Twitter Thread by Kelly Ellis



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So, I want to talk about how sexual harassment and fair pay are linked at Google (and beyond), because I think that's an angle that isn't being highlighted enough in the coverage of these walk-outs. I'm going to frame it largely around my personal experience there. Thread.

When I was sexually harassed by the director of the area I was working in, I was afraid to report it because I was worried that "getting him in trouble" would result in the subtle retaliation of missed leadership opportunities.

I wanted to continue working on the team I was on, because I'd gained a lot of very deep knowledge and expertise in that area, as well as reputation and camaraderie with the other folks working in that area. I didn't want to make the situation more "difficult."

To get promoted at Google, several need to happen: 1. you need opportunities for ownership and leadership above your current level (basically, opportunities to show you're working at the next level you're trying to get promoted to). The work you're "assigned" has a big impact.

2. You need glowing reviews from peers, *at or particularly above the level you're hoping to get promoted to.* Basically, you need people a lot more senior than you to say you're doing awesome work.

I think the walkout organizers' demand of better reporting structure is a good one, but I think fear of retaliation and fear of "rocking the boat" - especially because of how it can impact career advancement - is still going to be a huge barrier to reporting.

When leadership finally did become aware of what happened, I told them I couldn't work with that person any more. Rather than fire him or move him to a different team, I was told I could transfer teams. That meant starting all over on my path of advancement toward the next promo.

I also had a friend who was afraid of reporting harassment from a male peer who was more senior than her - even though he wasn't in a position of authority over her in the management chain, she needed his glowing peer review if she had any hope of getting promoted.

I think harassment victims need concrete commitments from Google (and this applies to other companies as well) to curtail the different ways that harassment, and their reporting of it, can negatively impact career advancement.

That's one reason these obscenely huge financial payouts for the harassers are such an ugly pill to swallow. Harassment often negatively impacts victims financially in ways that ripple out from that incident for a very long time. The unfairness is so staggering.

And because women are under-leveled, promoted more slowly than men, and already face limited opportunities for advancement because of bias, the man is almost always in more power in these situations. He almost always has some influence over her career.

So harassment and equal pay are connected in so many ways - the unfairness that already exists in equal pay and opportunity for women contributes to this power imbalance. And reporting can hurt women's careers, slowing their career growth unfairly.

If Google really wants this to change, they need to make it so that harassment victims don't have to choose between reporting the behavior vs. growing in their careers.

I think when people hear the term "retaliation," they imagine some form of obvious retaliation. But if I'd missed opportunities as a result of reporting, who was to say whether that incident had influenced anything? I sure wouldn't be able to prove that.

But even so, Google DID react by putting me in a position that hurt my career advancement there. That's ultimately why I left. I could no longer continue to advance on the path I was on, and that's deeply unfair. It was a one-two punch of sexism and shitty consequences for me.

What should they have done? I think they should've fired my harasser. But at the VERY least, they should have moved him to a different team. I shouldn't have been forced to switch teams just to get away from him. That's not fair.

Finally, of course sexual harassment and equal pay/opportunities are linked in many more subtle ways, relating to the overall attitude toward women from leadership and peers alike. I don't want that part to get lost. https://t.co/J0c0VpWM1B

> When Sergey Brin himself is openly having relationships with employees, it creates an environment where exec men, on down to men in senior management, think it's fine to treat the office like their harem.
>
> I'll also point out it's forbidden per Google's own training.
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> — Kelly Ellis (@justkelly_ok) October 30, 2018