

# BRIDGING THE GAP

Workplace Conflict Resolution and  
Global Business Events



HERBERHOLZ  
MEDIATION

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# HANDBOOK FOR THE EXHIBITION INDUSTRY

## I. INTRODUCTION

HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION welcomes you to a comprehensive insight into the use of informal conflict management in the exhibition industry and its yet to be discovered potential.

With 3.4 million total jobs being directly and indirectly supported by exhibitions (source 2023 UFI, The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry) workplace conflicts are inevitable. These can arise in various forms, ranging from interpersonal disagreements and misunderstandings to conflicts related to workload, communication, or differing opinions. These conflicts can create tension, hinder productivity, and affect employee morale. Conflict is an inevitable part of any workplace, including the exhibition industry, and if left unaddressed, it can have detrimental effects on event success, individual well-being and customer satisfaction. Regrettably, this important topic has often been neglected.

HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION presents a handbook based on the global survey conducted across the exhibition industry representing 31 countries/regions. It shares a comprehensive analysis of the survey results, marking a pioneering endeavour in the exhibition industry. By exploring various companies' approaches to resolving workplace conflicts, we shed light on the significance of acquiring conflict resolution skills and knowledge for effective conflict prevention and management.

Moreover, we provide practical and actionable tips on how mediation can empower the modern workforce and share how the industry leadership and their teams benefit from enhanced conflict resolution skills.

With the invaluable insights gained from our survey, this handbook invites industry professionals, executives, and employees to benefit from mediation as a transformative tool to address workplace conflicts. By showcasing real-world examples and success stories, we aim to inspire organisations to adopt mediation practices and create a culture that prioritises conflict prevention and resolution.

By emphasising the critical role of mediation, we recognise its potential to mitigate disputes, build stronger teams, and enhance overall organisational performance. This handbook serves as a guide for industry leaders, human resources practitioners, and employees alike, who seek to navigate workplace conflicts with a proactive and constructive approach.

Delve into the pages that follow, as we explore the survey findings, benefit from the case studies, use hands-on tips to empower your workforce and start today to transform workplace conflicts through the power of mediation.

Create a competitive advantage by implementing effective conflict resolution.

## I. I. ABOUT THE SURVEY

Building upon the in-depth research conducted in 2018, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION is delighted to present the findings of the second global survey focusing on workplace conflict prevention, management, and resolution in the exhibition industry. By publishing this report, we aim to explore the various conflict resolution methods employed by organisations, particularly focusing on the alternative method of conflict management known as mediation.

The survey focuses on how companies support employees in managing workplace conflicts, determine the extent to which mediation is utilised as a method for resolving disputes and highlights skill and knowledge gaps across workforce.

**DEFINITION:** Workplace mediation is an informal conflict resolution method that involves the intervention of a neutral third party, known as a mediator, to facilitate open and constructive communication between parties involved in a workplace conflict. The mediator assists in guiding the participants towards reaching a mutually acceptable resolution, allowing them to express their concerns, understand each other's perspectives, and explore potential solutions. Mediation emphasises collaboration and problem-solving, aiming to restore working relationships and promote a positive and productive work environment. Unlike traditional legal processes, workplace mediation offers a confidential and voluntary alternative to resolving conflicts, with a focus on preserving ongoing working relationships and avoiding the adversarial nature of court proceedings.

## METHODOLOGY

HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION employed an online survey approach utilising both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The data collection period spanned from April to May 2023, during which close to 100 replies were received from professionals within the exhibition industry.

The survey respondents represented a diverse range of countries, with participation from professionals across 31 countries worldwide. The survey aimed for broad geographic representation, including regions such as Asia-Pacific, Africa, America, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. This diverse sample ensures a comprehensive understanding of conflict resolution practices in the exhibition industry on a global scale.

Countries represented:

- **Asia-Pacific:** Australia, China, India, Singapore, Thailand
- **Americas:** Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico and the USA.
- **Europe:** Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.
- **Middle East/ Africa:** Iran, KSA, Oman, South Africa, UAE and Uzbekistan.

The majority of participants in the survey work for Exhibition Organisers and Venue Owners and Operators. In addition, the survey also includes voices from exhibition industry associations, service partners of the exhibition industry, and government entities, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives.

The survey respondents represent various company sizes, with the majority working in companies with more than 250 employees (37%). Following this, professionals from companies with 10-49 employees made up 29% of the respondents, while those from companies with 50-249 employees accounted for



20%. Additionally, professionals who work in organisations with 1-9 employees shared their experiences, comprising 14% of the respondents.

Regarding job positions, the majority of professionals who responded to the survey held senior leadership positions. Approximately 36% of respondents indicated being CEO, Managing Director, or COO. Another 28% were managers in charge of teams, while 22% held positions as heads of departments with a focus on business development and human resources activities. This diverse representation of senior-level professionals provides valuable insights into conflict resolution practices from experienced leaders within the exhibition industry.

## I.II. ABOUT HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION



Founded by Angela Herberholz, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION specialises in conflict prevention, management and resolution for the exhibition industry. Her professional experience at the Global Association for the Exhibition Industry (UFI), has equipped her with valuable expertise in the regional and global development of the business events industry.

Having worked at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Angela has been at the heart of international dispute resolution, acquiring unparalleled insights into complex global conflicts.

Drawing on Angela's extensive experience as a trainer, mediator, and conflict consultant, she brings a wealth of industry know-how to the table. With a focus on business events, company/shareholders, employment, education, multiparty assessment, NGO, partnerships, and technology, she has advised and provided conflict resolution services to a diverse range of businesses and international organisations.

Angela has honed her ability to effectively address conflicts and prevent disputes from escalating across various levels of professionals, including Executives, Board Members, Managers, HR Professionals, and Team Leaders.

Her [consultancy](#) work includes conflict analysis, stakeholder consultation, policy design and implementation, complex dialogue processes, capacity-building, and training

As a [commercial and workplace mediator](#) since 2010, Angela has successfully resolved disputes involving parties from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East – Africa, collaborating seamlessly with individuals at various levels within organisations.

Through her work, Angela has established herself as a trusted advisor and expert, capable of guiding professionals at all organisational levels towards effective conflict resolution strategies.

Additionally, she has [trained](#) numerous individuals globally in mediation, conflict resolution, effective communication and negotiation skills, ranging from business leaders and legal professionals to NGO teams and students.

Angela's speaking engagements have taken her to various countries, including China, France, Germany, India, Italy, and South Africa, where she has delivered insightful presentations at seminars, conferences, meetings, lectures, and formal dinners.

This unique combination of experiences enables Angela to bring a comprehensive perspective to her work, encompassing both effective conflict resolution and the dynamic landscape of the business events sector.



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## II. DEEP DIVE EXHIBITION INDUSTRY

Relationships within teams are complex and wherever people interact conflict is inevitable.

Here are three signals that often indicate when relationships break down and when team leaders shall act.

### ★ **Changes in communication**

- ☐ Increased tension or hostility in conversations.
- ☐ Lack of communication or avoidance of certain team members.
- ☐ Negative body language or tone of voice during conversations.

### ★ **Decreased productivity**

- ☐ Decreased output or missed deadlines
- ☐ Increased absenteeism or tardiness.
- ☐ Decreased quality of work or customer service.

### ★ **Behavioural changes**

- ☐ Increased irritability, anger, or frustration.
- ☐ Withdrawal from social activities with colleagues.
- ☐ Increased use of sick days or vacation time.

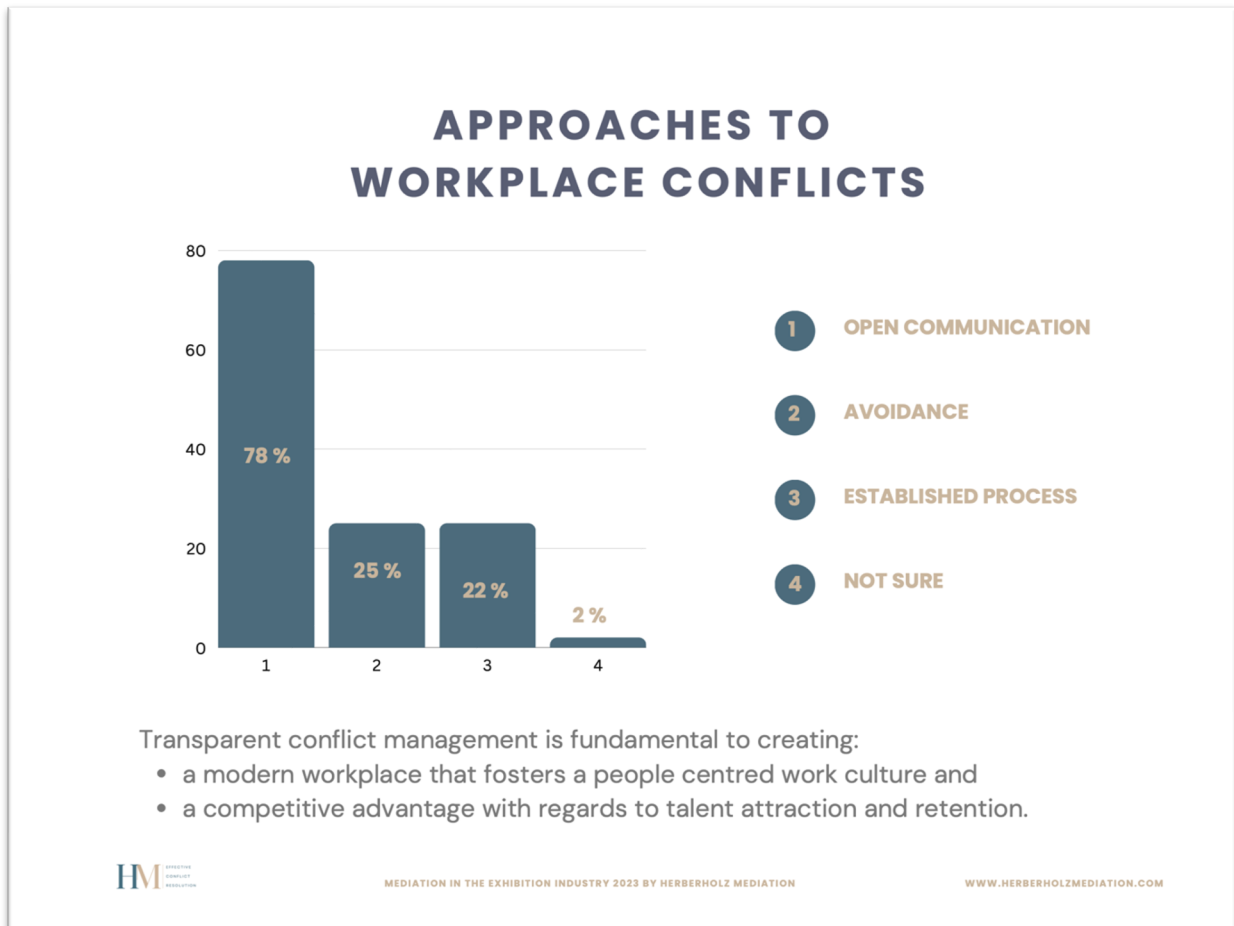
At first we often believe “it” will solve itself and we often step back. Yet it is exactly this moment where managers, trained and skilled in conflict management, have the best chance to engage and resolve conflict head on. And transform the situation into a constructive way forward.

If however team leaders are not skilled and ready to engage, we strongly recommend to ask for help and reach out to an external and neutral third party - a mediator.



## II.I. APPROACHES TO WORKPLACE CONFLICTS

The survey results reveal how companies in the exhibition industry approach the resolution of workplace conflicts. Participants were given the option to select multiple answers.



**Encouraging Open Communication and Collaboration:** The majority of respondents (78%) reported that their companies encourage open communication and collaboration between the parties involved in conflicts. This approach emphasises the importance of dialogue and constructive engagement to address and resolve workplace conflicts.

Open communication is a key factor in conflict prevention and management within the workplace. It promotes transparency, understanding, and effective collaboration among employees.


**Avoiding Conflict altogether:** Surprisingly, a quarter of respondents (25%) reported that their companies tend to avoid conflicts altogether. This approach suggests a potential avoidance or reluctance to confront conflicts head-on, which may have implications for the timely and effective resolution of workplace conflicts.

Conflict is an inevitable part of any workplace, and the exhibition industry is no exception. However, if left unaddressed, conflicts can quickly escalate and negatively impact the success of an event and the well-being of the individuals involved. Conflict management skill training can serve as an enabler to practice effective conflict prevention and management. Employees who participate in conflict management trainings gain the necessary skills and feel more prepared to address disagreements in a sustainable and constructive manner.

By investing in such training, organisations can enhance their employees' conflict resolution skills to better serve their teams.


Additionally, depending on the complexity of the conflict, sometimes it may be advisable to engage a neutral third-party mediator to address specific workplace conflicts. Mediation involves the intervention of a trained mediator who facilitates communication, promotes understanding, and helps parties find mutually agreeable solutions. This approach can be particularly beneficial when conflicts involve deep-rooted issues, strained relationships, or when parties have difficulty finding common ground. By considering the use of mediation, organisations can provide a structured and neutral space for resolving conflicts, promoting a transparent and balanced resolution process that encourages collaboration and preserves working relationships.

HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION specialises in helping conflicting parties move forward by facilitating confidential and respectful discussions, leading to mutually agreed-upon solutions. As a trusted conflict expert, Angela Herberholz has a track record of successfully resolving interpersonal conflicts, mending relationships, reducing the risk of litigation and conflict costs, empowering individuals to work more efficiently, and enabling teams to succeed together. Contact us to receive your guide to mediation and discover how we can support your company in navigating workplace conflicts with professionalism and expertise.

 **Conflict Resolution Process:** 22% of the respondents indicated that their companies have a conflict resolution process in place. This suggests that these organisations have established structured mechanisms to address conflicts when they arise, ensuring a consistent and systematic approach to resolution.

Advocating for a resolution policy rather than a traditional grievance procedure, we emphasize the objective of bringing the parties together and forming the policy around people rather than just following a rigid procedure. While a resolution policy can coexist alongside traditional grievance processes, it offers a more holistic approach to conflict resolution. It focuses on proactive measures, fostering open communication, and collaborative problem-solving, rather than merely addressing grievances after they have escalated. By implementing a resolution policy, organisations can create a culture that values constructive dialogue and seeks to resolve conflicts in a fair and collaborative manner, promoting a positive work environment and strengthening employee relationships.

HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION supports companies to establish a transparent process that enables employees and/or clients to raise concerns effectively and address them immediately. We work with a dedicated project team or person to design and implement a tailored conflict management system in line with clients' values. At the end of the partnership, our clients have a bespoke team resolution process, fully operational by their own employees.

 **Uncertainty About The Company's Approach:** Some respondents (2%) expressed uncertainty (e.g., "I do not know how we deal with workplace conflicts"). This finding suggests a clarity or communication gap within these organisations regarding conflict resolution policies.

The finding that some respondents expressed uncertainty about their company's approach to workplace conflicts highlights the importance of transparent processes and clear communication. To address this, short information sessions can be organised to display conflict resolution policies and concrete steps that can be taken if conflicts arise.

Emphasising the significance of open communication as the first step is crucial. Additionally, it is essential to provide guidance on who individuals can turn to if communication alone does not resolve the conflict or if they feel unready to address it on their own. Providing a brief guide or flyer can also be helpful, especially for onboarding new employees.

📌 **Conclusion:** While the majority of respondents perceived their companies as encouraging open communication and collaboration in conflicts, there are still areas for improvement. Establishing conflict resolution processes, addressing the prevalence of conflict avoidance, and providing clarity and support to employees regarding conflict management can contribute to fostering a more positive and productive work environment for exhibition industry professionals.

In our experience, professional transparent conflict management is fundamental to creating a modern workplace that fosters a people centred work culture.

Moreover, it creates a competitive advantage with regards to talent attraction and retention.

## II.II. OPEN COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Open communication and collaboration play vital roles in preventing conflict escalation within teams and organisations. When individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and concerns openly, misunderstandings can be clarified, tensions can be diffused, and potential conflicts can be addressed early on. Managers and team leaders have a crucial responsibility in creating an environment of psychological safety that encourages and supports open communication and collaboration.

We share the following three pillars that support you in fostering open communication and collaboration and help you prevent conflicts from escalating:

★ **Active Listening:** Active listening involves fully focusing on and understanding what the other person is saying without interruption or judgment. It requires giving one's full attention, acknowledging the speaker's perspective, and seeking clarification when needed. Active listening fosters mutual respect and empathy, allowing conflicts to be addressed with a deeper understanding of each other's viewpoints.

★ **Constructive Feedback:** Constructive feedback is an essential component of open communication. It involves providing feedback in a respectful and constructive manner, highlighting areas for improvement without personal attacks or criticism. Constructive feedback allows individuals to learn from their mistakes, grow professionally, and contribute to a positive work environment where conflicts can be addressed openly and constructively.

★ **Effective Conflict Resolution Process:** Open communication and collaboration go hand in hand with effective conflict resolution strategies. These strategies include encouraging dialogue and discussions, finding common ground, exploring win-win solutions, and fostering a culture of problem-solving rather than blame. By incorporating these strategies, individuals and teams can navigate conflicts in a constructive manner, leading to better outcomes and strengthened relationships.

On the third pillar, « Effective Conflict Resolution Process » it is important to highlight that while the majority of respondents indicated that their companies foster open communication and collaboration, the survey findings reveal a significant gap in the implementation of conflict resolution processes. Only 22 % of the respondents reported having a dedicated conflict resolution process in place.

This finding underscores the significance of having a transparent framework for addressing conflicts effectively. While open communication and collaboration are vital, a conflict resolution process serves as the foundation for successful implementation. It provides clear guidelines, procedures, and support mechanisms for employees to navigate conflicts in a fair and consistent manner. Without such processes in place, there is a risk of conflicts being handled inconsistently or in an ad hoc manner, potentially leading to unresolved issues, increased tensions, and a negative impact on the work environment.

As a conflict expert service, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION highlights the criticality for organisations in the exhibition industry to acknowledge the significant opportunity of establishing and promoting conflict resolution processes in conjunction with fostering open communication and collaboration. Drawing from our expertise, we have witnessed that by implementing effective conflict resolution mechanisms, companies can ensure that conflicts are addressed promptly, impartially, and constructively. This proactive approach facilitates the creation of a positive and productive work environment, which in turn cultivates a culture of open communication and collaboration.

Through our experience, we have observed that organisations that prioritise both conflict resolution processes and open communication enjoy enhanced teamwork, increased productivity, and improved employee satisfaction.

## II.III. ADDRESSING WORKPLACE CONFLICT

In this chapter, we will examine how companies in the exhibition industry support their employees during challenging times, who is in direct contact with employees in need of support and how ready feel these professionals to deal with internal conflict. The data collected provides insights into the extent to which mediation is utilised as a conflict resolution approach and the support systems in place to address workplace conflicts sustainably. Participants were given the option to select multiple answers.

### SUPPORT SYSTEMS



**No Support:** The survey results highlight that 50% of the respondents indicating that they have no support system in place to address workplace conflicts. These companies tend to let conflicts resolve



themselves without any intervention. This passive approach may result in unresolved conflicts, potentially leading to negative impacts on employee well-being and overall organisational effectiveness.

🔍 **Conflict Management Training:** Furthermore, 38% of the respondents reported offering conflict resolution training for their team leaders and managers. This demonstrates a recognition of the importance of equipping key personnel with conflict resolution skills to effectively manage and address workplace conflicts.

🔍 **Designated Team:** 29% of respondents mentioned that their companies have a designated team or individual responsible for handling workplace conflicts. This indicates a proactive approach to conflict management and suggests the presence of dedicated resources to address and resolve conflicts as they arise.

🔍 **Coaching:** The survey explored the support systems available to employees dealing with workplace conflicts. It was found that 22% of the respondents offer coaching for employees experiencing stress and anxiety related to workplace conflicts. This indicates a proactive approach to supporting individuals in managing the emotional impact of conflicts.

🔍 **Utilisation of Mediation:** When asked if employees can benefit from mediation service as a source of conflict management, the survey results indicate that only 14% of respondents are aware that mediation is part of their conflict resolution culture. This suggests an opportunity to raise awareness where such services exist and encourages reflection on the implementation of mediation as a valuable tool for resolving workplace conflicts.

📌 **Conclusion:** While some positive steps have been taken within the exhibition industry to address workplace conflicts, the survey results highlight the opportunity to increase awareness of established policies and proactive measures in addressing workplace conflicts. Increasing awareness and utilisation of mediation, expanding support systems, and implementing comprehensive conflict management policies are essential for fostering a productive work environment while minimising the negative consequences of unresolved conflicts.



## HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION

### Prevention - Management - Resolution

*Angela Bridges Gap Between International Conflict Resolution and Global Business Events.*



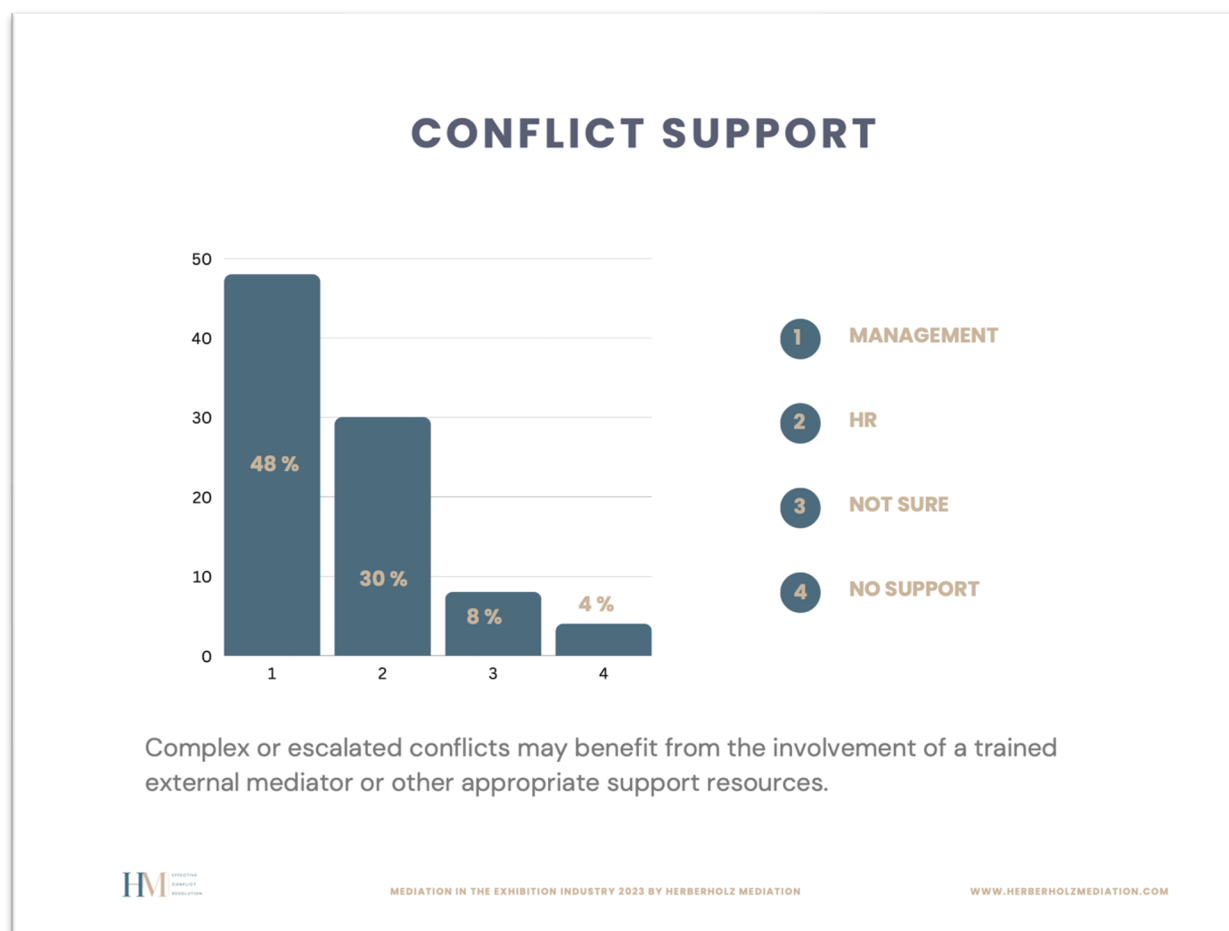
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## PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT




When conflicts arise within companies, it is helpful to have a clear process in place to guide employees on whom to approach for support and resolution. This chapter examines the primary points of contact for employees when seeking assistance in resolving conflicts within the exhibition industry.


The survey results shed light on the prevalent practices and highlight the role of management, HR departments, and individuals' independent attempts in addressing workplace conflicts.

**Management:** A majority of respondents, 48%, reported that they seek support from their management or direct manager. This indicates a common tendency to approach those in positions of authority within the organisational hierarchy for guidance and intervention. Management or direct managers play a crucial role in supporting their teams and have the potential to effectively address conflicts through their leadership and mediation skills.

**Human Resources:** Approximately 30% of respondents mentioned turning to the Human Resources (HR) department or a similar resource for support in resolving conflicts. HR professionals are viewed as neutral and confidential figures who can provide guidance and facilitate discussions between conflicting parties. Their expertise in conflict resolution, policies, and employee relations can contribute significantly to finding fair and constructive solutions.

**Not sure:** 8% of respondents expressed uncertainty about who they can ask for support, suggesting a potential lack of clarity or awareness regarding available resources within their organisations. Our experience confirms the importance of organisations to clearly communicating the designated points of contact for conflict resolution, ensuring employees are aware of the available support systems.

 **No support:** A small proportion, 4%, stated that they do not seek any support and attempt to address their conflicts with co-workers themselves. This approach may indicate a preference for handling conflicts independently or a lack of awareness regarding the benefits of seeking external support. It is essential to recognise that while independent conflict resolution attempts can be appropriate for minor disagreements, complex or escalated conflicts may benefit from the involvement of a trained mediator or other appropriate support resources.

 **Conclusion:** Overall, the findings emphasise the importance of clearly communicating and promoting available support channels within organisations. Our recommendation is to encouraging employees to seek appropriate assistance to contribute to effective conflict resolution and the creation of a supportive work environment.

### 5 YEAR TREND

In 2018, we conducted a comprehensive survey to investigate the primary points of contact for employees when seeking support and resolution for workplace conflicts within the exhibition industry. By comparing the survey results from 2018 and 2023, we can observe the following trends:

**Decrease in Seeking Support from Management:** The percentage of respondents seeking support from their management or direct manager has decreased from 61% in 2018 to 48% in 2023. This suggests that there has been a shift in the reliance on management as a support structure for conflict resolution.

**Slight Decrease in HR Dependency:** The percentage of respondents turning to the Human Resources (HR) department or a similar entity has slightly decreased from 33% in 2018 to 30% in 2023. Although the change is relatively small, it indicates a slight shift in the preference for seeking support from HR.

**Increase in Transparency:** The percentage of respondents expressing uncertainty about who they can ask for support has decreased from 23% in 2018 to 8% in 2023. This suggests that companies have successfully increased their internal communication about the support structures available to their employees.


**Increase in Self-Addressing Conflicts:** The percentage of respondents who stated that they do not seek any support and attempt to address their conflicts with co-workers themselves has decreased from 6% in 2018 to 4% in 2023. While the change is minimal, it suggests a slight reduction in individuals relying on their own efforts to resolve conflicts.

These trends suggest that companies explore alternative support structures, such as mediation and develop proactive approaches to conflict resolution in the workplace over the past five years.

## READINESS TO ENGAGE IN CONFLICT

We acknowledge that engaging in conflicts without proper training and knowledge can not only be insufficient to effectively resolve the issues at hand but may also worsen the situation.

In the following section of the survey analysis, we will explore the readiness of professionals within the exhibition industry to engage in workplace conflicts, examining their level of training and preparedness to handle disputes in a constructive and sustainable manner. Understanding this aspect is essential for organisations to foster a culture of effective conflict resolution and provide the necessary support to their employees.

 **Training gap:** The survey revealed that the majority of respondents in management positions (79%) have not recently participated in formal conflict resolution training, indicating a potential gap in their skills and knowledge to effectively address workplace conflicts within their teams and companies. Yet is it that exact group who are the primary point of contact to support workplace conflicts.

It is encouraging to note that these individuals expressed a willingness to engage in such training opportunities. The survey analysis emphasises the need for organisations to consider providing formal conflict resolution training as a valuable investment in their employees' capabilities and overall workplace efficiency.

Through specialised trainings, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION enables individuals and teams to navigate successfully through disputes and empower them to prevent disputes from escalating. We have trained hundreds of professionals worldwide in conflict prevention and management, negotiation and communication. Participants ranging from business leaders to HR professionals, managers, exhibition directors and lawyers, benefited from these trainings and today successfully address workplace conflicts.

Whether you are seeking personal & team development or mediation and negotiation skills training, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION tailors aligns the training programme to your organisation's culture.



### Success Story

One success story that exemplifies the impact of mediation skill training involved a manager who had recently completed our conflict resolution training programme. After acquiring the necessary tools and techniques, this manager felt confident and equipped to address conflicts within their team.

In a specific instance, a conflict emerged between two team members who had been experiencing ongoing communication disagreements. The manager recognised the potential for the conflict to escalate and disrupt team dynamics if left unaddressed. Drawing on the training received, the manager took proactive steps to engage.

As a result of the manager's intervention and application of conflict resolution skills, the conflict was successfully resolved in a sustainable manner. The team members not only resolved their immediate issues but also developed a better understanding of each other's viewpoints, fostering improved communication and collaboration moving forward.

This success story highlights the transformative impact of conflict resolution skill training, empowering managers to intervene effectively and address conflicts within their teams.

If you and your colleagues are interested in enhancing your conflict management and resolution skills, contact us [herberholz@mediate.solutions](mailto:herberholz@mediate.solutions). We design and deliver in-house training sessions tailored to your organisation's needs. Please reach out to me for more information and to discuss how we can enhance your conflict manager and resolution skills.

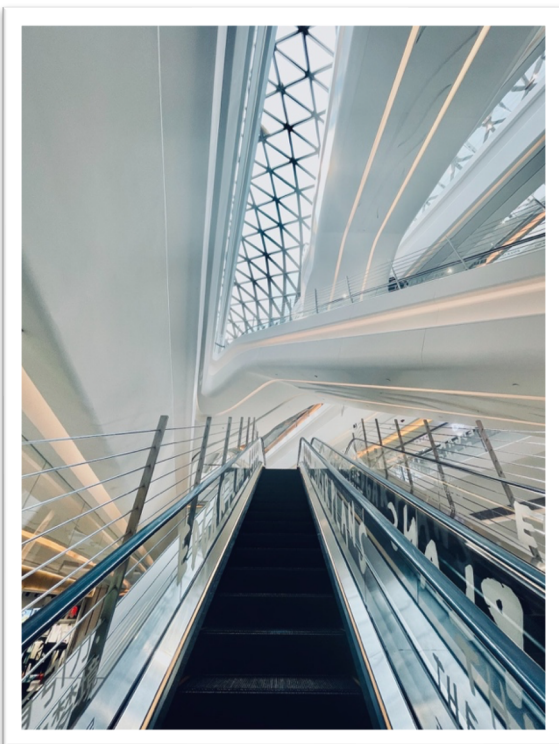
## III. FOCUS ON MEDIATION

### III.I. KPI's FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Effective conflict management is essential to maintaining a healthy and productive work environment.

Conflict management involves identifying and resolving workplace disputes in a way that preserves relationships, promotes mutual respect, and protects the interests of all parties involved.

Here are 7 key performance indicators (KPIs) for effective conflict management in the workplace.



★ **Reduced number of conflicts:** This KPI measures the success of conflict management strategies in reducing the number of conflicts in the workplace.

★ **Reduced duration of conflicts:** This KPI measures the effectiveness of conflict management strategies in reducing the duration of conflicts in the workplace.

★ **Reduced absenteeism:** Conflict in the workplace can cause stress and anxiety, leading to employee absenteeism. Measuring the reduction in absenteeism can be an indication of the success of conflict management strategies.

★ **Improved employee morale:** Effective conflict management can improve employee morale and job satisfaction, leading to better employee retention rates and higher productivity.

★ **Increased collaboration:** Conflict can disrupt teamwork and collaboration. Measuring the increase

in collaboration can be an indication of the success of conflict management strategies.

★ **Improved communication:** Effective conflict management can improve communication between employees, teams, and management, leading to better decision-making, problem-solving, and overall organisational performance.

★ **Reduced turnover:** Conflict in the workplace can lead to high turnover rates. Measuring the reduction in turnover rates can be an indication of the success of conflict management strategies.

### III.II. USE OF MEDIATION

« Mediation has proven to be particularly useful in addressing conflicts rooted in interpersonal dynamics, communication breakdowns, and relationship strains. »

🔍 The survey results shed light on the utilisation of mediation as a method for resolving workplace conflicts within the exhibition industry. Only a small percentage, 4% of respondents, reported using mediation frequently, indicating a proactive approach to utilising this informal conflict resolution method.

🔍 A larger portion, 43% of respondents, mentioned using mediation for certain situations, suggesting a selective or case-by-case approach to its application. Mediation may be useful for certain situations, but not all workplace disputes are suitable for this approach. Each conflict requires careful consideration to determine the most appropriate method of resolution, taking into account factors such as the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the desired outcomes. HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION helps you to identify whether the conflict is suitable for mediation or not.

🔍 A significant percentage, 37% of respondents, stated that their companies do not use mediation to address workplace conflicts at all. This suggests a missed opportunity for utilising a valuable alternative dispute resolution method that could contribute to more effective conflict resolution.

🔍 Furthermore, 17% of respondents expressed uncertainty about whether their companies use mediation, indicating a possible lack of clarity or awareness regarding their company's respective conflict resolution approach.

#### 5 YEAR TREND

By comparing the survey results from 2018 and 2023, we can observe an overall positive trend towards increased utilisation of mediation in the exhibition industry to address workplace conflicts. The percentage of respondents using mediation has increased, while the percentages of uncertainty and non-usage have decreased. This data suggests that the importance and acceptance of mediation as an effective conflict resolution tool have grown over the past five years.

To demonstrate that the importance and use of mediation has increased in the past five years, we can observe the following trends:

**Increase in Mediation Usage:** The percentage of respondents who mentioned using mediation has risen from 31% in 2018 to 43% in 2023. This represents a significant increase of 12 percentage points over the five-year period.

**Decrease in Uncertainty:** The percentage of respondents expressing uncertainty about whether their companies use mediation has decreased from 23% in 2018 to 17% in 2023. This indicates that there is more clarity and awareness about the use of mediation in the workplace.

**Decrease in Non-Usage:** The percentage of respondents stating that their companies do not use mediation to address workplace conflicts has decreased from 46% in 2018 to 37% in 2023. This shows a reduction in the number of companies that completely neglect mediation as a conflict resolution strategy.

In our experience, mediation as an informal conflict resolution tool has proven to be particularly useful in addressing conflicts rooted in interpersonal dynamics, communication breakdowns, and relationship strains.

Mediation provides a neutral and facilitated environment where parties can openly express their concerns, actively listen to each other's perspectives, and work together to find mutually agreeable solutions. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of each party's underlying interests and helps foster effective communication, empathy, and collaboration.

Mediation can be especially valuable when conflicts involve individuals who have ongoing working relationships, as it offers an opportunity to rebuild trust, mend damaged relationships, and create a positive and productive work environment.

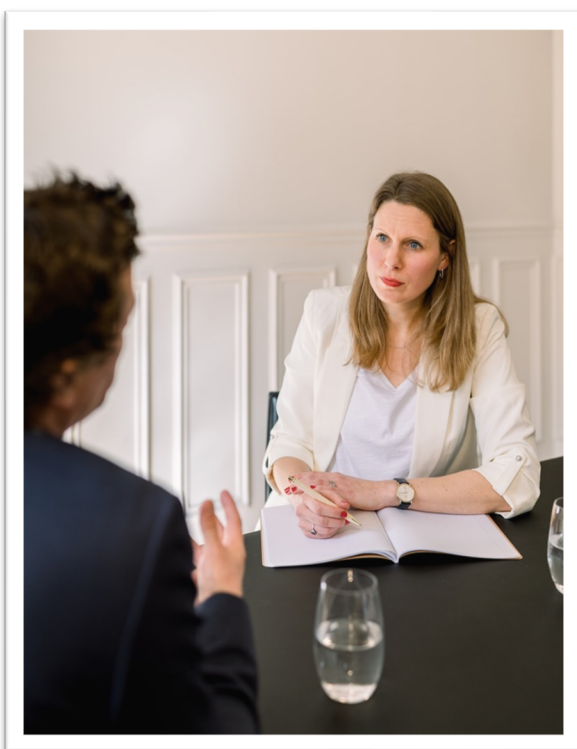
📌 The 2023 survey findings underscore the opportunity for organisations in the exhibition industry to get familiar with the informal process of mediation and consider its broader adoption as a method for resolving selected workplace conflicts.

By embracing mediation, companies can promote a collaborative and constructive approach to taking employees disagreements serious, leading to improved employee satisfaction, enhanced teamwork, reduced litigation risks, and a productive workforce.

### III.III. WHEN TO INVOLVE A MEDIATOR

In navigating workplace conflicts, it is crucial to recognise that not all disputes are suitable for mediation. This chapter delves into the specific contexts and scenarios where mediation proves to be a valuable and effective approach, providing insights into the circumstances that make mediation a suitable choice for resolving conflicts within the exhibition industry.

External mediation support (engaging a professional mediator) is recommended in situations such as:



★ **Impasse or deadlock:** When internal conflict reaches an impasse and parties are unable to find a mutually agreeable solution, an external mediator can help facilitate the negotiation process and guide the parties towards a resolution.

★ **Highly sensitive or emotional disputes:** In cases where conflicts involve deeply personal or sensitive matters, an external mediator can provide a neutral and confidential environment for parties to express their concerns and work towards a resolution without fear of bias or judgment.

★ **Power imbalances:** When there is a significant power imbalance between the parties involved, seeking the support of an external mediator can ensure a fair and balanced process, where all voices are heard and considered.



By offering external mediation support, organisations can empower employees to seek assistance in resolving complex or challenging conflicts. The involvement of an external mediator brings impartiality, expertise, and a fresh perspective to facilitate the resolution process, fostering a positive work environment and maintaining healthy professional relationships.

📌 The awareness and utilisation of mediation as an informal conflict resolution method within the exhibition industry present both opportunities and areas for improvement. While some companies have already embraced mediation and implemented support systems, there is still work to be done to ensure that all organisations and employees fully benefit from effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

We, at HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION, invite you to consider integrating mediation into your conflict resolution policies. By doing so, you can proactively promote a culture of open communication, collaboration, and timely resolution of workplace conflicts.

To the 88% of survey respondents and everyone else who does not currently have a conflict resolution policy in place, we encourage you to consider the numerous benefits of developing such a policy for your organisation.

As mediation service for the exhibition industry, we are ready to offer support and expertise in setting up mediation path tailored to your organisation's unique needs and in support of your exciting resolution policies.

### III.IV. HOW TO ASK FOR SUPPORT

The exhibition industry, like other people focused industries, often encounters conflicts and disputes that can block smooth operations. In such situations, engaging a professional mediator can be immensely beneficial in facilitating constructive dialogue, resolving issues, and maintaining positive relationships staff and stakeholders.

In the following, we share how employees can seek mediation support and how HR professionals find a suitable mediation expert for their respective conflict.

#### A MANAGER'S APPROACH

You are a manager and want to explore mediation support, here is how you go about it :

★ **Inform management/ HR:** Employees may first notify their immediate supervisor, HR representative, or designated contact about the conflict and express their interest in exploring external mediation as a potential resolution method.

★ **Collaborate with management/ HR:** Work closely with management and/or HR to identify and engage a qualified external mediator with expertise in workplace conflicts and the exhibition industry. This collaboration ensures that the mediator's selection aligns with the specific needs and dynamics of the conflict.

★ **Confidentiality and privacy:** Emphasise the importance of confidentiality and privacy throughout the mediation process. This helps create a safe space for open communication and ensures that sensitive information remains protected.

#### HUMAN RESOURCE'S APPROACH

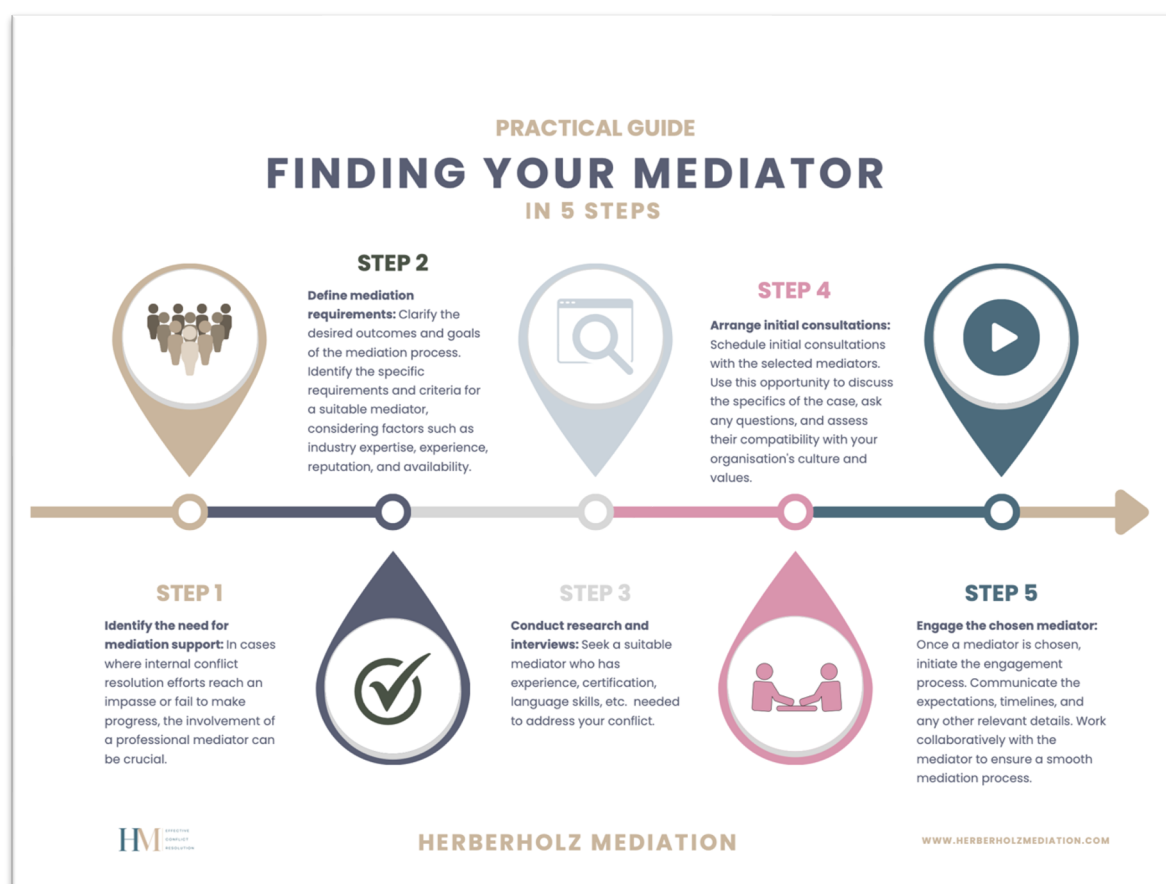
You have been contacted by one of your managers who seeks mediation support for a conflict within his team. To assist you in finding a suitable mediator, HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION has developed a brief and transparent framework. See next chapter or contact us at: [herberholz@mediate.solutions](mailto:herberholz@mediate.solutions).

### III.V. FINDING THE RIGHT MEDIATOR

This framework is designed to assist professionals within the exhibition industry who find themselves in need of mediation support. It provides a structured approach to help individuals and organisations identify, research, and select a suitable mediator for resolving conflicts or disputes within the exhibition sector.

By following this framework, you will have a structured approach to identify and select a mediator with the necessary expertise, experience, and compatibility with your specific needs.

From the moment our clients have identified the potential for mediation, we join them as quickly as need be.



★ **STEP 1:** Identify the Need for Mediation Support: In cases where internal conflict resolution efforts reach an impasse or fail to make progress, the involvement of a professional mediator can be crucial. Mediators bring a neutral perspective and specialized skills to facilitate constructive dialogue and guide parties towards a mutually beneficial resolution. Their expertise can help unlock barriers, restore communication, and foster a productive work environment.

★ **STEP 2:** Define Mediation Requirements: Clarify the desired outcomes and goals of the mediation process. Identify the specific requirements and criteria for a suitable mediator, considering factors such as industry expertise, experience, reputation, and availability.

★ **STEP 3:** Conduct Research: When searching for a suitable mediator within the exhibition industry, it is ideal to identify a professional who possesses:



- ☐ a positive track record,
- ☐ substantial experience in conflict resolution,
- ☐ relevant work experience in the exhibition sector, and
- ☐ the necessary accreditation and certification.

These criteria ensure that the mediator is well-equipped to understand the intricacies of the industry and effectively facilitate the resolution process.

Begin the search for a suitable mediator by exploring multiple avenues to gather information, such as: Online Search, Industry Associations, Referrals and Recommendations and Mediation Services Providers:

Reach out to Potential Mediators: Contact the mediators to discuss your requirements and gauge their availability.

★ **STEP 4:** Arrange Initial Consultations: Schedule initial consultations with the selected mediators. Use this opportunity to discuss the specifics of the case, ask any questions, and assess their compatibility with your organisation's culture and values.

★ **STEP 5:** Engage the Chosen Mediator: Once a mediator is chosen, initiate the engagement process. Communicate the expectations, timelines, and any other relevant details. Work collaboratively with the mediator to ensure a smooth mediation process.

By following this framework, you will be equipped with a structured approach to identify, research, and select a suitable mediator for the exhibition industry. Remember that the success of mediation often relies on the mediator's expertise, experience, and compatibility with the parties involved, so it is crucial to invest time and effort in finding the right professional for your specific needs.

Jump to Step 4 and contact HERBERHOLZ MEDIATION to evaluate if our mediator – Angela Herberholz- is suitable for your needs: [herberholz@mediate.solutions](mailto:herberholz@mediate.solutions).

### III.VI. EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Organisations that offer mediation as a method of conflict resolution tend to have higher employee satisfaction levels. Here are a few potential reasons for this correlation:

★ **Enhanced Communication:** Mediation promotes open and effective communication between conflicting parties. When employees have a platform to express their concerns and perspectives in a safe and neutral environment, it can lead to improved understanding, collaboration, and ultimately, higher satisfaction levels.

★ **Empowerment and Ownership:** Mediation empowers employees to actively participate in resolving conflicts. It allows them to have a voice in the process and work towards mutually agreeable solutions. This sense of ownership and involvement can contribute to higher job satisfaction and engagement.

★ **Timely Conflict Resolution:** Mediation can expedite conflict resolution compared to more formal or adversarial processes. Resolving conflicts in a timely manner reduces the negative impact on work relationships, team dynamics, and overall job satisfaction.

While specific statistics may vary depending on the organisation and context, it is generally recognised that providing access to mediation as a conflict resolution option can contribute positively to employee satisfaction. Implementing mediation programs and ensuring employees are aware of this resource can create a more positive and supportive work environment.

## IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

This handbook has presented the findings of the survey conducted in 2023, highlighting the importance of bridging the gap between conflict resolution and business events. Based on extensive research and five-year trends, the report provides valuable insights into conflict resolution practices and best practices examples from within the industry. Moreover, it provides recommendations for informal conflict resolution.

The survey results demonstrate the need for enhanced skills and knowledge in conflict resolution among professionals tasked with addressing workplace disputes. The majority of respondents in management positions (79%) had not recently participated in formal conflict resolution training. This highlights the potential gap in their abilities to effectively handle conflicts within their teams and companies. By investing in training programs and providing opportunities for professionals to enhance their conflict resolution skills, organisations can better equip their employees to address workplace conflicts in a sustainable and constructive manner.

Additionally, the survey results emphasise the importance of mediation as an informal conflict resolution tool. While not all conflicts are suitable for mediation, the results show that 43% of respondents use mediation occasionally. Mediation can be particularly effective in complex or escalated conflicts involving deep-rooted issues or strained relationships. The involvement of a professional mediator can help facilitate communication, promote understanding, and guide parties towards mutually agreeable solutions.

Furthermore, the survey revealed the primary points of contact for employees seeking support in resolving conflicts. The majority of respondents (48%) reported turning to their management or direct manager, while approximately 30% sought support from the HR department. This highlights the significance of these roles in providing guidance and intervention during workplace conflicts. However, there is also a need for organisations to ensure clarity and awareness regarding available support resources, as 8% of respondents expressed uncertainty about whom to ask for support.

In conclusion, organisations within the exhibition industry should prioritise training and skill development in conflict resolution, consider the utilisation of mediation for suitable conflicts, and establish clear support systems and processes for addressing workplace conflicts. By fostering a culture of open communication, providing adequate training, and offering access to professional mediation services when needed, organisations can create a positive work environment that promotes effective conflict resolution, employee well-being, and overall organizational success.

Herberholz Mediation is committed to supporting organisations in bridging this gap, offering in-house trainings and expert guidance to navigate workplace conflicts with professionalism and expertise.

### Need more Support?

Every connection begins with a conversation.



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## V. CASE STUDIES

### V. I. INVESTING IN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION



**Background:** In the highly dynamic exhibition industry, « Exhibition Organiser A » recognised the importance of fostering a positive work environment and addressing workplace conflicts in a proactive and effective manner. To achieve this, they decided to invest in furthering their alternative

dispute resolution agenda. The organisation aimed to develop and launch a comprehensive conflict resolution policy, alongside providing training to enhance conflict management skills among their HR managers and selected pool of managers.

**Implementation:** « Exhibition Organiser A » approached the implementation of their alternative dispute resolution agenda in two steps. In the first step, they formed a working group comprising management, HR representatives, volunteer employees, and an external conflict management expert. This diverse team collaborated to develop a robust conflict resolution policy that aligned with the organisation's values, culture, and industry requirements. The policy was designed to complement, rather than replace, the traditional complaints process. It allowed for the assessment of cases and the identification of alternative forms of dispute resolution for workplace-related conflicts.

In the second step, « Exhibition Organiser A » rolled out comprehensive conflict management training for their HR managers and the identified pool of managers who play crucial roles in conflict resolution within the organisation. These training sessions were conducted by an external expert with extensive experience in conflict management. The trainings focused on equipping the managers with transferable conflict management skills that could be applied not only to employee dispute resolution but also to various aspects of their managerial responsibilities.

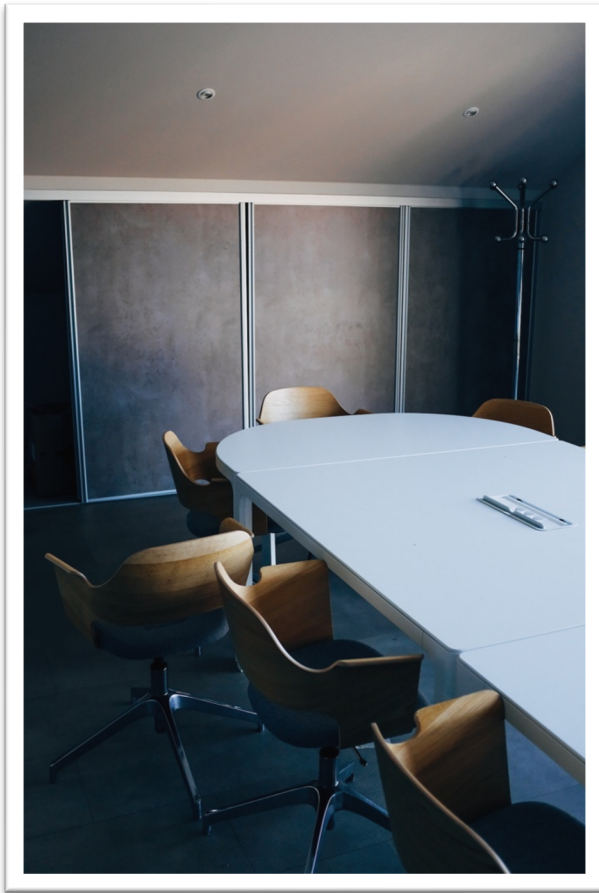
**Results and Impact:** The implementation of the conflict resolution policy and the comprehensive training sessions had a significant positive impact on « Exhibition Organiser A » and its workforce. Firstly, the conflict resolution policy provided clear guidelines and procedures for addressing workplace conflicts, ensuring a fair and consistent approach to resolution. It also enabled the organisation to explore alternative dispute resolution methods, fostering a more collaborative and constructive environment for conflict resolution.

The training sessions equipped HR managers and managers with valuable conflict management skills. These skills went beyond resolving employee disputes and positively impacted the overall business operations. Managers gained a deeper understanding of effective communication, active listening, negotiation techniques, and problem-solving approaches. This resulted in improved teamwork, reduced tensions, enhanced employee satisfaction, and increased productivity within the organisation.

Moreover, the investment in alternative dispute resolution demonstrated « Exhibition Organiser A's » commitment to fostering a supportive work environment and promoting open communication. Employees felt heard, valued, and supported in addressing conflicts, leading to improved morale and strengthened relationships within the organisation.

**Take Away:** By investing in alternative dispute resolution, including the development and launch of a conflict resolution policy and comprehensive trainings, « Exhibition Organiser A's » successfully enhanced their conflict management practices within the exhibition industry. This proactive approach not only improved the resolution of workplace conflicts but also had a broader positive impact on the organisation's overall operations. By prioritising effective conflict resolution strategies, « Exhibition Organiser A's » demonstrated its commitment to a harmonious work environment, employee well-being, and sustainable business success.

## V.II. ENHANCING WORKFORCE COMPETENCE & ENGAGING PROFESSIONAL MEDIATOR



In a renowned exhibition company based in Europe, an incident occurred that required immediate intervention and skilful conflict resolution. A significant disagreement arose between two key stakeholders, both holding influential positions within the organisation.

The dispute, if left unresolved, could have had severe repercussions on the company's success and reputation.

**Results and Impact:** Recognising the critical nature of the situation, the company's management decided to seek external mediation expertise. A professional mediator, experienced and skilled within the exhibition industry, was engaged to assist with resolving the conflict. The mediator, was able to navigate the complex dynamics at play and facilitate constructive dialogue between the conflicting parties.

Within one day of mediation, the parties involved reached a mutually agreeable path forward. The swift resolution not only saved valuable time and resources but also mitigated potential disruptions to the workflow moving

forward. The efficiency and effectiveness of the mediation process demonstrated the value of working with external professional mediators, skilled to navigate conflicts.

Recognizing the significant impact of this successful mediation, the organisation's management took proactive measures to address future conflicts. They understood the importance of early intervention and decided to offer conflict resolution skill training to their top managers. By equipping these key individuals with the necessary tools and techniques, the organisation aimed to enhance their ability to identify and intervene in potential conflicts at an early stage.

### **Take Away:**

This case study from the exhibition industry serves as a testament to the effectiveness of skilled mediators in resolving conflicts efficiently and preserving positive working relationships. By embracing professional mediation services and providing conflict resolution training, organisations can empower their managers to intervene promptly, address conflicts effectively, and cultivate a culture of open communication and collaboration.