

THE MOST POWERFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

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Political Powerhouse

If you're wondering what it takes to become the world's most powerful woman, here's the name you should know: Angela Merkel. She's the Chancellor of Germany and leader of the Christian Democratic Union—the first female in either office—and she's done much more than win the election three consecutive times. In what will be a decade in office this year, Merkel boasts an accomplished track record. From fervently fighting off Germany's recession to revolutionizing energy reform, her politics have proven to be influential and effective in making her the so-called de-facto leader of Europe.

Merkel was easily born for politics. Between her strict academic background and her serious childhood, she was as dedicated in her education then as she is in her profession now. As a youth in East Germany, Merkel joined the Free German Youth (FDJ), a socialist youth movement that made higher education possible for many of its members. She went onto study physics at the University of Leipzig. Earning her doctorate in 1978, she went on to become a chemist for twelve years at the Central Institute for Physical Chemistry, Academy of Sciences.

At age 36, she joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and quickly became a part of Helmut Kohl's cabinet, advocating for women and youth. Eight years later, she progressed to become the Secretary-General of the CDU, and two years after that she was chosen for party leader. Although she lost the candidacy for chancellor in 2002, she had successfully returned to claim it in 2005, thus becoming Germany's first female chancellor.

Think Like a Scientist

Born in 1954, Merkel didn't earn the position that would make her the most powerful woman until she was nearly five decades into her lifetime. If you're worried about not reaching your potential or failing to make the most of your time, Merkel has a thing or two to teach you about patience.

Particularly: think like a scientist.

"She is about the best analyst of any given situation that I could imagine," a senior official in Merkel's government told the New Yorker. "She looks at various vectors, extrapolates, and says, 'This is where I think it's going.'"

Merkel has been criticized for being slow moving in the past, but it makes sense that a successful woman in *any* field be wholly informed about a situation and assess her options before making decisions. Like a serious scientist, she believes there's a methodical approach and a reasonable way of action given any problem, so long as you weigh all your options.

"People often accuse me of not acting fast enough," she says in The Making of Merkel. "That I let things go on too long. For me it's important I deliberate all options... running through scenarios, and not simply theoretical experiments in my head."

The Perfect Leader

One of Merkel's defining professional accomplishments is her central role in handling the eurozone financial crisis. Known as "the decider," she's made history for being the central political figure in Europe and the world.

According to Stylist magazine, "she is, in many ways, the perfect leader for these tough times."