

Article

Why Corporate Mediators Matter – Now More Than Ever

Anna Doyle*

1 Introduction

30

I would like to share with you why I believe corporate mediators matter, now more than ever. Corporate mediation, as eloquently elaborated in the pages of the *Corporate Mediation Journal* (CMJ) over many years, is all about the practice of mediation, within and between organisations. The CMJ's aim was to become the voice of mediation as a management tool. CMJ offered experienced professionals a medium to share their best practice, using mediation skills, in a way that would add value to both the workplace and organisation.

2 A Question

Recognising that mediation holds the potential to transform traditions, shape ideologies, enable paradigms, inspire practices and offer new insights, a burning question now is *Has the CMJ succeeded in achieving its aim?* I ponder the question on the eve of publication of this, its final edition.

Corporate mediators create and maintain processes of mutual listening, respect, self-determination, trust, confidentiality through hope and empowerment. We equip people in dispute with the constructive tools of co-creation and we accompany them on their journey towards resolution. Enabling the making of agreements

that prevent breakdown and allowing all parties to keep on working together is a vital role that we perform with care and attention. While mediation is a science, it is also an exercise in amplifying human potential to do good and to share wisdom. As mediators, we encourage the parties to hold together their differences until they have walked through the turbulence, mistrust, doubt and hostility and new horizons open up and come into view. Corporate mediators also access the pure potentiality of creative endeavour and use our influence to enable employers, stakeholders and workforces to view conflict less as a problem and more as an opportunity. And many of us love to write and share stories.

3 An Answer

In my experience, the answer to this question is a resounding 'Yes'. The CMJ has truly succeeded in achieving its aim, until now. Not only has the Journal offered a trusted and highly valued platform to mediators in which to express and share their opinions, it has also empowered corporate mediators, like me, to find their voice. Corporate mediation has become a mainstream option, and a valued management tool of first choice, in many aspects of workplace and organisational conflict, as regards both prevention and resolution. It has been tried and tested and, while still evolving as a science, the positive results of corporate mediation speak for themselves. I make this considered observation as an international workplace mediator with 17 years' experience, during which I have seen the concept of corporate mediation grow from the metaphorical equivalent of sapling into the equivalent of a sustainable forest. The Journal has enabled us to mirror our experiences and plot our

* Anna (Walsh) Doyle is an International Mediator & CMJ Editorial Board member. She is also an external Mediator on the Global Mediation Panel at the Office of the Ombudsman for UN Funds and Programmes.

journeys, sharing and learning from each other. I believe that there is still huge potential for further growth, development and enlightenment, if corporate mediators work together to achieve this, continuing to write and share our stories along the way.

4 Why Corporate Mediators Matter

So, instead of seeking confrontation, instigating battles, declaring war and litigating to defeat another party, corporate mediators offer a wide range of creative processes. We matter because we allow differences to be expressed, voices to be heard, opposing viewpoints to be better understood and opinions in various states of formulation to be held in safe space, allowed to mature over time. In this way, no one is damaged in the conflict resolution process and both people and working environment can be transformed in ways that enable people and organisations to thrive.

Ours is challenging and important work that needs expertise, patience, endurance, commitment and a willingness to never stop learning. The world needs our skills, now more than ever.

5 A Mediator's Mindset

Corporate mediators also tune into hidden, silent vibrations – connecting with what is as yet unspoken, perhaps even not yet manifesting as a particle of thought. We detect untapped seams of potential expression and open up new channels of communication, enabling waves of thoughts to become words and words to become actions. Our mediators' mindset offers a key to unlocking potential in a new world of work. This is important now more than ever because the world needs both enlightened and ethical leadership, as well as encouraging dedicated followership. The aim is to collectively empower ourselves and others to become more adept and responsive in changing direction quickly, in response to constantly emerging global challenges.

I sense the stirrings of a collective *mediator's mindset* emerging. It is working silently alongside governance, stakeholders and labour, enabling new shared perspective to emerge. This is not only important for clients, it is also potentially of value for the evolution of our profession. The spirit of our time calls out to us and asks for our response. What will our response be?

6 Intentions

Corporate mediators, alone and with others, have a key role to play in enabling the expression of intentions to empower global responses aimed at transforming the

future. We contribute positively to this powerful force. Global corporations are potential hosts for transformation and can, if so inclined, lead the way. A window of opportunity is appearing within the spectrum of our mutual gaze. Will we walk through it together? I hope corporate mediators everywhere will unite, in a constructive spirit of global transformation, in elaborating the evolution of the mediators' mindset. The words of John O'Donohue, author and poet, offer us some guidance on what our response might be and how we can harness the power of collective intention:

The spirit of a time is an incredibly subtle, yet hugely powerful force. And it is comprised of the mentality and spirit of all individuals together. Therefore, the way you look at things is not simply a private matter. Your outlook actually and concretely affects what goes on. When you give in to helplessness, you collude with despair and add to it. When you take back your power and choose to see the possibilities for healing and transformation, your creativity awakens and flows to become an active force of renewal and encouragement in the world. In this way, even in your own hidden life, you can become a powerful agent of transformation in a broken, darkened world. There is a huge force field that opens when intention focuses and directs itself towards transformation.¹

7 An Appreciation

On a personal note, in this last edition of the *Corporate Mediation Journal*, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to all involved in the publication and to readers, past and present. It has been an honour and a pleasure to have been associated with the publication for the past 6 years. Working closely with Martin Brink and Bas Van Elst, firstly as an occasional contributor to the Journal, and subsequently joining them as a member of the Editorial Board, has been a hugely creative professional experience. Reading, writing and contributing to editing CMJ articles has also been a very enjoyable experience. Interaction with authors has been a joy and a challenge I delighted in rising to. It was a privilege to be a part of enabling the creative process, with contributors generously sharing wisdom in the field of mediation and contributing substantially to the collective body of work that comprises the CMJ portfolio.

8 A Sense of Longing

It is with mixed emotions, therefore, that I end my final contribution; so much to say, so little time to say it. Had I more time, I would have enthusiastically elaborated on

1 O'Donohue J. (2008). *To Bless the Space Between Us*. New York: Doubleday, pp. 215-216. ISBN 978-0-385-52227-4.

many topics that must now, sadly, await another time, another mode of expression. I recall these topics briefly by name, not for any ostentatious motive, but simply as a gentle reminder, to self and perhaps others, that there still remains much to express, share and develop in our collective formulation of the mediators' psyche:

- How are corporate mediators preparing themselves and each other for what will happen next?
- Will mediation become a right in society in the future?
- Challenges for mediators in a post-pandemic workplace.
- How mediators are acting as midwives in the emergence of a new framework of corporate governance.
- The demise of human resources management and the rise of self-governing employees.
- A comparison of the merits of internal corporate mediation versus the engagement of external mediator services.
- How the mediators' mindset is transcending meridians of latitude and longitude to tap into the potentiality of creating new conflict resolution methods.
- Why mediators allow the destination in a dispute to take care of itself.
- How a new concept in pre-mediation enables parties in dispute to resolve their differences, even before conflict begins.
- How the Global Mediation Panel of the United Nations is transforming internal dispute resolution for a global workforce.
- How the world mediators' alliance against climate change is partnering corporations to promote a sustainable future.

32

Perhaps some of these ideas may resonate with a broader readership or a pooling of thought processes may even lead to deeper exploration and new discoveries further afield. If so, we will not only have found and amplified our voices, as corporate mediators, but we may also become keen architects of broadening the scope of the mediators' mindset. We can take on new perspective, not only of our daily work in progress but also of the makings of an even more dynamic profession, constantly in an evolving state of proactive, energetic and enthusiastic emergence.

9 Au Revoir

Tempus fugit. Corporate mediators, people of peace, out there, beyond the boardroom and the courtroom, there is a space of pure potentiality coming into view from beyond the horizon. Let us take to the sky, like a murmuration of starlings, ready to fulfil our potential as enablers of a transformative future in an emerging world of work. I'll meet you there!