

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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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



Relationships on the Rails

Strong relationships are critical to our success at the IBEW. Whether it's with executives at the companies we work for or with one another on the job, keeping those relationships safely on the tracks leads to positive outcomes for all of us in the railroad branch.

Last spring, our relationships with one another were tested when employer CN Railway asked for significant concessions in the lead-up to new contract talks.



More than 700 signal and communications workers at CN across Canada were facing tough negotiations. Negotiators with Railroad System Council 11 asked workers to trust them and to stick together—and that's just what they did.

That relationship, that trust, between CN workers and their IBEW representatives was key to standing strong and eventually finding a solution in the five-year contract they ratified a few months later. But it doesn't always have to be contentious. Every day we show up to work mindful of the relationships we have on the job—with managers and supervisors, with company executives, with members of other trades.

Building positive relationships at work can give us all an edge in our ability to settle claims and grievances and to work through disciplinary issues and workplace safety concerns. Working with management as partners allows us to address small problems before they become big ones, and when you're working around 200-ton locomotives, problems become big very quickly.

Through our exceptional work, IBEW railroad members have built a remarkable reputation, but through our relationships, we have built success for members and employers alike. Let's keep it up.

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."