

Raising the bar with ETCP

iWeiss grows with ETCP

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO iWEISS back in 1985 (anyone remember 1985?), the company's installation department consisted of two old timers who hung curtain track and curtains. It seemed to me that the prevailing attitude of the day was, "If it's up when we leave the theatre, it will stay up." I figured it was time to bring in fresh blood.

Our first dedicated rigging person knew his stuff, but there was no ETCP in those days so I decided to impose the following edict: "Make sure you would allow your children to work or perform on this stage." That certainly raised the bar, but we were far from where I wanted us to be. The next step was to begin to use outside engineers to review our methodology. Looking back, I think we were unknowingly heading in the direction where ESTA would take a leading role.

With the hiring of Richard Parks in 2001, our rigging division really started to grow. Richard came to iWeiss with academic credentials as well as a good deal of work related experience. As we tackled

increasingly larger projects and went from doing only manual rigging to automated rigging, Richard set standards for the hiring of project managers and crew. We switched to domestic-rated hardware and bought equipment only from recognized manufacturers. We also began to send all of our drawings out for engineering review and did not install anything until those drawings were stamped.



Pipe Battens at the new DePaul University Theatre School

When the ETCP program was announced, Richard was in the first graduating class. Our project managers Lauren Duffy and Nick Belton received their certification soon after joining our team, as do all of our lead installers.

We are supportive of the efforts that ESTA, now PLASA, has made to bring standards to our industry, and we are pleased to see that ETCP certification is now a requirement on many jobs.

As iWeiss continues its growth with our own Via line of automation products, maintaining the standards that ETCP brought to the industry is increasingly



iWeiss Via Winches installed at Riverside Church's South Hall

important. Our draftsman is now planning to become certified. With the addition of Russ Dusek to our team, we have someone who served on the committee to develop the second set of exam questions. We are confident he will be of great help to raise that bar even higher.

We applaud the efforts of all involved in the birth and growth of the ETCP program. ■



David Rosenberg is President of iWeiss and responsible for overseeing all company business, though he leaves day-to-day operations to iWeiss Vice President Jennifer Tankleff. David has run the company for 28 years.

Prior, he had 15 years of production and touring experience putting shows into more than 300 theaters in the United States, Canada, and Europe.



David Rosenberg, Richard Parks, and Jennifer Tankleff at LDI

The maze of life—or, plan and prepare for an ETCP exam

By Richard Cadena

LET'S SUPPOSE you were visually impaired and you were trying to negotiate a maze. How far do you imagine you would get if the first time you bumped into an obstacle, you gave up, and went home? On the other hand, what if you were like Google maps, and every time you took a wrong turn, you would say to yourself, "Recalculating..." and tried another route?

Life is nothing if not maze-like. We all run into obstacles, and we all bump into walls. But not all of us give up and go home if we don't find the opening the first time. Those who have the ability to recalculate are the ones who eventually find their way through the maze of life and conquer their goals despite the obstacles.

As an ETCP Recognized Trainer, I've taught hundreds of classes, seminars, and workshops, helping people like you to prepare for taking the test. If there is one thing in common with those who have become certified—it is that they don't give up easily. Not everyone passes the test the first time they take it. In fact, I would guess there are a good number of people who have to take it more than once to pass. There is no shame in having to take it again; the shame is in giving up and not taking it again. Those who retake the test have the advantage of knowing what to expect, and they have the benefit of knowing how best to prepare to retake it.

If you are preparing to take the test for the first time, the second time, or the third time, here are some pointers:

- **Read the ETCP Candidate Handbook.** Download the ETCP Candidate Handbook at etcp.plasa.org and read it, especially the part about what is on the test. Circle the parts that you are unfamiliar with or that you think you need help with. Now you've got your roadmap to success. All you have to do to conquer your goal is to focus on your weaknesses and make them strengths.
- **Take the Practice Test.** Go to www.goamp.com (or <http://plasa.me/oc5ln>), cough up \$35, and take the ETCP practice test. It will be the best \$35 you've spent on yourself because taking it will give you a good idea of what to expect when you take the real test.
- **Put in some O.T.** Jeanette Farmer, one of the subject matter experts (SME) on the ETCP Entertainment Electrician's exam used to be the technical director at one of the Cirque du Soleil shows in Las Vegas. There were around 60 techs in her chain of command, and when I asked how they were all trained and kept current, she said Cirque asked them to put in their "own time." In other words, they were asked to read something about their jobs for at least a few minutes every day. There are lots of

very good resources for studying for the ETCP test, and many of them are free. Take advantage of the resources and read as much as you can about the subject matter on the test.

■ Believe in Yourself.

As Walt Whitman said, "Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string." The first step toward becoming certified is to believe that you are capable of becoming certified. Visualize yourself completing the perfect test with all the right answers. Picture yourself opening an email telling you that you've passed the test. See yourself opening a letter in the mail and finding an ETCP Certification card with your name and picture on it, putting it in your wallet, and carrying it everywhere you go. That first step is the easiest and the hardest, and it's non-negotiable.

- **Evaluate Your Strengths and Weaknesses.** Before you can improve your chances of success, you need to know what you know and what you don't know. I've been working on an evaluation for aspiring entertainment electricians to help you figure out where you need work and where you don't. You can take the evaluation test free of charge at <http://bit.ly/APTeval2>, but perhaps the best way to see if you are ready to take the ETCP exams is to purchase the practice exams at <http://etcp.plasa.org/practiceexams>.

Today, there are less than 400 ETCP certified entertainment electricians in North America. How many entertainment electricians in North America are uncertified? I don't know, but I would estimate that number to be around 100,000, which means that if you are certified, you are in the top 1% or less of your peer group. That's an elite category and something to aspire to. If you're already certified, congratulations on negotiating the maze of life. If you are not yet certified, I'm certain there's an opening in a wall near you.

Richard Cadena is an ETCP Recognized Trainer. For more information about available training opportunities, visit www.APTXL.com.

