



Branding the Industry of Mediation

by Leslie Short

We are in troubling times. The option to use mediation as a tool to aid in conflict resolution should be the beginning of many conversations. There are many issues that plague our world today, for example, how we speak and deal with each other as colleagues.

Mediation is as good as the mediator is and as good as those participating in the process.

We were all trained to be aware of “what's in our bags” or to phrase it differently, what each person brings to the table. Then we're told you must not bring anything to the table but the ability to listen and ask open-ended questions.

In light of the issues in the world, and as humans being humans, is it fair to ask you to leave your bag at the door when you invite the participants into the room? What does the room you're inviting them into look like? (**Branding: Your environment-where is the mediation being held and what's the feel of the space**)

I saw an offering for a talk on unconscious bias and I thought to myself, well said! Let's be honest, we each have some type of bias within us. Understanding your bias can be as small as acknowledging your preference of Oreo's as your favorite chocolate cookie to as large as your views on religion and race.

To be true to ourselves we must recognize that we are all human beings and we may see the same issue with a different twist. It's not about fixing the difference. Recognizing and identifying the issues can expand mediation, not as a suggestion to solve issues, but the first option to resolve issues.

(Branding: What do you stand for?)

I repeat what we all already know because those points are key in building a brand.

Now you have to ask, what does that mean and what does building a brand look like?

Collectively as an industry we must continue to educate ourselves, expand our horizons and meet people where they are colleagues and participants.

Regardless of what's in your bag as a mediator, we must have the empathy to hear both sides and ask the open-ended questions. These questions allow growth in the conversation, for the participants and for us, because each case is unique.

If ever there were a time for the practice of mediation to be recognized it is now. It's time to expand the use of mediation to outside courtrooms, boardrooms and community centers. (**Branding: understanding your brands worth**)

How do we advertise, is it necessary to advertise, how do we speak and present the industry? How do we present ourselves? Each individual mediator is a brand within building the brand of mediation.

How you dress, talk and walk reflects your brand. We are the faces of mediation.

Cultural sensitivity within your personal brand is a key factor in how you interact with clients and sets the tone of the perception of the industry.

There is a perception that mediation is mainly used in the divorce field. Each of us that focus our practice outside of divorce has a duty to begin to understand how to brand ourselves and our practice. This branding will then branch out to our clients understanding the strength of mediation. Different segments of mediation will grow and like building blocks will build the brand of mediation.

5 key points of building your brand

1. Know who you are and your skill set and be able to explain it clearly
2. Your workspace sets the tone of how comfortable clients will be
3. What do you stand for? What is your companies skill set?
4. Understanding the worth of your brand
5. Continue to build your brand by partnering; education and sharing how mediation can be of assistance outside of those that are familiar with the mediation world.

Leslie Short biography and additional articles: <http://www.mediate.com/people/personprofile.cfm?auid=1603>

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