

# Marvel Visual Effects Leader Pushes For More Women, Tells Newcomers ‘Fill The Gap’

by [David Bloom](#)

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[Victoria Alonso](#), [Marvel Studios](#)' exuberant EVP of visual effects and post production, told a roomful of VFX industry leaders this morning that it needs to invite more women into the industry, and onto the stage. And for entertainment industry newcomers trying to find their way into the business, she had simple advice: "fill the gap."



"I love the fact that you allowed a woman to talk to you this early in the morning," Alonso told the mostly male audience. "It's better when the room is 50-50 (male-female). It's okay to let the ladies enter. They bring a balance."

Alonso was speaking in a Q&A before more than 150 people at the [Visual Effects Society's VES Summit](#) on Saturday morning. The summit, being live-streamed online to VES's membership around the world, urged young women considering careers as digital artists to make it happen, but said one reason she always agrees to speak at events such as the summit, [San Diego Comic-Con](#) and elsewhere is that young women need role models in notable positions. For her life, seeing (and eventually meeting) pioneering female producers such as [Kathleen Kennedy](#) made a huge difference in her career choices.



“I used to look up to Kathy Kennedy,” Alonso said. “I didn’t know who she was, but I knew she produced *E.T.* and *Schindler’s List*. When I had lunch with her, I told everyone in the office. I was like a dork. I was a mess. But she had tears in her eyes (when I told her), ‘There are hundreds of thousands of little girls out there who think you’re the bomb.’”

For newcomers trying to break in, Alonso advised that they look for the role in an organization that’s not being filled, whatever it is, and even if it’s not exactly what the person wants to do. Her first chance at VFX house [Digital Domain](#) came when the executive assistant to a company executive had broken her leg and the fax machine was too far away.

“Fill the gap,” Alonso said repeatedly. “I made a career of filling the gap. You will be what you’re supposed to be.”

Alonso joined Marvel eight years ago, when it was a considerably smaller film operation. Since then, she has been an executive producer on all the Disney-owned companies VFX blockbusters, and a co-producer on four, including the first two [Iron Man](#) movies, [Thor](#) and [The Avengers](#). She’s also been raising a now-4-year-old daughter.

Alonso talked a great deal about the collaborative approach among Marvel executives, and the somewhat infamous company concept of “paddling out to the island” when a proffered idea isn’t working for anyone else on the team. But even the third-party VFX and post houses doing work on a Marvel movie are encouraged to propose ideas, she said, and 65 to 70 percent of them are accepted.

When Alonso started with Marvel, she said she wasn’t even a comic-book fan, and in fact, generally would prefer to see a romantic drama over another comic-book film. But that sensibility provides a useful balance when building a compelling story line for a film that can appeal to a broad audience.

“I’m the voice that doesn’t know comics, that isn’t a comic-book fan,” Alonso said. “I’ve become one, but I’m the person you have to win over sometimes.”



That said, she's "slowly but surely being won over," particularly by Marvel's most recent hit, [Guardians of the Galaxy](#). **(SPOILER ALERT JUST AHEAD, IF YOU HAVEN'T YET SEEN THE MOVIE.)**

"A tree is not anything you think would give its life for its friends," Alonso said of a key scene. "But the biggest lesson in *Guardians* is you can find your pod and some people will love you and that will be okay."

Asked whether the substantially increased [production tax incentives signed into California law](#) last month will make a difference for Marvel in deciding where it makes its movies, Alonso said her company welcomes the chance.

"We want to make movies in L.A., so if the government is ready, we're ready" she said. "We live here. We want to make movies here. We will be happy to commute through the horrendous traffic in L.A. because we want to be home every night."