

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 2 | Issue 2 | Spring 2018

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



Good Relationships Make All the Difference

Whether it's our relationships with management or the bonds we share as union brothers and sisters, our ability to work together is one of the most valuable tools we have on any manufacturing job.

Solid relationships, where IBEW members and employers are willing to listen to, learn from and show respect for each other, enable us to find solutions that result in profitable companies and satisfied, productive employees.

One way we do that is through labor-management committees, solving problems long before small matters grow into grievances. For small issues, managers are more likely to approach a local leader or steward to resolve a problem before heading to human resources and setting a disciplinary process in motion.

A committee can tackle bigger problems as well. For example, when employers eye changes that could run afoul of our collective bargaining agreements, they can come to us first for input. When layoffs or plant closures threaten our jobs, joint committees allow us to brainstorm ideas and suggest options.

Our relationships with each other are just as important as those we build with management. "Power in numbers" isn't a cliché. The stronger our bonds, the stronger our

union, which strengthens our ability to work as partners with management.

But unity is about more than contracts. It's about looking out for each other's safety and caring for fellow IBEW members in times of need. It's about being true brothers and sisters to one another and making the relationships we have with one another and with our employers work for us.



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."