

A way forward beyond conflict

Conflict in the workplace - it's awkward, uncomfortable, and unfortunately, it's also a fact of life. What often starts as minor tension can sometimes escalate into a bitter dispute - especially if not dealt with properly, to begin with.

Noticing this tendency led Bendigo Mediation director and principal mediator Janis Bull to offer her services in 2017. Janis is an NMAS accredited mediator.

Over the past decade, she has provided counselling, consulting and training to organisations, employees and employers.

"During this time, I began to notice common themes and issues within the workplace," she said. "These issues most often involved two or more people who were not getting along and found themselves in a place of conflict and upset.

"This may have been for various reasons, however, was predominantly due to a chronic breakdown in communication and vast differences in personalities, values, and expectations."



Bendigo Mediation director and principal mediator Janis Bull helps businesses resolve issues before they get out of hand.

Janis said this kind of experience was not uncommon in workplaces, but what stood out to her was that these issues and disputes were not being resolved efficiently or effectively.

"What may have started as a minor issue or misunderstanding was festering into a huge problem resulting in highly anxious and stressed staff," she said.

This could then lead to high rates of absenteeism, lengthy grievance processes and overall employee dissatisfaction and disengagement.

"There seemed to be a gap in intervention occurring before things got out of hand, and it was becoming too late," Janis said. "Many organisations and individuals are unaware of the benefits of mediation and how it can help them, their employees and businesses by providing a safe and supportive space for difficult conversations and resolving ongoing conflict."

Bendigo Mediation offers dispute resolutions to suit any dispute or conflict, including but not limited to workplace mediation, team dynamics assessment, family dispute resolution, child-inclusive mediation, elder mediation including wills and estates, and coaching and training.

"If there are people, there's conflict; it's human nature," Janis said. "Healthy conflict can work to bring people and teams together; however unhealthy conflict, if left

unresolved, will push them apart.

"It is instinctual to avoid conflict for self-preservation and is a skill that needs to be learned over time.

"To have difficult conversations with others is tricky and often avoided due to fear of confrontation.

"A mediation process will not only help with solving disputes and reaching agreements for the future, but it can also improve communication, model effective problem-solving skills and strategies, and overall improve team wellbeing, harmony and functioning."

Bendigo Mediation cares about people in the workplace and believes workplaces should be free of violence, abuse, tension and stress.



"Everyone has the right to a safe working environment," Janis said. "Everyone should be able to drive to work each day without feeling a sense of dread.

"We assist people in having a voice about the issue and together developing solutions that everyone can live and with that is acceptable, professional and respectful for all involved."

Janis warned workplaces experiencing an issue, dispute or conflict that it is unlikely to spontaneously resolve unless addressed professionally.

"The misconception of 'it will sort itself out' can cost a company thousands of dollars and potentially lead to formal investigations and even court proceedings," she noted. "If the issue is addressed promptly and effectively, the chances of being able to preserve positive working relationships is a lot higher keeping in mind that prevention is better than cure."

Get in touch with Bendigo Mediation at 391 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo, by phoning 0438 023 155 or visit bendigomediation.com.au.

Workplace Mediation

Is your workplace experiencing an issue, dispute or conflict between employees? Bendigo Mediation can help.

Book in now and take the next step in maintaining healthy workplace relations

Moving beyond conflict towards resolution

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