



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 highlight an excellent study recently published by ACAS looking at the cost of workplace conflict. I've also picked out an article which talks about how mediation is being used where you may not expect it - the British Army! There are also a couple of articles looking at how new working practices are affecting conflict.

Marc Reid

Counting the cost of workplace conflict

The case for mediation and informal workplace conflict resolution over formal processes is easy to make based on intangibles like being quicker, less disruptive, and the potential for win-win. More difficult is to find reliable data to build a business case on cost. A new ACAS study highlighted in this article (click [here](#)) gives the best analysis I've seen on what conflict costs. The article mentions the headline figure of £28.5bn cost to UK business, a colossal figure which is perhaps easier to grasp when expressed as an average of £1000 per employee. Whilst the figures may be new, the conclusions of the report are familiar territory: the vital importance of addressing conflict early so escalation and further costs are avoided; formal processes should be the exception rather than the rule, not least as the resulting costs are high; and of course the need for increasing the level of skill and confidence in line managers in dealing with conflict. This is an outstanding report and it is well worth reading in full if you have the time!

Working from home and effect on workplace conflict



This article from The HR Director (click [here](#)) explores how the big shift to working from home might have impacted on conflict at work. In theory it might make conflict less likely - less interaction with people you don't get on with etc - but in practice you can also argue that there is increased potential. Most conflicts escalate through a breakdown in communication and the lack of face to face meetings has definitely increased the potential for escalation. This has certainly been evidenced in the mediation work I've undertaken in the past year. Situations which might normally have been resolved through a chat in the canteen have not been addressed and have ended up in a Zoom mediation.

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

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The Army mediation service



The British Army might not be the first organisation you think of as the obvious place for an outstanding workplace medi-

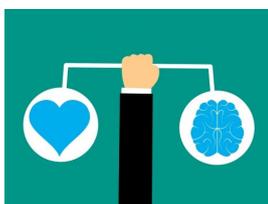
ation scheme, but this article proves otherwise (click [here](#)). I love to see examples of best practice in internal mediation schemes and it sounds like the Army has fully adopted not just the process but also the principles of mediation. I particularly like the emphasis placed on getting in early and preventing escalation. It also seems the scheme is sensibly staffed, ensuring mediators get 3-4 mediations a year each. This is where many internal schemes fall down, training too many people who don't get enough practice, lose motivation and drop out.

Can HR be the mediator?

This article is an answer by a senior employment lawyer to a webinar question - 'can you train an HR person to be a qualified mediator rather than go external?' (click [here](#)). The author argues that issues such as independence and the ability to 'take off your HR hat' might make it more difficult for HR to mediate within an organisation. It is certainly true that mediation demands a very different approach to the one normally asked of HR where you are expected to give a view and find solutions. My own experience in training HR in mediation skills suggests some struggle but most have the core skills and just need some guidance on how to approach a mediation and have a process to follow. In the end though, if you need true independence, external is the best option.

Our latest book '8 Stages of Workplace Conflict— and how best to resolve each stage' is still available to download for free from our website. Just go to www.mediation4.co.uk and click on the download link.

Emotional Intelligence and conflict



This article in Financier Worldwide (click [here](#)) considers the importance of emotional intelligence in managing workplace conflict. The author points to

the increased pressures brought about by the pandemic resulting in greater potential for conflict. Certainly individuals with good emotional intelligence find it easier to recognise their own emotions and to empathise with others. These strengths are key when it comes to finding a way through conflict. I strongly agree with the author who suggests that management training programmes should place greater emphasis on building the skills around emotional intelligence as well as helping managers understand how to manage conflict.

What does 'trust' mean?

My latest blog (click [here](#)) looks at the concept of 'trust' in the workplace and what trust means to different people. It is normal for people entering mediation to have lost trust in each other. Participants often say they want the other to trust them going forward. That's all very well but what does that mean in practice? The blog explores how I break 'trust' down into 5 types of behaviour, and further into specific actions which indicate that behaviour. This is an excellent tool to help participants in a mediation to explain specifically what trust means to them. By being explicit about the behaviours that they each associate with trust, the participants can agree between them what actions they want to take in future to demonstrate trust towards each other.

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