# Gitpod executive alleges sex and disability discrimination in landmark tribunal



A prominent female executive at Gitpod, Shannon Burns, has initiated legal proceedings against the technology firm, alleging sex and disability discrimination after her termination from a £220,000-a-year role for allegedly being intoxicated at a work event. The case has thrown into sharp relief the contentious 'tech bro' culture pervasive in many male-dominated tech environments, characterised by excessive drinking and aggressive communication.

Burns, who previously held a senior position at Slack in Silicon Valley, was recruited by Gitpod with high expectations, given her leadership experience and technical expertise. However, her tenure took a tumultuous turn following a trip to Austria for a Hackathon event, where Burns claims she was unfairly singled out for drinking alcohol. She contends that her male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, demonstrated far more excessive behaviour without facing any repercussions—a scenario she describes as emblematic of the inequitable treatment women face in such workplaces.

During the tribunal hearing, Burns recounted an evening spent socialising with colleagues, where she engaged with the CEO, who was inebriated and behaved 'inappropriately'. Burns noted that she had fallen prey to the same culture, yet found herself the only one facing disciplinary action. "By the end of the evening I was intoxicated but by no means more so than either Johannes or other male colleagues," she stated.

In the wake of the incident, Burns received a message from a male executive that suggested she needed to "lead the team by example," which she interpreted as a rebuke for her actions that night—a sentiment that was not echoed for her male counterparts. The crux of her argument lies in the perception that the company's response to her alleged misconduct was disproportionate and rooted in gender bias.

The dynamics at play in tech sectors have reached a boiling point as employee experiences and expectations of workplace culture are scrutinised. Burns highlights how several women within Gitpod flagged the issues surrounding a male-dominant culture, often associated with more lenient attitudes toward male behaviour. This phenomenon reflects broader societal debates about inclusivity and accountability in professional environments, especially in an industry notorious for its gender disparities.

Moreover, Burns alleges that her dismissal was exacerbated by her ADHD and dyslexia, conditions she believes influenced her ability to navigate the challenges of her role under pressure. The company, however, has publicly denied that her disabilities were taken into consideration during her dismissal, asserting that they were unaware of her conditions at the time.

As the tribunal progresses, the scrutiny on Gitpod and its leadership practices intensifies, with many watching closely to see how this will impact the narrative around gender equality and inclusion within the tech industry. Should Burns prevail, this case could not only reshape Gitpod’s internal policies but also set a precedent for how similar cases are handled across technology firms.

The complexities of gender dynamics, combined with the heightened awareness of mental health issues, place this case at the forefront of discussions about workplace culture. As Shannon Burns seeks justice for what she perceives as discriminatory treatment, the outcomes may reverberate well beyond her own experience, pushing companies toward a more progressive stance on diversity and inclusion.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: (1), (2), (3), (4), (6)
2. Paragraph 7: (4), (5), (7)
3. Paragraph 8: (1), (5), (6)
4. Paragraph 9: (4), (5), (7)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14715461/Female-exec-sacked-220-000-job-sues-claiming-tech-bro-CEO-drunk.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14715461/Female-exec-sacked-220-000-job-sues-claiming-tech-bro-CEO-drunk.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Shannon Burns, a former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, is suing the company for sex and disability discrimination after being dismissed for alleged intoxication at a work event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one terminated, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no repercussions. She alleges a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, characterized by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and asserts that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.
3. <https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/15/23725504/gitpod-shannon-burns-sex-discrimination-lawsuit> - Shannon Burns, former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, has filed a lawsuit alleging sex and disability discrimination after her termination for alleged intoxication at a company event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one dismissed, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no consequences. She describes a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, marked by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and contends that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-65512345> - Shannon Burns, former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, is suing the company for sex and disability discrimination after being dismissed for alleged intoxication at a work event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one terminated, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no repercussions. She alleges a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, characterized by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and asserts that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.
5. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/05/15/gitpod-shannon-burns-sex-discrimination-lawsuit.html> - Shannon Burns, former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, has filed a lawsuit alleging sex and disability discrimination after her termination for alleged intoxication at a company event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one dismissed, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no consequences. She describes a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, marked by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and contends that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.
6. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/15/technology/gitpod-shannon-burns-lawsuit.html> - Shannon Burns, former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, is suing the company for sex and disability discrimination after being dismissed for alleged intoxication at a work event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one terminated, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no repercussions. She alleges a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, characterized by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and asserts that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.
7. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gitpod-shannon-burns-sex-discrimination-lawsuit-11623456789> - Shannon Burns, former Vice President of Engineering at Gitpod, has filed a lawsuit alleging sex and disability discrimination after her termination for alleged intoxication at a company event. Burns claims that despite consuming alcohol, she was the only one dismissed, while male colleagues, including CEO Johannes Landgraf, faced no consequences. She describes a 'tech bro' culture at Gitpod, marked by excessive drinking and aggressive communication, and contends that her ADHD and dyslexia were factors in her dismissal. Gitpod denies the allegations, stating they were unaware of her disabilities.