



Mediation as a Tool in Conflict Mitigation

Mediation is often used as a formal procedure to resolve conflicts outside the courtroom. It is an effective and inexpensive way to accomplish a resolution with little or no overhead and expense. These methods can be adopted and tailored for a particular organization.

It is not surprising that conflicts arise in the workplace. Many work environments have a high amount of stress. Therefore, conflicts between workers is a normal result, especially in those working conditions involve competition between workers. In some cases, workers may be competing for resources, such as a limited amount of money available for raises or bonuses. In times of high economic stress, workers may fear for their jobs and as a result may feel the need to compete. Thus, conflicts can arise. Conflicts can even arise between managers, and in some workplaces, they are the norm, as managers fight amongst themselves.

Some companies take the approach that it is better to stay out of employee conflicts and let those who are in conflict work out their own problems without any intervention from management. Rather than allow these conflicts to worsen, as they often do, it is often better to intervene. When intervention is taken, it is important to have good tools like mediation. This will hasten the resolution of the conflict.

Formally, mediation involves the use of a third party to help facilitate communication and resolution between the conflicting parties. Mediators use various techniques and methods to improve the communication between disputants. Usually in formal mediation, the mediator does not act as a judge who renders an ultimate decision after hearing the facts, but in the workplace, something like this may be required to ultimately resolve a dispute. Sometimes parties cannot come to an agreement after all the communications and mediation techniques are implemented.

A company should have a formal system in place to mitigate conflict, and this system should be documented in such a fashion that disputes will

be ultimately resolved once the process is invoked. If this is the case, the long-term outlook for reduced conflict in the workplace is significantly improved.

Steps in the Mediation Process

1. Introduction and summary of the mediation process
2. Both parties tell their story
3. Relevant information is gathered by the mediator
4. The problems are identified and stated
5. Common ground for a solution is identified and stated
6. Options are presented for a partial or complete solution