

Learn Innovate Solve



Meet Dr. Traci Nathans-Kelly . . .

Author, Slide Rules: Design, Build, and Archive Presentations in the Engineering and Technical Fields

Traci Nathans-Kelly, Ph.D. currently teaches full-time at Cornell University in the Engineering Communications Program. As well, she instructs for the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the Engineering Professional Development department, working with the Masters of Engineering in Engineering Management (MEM) and Masters of Engineering in Engine Systems (MEES) online graduate programs. As a member of IEEE's Professional Communication Society, she serves as a series editor for the Professional Engineering Communication books and participates at the national level for that organization. Her book, co-authored with Christine Nicometo, is called *Slide Rules: Design, Build, and Archive Presentations in the Engineering and Technical Fields*, and is available from Wiley-IEEE Press.

Traci told us . . .

"My job is all about supporting the work that engineers do on a daily basis. I teach engineering communication and technical communication to undergraduates, graduates, and practicing engineers alike. For me, the work is fascinating, compelling, and continuously exciting because I get to see those engineers become more confident with their technical expertise, I get to see them communicate in rich ways to stakeholders, and I have the privilege to watch those engineers get noticed and be wildly successful.

I can't imagine NOT working with engineers, scientists, and tech experts. The incredible complexity of their technical efforts and the immense effort that it takes to effectively communicate that work to the rest of the world (experts and non-experts alike) is a challenge to every engineer. I love being a part of that process, helping those experts find their own style, the right words, the right organization, the right kinds of persuasion, the right kinds of graphics, and the right speaking style for their purposes.

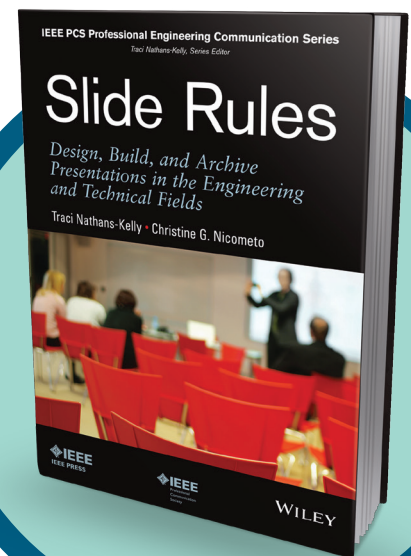
As an instructor, the benefits that come out of teaching engineering communication are many. For example, I never read the same thing twice because there's always something new in engineering and science. In the morning, I might work with Biomedical engineers. Next, I pop down for a double session with Computer Games designers. In the afternoon, I might assist with a team ironing out proposals for an Engineers Without Borders initiative, followed by a workshop on résumé writing.

But sometimes, it's hard. I recall the female undergraduate engineer who came to me, wondering if she should take off her new engagement ring when interviewing for jobs (No! Be honest about who you are...!). I think of the graduate engineer who is just starting to recognize the myriad of daily microaggressions flung at her and how she is learning to channel a strength she didn't know she would need in the technical world.

On the bright side, as the years go on, I see fewer of these problems with the younger engineers. They have a strong sense, most of the time, of how to work in an equitable manner. They are willing to stand up for each other and listen to any solid solution, no matter where it comes from. This is why I would encourage women engineers to be strong and stand their ground. We also need male engineers to stick up for their colleagues.

Engineering changes the world, and we need plenty of positive perspectives to make that world whole, healthy, safe, equitable, and fair.

Perhaps one of the most compelling areas of engineering right now is steeped in social justice. Go out there and create designs and solutions that will clean our water, power our needs without polluting, feed our hungry the healthiest of foods, and provide safety at every turn. Do the work that will help feed the children, keep them healthy, and relieve them of hard labor. If I can help new engineers (or old ones) find pathways towards social justice in their engineering designs and inventions, that would make every late night grading technical reports worth the while."



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