

# Catalyst Mediation

## A Case Study in Employee/Employee Conflict.

### Brief details of the dispute

A department of a public organisation had grown rapidly and a new line manager and her more experienced team leader were finding their working relationship increasingly in conflict. The team leader was responsible for 8 local workers and their effectiveness was being affected by the conflict. Following a harassment claim by the team leader, an internal investigation recorded a “not proven” decision. She approached her HR Director who suggested mediation as an independent resolution process.

### Particular features

- Relationship issues: the line manager felt her strengths were in administration and these were not being recognised by the team leader, who was undermining her with the local workers, with whom she enjoyed working. The team leader felt her experience was not being recognised by her line manager, who she felt was interfering with her team. Neither felt there was any solution to the conflict.
- Organisational Issues: there was a concern that, due to the effect on the local workers, without some resolution one or other of the individuals would need to be dismissed.

### Mediation

A pre-mediation meeting was held with each individual to reduce their concerns about the mediation and help them prepare. This resulted in both approaching the mediation in a more positive frame of mind, with a desire to “lay some ghosts” and look to the future. After a very emotional discussion, the mediators were able to encourage both sides to make positive statements about each others strengths and helped them to recognise how each might be seen to be threatening the other’s position. They were also able to discuss the effect on the local workers and how this would affect the overall perception of the organisation.

### Outcomes

A wide range of practical solutions were discussed, including how they could improve the working of the local team, and how the line manager could provide support at a senior management level for certain changes they both agreed were necessary in the local workers organisation. The individuals also agreed a joint debrief for their employer on the outcomes of the mediation and the recommendations for changes within the organisation.

### Learning points

- Pre-mediation meetings can be extremely effective in reducing the emotional stress of the conflict by focusing parties on the future.
- Outcomes can include new ideas for organisations to help reduce future tension by simple alterations to working patterns and responsibilities.

### Note

Mediations are always confidential unless the parties agree otherwise, so while many details have been changed, the Clients comments are verbatim and the outcomes factual.

### Dispute Duration

The conflict had been ongoing for two years.

### Mediation Length

8 hours on one day.

### Client Comments

*“The mediation created a more effective working relationship between the two parties, resulting in positive outcomes for the organisation in terms of effective joint working, less time and associated costs due to conflict situations arising etc”*

*It is essential that both parties can work positively together to ensure the efficient and effective management of service delivery*

*The main benefits of using the mediation process were a reduction in stress levels, no further tensions within work, improved job performance.”*

### Mediation Budget

Total cost circa £3,000.

