QUBERA WEALTH MANAGEMENT

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FREE GUIDE FOR WOMEN IN TECH

10 Mistakes Women Executives Are Making With Their Money

A plain-language guide for Directors, VPs & C-Suite women in tech - backed by McKinsey, Fidelity & BLS.

$34T
Female-controlled U.S. assets by 2030

71%
Women now investing (up from 44% in 2018)

+1.8%
Annual outperformance vs. male investors

Nirav Desai
Founder & Financial Advisor, Qubera Wealth Management
QuberaWealth.com · Fee-Only · Fiduciary

A Note Before You Begin

> ***You are objectively a better investor than you think you are.***
>
> Women outperform male investors by 0.4–1.8% annually, yet only 54% of women self-rate as confident investors. That gap is costing you real money.
>
> *- Warwick Business School / George Washington University GFLEC*

Who this guide is for

This guide was written for women in senior sales and marketing roles at technology companies - Directors, VPs, SVPs, and C-suite leaders earning $200K-$500K+ in total compensation who feel their financial life hasn't caught up with their career.

You are not bad with money. You are busy, you are paid less than your male peers, and you have been sold generic financial advice that ignores how you actually earn, variable comp, RSUs, equity, bonus cycles, and career volatility.

What makes your financial situation unique

- A base salary plus significant variable compensation (OTE, bonus, commission)
- Equity (RSUs / options) that may be your single largest financial asset
- A gender pay gap that compounds invisibly over decades
- Higher likelihood of career gaps due to family, burnout, or tech-sector layoffs
- A longevity advantage, women live ~6 years longer, meaning your money must last longer
- The motherhood earnings penalty, up to $500K+ in lifetime wealth impact

These 10 mistakes are the ones I see most often. Let's fix them.

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MISTAKE #1 OF 10

Treating RSUs Like a Bonus Instead of a Concentrated Risk

01

THE REALITY

When your RSUs vest, they feel like found money. Most people spend them immediately or let them sit as company stock. But the moment they vest, you own a concentrated position in a single stock, the same company whose paycheck you already depend on. That is double exposure.

65% of company insiders hold more than 10% of their wealth in company stock

Morgan Stanley Equity Compensation Research

WHY IT MATTERS

If your company's stock drops 40%, or you are laid off, your income and your investments decline simultaneously. Diversification is not just smart here, it is essential. The IRS also gives you a narrow window to optimize taxes at vesting, and most people miss it entirely.

THE FIX

- Build a vesting calendar and plan your diversification cadence in advance
- Understand the tax treatment: RSUs are ordinary income at vesting, plan withholding accordingly
- Consider a 10b5-1 plan for automated, compliance-friendly selling if you are a senior officer
- Set a target: how much single-stock exposure is acceptable to you?

NIRAV'S NOTE

For someone vesting $150K-$300K in RSUs annually, tax planning around vesting events can be one of the highest-leverage financial conversations we will have together.

MISTAKE #2 OF 10

Under-Contributing to Retirement Because 'The Bonus Will Cover It'

02

THE REALITY

High earners routinely defer retirement savings with the assumption that a future raise, bonus, or equity event will make up the gap. It rarely does. The compounding math is unforgiving: a dollar not invested at 38 costs you far more than a dollar not invested at 48.

$59K Average 401(k) balance for women vs. $89K for men, a 50% gap

Bank of America, 2023

WHY IT MATTERS

The 401(k) gender gap is not primarily a savings-rate problem. It is a compounding gap created by career interruptions, lower base salaries, and delayed starting points. Every year you under-contribute is multiplied forward by decades of lost growth.

THE FIX

- Max your 401(k) contribution every year ($23,500 in 2025, plus $7,500 catch-up if 50+)
- If your plan allows it, investigate Mega Backdoor Roth contributions (see Mistake #7)
- Automate your contribution increase by 1% each year at minimum
- If you have a high-deductible health plan, maximize your HSA, it is a triple-tax-advantaged retirement vehicle

NIRAV'S NOTE

Most high earners max their 401(k) and stop there. But if you have a high-deductible health plan, your HSA is the most tax-efficient account available - a triple tax advantage: deductible contributions, tax-free growth, and tax-free withdrawals for medical expenses. In retirement, it can also be used for any expense. It is the one account I always make sure clients are not leaving on the table.

MISTAKE #3 OF 10

Holding Too Much Cash While Inflation Quietly Erodes It

03

THE REALITY

After years of income volatility, layoffs, variable comp, career transitions, many high-earning women become cash-heavy. A $200K emergency fund feels safe. But at 4.5% HYSA yield with 3% inflation, your real return is negligible. And your real (after-tax) return might even be negative. Safety and security are not the same thing.

48% of women say their biggest financial regret is not investing sooner

SoFi Women & Finances Survey, 2024

WHY IT MATTERS

Cash drag, holding more in savings than you need, is one of the most common and costly mistakes among high earners. Your emergency fund should be 3-6 months of expenses, not income. The difference can be $100K or more sitting idle and losing real purchasing power every year.

THE FIX

- Define your emergency fund target in expenses, not income (3-6 months of actual spend)
- Move excess cash above your emergency target into the market within a defined timeline
- For cash needed in 1–3 years (home purchase, career transition fund), consider T-bills or short-duration bond funds
- For cash you do not need for 5+ years, it should be invested, not saved

NIRAV'S NOTE

I often ask new clients: what would need to happen for you to feel safe investing that cash? The answer is almost always revealing, and almost never a specific number.

MISTAKE #4 OF 10

Having No Plan for the Motherhood Earnings Penalty

04

THE REALITY

The motherhood penalty is one of the most financially devastating and least-discussed issues in women's personal finance. Mothers working full time earn 31% less than fathers. The average woman loses more than $500,000 in lifetime earnings simply from the economic impact of becoming a mother.

$500K+ Average lifetime earnings loss from the motherhood penalty in the U.S.

Bankrate analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, 2024

WHY IT MATTERS

This is not just about salary. The motherhood penalty affects Social Security benefits, 401(k) contributions, equity accumulation, and lifetime wealth compounding. Women who take career breaks of one year or more earn 7% less than continuous workers, immediately upon return.

THE FIX

- Before any leave, understand your equity: what vests, what accelerates, what is forfeited
- Maximize retirement contributions in the years before a leave
- Negotiate return-to-work terms explicitly: part-time, remote, adjusted targets
- Consider a spousal IRA for any year you have low or no earned income
- Model the Social Security impact of low-earning years in your retirement plan

NIRAV'S NOTE

The financial impact of parental leave is almost never included in a standard financial plan. I build a specific leave scenario for every client who is planning a family. The numbers are often surprising, and the planning opportunities are real.

MISTAKE #5 OF 10

Skipping Disability Insurance Because 'That Won't Happen to Me'

05

THE REALITY

You've insured your car, your home, and probably your life. But you haven't insured your most valuable asset: your ability to earn. A 40-year-old earning $300K will generate $6M or more in income over the rest of her career if she stays healthy. Disability is more common than death among working-age professionals.

1 in 4 Workers will experience a disabling injury or illness before retirement age

Social Security Administration / Council for Disability Awareness

WHY IT MATTERS

Most employer-provided disability coverage replaces only 60% of base salary, it rarely covers bonuses, commissions, or equity income. For a senior tech sales or marketing executive, that gap can be $100K-$200K per year. And if you leave your employer, that group coverage disappears entirely.

THE FIX

- Review your employer's long-term disability policy: what does it cover and for how long?
- Consider a personal own-occupation disability policy that covers your specific job
- For high earners, a supplemental disability policy can cover the gap above group coverage limits
- Ensure your policy covers bonuses and commission income, not just base salary

NIRAV'S NOTE

The most overlooked question is whether your disability policy uses an own-occupation definition. Some policies stop paying once you can do any occupation at all. Own-occupation policies pay as long as you cannot perform your specific job, a critical distinction for senior professionals.

MISTAKE #6 OF 10

Waiting to Invest Until You Feel Ready

06

THE REALITY

The confidence gap in investing is real, well-documented, and expensive. Only 54% of women say they feel confident making investment decisions, versus 71% of men. Yet women consistently outperform male investors by 0.4-1.8% annually. You are already more capable than you feel, and waiting is costing you.

54% Women who feel confident making investment decisions, vs. 71% of men

George Washington University GFLEC Financial Literacy Survey

WHY IT MATTERS

Waiting just one year to invest $50,000 costs approximately $3,500-$5,000 in foregone returns at historical average rates. Waiting five years costs $25,000 or more. The confidence gap is not a knowledge gap, it is a socialized one. The antidote is starting, not studying more.

THE FIX

- Set up automatic monthly investments, remove the decision from the equation entirely
- Start with a simple diversified portfolio if complexity is the barrier
- Track your own investment results for 12 months, your data will build confidence faster than reading about it
- Work with an advisor who explains decisions, shares results, and builds your knowledge over time

NIRAV'S NOTE

I share portfolio performance reports with all my clients on a periodic basis, not just the numbers, but the reasoning behind every decision. Educated clients make better decisions and stay invested during volatility. That is where generational wealth is actually built.

MISTAKE #7 OF 10

Missing the Mega Backdoor Roth Opportunity

07

THE REALITY

Most high earners know about the standard Backdoor Roth IRA ($7,000 per year). Far fewer know about the Mega Backdoor Roth, which allows after-tax contributions to your 401(k) that are then converted to a Roth account. The total 2026 annual additions limit is $72,000 - plus catch-up contributions if you are over 50. Tax-free growth on that scale compounds to extraordinary wealth.

$72K 2026 IRS annual additions limit (IRC Section 415(c)) - plus catch-up contributions if over 50

IRS Section 415(c) / IRS.gov 2026 retirement plan limits

WHY IT MATTERS

A Roth account grows entirely tax-free. For a 40-year-old in the top tax bracket, maximizing after-tax contributions to a Mega Backdoor Roth for 20 years could generate $3M or more in tax-free retirement assets. This strategy is not available in every 401(k) plan, but it is in many major tech company plans.

THE FIX

- Ask your HR or 401(k) administrator: does our plan allow after-tax contributions with in-plan Roth conversion?
- If yes, contribute up to the 2026 annual additions limit ($72,000, minus employer match and pre-tax contributions) - plus catch-up contributions if you are over 50
- If you have existing traditional IRA money, ask your advisor about the pro-rata rule before executing
- This strategy requires coordination between HR, your 401(k) platform, and your financial advisor
- Important: if you plan to max out the strategy, subtract your employer match from the $72,000 limit first, then contribute the remainder as after-tax. This ensures you do not inadvertently lose your employer match by hitting the cap too early in the year

NIRAV'S NOTE

This is one of the first things I check when I onboard a new client at a tech company. The Mega Backdoor Roth is available at many major employers, Google, Meta, Salesforce, and others, and the majority of eligible employees have no idea the strategy exists.

MISTAKE #8 OF 10

No Estate Plan at 40, Even With Significant Assets

08

THE REALITY

Estate planning feels like something you do when you are old. But if you have equity worth $500K, a retirement account, a home, or children, you need an estate plan right now. Without one, state law decides where your assets go, who raises your children, and who makes medical decisions for you.

67% Americans have no will or estate plan, including most people with significant assets

Caring.com Estate Planning Survey, 2024

WHY IT MATTERS

For single women and divorced women, a growing segment of senior tech professionals, the absence of an estate plan is especially dangerous. Your assets may pass to people you would not have chosen. Your healthcare wishes may be ignored. All of this is entirely fixable in a few hours with the right guidance.

THE FIX

- At minimum: create a will, healthcare proxy / advance directive, and durable power of attorney
- Update all beneficiary designations on retirement accounts and life insurance, these override your will entirely
- If you have significant assets, consider a revocable living trust to avoid probate
- Review and update estate documents after every major life event: marriage, divorce, new child, major asset change

NIRAV'S NOTE

Beneficiary designations are the most commonly ignored estate planning tool. I have personally seen estates pass entirely to ex-spouses because someone never updated their 401(k) beneficiary form after a divorce. We review these for every single client.

MISTAKE #9 OF 10

Letting a Partner's Financial Avoidance Become Your Risk

09

THE REALITY

In many dual-income households, financial management defaults to one partner, or falls through the cracks entirely. For high-earning women, this often means taking on all the financial responsibility or, more dangerously, deferring entirely to a partner who avoids the conversation altogether.

31% Lower lifetime earnings for mothers vs. fathers in the U.S.

Bankrate / U.S. Census Bureau analysis, 2024

WHY IT MATTERS

Divorce, widowhood, and financial infidelity are not rare events, they are common ones. Women who have ceded financial decision-making to a partner often discover significant problems (debt, undersaved accounts, tax issues) only during a crisis, when options are most limited.

THE FIX

- Know your complete financial picture: every account, every debt, every beneficiary, every policy
- Have your own financial advisor relationship, not a shared one where your partner dominates
- Establish and maintain credit in your own name
- Ensure you have access to liquid assets that are independently yours in any scenario
- If your partner avoids financial discussions, consider a structured quarterly money meeting with a clear agenda

NIRAV'S NOTE

I work with women navigating divorce regularly. The ones who are most prepared, who know their accounts, understand their options, and have their own independent advisor relationship, navigate it with far more confidence and far better outcomes. Financial independence is a form of self-protection.

MISTAKE #10 OF 10

Working With a Financial Advisor Who Doesn't Speak Your Language

10

THE REALITY

The financial services industry was built by men, for men. Most financial advice defaults to assumptions that do not fit your life: that you have a spouse, that your income is stable, that your biggest concern is your 80s. It ignores equity compensation, variable income, the confidence gap, and the gender pay gap entirely.

28% Women who say they have received financial advice tailored to their specific situation

Merrill Lynch / Age Wave Women & Financial Wellness Study

WHY IT MATTERS

An advisor who does not understand your RSU vesting schedule, your OTE compensation structure, the motherhood earnings penalty, or the specific financial risks of being a woman in tech cannot give you the best advice. Generic advice produces generic results, and you deserve far better than that.

THE FIX

- Look for an advisor who specifically works with tech executives and has demonstrated equity compensation expertise
- Ask directly: what percentage of your clients are women at the VP level or above in tech?
- Your advisor should proactively raise RSU diversification, disability insurance, the motherhood penalty, and retirement gaps
- You should leave every meeting feeling more informed and more confident, not talked down to
- If your advisor has never asked about your career trajectory or your life goals beyond retirement, find one who will

NIRAV'S NOTE

The right financial advisor relationship feels like having a CFO for your personal life, someone who proactively flags risks, explains reasoning clearly, and genuinely understands both how you earn and what matters most to you. That is exactly what I aim to be for every Qubera client.

YOU'VE READ THE 10 MISTAKES. NOW WHAT?

Your financial plan should be as exceptional as your career.

Knowing the mistakes is the first step.
The second step is building a plan specific to how you earn, invest, and live.

01

Download & Reflect

Go through this guide and mark the mistakes that apply to you. Most women in tech identify with at least 4–6 of these. Honest self-assessment is where the work begins.

02

Book a Free 30-Minute Call

Schedule a no-obligation conversation with Nirav. In 30 minutes, we will look at your specific compensation structure, equity, and goals, and you will leave with clarity on exactly what to prioritize.

03

Get a Plan Built for Your Life

Walk away with a concrete, prioritized action plan. No jargon. No hidden agendas. No product pitch. Just an honest conversation from a fee-only fiduciary who works exclusively in your interest.

Book Your Free 30-Minute Strategy Call with Nirav

QuberaWealth.com · Fee-Only · Fiduciary · No sales pitch

Schedule directly at: calendly.com/qwm/new-clients

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