

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



Transforming Relationships, Transforming Lives

Some of the best working relationships between management and IBEW members are found in the utility industry. But some of our most effective partnerships today were among our most dysfunctional in the past.

Only three years ago, Entergy's Arkansas Nuclear One in Russellville was one failed inspection away from being shut down by regulators. There was a fatal accident, and the relationship between Little Rock Local 647 and management was broken.

But in the Fall of 2016, Entergy changed the management team, and Local 647 initiated a Code of Excellence program. Leaders not only trained the 300 IBEW members, they trained more than 600 managers, other trades workers and contractors. Investments at the plant are up, accidents are down, and the plant is back in the good graces of safety inspectors.

And word gets around. When Toledo Edison hired CEO Paul Caudill in 2013, he'd heard about the successes of the Code of Excellence and asked the IBEW to bring it to northwest Ohio. At AEP, our relationship with the company is so strong that CEO Nick Akins filmed a national television commercial for us.

The value of those relationships pays off in more and



better jobs. Safe, productive companies are successful companies.

Building a relationship with a company can even help workers who aren't members yet. When the men and women of Baltimore Gas & Electric (BG&E) wanted to unionize last year, our relationship with new owners Exelon convinced them not to fight the drive like previous owners had.

Today, more than 3,000 BG&E workers have the protection of a contract and their own local union.

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."