

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



The “Rite” Relationship Helps New Jersey Local Win Work

The members of Jersey City, N.J., Local 164 have long had a deep commitment to the Code of Excellence. So, when a developer in the local’s jurisdiction announced plans to build a ShopRite grocery store using nonunion labor, the local’s leaders leveraged their longstanding relationship with the store’s owners, the Inserra family, to put that work back into union workers’ hands.

“The Inserras have been all union for over 50 years,” said Local 164 Business Manager Dan Gumble. The family had directly supervised the construction of 24 ShopRites in New Jersey and New York using IBEW electricians and other skilled tradespeople. The workers at all of the Inserras’ ShopRite stores are represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

For their latest project, the construction of a new ShopRite in Wyckoff, N.J., the Inserras were considering granting

a developer full control of the store’s construction. But the developer wanted to use unfamiliar and nonunion labor—something that made this family with such a lengthy progressive history uncomfortable when it was brought to their attention by Gumble and representatives from other building trades.

Thanks to Local 164’s half-century relationship with the Inserras, Gumble was able to set up a meeting with the family and building trades’ leaders at the local’s training facility in Paramus.

“Everyone was impressed with the center and with the fact that we teach the Code of Excellence to all of our members,” Gumble said. “After that meeting, they told us that we are the ‘real deal’ and that they would be glad to do business with us.

“We were able to turn that job around,” he said, “but we couldn’t have gotten that meeting—or the work—without that relationship.”



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.

