

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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The Power of Working Together

As union members, we believe there is nothing more powerful than people standing arm-in-arm behind a collective cause. It's what won working people basic things like a 40-hour work week, weekends, paid holidays and sick time and an expectation of safe working conditions. It's why we are able to negotiate contracts that ensure quality health care and higher wages than nonunion counterparts.

But the idea doesn't only apply to working people standing with one another. We understand that our success is dependent on the success of our employers and that cooperative relationships built on dignity and respect aren't just a good idea—they work. Companies that respect their workers and workers that respect their companies make better choices—and both sides do better in the long run.

That's why relationships are at the heart of the Code of Excellence. But what about when the relationship between the company and its workforce isn't going well? Not every company, or worker for that matter, believes that collaboration and success go together. What then?

There might be a misunderstanding that the Code of Excellence only works where relations are already good.

For those willing to embrace it, the Code of Excellence is much more than just a list of best practices for the best workplaces. People like incoming St.

Louis Local 1439 Business Manager Jeremy Pour understand that.

Local 1439 represents nearly 700 workers at the utility company Ameren, and, in recent years, the partnership with the company was, in Pour's words, "Contentious. Litigious.

1439 to ask if their directors, the direct supervisors of our members, could attend the Code of Excellence trainings as well. A month later, 50 directors joined 50 stewards to look at how a joint commitment to excellence could transform the company.



Every dispute became a grievance. Every grievance became a fight. So, we proposed to do something different."

Local 1439 introduced the Code of Excellence and received permission from the company to begin training stewards while on the clock. The stewards then fanned out across the utility, spreading the word about what our commitment was—to ourselves, to the company and to one another. And it got the company's attention.

Soon after, Ameren came to Local

"We are seeing a difference already," Pour said. "This wasn't built on a foundation of trust. The Code is the foundation."

Read on and then send us your stories about how the Code of Excellence is building and transforming relationships between sisters and brothers, fellow unions and our partners and employers.



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



Prioritizing Communication Before a Crisis

It's easy to view dealings with management as an us-versus-them scenario. We're taught to stand up for our rights, and we often have differences in our rapidly changing industry.

But it's those very changes that require us to build strong relationships with our partners.

Competition is fiercer than ever. Companies continue to cut costs. Technological change continues, making more jobs obsolete. And that's why Dan Ham, a New York Local 1212 steward at CBS, says keeping open lines of communication with management is more important than ever. It lets him head off issues before they reach negotiations or the grievance stage.

"When you are able to have that unfiltered conversation, you can focus on how to solve the issue instead of just butting heads," said Ham, who works in CBS's operations and engineering department and serves on his local's negotiating committee.

"When you have that framework set up, it just makes it easier to solve issues. You realize you're working together for a common goal."

Ham said he tries to approach every situation remembering that both sides have a boss to answer to. "It has the tone of speaking to a friend or colleague," he said. "You're able to get to the core of what each side is trying to say."



When we operate with our employers as partners, it eliminates many conflicts and helps to smooth the approach when bigger disagreements arise. On the big issues, we're able to stand up for ourselves more effectively because we have shared goals of excellence. It's why so many of our relationships go back decades.

When IBEW members do their part to keep the lines of communication open between employers and employees, they demonstrate one of the key tenets of the Code of Excellence—relationships.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL

IBEW Locals 1245 and 396

Two IBEW locals and their employer have won the inaugural Edwin D. Hill Award for their expansive efforts to protect good jobs and Nevada power customers, a campaign that led to the landslide defeat last November of Question 3, a deceptive state ballot measure.

The ability to work with NV Energy was essential, Business Manager Jesse Newman said, noting that the partnership didn't originate with the campaign. "If we didn't have the relationship we have through the Code of Excellence, I don't think Question 3 would have been defeated," he said.

CEO at the Local

Building a strong partnership takes commitment. NV Energy's CEO Doug Cannon is committed to continuing the practice of meeting with members and leaders of IBEW Local Union 396 twice a year to answer questions and discuss solutions to issues on the job. No surprise, these meetings are the most well-attended of the year.

