The IBEW SPARQ

Putting IBEW Excellence on Display

At the IBEW, professionalism means different things to different workers. But in every case, it boils down to this: When our superior training and work ethic shine through; when we show our customers and stakeholders what IBEW excellence is all about—that's professionalism.

Professionalism can be showing up for an appointment on time and explaining the problem and how you'll fix it. Or maybe it's putting in that extra effort to satisfy an upset customer when he or she reaches a call center with a problem.

On a construction site, it's putting in a full day's work for a full day's pay and getting the job done right the first time.

For railroad members, professionalism is working safely and in a way that gets passengers and cargo where it's going without disruption.

It's also working together with management in pursuit of common goals and remembering that we're often the public face of the companies we work for.

When our utility members are the first on the ground after a natural disaster, as we saw with the California wildfires and Hurricane Florence last year, we're the professionals helping those in need.

It isn't enough to be competent. Putting our best face forward and showing why we're the right choice for a job is why companies and

Photo credit: Local 1245/John Storey

customers keep coming back to us. They recognize our professionalism.

Another plus for professionalism is that non-union workers notice and want to be a part of it.

East Windsor, N.J., Local 827 recently organized workers at three Altice USA locations in the state—Newark, Lodi and Oakland—which means more than 200 new members when contracts are finalized. The Altice workers noticed the professionalism of IBEW Verizon technicians, who they'd often run into on the job.

Altice has successfully fought attempts to organize at other locations, but credit for Local 827's success goes to persistence and to the newly organized members.

Ultimately, professionalism is about perception. It's about how other people see us and, with the right attitude and a lot of hard work, we can make our IBEW professionalism pay—with higher wages, bigger jobs, better benefits and more work opportunities.

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

Professionalism on the Factory Floor

The word "professional" tends to conjure up images of office workers wearing suits and carrying briefcases.

But the skills, precision and dedication that IBEW members bring to manufacturing jobs every day demonstrates every bit as much professionalism as white-collar workers.

Guided by the values set forth in the Code of Excellence, we're as committed to being professional as workers in any other job.

Walter Lang of New York City's Local 3 is a perfect example. A lead wireman at MAC Products, Inc., the local's latest employer to sign on to the COE, he spotted a design flaw and brought it to the attention of the design engineer.

Management took notice, applauding Brother Lang and recognizing the value that the Code brings to business: "It turned out that Walter was correct in his evaluation and the engineer made the correction, which allowed us to avoid rework and delivery delays to the customer," company Vice President Eddie Russnow said. "This sense of 'ownership' is one of the reasons we wanted to implement this program."

Manufacturers must constantly find ways to maintain a competitive edge. Rework costs companies time and money. Through the Code, workers and management at MAC Products and other COE companies are invested in each other's success. The professionalism demonstrated by IBEW members makes the companies we work with stronger.

"We as a company need to highlight this to the rest of the team so that this sense of 'teamwork' continues throughout our company," Russnow said. "It is imperative that everyone within the company shares their ideas and points out things that might not look right. It does not matter what area of the company you work, taking 'ownership' benefits everyone."

The BP Oil Refinery in Whiting, Ind.
Gary and Hammond, Ind., Local 697 made a Code of Excellence presentation for M.J. Electric, a longtime signatory contractor in the area, to secure a bid at the local BP Oil Refinery. The presentation was a success; the contractor went on to use the Code to win the BP bid. The Code resonated, and now IBEW members at M.J. Electric are on the job at the refinery.