

Paving the way

The health and high tech industries are still seen as predominantly male, but in fact women are paving the way for the future. We spoke with three women about working in these industries - both the fun parts and downsides - and their tips and best practices for future female talent.



Christelle Le Cam:
From engineering to people management

Christelle is Technology & Quality Support Senior Director at NXP and working hard to help engineers reach their full potential.

The Netherlands as home base

More than 20 years ago, Christelle moved from France to the Netherlands to work at Philips in Eindhoven. She also worked a few years in Belgium and France but in the last 14 years, she has been working at NXP in Nijmegen. She has always had a knack for physics and math. And as an engineer in micro-electronics, she did what she enjoys most: “Chips are fascinating! In my work I get to work on the technologies to manufacture future chips.” Part of what makes working in health and high tech valuable to Christelle, is the application of her work in people’s everyday lives. “For instance, working on chips that are used in phones and cars is great: you help to advance technology that many people use.”

As an expat, there are always challenges when you first start to work in a different country. Christelle chose to try and adapt quickly when she first arrived in the Netherlands. “The first year in Eindhoven was a cultural

shock. I took a course in Dutch culture, which was a real eye-opener,” she says. The Dutch directness was one of the biggest differences compared to France. However, she quickly understood that this was not a sign of rudeness, but simply the Dutch way of working.

Helping engineers reach their potential

Throughout the years, transistors have become smaller and smaller. Christelle has been responsible for an entire technology platform. “The challenge was to make sure the necessary technology is available and ready to use in the production of chips.” Now, she is managing a few teams which are, for example, aiming at developing simulation models. This enables chip designers to better predict how chips will behave once they are taken into production and used in cars, phones, and many other products.

She used to work as an engineer, but her current position in management requires different skills. It took a while before she accepted the management position, even though she had received offers before. “For a long time, I was too passionate about working on the technology itself, to move into a management position. Now, I enjoy using my people management skills to make my engineers reach their full potential.” Even though it has only been a little over a year, she enjoys her new role. “I look forward to getting to know the organisation even better and having the best possible impact on NXP as a whole.” Her teams seem satisfied, which to her, is the most important indicator that she is off to a good start.

Traveling the world online

She works in a very international team. This is inherent to the nature of her work, as she is in charge of teams located on different continents. “I work with teams in the Netherlands,

the United States and China”, she says. These international contacts are part of the chip industry: “My work enabled me to travel a lot, like going to conferences in the United States or going to Asia to visit manufacturing sites.”

Working with teams all over the world requires more than just management skills. As an engineer, Christelle experienced what it’s like to be part of one of those teams. She can use these insights in her current role. “I enjoyed working as an engineer. My focus is now on helping engineers grow,” she says.

Leading the way

Helping others find ways to improve and reach their full potential is nothing new to Christelle. Christelle is helping other expats, particularly women, find work. She is contributing to a programme in Eindhoven called ‘Women for Women’. “There are many talented women who move to the Netherlands with their partners. They need to find their path as well. And I am happy to help them do so.” Christelle continues to lead the way, now guiding female talent more specifically in health and high tech..

Within NXP, Christelle is part of the ‘Women in NXP’-board. There are similar boards in all countries where NXP is located. “We aim at empowering female talent, for instance, to reach their career path within the company.” Christelle sees positive signs within the company regarding the action that is being taken to the benefit of women. She encourages other companies to follow NXP’s initiatives. The ‘Women in NXP’ board contributes by organising workshops and mentoring. In doing so, Christelle shows that a career within health and high tech like hers is within arm’s reach.



Kasia Nowak: It's about making the right choices

As a Technical Director at Nexperia, Kasia helps the company realise its ambitious plans.

Kasia started her academic education in Poland but moved to the Netherlands for her master's degree. She received a scholarship and studied at Delft University. Fast forward 25 years and she is now technical director at Nexperia. "After doing a PhD, I started working in Eindhoven where I was in Philips' Research department. Early on in my career, I got to choose between the 'management'- or 'technical' track. I consciously chose the latter, which has always been my biggest passion."

A high tech architect

Nexperia is keen to become a big player in chip technology and aims to not only rise to the level of its competitors, but exceed it with new technologies. When Kasia joined, she was hesitant at first, but quickly understood that Nexperia and herself had similar ambitions. She took the challenge. "I didn't want to work on 'simple' chip technology, but at Nexperia I get to work on innovative technologies. This is critical to differentiate from com-

petitors. I also get to expand my expertise and shape the multidisciplinary teams that have to deliver the actual technology. Also, being involved in the complete product development cycle: from a concept, through its realisation, to the final product, I face lots of challenges and a steep learning curve. It's very exciting."

Chips can have different implementations and applications. In the initial stages of her career, Kasia's efforts were focused on boosting chip performance. And after having worked as a "chip architect" for quite some time, she now gets to do even more meaningful work as Technical Director. "One of my key challenges is to come up with innovative and at the same time cost-effective solutions. But it's not just about the technical aspect anymore. I now have to use different skills to manage stakeholders' expectations."

Adding a sense of direction

The most important task that lies ahead, is giving direction to the technical choices made at Nexperia. "I basically receive product ideas from our product management department. I then judge them in terms of relevance and whether it's realistic that we can turn the idea into actual technology." This also means she has to work together with many people from different domains and across business groups within the organisation. "Marketing, project leaders, designers. All of them have to come together to create something special. It's up to me to fit the pieces together. Clear communication and making the right choices are equally critical."

In the future, Kasia plans to make an even bigger impact at Nexperia. "Not only by sharing as much of my technical expertise as possible with our management but with new employees as well. I see a lot of junior engineers who come straight out of university and still have to adapt to working in our industry. I like helping them find their place."

Enjoying the journey

By sharing her story, expertise and network, Kasia hopes to inspire other women to pursue a career in health and high tech. She would like to be a role model for them. "Some women might think it's too difficult, or that they need to choose soft-skill oriented careers. I believe it is just as fascinating to work in high tech, where your efforts can have an impact on every single person in the world. Nobody should be forced into a certain career, but I hope to show them how interesting my work is."

Kasia is positive about the chances for women in health and high tech. "Back when I first started working after my studies, I felt like I was pretty much the only woman in this field of work. When working in teams, it could sometimes feel intimidating to work with only men. But I knew there was no other way. Through dedication, commitment, hard work, and perseverance I have managed to push my career forward. But this was never the goal in itself for me. Everything you learn along the way is more important. It's great to see that more and more women are finding their way into our industry too."



Anna Walesieniuk: Meaningful work in exciting times

As product marketing director at Ampleon, Anna is at the forefront of exciting developments in broadband and communications technology.

Amazing people from all over the world

When Anna was finishing her studies back in Poland, where she grew up, a delegation from Philips visited her university. They offered her an internship, which brought her to the Netherlands. As a designer of power amplifiers, Anna travelled the world, working in several countries before returning to Nijmegen, where she now works at Ampleon. "The semiconductor world is very international. As part of my work, I met amazing people and was exposed to many cultures all over the world." Ampleon's technology is an important part of the infrastructure needed to make phone calls or establish an internet connection. "Macro base stations are my portfolio. I am basically advertising the work Ampleon designers do; my former job. It is important for us to maintain close connections with big companies in the phone industry, like Nokia. Our products are reliable, and that's what I convey to our partners."

It's like Star Wars

Anna is clearly excited about the developments in her field of work. "The developments in 5G technology are like something out of Star Wars." The result of the groundbreaking work in high tech will be noticeable within our lifetime, she says. "Most likely, autonomous vehicles, or self-driving cars, are something you and I will experience. There is no doubt that our children will grow up thinking this is normal. But the technology is developing at such a pace that it is realistic to expect that we will see it happen as well." Anna is delighted to be a part of these kinds of technological advances: "It's great to see from up close how we are turning the seemingly impossible into something real."

Important industries

Working in an international setting requires an understanding of many cultures. "I was lucky enough to spend a lot of time abroad, for instance in Shanghai. Part of our team is based there, and having spent time there, I can reflect on why they do things a certain way. That way, I can understand them instead of judging and trying to fix how they work." After a long spell of working from home, Anna enjoys working at their office again, on the Noviotech Campus in Nijmegen. "Being on a campus has advantages beyond the presence of other companies that work on

health and high tech solutions," she says. "It's a pleasant place to work and, with all these other companies here, it shows the importance of our industry. I consider this to be healthy competition!"

Big expectations, big impact

Like most companies in the semiconductor industry, Ampleon has had its challenges with the current shortage of chips. "The automotive and mobile communications industries are definitely suffering." Still, the biggest challenge in Anna's work lies in customers' high expectations. "When the first mobile phone was released, we were all excited to be able to send and receive messages. Customers have raised their expectations, and you have to be on your toes to keep up with all the technological developments." So making smart decisions is an absolute must in order to stay on top of customers' needs. Looking ahead, Anna hopes her work will positively impact our society and the planet. "Our technology is part of a system in which energy plays a central role. If we do well, those processes become more efficient. That way we contribute to a positive impact on the environment." Ampleon is the perfect place for her to achieve this goal: "It's great to work in an international team of great people. All of different ages and backgrounds – an eclectic mix that does great things!"

Role It Out: female role model agency

Women working in technology are still a minority. This inspired six women, all working in tech themselves, to do something about it. After winning the Nimma Hacks hackathon in 2021, they officially launched Role It Out: an agency enabling women working in tech to become role models, share their story and experiences and inspire others. Role models are key factors in decision-making related to study and future jobs. With their platform they support women who want their company to become more gender diverse and to inspire young women to choose a career in tech.

Are you working for a tech company that would like to hire more women? Or are you a woman in tech that would like to become a role model? **Get in touch with Role It Out via:** www.roleitout.com, info@roleitout.com, LinkedIn or Instagram (@roleitout).