



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 relaunch of the UK's largest internal mediation scheme as well as a couple of articles touching on how technology is impacting dispute resolution now and into the future. Any idea what an 'Inter-AI Conflict Resolution Specialist' might be? Read the article to find out!

Marc Reid

Relaunch of largest internal workplace mediation scheme

How big is the UK's largest internal workplace mediation scheme? 160 mediators apparently according to this article by Chief People Officer at the Civil Service, Rupert McNeil (click [here](#)). Having such a large scheme means some of the usual issues with using internal mediators due to independence / impartiality, are overcome as people from completely different departments can be used. There are some good pointers in this article about key things to remember when launching (or relaunching) an internal mediation scheme. Rupert points to the need to collect data on use and success of the scheme, the need for internal communications to ensure sufficient awareness of the availability of mediation and the necessity of highlighting the business case. For those of us already 'sold' on mediation these are self evident but internal schemes often fail through neglecting to market themselves sufficiently through the organisation. Let's hope the relaunch goes well and they can publish some helpful stats on the benefits resulting from the scheme.

Successful outcomes for online dispute resolution



Driven by the need to cut costs there has been much focus recently on the use of online dispute resolution for commercial disputes. This Law Gazette article (click [here](#)) states that online technology has been successfully used in commercial mediation cases. I can understand that when the focus is settling a dispute about money, mediation that is not 'face to face' can be effective. I am less convinced that online mediation can be successful when the goal is to restore a professional working relationship, which is what we are aiming at in workplace mediation. A key factor in moving a relationship forward is to bring the two people together and facilitate direct communication between them.

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

Tel: 07870 444444

Email: enquiry@mediation4.co.uk

Firm management or bullying?

Many of the mediation cases I deal with are the result of bullying claims; an employee against their manager, or vice versa, or both against each other! This article in People Management magazine (click [here](#)) highlights the difficulty in drawing the line between strong management and bullying. As the article points out, there is no legal definition of bullying, so assessing behaviour can be quite subjective. The key is to get beneath the 'bullying' label and to understand what the behaviours are that are considered to be bullying and to address those. This article gives some useful suggestions on how to manage assertively without 'crossing the line'. I would add one of my own: have open and honest discussions with colleagues about style and seek feedback on how you come across.

The future. Mediating between robots?



There has been much speculation in the press recently about how progress in the development of Artificial Intelligence threatens certain jobs. This article from a technical publication (click [here](#)) looks at possible 'new' jobs resulting from the development of AI. It is quite amusing, but also alarming at the same time! The one that caught my eye was the 'Inter-AI Conflict Resolution Specialist'. The authors propose that, as AI develops, robots will be talking to each other, for instance your AI personal assistant communicating with the customer service of a vendor. If they don't agree what happens? A human needs to intervene to resolve their disagreement!! This is good news for us mediators; plenty of work for the future!

Website: www.mediation4.co.uk

When you can't let conflict drop



My latest blog (click [here](#)) looks at the issue of how difficult it can

be to let go of conflict. This sounds counter-intuitive. Why wouldn't you want to let go of something which can be so painful? I speculate that one reason could be that by being in conflict with someone, you have a scapegoat, a person onto whom you can place blame for whatever may be wrong in your life. Resolving the conflict therefore risks removing the scapegoat, meaning that you may have to face up to the possibility that the other person was not to blame for some of what is going wrong. In the blog I look at a neighbour mediation case where this dynamic may have been playing out. Was it resolved? You'll need to read the blog to find out!

Can mediation help in sexual harassment cases?

This article from Rachel Suff (CIPD's Employee Relations and Diversity Adviser) in the CIPD forum (click [here](#)) raises the tricky issue of whether mediation can be used in sexual harassment cases. It previews a Civil Mediation Council event on this subject taking place on 28th June. For me there is no simple answer to this question. It could be appropriate for certain cases, particularly those that are relatively low level (recognising that interpretation of this can vary considerably) and where there is a need for an ongoing working relationship. I was asked to mediate in such a case and through mediation the people involved were able to clarify how they felt about what had happened and agree how they would work together going forward. So mediation can be effective.