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# Unwanted’s Andrea Lindemann Gilliam on Workplace Harassment and Why It’s Not Just “a Women’s Issue”

Written by [WeWork Labs](#)

On March 29, 2019 - 5 min read

Sexual harassment in the workplace has been one of, if not the, most discussed topic in companies around the world over the past two years. Unwanted is aiming to be part of the solution. Cofounder Andrea Lindemann Gilliam and her team, Labs members at 80 M SE in Washington, DC, are creating a platform to help employees and employers address harassment and broader workplace culture issues in their organizations and change behavior for the better. WeWork Labs spoke with Lindemann Gilliam about her experience as a female founder, the stereotypes she's had to overcome in her career, and her advice for women who want to start their own business.

**WeWork Labs: Tell us about Unwanted.**

**ALG:** We're developing a platform to allow every individual, whether they're an entry level employee or a C-suite executive, to be a change agent in their organization. And the way that we're doing that is providing a place for people to raise concerns around sexual harassment and workplace culture. Right now, there are ways to formally report things, but one of the missing links is what do you do if you have questions, or if you don't want to file a formal complaint with HR? We're creating a safe space for that middle ground and honest, courageous conversations.

Organizations will get aggregate data about trends in their workplace that allow them to have more targeted responses to what’s really happening, as opposed to a one size fits all training. Say you have a situation where 10 people raise concerns about after work happy hours at a certain office within the company. That anonymous information gives leadership

the ability to decide to refresh their policy or do training specific to that issue without requiring one person to bear the burden of filing a public complaint. Right now we're in the process of early user testing, then we'll use that information to build our B2B product and start piloting with customers.

**WeWork Labs: Is this a topic you were personally interested in before you started Unwanted?**

**ALG:** I actually came on board at the end of last June after I was approached by Nick Dowling, my cofounder. He wanted to provide seed funding for an initiative and was looking for someone who'd worked in the space to take his vision and make it a reality. I've been a labor and employment attorney for my whole career and I've seen both sides of this issue. And what really excited me about this project was finding middle ground for people.

For me, it's about how we empower women in the workplace broadly. Many people in the workplace have had uncomfortable situations, but I'm driven by a broader vision of seeing the cultural change and the moment that we're in with women in the workplace, generally and in leadership roles. It's about how we continue to support and empower women through that lens and not just through a typical victim versus perpetrator legal response.

**WeWork Labs: What's your experience as a female founder been like?**

**ALG:** There've been gender stereotypes that I've had to work to overcome. My natural personality is to ask questions and to get a lot of information and to be supportive. My cofounder is more of how I imagine the typical male founder persona, where he's very confident in what he's doing and all of his answers, which is a good quality to have. It's been interesting to see those gender dynamics on our team. And for me, it's a personal challenge to learn to use my voice and be confident in it, and be okay with not having perfect information at all times.

The rest of our team is female, and I find that we spend a lot of time building consensus, making sure everyone's been heard, and using a lot of soft skills. And it's both a pro and a con. Consensus is important, but sometimes you just need to move forward. I also think there's a benefit to having a male cofounder in this space because it's important that this isn't seen as only a women's issue. The fact that my cofounder felt passionately enough to want to do something about this problem and invest it in is really critical, and I think it'll move the ball forward. We need male allies to help if we really want to take on this challenge.

**WeWork Labs: There are often traits or qualities that society associates with men, like assertiveness, that are viewed as strengths for entrepreneurs. What traits or qualities that are typically associated with women do you think are big advantages for founders?**

**ALG:** That's a really great question. I would say empathy is important in terms of both team building and understanding your customer. You need a real ability to connect with people and create connection in both the startup ecosystem and beyond.

**WeWork Labs: You've been interacting with women in the workplace for a long time through your career as an attorney. How do you think things have changed for the better for women over time?**

**ALG:** When I started at a big corporate law firm when I graduated from law school, I remember approaching the head of my department, who was a woman, and asking her quite naively, "What's it like to be the first woman to head this department?" She like looked at me with a blank expression and said, "It's the same as being a man. Just watch what you wear." I think that generationally, women had to fit into a male mold to succeed. They couldn't blend the lines between who they were at work and who they were in their personal lives. Now, this younger generation is really bringing their whole selves to work. We're in a much different time where the personal blends with the professional. That's why I talk to my daughter often about being a founder because it's an important part of who I am. And there's something uniquely personal about starting your own company.

WeWork Labs: What advice would you give to other female founders or women who want to start their own company?

ALG: Really take time to get to know yourself. Entrepreneurship is both a personal and professional journey. And if you go into it with self-awareness, you’ll have a much better chance of success both in your business and in your happiness. Build in time to continue to check in with yourself on how that progress is going, what you’re learning, and how you can support yourself. Don’t take things personally. And lastly, surround yourself with people who support you, too. I’d also share the best advice I’ve ever gotten from another female founder: Don’t let perfection get in the way of progress, and lean into your vision.

*This post is part of our [Female Founder Series](#), a series of interviews exploring the challenges that face female founders today and the inspiring female founders making their dreams a reality in Labs around the world.*



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