



This is a regular look at recent news in the world of mediation, focusing in particular on the workplace and throwing in some of my own views for good measure. In this edition I look at the results of some recent workplace surveys which emphasise the prevalence of workplace conflict and the damage it can cause. In the light of this it is good to see positive case studies and the latest edition of the UK Mediation Journal gives us some good examples.

**Marc Reid**

### New survey highlights top causes of office conflict



Software firm, Cascade HR, has recently published an interesting survey of 1000 full or part time employees and their views on office conflict. (Full report [here](#), and summary article [here](#).) It confirms that what winds employees up more than anything are the people they work with! The top four causes of conflict focus around fair and equal treatment and interpersonal relationships. Interestingly these issues are significantly more likely to cause conflict than what you might think of as more traditional complaints such as salary and promotion. And conflicts are common; over a third of those surveyed confirmed they had experienced conflict with a work colleague. Yet employees' confidence in how companies deal with it is not strong. Fewer than half of respondents feel that their company is effective when it comes to dealing with conflict at work. Proof once again that training our staff in conflict management skills is so important.

### 21% of employees resign because of difficult boss

This People Management article (click [here](#)) highlights another survey, this time from job search company Glassdoor, which looked at the employee / manager relationship. Nearly half mentioned 'disrespectful' behaviour as the most common problem with managers. More concerning is that over 1 in 5 said they had actually resigned as a result of the breakdown in their relationship with their manager. What an opportunity for employers! We spend time, effort and money to bring in the right people only for a fifth of them to leave due to not getting on with their manager. If we put a little more time, effort and money into training those managers in how to manage, how much could we save on recruitment and training of new staff? Plus those that won't or can't leave will be better managed and more motivated.

Want to share a thought or make an enquiry? We'll be glad to hear from you:

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## UK Mediation Journal published



The latest edition of the only publication specifically focused on mediation

in the workplace has just been published. The UK Mediation Journal (click [here](#)) features some very good articles. I particularly like the two case studies on use of mediation in NHS trusts. With our NHS suffering in a tough funding environment it is critical that money is spent in the most efficient way. Mediation has proven itself to be both more cost- and outcome effective when properly applied. Don't miss my article provocatively titled 'You don't need a mediator...' (p.42/43). I talk about the need to ensure HR professionals have the skills, process and tools to address low level conflict, the subject of my book ['DIY Mediation. The Conflict Resolution Toolkit for HR'](#)

## Mediation and mental health in workplace disputes

A leading employment lawyer discusses the interesting question of whether mediation can still be used when a participant is suffering with mental health issues. The article (click [here](#)) appears on an American law site and concludes that generally there is no reason this should be an issue, provided of course that the person concerned is mentally capable of reaching an agreement that they are likely to stick to. The author makes the excellent point that features of the mediation process, such as confidentiality, participants in control of the process, actually make it particularly attractive to someone who may be suffering with mental health issues such as anxiety. A good mediator will always be sensitive to the emotions and needs of the participants and this is no different regardless of the state of their mental health.

Website: [www.mediation4.co.uk](http://www.mediation4.co.uk)

## 'HR? We've got a problem...'

This article from HR News (click [here](#)) covers the common issue faced by HR professionals of having to sort out conflict situations that haven't been dealt with effectively by managers. The author provides guidance for what managers should do when approached by employees who have concerns. I would go further and say managers should be aware of signs of potential conflict before being approached. The suggestions on what to do are sensible. My only issue is that they relate principally to process, such as follow the procedures, communicate according to company policy etc. By all means follow the process but critical to the managers success in 'nipping in the bud' any issues are how they address the issues. Skills such as active listening and showing empathy are vital in this respect.

## Grievance Grief. The problem with formal processes.

My latest blog (click [here](#)) reflects on a recent case I mediated where the participants had been through a formal grievance process and were looking to find a way to work together again. It's a common scenario. Sadly I feel we sometimes jump too quickly to the formal process without sufficiently considering whether this is the most appropriate route. The process by its nature is adversarial so trying to re-establish a working relationship afterwards becomes much more difficult. In the mediation case I mention we reached a successful conclusion but it is going to take a lot more work for the two of them to recover from the pain and damage caused by going through the grievance process.

