



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. This edition features a very good case study on how mediation has been successfully introduced to a major company. There is also another salutary tale of a relatively minor incident (carrying a cup of coffee!) that ended up in a Tribunal. All so unnecessary!

Marc Reid

## Mediation works for Irish multinational company

The Irish Independent recently published a very interesting case study (click [here](#)) about how Aramark, a food and facilities management multinational, have successfully introduced workplace mediation. I particularly like their reasoning. They recognised that “*as a company which is committed to health and wellness in the workplace, ... a 'one size fits all' approach to dispute resolution was not working for our employees or for our company.*” So mediation works from a wellness perspective but also there are significant business benefits. They refer to increased productivity through less time being spent on disputes. There are great lessons learned and critical success factors in the article, valuable reading for anyone thinking of introducing mediation.

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

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## Harrods coffee incident ended up in Employment Tribunal loss

This Guardian article (click [here](#)) tells the story of how take-out coffee has cost Harrods £18,000, the loss of a vigilant employee and potential reputational damage. Following company policy on unsealed drinks, security guard John Perrett stopped the Merchandise Manager from carrying coffee (for the HR and Retail Director) into the store. Perrett told the employment tribunal: “I believe I stopped her on a reasonable and valid health and safety issue.” Perrett was accused of dismissive and rude behaviour and was later dismissed for gross misconduct. Perrett’s claim of unfair dismissal was upheld and the tribunal awarded him £18,000. This is an example of how a very minor incident (which mediation could have dealt with very affectively) has been allowed to escalate into a potential major PR disaster badly affecting a valued brand name.



## UK Mediation Journal

One of the biggest issues facing those of us who are involved with



workplace mediation is lack of awareness amongst the HR population. It is a very welcome development therefore that a new publication has been launched with the primary aim to educate and inform potential users of mediation. It particularly targets the HR profession and the first issue published in the summer was distributed to 32,000 HR managers in the UK. The online version of the journal can be seen [here](#) and pages 12/13 feature one of my own articles 'Who should mediate'. The next issue is due out in December and if you'd like a copy you can register your interest with the publishers [here](#).

## Amazon workplace relations and impact on employees

Personnel Today examines the impact of company culture on employee welfare by looking at Amazon's "bruising" approach to workplace relations (click [here](#)). Research published this year by Harvard and Stanford Business Schools suggests that health problems associated with job-related anxiety account for more deaths each year in the US than Alzheimer's disease or diabetes and it is likely to be the same in the UK. This article argues there are many ways to foster healthy workplace relations and one of these relates to how workplace conflict is perceived and managed within an organisation, including in cases of severe relationship breakdowns. I could not agree more and would add that mediation has a valuable role to play in the reduction of workplace conflict and stress.

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

## 7 tips on managing conflict

You will often see the classic 3 / 5 / 7 tips articles in newspapers and business magazines claiming to solve all your conflict problems in a few lines. Often they contain little more than superficial and obvious statements. This one however (click [here](#)) stood out for me as it has a little more thought behind it. It is from a Philippines based mediator and corporate consultant. There are some very sensible suggestions such as knowing what are the things that might trigger you, and asking questions rather than making assumptions. There are also some quirky but interesting ideas including the thought that going through conflict will strengthen our heart muscles! It's a bit off beat but there are some lessons in the article that it's good to remind ourselves of.

## Mediation could save you £31,000

My latest blog (click [here](#)) was inspired by a recent article which identified 10 things which affect the



value of your home. What do you think was number one? Having anti-social neighbours. Research from the Halifax suggests nuisance neighbours could knock £31,000 off the average house price. Perhaps even more shocking was the finding that nearly 1 in 5 people have encountered problems with their neighbours over the previous year. Apart from the potential financial impact, the stress caused by poor relations with neighbours is very damaging. As a community mediator I have seen this at first hand. The blog gives my top 5 strategies to avoid a fight with your neighbour!