

RWE

POWER

LOOKS GOOD

ON YOU

#4 ISSUE

Becoming  
a leader

We all struggle, but it  
shouldn't hold you back.

CONNIE

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# I look at other mothers and think, “You’re superwoman”. But I often look like a panda in the morning.

**Conny Cichon** talks Operations, motherhood and thinking like a leader.

**Conny starts by warning me that she hasn’t prepared for the interview. Honest and vulnerable, it’s exactly how she wants to be seen. But her answers are raw, real, and better than any script.**

**What made you fall in love with energy?**

As a student, I stood in front of a turbine, and thought, “Wow! This is the area I want to work in. I want to go where the big machines are, where we produce electricity”.

I started working in power plants at just 25. That was a bit of a shocker as one of the established Engineers would

introduce me by saying “This is Conny. She’s going to take my job.”.

**How did you deal with that?**

Back then I thought, “Oh my god, I’ll never be able to do this!”. But after some time, I just smiled at people and said “Yes, I will!”.

**When did you start at RWE?**

I joined the RWE graduate program at 27. As part of the program, you get to see different aspects of the company, so I’ve been with Investor Relations and Consulting. When the program was over, I knew I wanted to go back into power production. That’s when I got an offer at the Renewables business.



**What made you choose Operations?**

The vibe. It was a brand-new team and RWE's first German offshore wind farm. We were like pioneers.

**What's one of the biggest things you've learned throughout your career?**

That I was too passive for too long.

**What do you mean by that?**

I come from a family that worked hard but was modest. I thought if I gave 100%, people would recognise me. But nobody ever said, "Wow, look at you, you should be promoted."

It took me a while to realise the difference between being a diligent employee and proving you're ready to move up.

**Did you decide to show up more?**

The change happened with the RWE talent program. I wanted to apply for the specialist careers group. My boss, she said, "Uh-uh. You've led large projects. Apply for the leadership one, I'm not letting you do the others". With her push, I went for it. Then I realised I needed to actively ask for a leadership role.

**How did you go after it?**

There was a vacant position, I applied, and I didn't get it! But because I applied, people knew I was serious. A month later, I got a call from my future boss with a different opportunity.

I also realised you need to think like a leader.

**How is thinking like a leader different?**

Sometimes people ask me if they should go for a leadership role. I always

say, "Have you, in the last month or year, thought 'My manager should change things' or have you thought, 'If I was in that position, I would do this'?" One is identifying problems - the other is finding solutions.

It's easy to see things that should be done differently, but if it stops there, you don't have that leadership mindset.

**How do you see the potential in others?**

Everyone has a strength; we're just different. I always try to see what gives someone energy.

If they've got potential to be a leader, I tell them straight away. And reactions are different. If they don't want to, that's okay. But some don't dare to. That's when I tell them that I applied to a job, didn't get it, and another door opened.

**How does it feel to help someone dare to go for it?**

In my team, there was one woman who started as an Office Clerk. She was doing everything we needed, but nothing more. I saw that she was super reliable and skilful, so I pushed her and supported her. She grew out of the team and now, she's in a higher position.

Also, one of the guys is not as good at office work, but he's amazing at bringing people together. So, I told him. A day later, he texted me, "I've never seen my skills like that. Thank you for seeing so much in me.". Then he volunteered to take on a higher responsibility job improving the team atmosphere.

That made me really proud.



**“Everyone has a strength; we’re just different. I always try to see what gives someone energy.”**



**What are the challenges you face as a mother?**

It's like I have two full-time jobs and I'm not giving enough to either. Sometimes, I need to leave work to take care of my son and I feel like I should've done two hours more. Other times, I play with my son, and I need to leave because I live in Germany but work in Denmark. He always says, "Why are you leaving again?". That breaks my heart.

But it makes me more efficient. I don't have 14 hours a day to spend on my job and I also have a life in between.

**What has being a mother taught you about your role?**

In Operations, we work together very closely. It's like family life - there are good times and arguments. Even with grown-up men, deep down, we're all a bit like children. We want to be heard and appreciated. Not literally, but figuratively hugged. And that's the life of a parent. You need to tell them it's okay to blow off steam, but now it's time to get back to work.

**What advice would you give to a mother who wants to be a leader?**

I would share that I'm struggling. I've seen mothers in leadership positions, and I've always thought, "You're superwoman. You're confident, you look great and everything's perfect". Yet when I'm at home, I often look like a panda in the morning! Then when I get to know them, they tell me, "I'm struggling" and that makes me feel human. We all struggle, but that shouldn't hold you back. And now it's okay to shut the laptop in the afternoon, pick up our children, and do some work in the evening.

# “We all struggle, but that shouldn’t hold you back.”

I would also say that parents know what it feels like to have everybody wanting something from them. They need to juggle different tasks and responsibilities. These are exactly the skills you need to become a leader – so they should all go for it.

## Why do you think self-doubt should be viewed as something positive?

I always question myself. But by asking the question, I’m also asking myself, “What do I need to do to be better?”. By doubting, we never stop growing.

## What can women bring to this industry?

Working offshore is very male dominated. People are always trying to show that nothing can hurt them. But that creates a culture where you don’t openly say if something’s wrong. Women are more likely to say they’re scared or ask people how they’re doing. And it’s not only women who want a more open culture – everybody does! I’m really happy that RWE is looking into how we can improve the offshore environment to make it more accessible for women.

## How is RWE helping you? How are you helping RWE?

RWE has given me so much. I had wonderful training, got to see the company, and found a great network. I’ve grown my confidence so much. Now, this is something I want to give back to others.

## “By doubting, we never stop growing.”

Maybe Conny’s responses have sparked something in you. You might be thinking of all the things your boss could change, and how you’d make them happen. Or you might tell someone you’re struggling. And that’s the power of Conny. She’s not just reflecting on her own career, she’s helping us all take a step back and think a little differently. So, consider your big picture, then dare to go for it.

