

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 3 | Issue 2 | Spring 2019

The Importance and Benefits of Accountability

When your company spreads across some 60 sites and seven states, holding people accountable can seem almost impossible; that is, unless you have the IBEW and the Code of Excellence.

The Tennessee Valley Authority employs approximately 2,500 IBEW members as permanent employees at its worksites that include nuclear, solar, hydroelectric and oil and gas plants. Thousands more work in a short-term capacity upgrading infrastructure and performing maintenance work.

The TVA has long been proud of its relationship with labor, but by partnering with the IBEW and implementing its Code of Excellence, it's made that relationship even stronger. And the partnership is bringing in workers from other trades, making this a multi-trade initiative that shines a light on the importance of accountability.

Surveys have shown that 91 percent of employees who feel valued at their job are motivated to do their best, compared to 37 percent who don't feel valued.

When Tenth District International Vice President Brent Hall began discussions with TVA about the Code, he pointed to the previous success of Florida Power & Light when it



implemented the program. Part of its success came from empowering lower-level union and management representatives to resolve problems.

By empowering people at this level, it sends a message of trust and appreciation, which in turn creates a culture where everyone feels valued—and accountable—to one another. It also creates a sense of ownership. In other words, it fosters a culture of positive peer pressure.

"It's been our experience that when you have onsite labor relations, with mid-level management and the union working together at that site, the problems don't end up downtown," Hall said. "It's better for management, and it gives workers a voice in the decision-making. It's not some mandate from some office in some building far away."

At a place as vast and varied as TVA, this becomes particularly valuable.

"Each site has its own specific issues," Hall said. "A plant manager may be fine letting his guys have a say, except that he's handcuffed by some company-wide letter. We're trying to get back to letting management and local union representatives fix their problems at home."

Of course, none of this takes the place of top-level leadership. And some things will always have to be handled at a higher level. But by giving people on-site power to handle more issues, they're also allowed more ownership. And that ownership translates to accountability, an essential part of the Code of Excellence.

Whether you work at a sprawling site like TVA, or a small, mom-and-pop shop, accountability matters. It's a way of allowing people to show they're responsible, which in turn makes every worksite, and worker, better.



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



The Value of Accountability

When it's your job to turn titanium into life-saving artificial heart valves, you have an innate sense of accountability.

That's what members of Chicago Local 134 do at LaVezzi Precision with painstaking care, creating the company's flagship valve and components for other medical and surgical devices.

Accountability is key to the success of a product that keeps hearts beating and to all of us in manufacturing—to each other, our employers and the customers we serve. Ultimately, nothing is more important than putting the safest, highest-quality products in their hands.

That means employers need to be accountable to us, too, by valuing and respecting workers. One surefire way to encourage this is signing on to the IBEW's Code of Excellence, as LaVezzi's new owners recently agreed to do.

MW Industries took over the century-old family business last year as contract talks for 120 IBEW members were in progress.



"In bargaining, we wanted them to know that we were a partner, that we had things to offer," Local 134 Business Representative Ryan Madiar said.

The local introduced the COE to the company, explaining its commitment to "8 for 8," always being on time, and the principle that hard work and dedication benefit everyone.

"We tell our members to respect management and be accountable, but we also expect management to run the company in a responsible way," Madiar said. "Accountability is a two-way street."

The company liked what it heard, saying the Code fit its corporate philosophy.

The COE builds on a history of accountability at LaVezzi, where IBEW bargained strong contracts with the former owners and helped get them training grants that spurred hiring and productivity.

Making this commitment to accountability official is a win for us, the company and the people whose lives depend on the products our members craft.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Sheffield, Ala., Local 558 demonstrated its commitment to the IBEW's core principles with Code of Excellence training in February.



Local 558 Business Manager Tony Quillen spoke to construction members about the Code and its benefits.