

# 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](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



# Relationships Vital Amidst Constant Change

Building relationships in the telecommunications industry isn't always easy. With increased automation and overseas call centers regularly snapping up jobs, it's easy to get discouraged.

But fostering good working relationships can help, and they are more important than ever—whether it be with your local union, your employer, or perhaps most importantly, with customers.

The IBEW's long-running relationship with AT&T has paid off for both the company and for our members. Last year, we reached a five-year contract agreement, ensuring stability for AT&T workers during uncertain times for the industry. That relationship also helped the IBEW bring in 3,000 new DirecTV workers after AT&T purchased the satellite giant.

It's a success story that wouldn't have been possible without careful attention to relationships, between AT&T and its workforce and the IBEW and management.

But relationships can pay off in other ways as well. Companies are more likely to work with the IBEW on political and regulatory issues when we have mutual concerns.

When we build good relationships with customers, our partners can grow and pay wages that outpace our

nonunion counterparts.

For service representatives, relationships with customers grow when we provide correct information early and carefully answer questions and explain details.

Technicians are often the face of the company during installation or when there is a disruption. Getting work done on time, correctly, and treating customers courteously leads to a long-term relationship between the customer and employer—and more jobs for the IBEW.

Building relationships is just one more way we live out the Code of Excellence.



## 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."