

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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Relationships: Stronger Bonds, Higher Standards

At the IBEW, our relationships—with employers, with customers and with one another—ensure that we remain the right choice for business. Good relationships translate into more work for IBEW sisters and brothers, more money in our pockets, and a safer, more efficient workplace. Strong relationships foster a strong workforce, and IBEW members are leading the way with the Code of Excellence.

It was the Code of Excellence that helped renew the business relationship between a wire company in Massachusetts and a transformer plant in Wisconsin. When Business Manager John Horak of Chelsea, Mass., Local 1499 learned that one of his employers, Rea Magnet Wire, used to have a contract with SPX Transformer Solutions, he reached out to his brother, Milwaukee, Wis., Local 2150 Business Representative Mike Bruening, with an idea.

Horak and Bruening used the Code as a selling point to grow Rea's business. SPX had implemented IBEW's COE around 2011 to great reception, so Bruening suggested that Rea adopt the program, too.

"It's the mark of quality," Horak said. "There's an assurance that you're getting something you can rely on. It's good branding."

The increased work led to a need for more people, and because Local 1499 members were delivering such



a high-quality product, Rea chose to invest \$5 million in their union plant in Connecticut instead of investing in Arkansas, which is a "right-to-work" state. Membership in the Connecticut local increased nearly 50 percent.

In Florida, utility company Florida Power & Light needed to turn things around. Relationships with workers were strained and the number of grievances filed was high. But when the company and its IBEW local unions rolled out the COE, those grievances dropped and OSHA-reportable accidents fell by 50 percent.

"It's a cultural change," said Miami Local 359 member and Line Specialist Laquanta Ransom. "If the company looks good, we look good, and if everyone gets on board [with the Code], we'll be a flawless company."

Other trades are also recognizing the power of the Code of Excellence. When the headquarters of Northwestern Mutual was built in Milwaukee, it was done under a multi-trade version of IBEW's Code called the Code of Distinction.

"It's truly the gold standard in what's going on in Milwaukee building-wise right now," said Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades President Dan Bukiewicz, who initially brought the idea to Northwestern Mutual. "The trades are blending wonderfully."

Effective relationships not only increase job opportunities—they help create the type of workplace that employees want to contribute to. Keep reading to find out how relationships are an essential part of the Code in your branch.



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email theSPARQ@ibew.org



Every Relationship Needs to Last

Building long-term relationships in the electrical construction industry isn't easy. Some people have jobs that last an entire career, but every construction project has a first day and a last.

Careers are built on a series of new jobs, each coming with a different combination of owners, contractors and subcontractors and its own mix of trades, journeymen and apprentices, union and nonunion.

For many construction members, inside and out, the long-term work relationship they feel most strongly about is with the IBEW and their local union. Ever met a sister or brother with an IBEW tattoo? Construction members demonstrate the union pride that they carry on the job with the Code of Excellence.

As construction electricians, we make our reputation on every project; and every job we get today was earned by the good relationships our sisters and brothers built yesterday.



The Code of Excellence is our tool for communicating throughout an entire project and after—because contractors talk to one another. They will remember if we were as good as our word. And they will tell other contractors when we promised a lot and delivered even more.

With all the concerns owners and contractors have, reputations are built when they're able to take us off the list of things to worry about.

Strong relationships are the foundation of countless winning bids, pitches for project labor agreements, marketing materials and even commercials. That's how we not only keep the business we have, but also change minds and build long-term, sustainable growth.

The truth is, there is nothing short term in this business, because the IBEW has only ever had one job: to organize the entire electrical industry. The relationships we build are a key tool to achieving that dream.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Local 37 members proudly wearing SPARQ T-shirts while taking a fitness break at their annual training conference.



Debbie Barry (pictured above right) and other COE volunteer trainers were recognized at the annual Local 37 Training Conference where the theme was "Celebrating Excellence."