

# **EXHIBIT 28**

BUSINESS

# The Power Issue: Heather Brunner Is Championing Diversity in an Industry That Sorely Needs It

The CEO of Austin's WP Engine says her company doesn't look like most tech outfits—and that's one reason it's so successful.



By Tom Foster

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Brunner at the WP Engine office, in Austin, on October 29, 2018.

Photograph by Drew Anthony Smith

*This profile is part of our 2018 Power Issue. For more of 2018's most powerful Texans, click [here](#).*

When the private-equity firm Silver Lake Partners invested \$250 million in Austin-based tech platform WP Engine this past January, it was not only the largest investment in an Austin start-up in a decade, it was one of the three largest investments in a woman-led start-up ever. (WP Engine helps businesses build websites and apps running on WordPress software. Disclosure: *Texas Monthly* is a customer of WP Engine.) Heather Brunner, a fifth-generation Texan and Trinity University alum, has made diversity one of WP Engine's highest priorities during the six years she has been there, and she says that has been one of the keys to the company's success. "It fuels a high-performance culture," she says. Here's how that works, in her words:

"I spent the majority of my post-Trinity career trying to be perceived not as a female leader but just somebody who gets things done. But being an executive who is also a mother of two daughters, I realized that I had a responsibility to advocate bringing your full self to work. Being different is what makes all of us stronger. I needed to have that realization personally in order to be a champion for it.

"We have embedded that philosophy in the core values of the company. You can be gay, Democrat, Republican, Jewish, Muslim—you will be treated as a full equal. People get a feeling of ownership when they are free to be who they are. That has paid incredible dividends to our culture and affected how hard people work and how loyal they are to the company. That consistency and passion from our team builds longer-lasting relationships with customers and more innovation internally.

"We don't look like a typical tech company. Sixty percent of the executive team is women. Thirty percent of the whole organization is women. Thirty percent is non-white. Thirty-three percent do not have a college degree. And twenty-five percent of the employees who were promoted in the first half of this year do not have a college degree. One of our most successful sales leaders does not have a college degree. So not only are people coming here who are different from the tech-sector norm, they are earning leadership positions.

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“I’m involved with several initiatives, locally and nationally, to push this discussion within other companies. One is with a group called the Austin 100, which is leaders from different industries. In January we launched a start-up diversity pledge, so company founders can commit to a series of best practices from day one. The point is, can we make Austin the place where I’m judged on my character and deeds and potential? Period.”

*This article originally appeared in the December 2018 issue of Texas Monthly with the headline “Championing Diversity in an Industry That Sorely Needs It.” **Subscribe today.***

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