

RWE

POWER

LOOKS GOOD

ON YOU

#2 ISSUE

Defying
stereotypes

Once I tasted success,
I got addicted.

MICHELLE

WTG Offshore Technician, Germany



POWER LOOKS GOOD ON YOU. Michelle Simon, WTG Offshore Technician, RWE Offshore, Germany.

How will they know what you're capable of?

Michelle Simon discusses ambition, exceeding expectations, and euphoric runs in Heligoland.

We don't use the word badass in the corporate world. But Michelle is proof that we should. It's shoot day, and she's got two outfits. One: her on-land attire. And two: her bright orange survival suit, designed to withstand the toughest offshore conditions. And what a story she has to tell, from being picked on at school, to being turned away from

mechanics, to going further than she could've ever imagined.

What first drew you to mechanics?

It all started with my motorcycle. You take 1000 pieces of metal, put them together, and get something that goes 300km/hr. It's amazing. I feel the same for turbines, but it's way more impactful.



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What were your early challenges?

I used to be overweight, and I was bullied in school. It's weird to say now, but I'm thankful for it. First, it made me want to prove the bullies wrong, but then I wanted to prove myself something.

I had some back pain, and the doctor said I needed more muscle support. So, I went to the gym. Once I tasted success, I got addicted. I grew into the whole gym, sports, weightlifting thing.

Then, when I tried to go into car mechanics, all the companies said, “No, we don't take girls because it's hard”. It was autumn, the season of tyre changing, and they thought I couldn't do it.

How did you react?

I was disappointed. It was my dream! But I didn't give up. I did many jobs at car workshops and one saw how serious I was. That interview was quite weird because I was at the office, and I spoke for about an hour. That hour was a fight. The interviewer didn't see a car

mechanic, he saw a tiny girl. I had to convince him that I really wanted to do it. Then, he agreed to give me a try.

When did you make the leap to wind power?

In 2018, I made brakes for wind turbines rather than cars. I wanted to do something that benefits everyone, but still mechanical. And we all need power, so it was the perfect combination.

First, I worked onshore. Then after five years, I wanted to go offshore. I heard great things about RWE. So, I had a closer look.

Did you experience the same challenges in the energy industry?

Before I joined RWE, when I worked onshore, I struggled with some customers. Someone once said to my colleague, “Oh nice, you've brought your wife to help.” and he said, “She isn't my wife, she's my colleague!”. People would also say things like, “Can you even lift heavy stuff?”.

How did you deal with that?

I just told them it's not what we do all day. And we help each other. Men also help each other because they don't want to ruin their backs. I asked them questions. Like, “Which is the part I can't do that others can?”.

Do you still feel a need to prove yourself?

No. Not at RWE. No one ever asked me “Oh, do you think you can do it because you're a girl?”. I think it's because of the team.



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What’s so great about the team?

They show me that for them, it’s not a difference. What gender I am. If I’m small, if I’m big, if I’m male, if I’m female. Where I come from. It doesn’t matter. Everyone starts the same.

And from the beginning, everyone was honest. Sometimes you hear things you don’t want to hear! Because it’s *really* honest. There’s no gossip. We see each other for two weeks every month, so we have to get along. That’s what makes me feel at home.

What do you do to let off steam when you’re working?

I go for runs in Heligoland, the tiny island where we’re based. It really clears my mind. Often, I think about the changes I’ve made – for myself and my career. When I was fighting to get mechanics training, I would’ve never thought that I’d end up here.

What are your plans for the future?

I want to do my electrician training next year. Now I’m a mechanic, but if you work on turbines, it’s best to have both. Then someday I can be a good Troubleshooter – the people who search for complex issues on the turbine. I’m also doing helicopter training. We’re learning what to do if the helicopter goes down in the water. Some people are struggling with it. The getting out of the helicopter is easy, it’s what’s in your head.

“We can do all the stuff the boys can do.”

How do you get that mental strength?

I have to do it because it's my job. Panicking is not an option. You just switch off your head and go through it. Ten years ago, I would've run away, but now I've grown enough to do it.

Actually, last year I had a huge struggle with seasickness. My boss said, “You have to find a way. Just try anything. Try ginger tea. Try everything.” Without being mean he told me, “If you can't get this managed, we can't keep you”.

But it was always my dream to go offshore. So, it was a really wild ride. There were two or three months that I didn't know if I could stay. And then, one day there was really rough sea I didn't mind. That was the best day EVER!

What would you say to someone else who was once told “You can't do it”?

I would tell them that the people who say that to you, “How will they know?”

How will they know what you are capable of?”

I have a feeling that being an Offshore Technician is something more women want to do, but maybe they're afraid of something. Maybe it's judgement, or they think the work is too heavy. But it's just not the truth. We can do all the stuff the boys can do.

What would you say to anyone looking to join RWE?

Do it! It's amazing. I've worked at other companies before, and they were good. But RWE is even better. There's no judgement. Everyone's honest. Everyone just tries to push you.

At the end of the shoot, Michelle shows us all a video of herself being hoisted up in a helicopter in her survival suit. It's the perfect example of how she's taken her passion for machines and adrenaline and turned it into something epic. Move over Destiny's Child – Michelle is our true Survivor.

