean Out: The Struggle for Gender Equality in Tech and Start-Up Culture Details

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Culture Elissa Shevinsky (Editor)**

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## **From Reader Review Lean Out: The Struggle for Gender Equality in Tech and Start-Up Culture for online ebook**

### **Frances says**

Shocking essays about intersectional oppression experienced by radical women leaders in tech and people who are most negatively impacted by a toxic tech environment.

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### **Adam DeConinck says**

Thought-provoking and at times heart-breaking. This collection of essays includes personal stories, academic analysis, and proposed solutions addressing sexism and lack of diversity in the tech industry. Every essay in this collection is interesting, well-written, and \*worth\* reading, and they collectively gave me a lot to think about. Required reading if you're involved in the tech industry today.

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### **Suzy says**

Every human in tech should read this essay collection.

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### **Jillian Meehan says**

"Men did not build the internet, at least not without women ... if this book matters, it's because we are part of a movement to tell the untold stories."

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### **Dylan Tweney says**

Excellent call to arms -- and illustrative stories -- about the state of women in the tech industry.

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### **Christopher Litsinger says**

This is an important and thought-provoking book, that probably won't get all of the attention that it deserves. While I'm not the target audience here (maybe I should be, but that's a discussion I'm not ready to get into now), I did find this to be a useful framework for thinking about some things that I'm pretty happy to have pondered.

The book is not as much of a rebuke of Lean In as the title suggests. It's more just a collection of essays about the issues faced by women (and black and lgbt women) in technology. As with any collection of essays the quality of the essays varies, as do the tone and message. In fact, that's probably where this, as a book most suffers- there isn't one common agenda that emerges out of these essays.

Ultimately, that's probably a reflection of where society is at this point in time, and also of the books efforts

to be inclusive to many different viewpoints.

Anyhow, if you work in technology, and care about making work in our field better *for everyone*, this a good book to read and reflect on.

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### **Luke says**

This book gave a phenomenal group of people the opportunity to really share and speak about this issue. I flew through this book because I couldn't put it down. I thought the inclusion of trans folks was necessary and fantastic.

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### **Heather says**

This book is clearly not meant for people that do not work in tech. The best essay is, "Fictive Ethnicity and Nerds," which talks more generally about the exclusivity of nerd culture.

These essays are so hyper specific, that they are not relatable to anyone even remotely outside of tech. Hopefully they are more meaningful to women who may be struggling within that industry. The writing is a bit all over the place. In some sections it barely makes any sense. Some sections rattle off technical terms with no explication, other sections are like this:

Direct quote:

"Wisdom is deeply personal. If it were one size fits all, we would have many more wise nineteen-year-olds. We'd have a book we could crack open and mine for solutions. Wisdom comes not from finding the road, but from knowing yourself well enough that you understand how to live in your own universe. The wise know how to interface with other humans in a productive way and how to do good work in a upstanding manner."

Direct quote:

"High-fives are like bro-juice. They love high-fives and I started to really love high-fives too. Bros high-five over everything. Finished a deploy? High-five. Fixed that bug? High-five! Got a beer from the fridge? Yeah! High-five. High-fiving was a way to congratulate and acknowledge each other on a job well done."

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### **Catherine Rector says**

I received this as an ARC copy in return for an honest review. I've just finished the book and am composing a proper review, but I'm rating this book a 4.5 stars. Please check back soon for a full review!

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### **Haley says**

I bought this book because my friend Brook had a piece in it, and was delighted to see pieces from other women that I know and respect in the industry. The essays in this book range from academic to extremely personal, but almost all of them opened my eyes to a new perspective and reinforced the notion that Leaning

In is not the answer as long as tech, gaming, and VC remain white patriarchal spaces. I can't post about this book, though, without bringing up my concerns about the editor, Elissa. After I tweeted about the book she reached out to me and we had an exchange about her support of GamerGate, including her AMA on their subreddit KotakuInAction where she throws many women under the bus and denounces "SJW leadership and tactics," whatever that means. I'm still confused about how someone with her politics could have published such an excellent collection of feminist literature. Claiming to support intersectional feminism while denouncing anti-harassment activists as "SJWs" seems like an incredible act of cognitive dissonance, but I thank her for this book all the same. #GiveYourMoneyToWomen

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### **Brian says**

Absolute must read for anyone in the tech industry. Really excellent collection of articles and essays and poetry about the current state of the tech industry for women, POCs and members of the LGBTQIA\* community.

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### **Christine Chapman says**

Great alternative to Lean In, a must-read for anyone who feels marginalized or trapped in the tech industry or anyone who is serious about being an ally.

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### **Linda Atkinson says**

While this book deals with tech industry, I found that most essays cross over into most work/life situations for minorities. The essays held profound truths, ideas pointing to ways to survive the daily injustices, and outlines for moving forward. Wasn't planned, but this was the perfect book to read on Internat'l Women's Day and it had the perfect quote to jump start the essays: "I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life's a bitch. You've got to go out and kick ass." ~Maya Angelou

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### **Jeff Stern says**

"The idea that tech has pipeline problem – one that can be solved by teaching five-year-old girls to code – infuriates me. [...] the problem isn't women, the problem is tech culture. And that's the problem that needs to be addressed." -Shevinsky

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### **Danielle says**

Required reading for every single person who works in the tech industry. This book perfectly describes the types of micro-aggression tolerated by non-white, non-male members of the industry that turns into depression and, sometimes, giving up on a career in the industry altogether.

If it's killing you, there's no shame in taking your hand off something that's poison.

