

Recap: “Venture Capital Speaker Series—The Tech Counsel”

By Stacey Ward, J.D. Candidate 2019 | October 19, 2016

On October 12, 2016, the Berkeley Center for Law, Business and the Economy ([BCLBE](#)) welcomed Dave Kling ('97), Vice President, Deputy Counsel, and Corporate Secretary of Facebook for a Q&A discussion about his career, his role at Facebook, and the variety of legal challenges Facebook faces as a company.

A graduate of Stanford University and Berkeley Law School, Mr. Kling was formerly a partner at Gunderson Dettmer in Silicon Valley. In 2009, after 11 years at Gunderson Dettmer, Mr. Kling joined Facebook’s legal department.

When asked what he loves most about working at Facebook, Mr. Kling stressed his belief in Facebook’s [mission](#)—making the world more “connected.” Facebook’s goal is not solely to inform us about the lives of our closest friends and family, but also to bring everyone in the world closer together. For example, as Mr. Kling shared, Facebook endeavored to bring our world together by providing internet to some of the world’s most unconnected places—Africa, in particular, through a [SpaceX rocket](#). Unfortunately, Facebook’s SpaceX exploded during a test run on September 1, 2016. Nevertheless, the failed rocket launch is an interesting example of the diversity of legal issues Facebook handles as a company.

When asked about the composition of Facebook’s legal team, Mr. Kling estimated an in-house team of about 200 lawyers, but explained that, due to the specialized nature of many of Facebook’s projects, the company often relies upon outside counsel. Projects such as the SpaceX launch require knowledge of very specialized areas of the law for which Facebook outsources work to a handful of trusted firms.

When asked about the obstacles confronting Facebook overseas, Mr. Kling emphasized the importance of adhering to the laws of the different countries to which they provide service. A common legal bone of contention is laws regulating freedom of speech, as these laws vary from country to country. Facebook strives to comply with local law because, as Mr. Kling explained, Facebook would rather function in a more limited capacity in a particular country than be prohibited from existing in that country altogether.

Most importantly, Mr. Kling offered advice to fellow Boalt Hall students. He stressed the importance of being open to new experiences and not shying away from the unknown. One regret during his three years at Berkeley Law: not playing more rounds of golf at Tilden Park before class during his last year.