



Mediation – Using It For More Than Peace In The Middle East

Mediators are usually portrayed in the evening news as high-profile statesmen, such as President Clinton, or retired president Jimmy Carter, using "shuttle diplomacy" to bring peace to the Middle East; or as a tool of last resort used to end a labour strike that has dragged on for weeks and has brought a company, or even an economy, to the brink of disaster. (Remember the postal strikes of the 1970's?)

Both views are outdated. The truth is that mediation belongs in Canadian business as an avenue of first choice, rather than a tool of last resort. In addition, it's no longer necessary to reserve mediation just for resolving high-profile "glamorous" issues. It's now widely and economically available and can be used whenever productivity and profitability is threatened by the variety of contentious issues that can crop up on a daily basis between a company and its suppliers, customers, clients or employees.

A business that includes mediation in their conflict resolution plans find that; they receive proven long-term solutions to almost any situation; they can resolve conflicts in a timely manner; mediation is less formal than litigation and far more cost effective.

In this era of global change, the relationships we develop in business are essential to future success. Historically, if you had a conflict with a supplier, client or employee you would end the relationship and resolve many outstanding issues in court. Today this isn't the best solution. Substantial time and money goes into researching and negotiating with clients or suppliers and an even a larger investment is made in the recruitment, training and retention of good employees. So what does a business do if the relationships they have invested in are not living up to their potential?

Well, you hire a mediation firm to resolve your issues or conflicts. One such firm is Toronto ADR Services, who is a leader in mediation services. Toronto ADR Services brings proven mediation techniques to all types of businesses in Canada. "No matter what type of business you're in, whether dealing with local suppliers or negotiating with a multi-national group, disputes arise along the way. Some disputes can spiral out of control and relationships get strained, or even terminated," explains Catharine Allen, President, Toronto ADR Services, "Mediation will assist the parties involved to restore and repair their relationship, creating a winning solution for everyone at an affordable cost."

So how does the mediation process work?

The parties involved voluntarily meet in a temporary relationship specifically designed to encourage an exchange of views and interests. Throughout the mediation process, with the help of a conflict manager, the mediator examines the issues, which have brought the parties to mediation. After successful professional mediation, the participants emerge knowing that they have reached a win-win solution, which they can continue to build on.

What type of business conflicts would a mediator resolve?

Mediation is most commonly used to resolve client or supplier issues such as late payment or no payment of invoices, work not completed or not done to the quality of expectations. A mediator can readily resolve these and many other issues. For external conflicts a mediator can be used in almost any situation that you would litigate.

Other issues that you may not think of are internal conflicts between departments and individuals. A mediator can provide neutrality that most internal personnel cannot as a mediator does not have a personnel stake in the outcome of the conflict.

“Every business goes through stages where employees are not working in harmony. It is just as important to resolve these types of conflicts as it is to make sure your clients are paying their invoices,” explains Mrs. Allen, “This situation will not fix itself, so if you can show your employees a better way to work together, reduce stress and maintain harmony through mediation, your business will win every time.”

For many years judicial systems and governments have reaped the benefits of mediation. It's now time for businesses in Canada to join in and find out for themselves how beneficial mediation can be to their employee's and their bottom-line.