

# Paving the way



**More and more, diversity finds its way into the health & high tech industries. Women are raising their voice, inspiring others to pursue a career in health and high tech – and an increasing group of internationals embraces the advantages of working and living abroad. We reached out to learn from their experiences - both the fun parts and downsides - and their advice and best practices for future talent.**



**“The tech world can become a woman’s world, if we just enter it.”**

### **Francesca Chiappini**

*As Program Manager at Chip Integration Technology Center (CITC), Francesca is responsible for communication between the research team and their clients.*

### **The place to stay**

Italian-born Francesca first came to the Netherlands as an Erasmus student. “At Radboud University, I met like-minded international students, who all intended to make the best of their time in Nijmegen. I loved the university and the physics courses, but most of all, I loved the people. International students have the same mindset, so making friends was easy. At the end of our semester, my friends went back to their home countries. But I turned my project into a PhD position and decided to stay.”

**“I didn’t grow up thinking my future was in the electronics sector, but I am glad it turned out this way!”**

“My PhD work was highly fundamental, and I wanted more than writing a thesis: I wanted to make an impact.” After obtaining her PhD, Francesca started a TNO traineeship, where she worked as a scientist on flexible electronics and tried out different departments. Here, she tried to make an impact, one innovation at a time.

### **Letting go of control**

“I didn’t grow up thinking my future was in the electronics sector, but I always loved natural sciences and physics, with a slight philosophical touch. So, when I was offered an opportunity at CITC, I didn’t have to think long and grabbed it. CITC is a non-profit, joint innovation centre that focuses on better, smarter and cheaper ways to manufacture chip housing. It is quite a young organization, which allowed me to be really involved in developing relevant innovations and making the impact that I had always been looking for. Working at CITC and at the Noviotech Campus brings many benefits. There is a great sense of community with social activities for those who want to participate. Our neighbours are never far away. I am happy it turned out this way.”

**“I have shaped the job to suit me.”**

“As a scientist, I want to understand everything from A to Z. But when I became a program manager at CITC, I couldn’t do that anymore, I had to learn to let go. Being a program manager is a very hybrid and dynamic position, so I have shaped the job to suit me. When I talk to customers, I translate their needs to the technical teams to deliver the best product. I understand the work, the technical side, and the needs of the customer. Combining all this is super fun. Letting go was quite a challenge but I trust my colleagues and their expertise, and it feels good to see that everything turns out great without me being involved in every single detail.”

### **Do you want to inspire other women to pursue a career in tech?**

Join Role It Out, an agency for Female Role Models in Tech! Diversity in the work force is a great enabler for high quality, innovation and creativity. That’s why Role It Out is on a mission to inspire more women to choose a career in Tech. Role It Out offers a community of women in Tech and our unique ‘Role Model Training Program’. Join the Role It Out Training Program! Take a look at our website [www.roleitout.com](http://www.roleitout.com), on LinkedIn or Instagram @roleitout. Or contact us for more details [info@roleitout.com](mailto:info@roleitout.com)

### **Small achievements, big celebrations**

When asked about major milestones, Francesca starts laughing and seems a little hesitant. “One of them is, of course, finishing my PhD. It was hard work, which I did all by myself. I am really proud of that. It sounds a bit cheesy to say”, she continues. “But celebrating small achievements is just as important as celebrating the big ones.” One big milestone she hopes to reach is for CITC to flourish. “Since CITC is still a relatively young company, it is the dream to become well-known in the chip packaging industry. Hopefully one day, we won’t have to explain what we do. I want us to be recognised for our great research.”

With her story, Francesca hopes to inspire more women to pursue a career in high tech, as she sees many opportunities for women to work in these sectors. “There aren’t many women yet, but our numbers are growing. Companies recognise the need for women and diversity, so there are a lot of opportunities nowadays. The work itself is also more diverse than it might appear. At school, we see mathematics and science as something we will never use unless we work in programming or construction, but we have a lot more options than you might think. There are plenty of jobs you didn’t even know existed. There are so many opportunities to build the position you want. You just have to enter the world of science and see for yourself.”



**“I love to be part of the Dutch innovative industry!”**

**Roy Kanjanapornpreecha**

*As a supply chain manager at Nexperia, Roy knows how to keep the manufacturing process running smoothly.*

The thirty-year-old Roy from Thailand came to the Netherlands to “be around the tallest people in the world” and to study Industrial Engineering and Management in Groningen. It’s been five years since he started working in the high-tech industry, and he has loved every minute! He tells us about his experiences as an international student and high-tech employee.

Roy came to the Netherlands in 2012 to study Industrial Engineering and Management in Groningen. “The Netherlands is such a cool country, with good universities and a strong economy. I also liked that Dutch people speak English because Dutch isn’t the easiest to learn.” His studies were mainly about production optimization of the production process and covered topics such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, finance, and marketing. “It gave an idea of how to run a manufacturing business, and the supply chain also part of this.”

“After my studies, I worked in Leiden as a supply chain planner and for ASML in Veldhoven. A friend of mine worked at Nexperia and told me about a new job opening. I applied and have been working here since the beginning of 2022. As a supply chain manager, I help the company achieve the revenue target from the operations side of the business and ensure everything works in the most optimal way. When something goes wrong, we fix it. We also support growth by looking into new products to add to the market and making sure the new product is going smoothly into the market.”

**Life after 6 pm**

Roy had just finished high school, and coming to the Netherlands, it was as if he had begun a whole new chapter of life. He started adapting quickly but immediately realised that Eastern cultures are far more collective, whereas Dutch culture is highly individualistic. “In Thailand, you immediately become friends with your classmates and colleagues. In the Netherlands, people arrive one minute before class and leave directly after. Luckily, I lived in Groningen, a big student city. I got to know people through parties and activities. I really enjoyed living and studying in Groningen.”

**“It’s fun and challenging to have so many smart people around you. My advice for internationals is to just do it”**

Roy adds that in Asian countries, life doesn’t stop after six o’clock. “People go out, shop, eat and hang out. I was on a business trip to Taiwan and instantly made friends with co-workers there. It’s a different vibe here, it’s nice but people are a bit more reserved.” Roy says it was easier for him to adapt than it would be for a forty-year-old, since he spent his whole adult life in the Netherlands.

“Of course, the Dutch are direct”, says Roy enthusiastically. “But I like it. In Thailand, people don’t want

**I think it’s a good thing that Dutch people say what they need.**

to insult each other but also don’t say it if they need something from you. I think it’s a good thing that Dutch people say what they need. It’s not the same thing as being rude. Everyone is respectful, and everyone is equal. There’s no hierarchy; you don’t call your boss ‘boss’. You just use their name. In Thailand, we have a fixed expression to address an older person, even if they are just one year your senior. Here, people are treated more equally.”

**Proud to be a high-tech employee**

Roy enjoys the vibrant, international, supportive, and open-minded vibe of Nexperia: “It’s an exciting time to be part of this company. When taking care of new products, we work with R&D and marketing. We market new products like the Battery Booster. It’s a brand-new product; there’s nothing like it yet. It’s a chip that improves a lifespan. This chip, for example, is used in wristbands to pay with at festivals. It takes the lifespan of this wearable from about a day to one week. It’s super innovative, and I love being part of it. The new challenges that come with it. No day is the same. New topics are literally everywhere. Amazing!”

Looking back at his journey in the Netherlands so far, Roy’s advice for internationals is to just do it. “Start working in the Netherlands, especially in the high-tech environment. It’s fun and challenging to have so many smart people around. And looking at the bigger picture, it feels great to be part of an innovative industry!”



**“Your career is not a ladder, but a train ride”**

**Carlota Salamat**

*As Engineering Manager at NXP Semiconductors, Carlota is responsible for the engineering teams.*

Fifteen years ago, Carlota moved from the Philippines to the Netherlands and joined NXP to work as a Validation Engineer. She worked on chips for five years and ensured they performed according to the specifications: “When I started my bachelor, 2G and mobile phones were new and upcoming. We went from analogue to digital. During my master thesis, I worked on developing an antenna for Wi-Fi. This is all mainstream now and evolves really fast. So, working in the research department was super

**“It’s all about seizing the opportunity and doing your best with what life gives you.”**

exciting!” Carlota got the opportunity to become a manager and is now in charge of the engineering teams at NXP. In her role as manager, she makes sure her team has the correct tools, competences, and that their well-being is taken care of.

**Directness**

The move to the Netherlands wasn’t quite the culture shock one might expect. “I studied in Japan for years, so I am quite used to different cultures. The flat hierarchy in the Netherlands was something to get used to, though. In Asian countries, the manager has a very different, more leading role.” The well-known directness of Dutch people was also something to get used to for Carlota. “In the beginning, the directness was quite something, but after fifteen years of working here, I came to appreciate the directness, openness and willingness to help. Everyone can voice their opinion and wants to help you find a good solution. We also have great contact with our neighbours on the Noviotech Campus. I really appreciate that.”

**Respect and transparency**

The directness of her colleagues is not her biggest challenge. “In my job, I have to align individual ambitions with the business goals, which can be challenging. Sometimes there’s a mismatch. So my work also includes letting people go. That can be extremely hard to do.” However, Carlota has a good way of handling those difficult conversations. “I always want to make sure that the other person is heard. I always imagine what I would want to hear if I was in their shoes and try to help them with the transition to a better role. Transparency and respect are very important to me.”

**Small steps, big impact**

The most exciting thing about her work is the practical side. “The work we do has a lot of impact on the daily life of people. We make chips for communication infrastructures and develop them with the best performance and quality. For example, we look at how we can make sure the performance is great without draining the battery. How many transistors can we fit on a single chip? What can we do better in the future? We are even looking at steps beyond 5G. The work we do now is really shaping the future. It takes small steps, but the impact is big.”

**Train station**

Carlota makes an impact with her team and also on a personal level. As a woman in tech, it can sometimes be difficult to claim your place. However, Carlota never saw her being a woman as a limitation. “I actually think it is an advantage. Being a woman in a man’s world makes you stand out and enables you to make an impact. The men in tech are also rooting for us women to succeed. This really makes a difference. Whatever your job, find people that are invested in your growth. It really makes a difference.” One of her mentors gave Carlota a new vision for her career: “He taught me that your career is not a ladder, but a train ride. You hop on until the next stop and see where it goes. When you look back, you can see where you came from. If it’s not for you, you can hop off at the next station and take a different route. It’s all about seizing the opportunity and doing your best with what life gives you.”

**“Even when you think you are not 100% qualified, try it!”**

**Finding role models**

Carlota has a clear message for other women who want to work in tech: “Have confidence. We can do things the same as the guys, sometimes even better. Women often think they are not as good as men because they don’t have hands-on experience yet. Even when you think you are not 100% qualified, try it!”

When there are few women, it can sometimes be hard to imagine working in the tech world. Carlota’s advice: “Find role models and realise that it’s not just an image in your head, but there is a clear path. Connect with women who have already don’t it and have self-confidence. Trust that you can figure out things along the way and seize the opportunity. You can do more than you think!”