CASE STUDY

Yasmin Ali

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How did you get to where you are now?

While I was studying chemical engineering at university, I completed a three-month work placement at a gas-fired power station. This opened my eyes to the energy sector, it's a sector that touches everyone's lives, and I wanted to be part of it. After finishing my degree, I completed a two-year Engineering and Technical Leadership graduate scheme with E.ON, then took on a permanent role in E.ON's oil and gas exploration and production department. I worked as an operations engineer, supporting oil and gas platforms in the North Sea, then as a development engineer figuring out how to develop a new gas field in the Southern North Sea basin. From there, I moved on to become E.ON's district heating business control room manager, delivering heat and hot water supplies for over 25,000 customers.

Looking for a job that gave me an overview of the energy sector led me to join the government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, as a technical energy specialist. My job is giving technical advice to policy makers and politicians about how to decarbonise our energy systems.

Alongside this, I have built up my public speaking and writing skills. I regularly present at schools and events, and write for the media about engineering topics.

What challenges do you face on a day to day basis?

As a technical energy specialist, I provide advice to lots of different teams on a variety of topics in government. I could be working on anything from energy for steel or cement manufacturing to small scale energy storage innovation technologies. Switching from one topic to another can be challenging, but it's fun to have such varied days!

What is the biggest difference you noticed between work and university in terms of engineering?

I found engineering at university quite theoretical, whereas working involves much more application. The principles I was taught suddenly made sense in 'real' life.

Real life example of engineering applied to your work.

One of my modules at university was about how electricity can be generated from different sources. I saw this in action when I worked at coal and gas fired power stations. I also studied fluid dynamics, which is all about how fluids flow, this was useful during my work in oil and gas which is all about getting fluids to flow from their reservoir through pipelines to be processed and turned into useful products.

How do you approach challenges you encounter in your role?

I like to talk things through with my colleagues; this normally helps me to resolve challenges that I encounter in my job. I also have a network of engineering friends and mentors outside of work, who I approach for advice if needed. Engineering is a friendly community of professionals, that's one of the great things about it.

What would your advice be to someone who aspires to be like you?

Engineering has been a great career for me so far, and I'm sure it can be for you too. There will be ups and downs along the way, so make the best of failures, learn from them, and move on. Don't let anything or anyone hold you back.

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