

## DBRIEF DETAILS OF THE DISPUTE

A line Manager and his junior were part of a 25 strong team working in a key department within a public organisation. Their working relationship had worsened over a period of two years to the point where they each lodged bullying claims against the other. An internal investigation followed, recording a “not proven” decision on both claims, but in the meantime their team’s output had suffered.

## PARTICULAR FEATURES

- Relationship issues: the senior manager held strong beliefs about the respect he was due and the junior manager’s general attitude towards authority. The junior manager regarded this attitude as bullying and felt threatened in meetings.
- Organisational Issues: there was a concern that, due to the effect on the team, 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 for the mediation. This resulted in each being better prepared to discuss their central issues and express their desires that the mediation would help them to re-establish their working relationship. The mediators were able to create an environment where neither side felt threatened and a frank discussion followed where their feelings about each other’s attitudes and behaviour could be expressed without exacerbating the situation. This led to each making positive statements about the other’s professional skills, which in turn led to a discussion about how they could use this level of mutual respect to work together in the future.

## OUTCOMES

A wide range of practical solutions were discussed, including the language they would use with each other to reduce potential misperceptions, how they would work together in meetings, a specific project where they would work as a team and finally how they would jointly approach the other members of the team and start to rebuild the lost momentum. The individuals also agree to work out a joint debrief for their employer on the outcomes of the mediation and their commitment to resolving any future tensions that might occur using the skills they had learned.

## LEARNING POINTS

- Pre-mediation meetings can be extremely effective in reducing the emotional stress of the conflict by focusing parties on the future.
- Even when a dispute seems to involve extreme emotions, mediation can create the atmosphere in which frank, facilitated discussions that help to move the individuals to a positive outcome.

## 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 three years.

### *Mediation Length*

2 x three hour pre-mediation meetings then 10 hours over two days.

### *Client Comments*

"I believe that the mediation has re-established a relationship which had almost collapsed beyond recovery."

"It allowed me to obtain a positive outcome from a difficult situation."

### *Mediation Budget*

Total cost circa £3.000.

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