

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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Professionalism in Action

More than a decade after we made the Code of Excellence a priority, it is being used in every branch and every district of the IBEW.

The Code is a declaration of the core values—safety, professionalism, accountability, relationships and quality—that have driven our union for more than 125 years and will build our future in the 21st century.

Our members do a variety of jobs, from linemen to aerospace engineers to lawyers to custodians. It would be easy to focus on getting the job done “correctly” and think that speaks for itself.

But we’re the IBEW. Competence in our work is the minimum to get on the field; excellence is how we win the game.

One of the difference makers is the second value: professionalism.

A 2015 Angie’s List member survey showed that when customers expressed dissatisfaction, 80 percent of the time, their complaint was a lack of professionalism.

Professionalism is independent of the job title or the individual assignment. It is how we show up on the job: our attitude, our dress and the language we use.



Implementing the Code doesn’t mean labor will always agree with management, but our professional attitude paves the way for a solutions-driven outcome.

What it does mean is that we can identify and solve problems in a timely and professional manner.

There is plenty of evidence that valuing cooperation, customer service and effective communication pay off. In Las Vegas at NV Energy, the professionalism of the utility workers at Local 396 is leading to work for the construction members at Local 357.

Local 396 President Shannon Skinner has worked for the company for nearly 25 years. She’s noticed a change for the better since the Code of Excellence was implemented.

“I think it’s mutual respect,” she said. “We work together and we have a common goal, to serve our customers here in Nevada in a productive manner. We’re professionals, they’re professionals. When we work together, it

just doesn’t get any better.”

What we’re doing with the Code isn’t just about making this workplace or that workplace better.

We’re proving in practice that we can build a different kind of economy that says employers and unions are partners in prosperity.

“The Code of Excellence is a reminder the IBEW has the best workforce anywhere, and we back that up,” International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said. “To see an industry leader like NV Energy wholeheartedly embrace it is extremely gratifying, and we hope it convinces other utility companies to do the same.”

Employers hire the IBEW because they know every one of us is competent to get the job done; they hire us again and again when they see that we get it done with professionalism.

What does professionalism do for your branch? Turn the page to find out.



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



A Positive Approach on the Rails

The legendary Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi, once told his players, “When you go into the end zone, act like you’ve been there before.”

He was talking about professionalism, which, at its core, is mostly the same whether you’re on the gridiron or the high iron. Professionalism means showing up and doing our job well without drawing attention to ourselves for the wrong reasons.



In the railroad branch, we take pride in our jobs, showing up on time and ready to work. We have the tools we need, and we’re dressed appropriately with all the safety gear necessary to accomplish the task at hand. When there are disagreements on the job, we don’t argue. Instead, we work with our union representatives, who are experienced and trained to handle the issues that may come up, especially when working with other crafts.

But at its most fundamental, professionalism is about attitude. Negativity breeds more negativity, and it impacts the work we do and the way others view our work. When we approach our work with a positive attitude, problems are more easily solved and supervisors are more inclined to work with us to find a solution.

Whether it’s talking with management or interactions with passengers, professionalism means treating others politely and with respect. We’re not just representing ourselves on the job; we’re ambassadors for the IBEW and for our brothers and sisters in the union.

It’s hard to define, but no one has a hard time identifying someone who lacks professionalism. When we stick to the Code of Excellence, no one should ever have a reason to call ours into question.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Eaton is the first manufacturing company to attach an IBEW Code of Excellence sticker to its products. The program is a partnership with Local 3, which has 45 members working at the Hicksville facility.



Positive changes brought by the Code of Excellence led to System Council U-4 and Florida Power & Light winning a national award for its service reliability, which exceeded 99.98 percent.