

WOMEN IN GEOTHERMAL

Promoting the education, professional development, and advancement of women in the geothermal community.



TRACY KLIPHUIS CEO/CO-FOUNDER ENVITRACE

Tracy Kliphuis is the CEO and co-founder of EnviTrace. Tracy has over 20 years of technical and management experience related to regulation and restoration. She is also an artist, chemical engineer, mediator, and recognized leader with public outreach expertise. In this article we are diving more into her background, her journey as a co-founder, her company, mentorship experience, and what drives her each day.

As the CEO and co-founder of EnviTrace, a company focused on leveraging artificial intelligence to solve environmental challenges, Tracy Kliphuis' career is a testament to the power of passion, creativity, and persistence. Her journey from chemical engineering to entrepreneurship is filled with lessons on leadership, adaptability, and impact.

Tracy's story begins at Tufts University, where she studied chemical engineering. Realizing she wasn't drawn to the conventional paths in the field, she shifted her focus to research at UC Berkeley before eventually finding her niche in environmental regulation. Tracy spent years working on oil and gas regulations, using her technical expertise to make a difference. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, she and her partner decided they wanted



to amplify their impact, sparking the inception of EnviTrace.

Tracy notes her deep sense of curiosity as a driving force behind her career. "I'm always wanting to learn more—about leadership, mediation, or new technical fields," she shared. This insatiable desire for growth has allowed her to continually evolve and adapt throughout her professional journey.

EnviTrace emerged as a fusion of Tracy's environmental expertise and her partner, Velimir "Monty" Vesselinov's AI coding and geoscience background. Their mission: to tackle Earth science problems using cutting-edge, science-informed machine learning tools. As Tracy recounted, the inspiration for their venture came during a camping trip among the giant sequoias in California—a fitting setting for big ideas to take root. They like to say they had their "big ideas under big trees." Today, EnviTrace's tagline, "From data to decisions," underscores their commitment to creating reproducible, reliable solutions.

Community involvement is at the heart of EnviTrace's ethos. Whether it's hiring interns from disadvantaged communities or collaborating with minority-serving institutions, Tracy

ensures the company's values extend beyond business objectives. As a volunteer mediator in New Mexico, she continues to give back, embodying the idea that leadership and service go hand in hand.

Tracy credits much of her leadership growth to her participation in a year-long leadership training program with the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership (RIHEL). This immersive experience honed her high-level management skills and reinforced her belief in the importance of mentorship and community engagement. As someone who balances roles as an entrepreneur, mediator, and artist, Tracy exemplifies the importance of lifelong learning and multidimensional leadership.

Yet even with her considerable experience, stepping into the role of CEO presented its own set of challenges. "The responsibility is overwhelming. There's so much you're naïve about when starting out," she admitted. Managing stress and finding work-life balance has been a continual effort, but Tracy remains resolute in facing these challenges head-on.



PROFILES

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Tracy's identity as an artist adds a unique dimension to her work in the tech industry. Whether it's designing visually compelling software dashboards or crafting grant applications with stunning "super figures" that blend aesthetic appeal and technical precision, she finds ways to infuse creativity into her company's projects. Her artistic pursuits extend beyond the workplace. Tracy enjoys painting, backpacking to hot springs, and creating perfumes—a hobby she hopes to turn into her next business venture. These creative outlets serve as a source of inspiration and balance amid the demands of running a company.

Reflecting on her responsibility as a recipient of government grants, Tracy feels a strong obligation to use those resources effectively. "We've been so fortunate with grant funding, and I feel a huge responsibility to be effective with that money—not to waste it," she shared.

Tracy envisions a future where geothermal energy takes center stage as a 24/7 renewable energy source. At EnviTrace, she is particularly excited about projects that leverage geothermal for food security, such as heating and cooling greenhouses in remote areas. "I think geothermal-heated greenhouses can improve food

security in remote and underutilized areas, like Native lands," she said, expressing her excitement about the potential impact.

Personally, Tracy aspires to transition EnviTrace to employee ownership in the next five years, empowering her team to take the reins while she steps back to mentor the next generation of leaders. "I want to let others shine and take the company to the next level," she stated.

For those looking to start their own businesses, Tracy emphasizes the importance of personal growth, effective communication, and public speaking skills. She also advises aspiring entrepreneurs to invest in high-quality bookkeeping and accounting from the outset—an often-overlooked but critical component of running a successful company.

In the geothermal industry, Tracy encourages newcomers to dive in, highlighting the supportive and passionate community that surrounds this transformative energy source. "It's such a great resource, and the community is amazing," she remarked.

Tracy Kliphuis exemplifies the intersection of technical expertise, creative thinking, and community-driven leadership. Her journey from chemical engineering to co-founding EnviTrace is a testament to the power of curiosity and resilience. As she continues to lead with vision and dedication, Tracy's story serves as an inspiring blueprint for anyone striving to make a meaningful impact.

Author: Kiara Daly



Kiara Daly recently graduated from Cornell University with a PhD in geophysics and is currently contributing to the scientific community as a postdoctoral researcher in Hawai'i. Her research focuses on utilizing various seismological techniques to investigate the Alaska-Aleutian subduction zone and the Hawai'ian magmatic systems. Kiara earned her undergraduate degree in geophysics and physics from the University of Auckland in New Zealand. An active member of the Women in Geothermal (WING) thermal trailblazers mentorship program, Kiara has also joined a WING committee where she authors Spotlight Articles that celebrate the achievements of industry leaders. She is passionate about the geothermal industry and its vibrant community, eager to contribute to its growth and development. Beyond her professional roles Kiara is a New Zealand national champion in adult synchronized figure skating. She is an avid traveler, enjoys learning French, and has recently taken up playing the ukulele.

