

Blowup

Earlier that year, Sequethia participated in a VPRB (Vice Presidential Review Board) where each Director (including Sequethia) had to present their projects to the Vice Presidents. This process was important because it determined how much funding each Director received for their project. It was also a way that each Director got exposure to the people who would determine their career progression.

Sequethia had always dreaded these VPRB meetings. She particularly dreaded her interactions with Rich Yablonski, who always seemed to take a perverse joy in poking holes in Sequethia's presentations. Apparently that was not the only poking that he seemed to enjoy because he was eventually fired for sexual harassment (but that is a different story for a different time). This VPRB meeting was no exception.

As Sequethia entered (each Director "faced" the VPRB individually and it really did feel like facing a firing squad) she could sense that Rich Yablonski was in rare form that day. She could tell from the gleam in his eye that he was "locked and loaded". As Sequethia gave her presentation, he continually interrupted her with irrelevant questions. She tried so hard to contain herself and her emotions, but her irritation began to show. Because her job was to present the "numbers" that would help determine the products to advertise, and which to de-emphasize, he had a stake in not letting his products become "de-emphasized". Therefore, any time Sequethia's numbers even hinted about his division's poor performance, he called her into question. This went on for about 45 minutes with him questioning every premise that led to her conclusions, and this flew directly into the face of her belief that "the numbers don't lie". Rich became more insistent to the point of becoming obnoxious. He then questioned her ability to do her job because "As I understand it you haven't completed your PhD program anyway, and wasn't that a pre-requisite for getting your job?" He continued "I'm surprised they hired you in the first place, but I can guess why" and his implication was clear to her. At that point Sequethia had "had it". She responded, "You can take your implications and shove them up your ass. As far as I'm concerned, the numbers don't lie and several of your division's products should be discontinued". The Senior Vice President who was running the VPRB then hastily called the meeting into recess.