



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 something that affects many organisations at the moment, which is bringing employees back into the workplace. There is also news on potential changes in the civil / commercial mediation field and a look back as Mediation4 celebrates its 10th anniversary.

**Marc Reid**

### Returning to the office - potential for conflict?

The announcement that the final legal restrictions relating to the pandemic are ending, gives 'official' confirmation at least that we are returning to normal. But already employers are experiencing issues bringing employees back into the workplace. This article in HR Review (click [here](#)) refers to recent research suggesting almost a third of businesses are facing challenge from employees on returning to the office. There will of course be a whole range of reasons why employees may have concerns about returning. If employers adopt a blanket rules based approach to the return they are bound to end up in conflict with employees and potentially lose people at a time when recruitment is difficult. A more positive approach is suggested in this article (click [here](#)) which recommends that organisations should talk with individual employees and understand their underlying reasons for resisting a return. Through applying a communication based, mediation style approach, a better outcome for both employee and organisation can be achieved.

### Compulsory mediation for small civil / commercial claims



Often in these newsletters I refer to cases which end up costing those involved far more than the actual value at stake. Not only that but these cases take up precious court time. At last there are signs that common sense will prevail. The Law Gazette (click [here](#)) reports the Civil Justice Council recommendations that, in claims less than £500, litigants should be compelled to attend a mediation appointment. Of course there will be cases that do need to go to court but imposing a mediation step beforehand will significantly reduce the number of these. There is only one thing wrong with this proposal in my view. Why only £500? Make it something really significant like up to £5000 or even £10000. But at least it is a first step in the right direction.

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

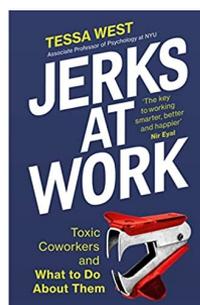
**Tel: 07870 444444**

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## Podcast on workplace mediation

CEDR, one of the largest mediation service providers, has released the first in what promises to be a very good podcast series on workplace mediation (click [here](#)). In this initial episode, experienced CEDR mediator Gillian Caroe, provides an excellent introduction to workplace mediation. Gillian covers the negative consequences that can arise from conflict in the workplace, emphasising that it impacts not only on those directly involved but on family members, work colleagues and the organisation as a whole. She also highlights how following a formal path can make it so much harder to re-establish the working relationship. A valuable point Gillian makes is that organisations need conflict. They need challenge to established thinking to allow for innovation and growth. This podcast is well worth listening to.

## Handling difficult office 'types'



I generally don't like the labelling of people as a certain 'type'. It is lazy and encourages assumptions rather than addressing the individual behaviour being demonstrated. This article from the Guardian (click [here](#)) interviews Tessa West, author of a new book 'Jerks at Work', which proposes 7 'types' and how to deal with them. Hopefully the author is referring to behaviour types rather than labelling individuals, but I won't know till I read the book! But the article suggests Tessa has some sensible advice to give - not least as she stresses 2 of my favourite points, that we can all be 'jerks' depending on the situation, and that often managers are not trained to manage people.

**Our 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](http://www.mediation4.co.uk) and click on the download link.**

## When communication breaks down



All too often Forbes and similar publications have trite articles with 'easy fix' solutions to complex relationship issues, but this one (click [here](#)) is different. It contains sensible and practical advice from a highly experienced mediator, Anna Shields. When problems start in a relationship, communication suffers, thereby limiting the potential to address issues. Anna suggests three valuable approaches that can be used to halt the downwards spiral and re-establish communication channels. I particularly like the emphasis on validating emotions and showing empathy. This will certainly help de-escalate tension, however it is, I acknowledge, enormously challenging to do when you are caught up in the emotions of a workplace conflict.

## 10th Anniversary!

My latest blog (click [here](#)) celebrates a very important milestone. Mediation4 is 10 years old! That means my News and Views letter is also 10 years old so I've looked back to the first edition. Sadly some of the stories have not moved on that much! I featured a FT article about workplace bullying and that is still very much an issue. Another article referred to the Employment Tribunal system as being broken. Well it is doubtful that after 2 years of pandemic that it is any less broken than it was 10 years ago! So whilst I would have liked to see more change over the past decade, I am ever the optimist and believe that the benefits of mediation will continue to be more widely experienced as we enter the second decade of Mediation4!

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