

Workplace Mediation

Workplace Mediation (WM) is evolving in India and conceptually new, I believe.

Differences, conflicts at workplace are natural in any business. The differences, intra or inter department get converted into the disputes and disturbs the organizational or departmental working environment. This ultimately results into the adverse impact over the efficiency of organization or functioning of a particular department.

Differences and conflicts are costly. Costly not only to the organization or department but also to the individual caught up in the dispute, as health, self-confidence and work performance of the individual can suffer. Workplace conflict can lead to increased absenteeism, lowered staff morale, and lost productivity.

In India, generally, intra department differences / disputes are left to the departmental head to handle and involvement of HR is minimal and more of a reactive in nature. HR is more involved in taking actions as advised by the departmental head.

Inter departmental disputes generally becomes a topic for a politics, sometimes ignored as part of the game or suppressed. In rare cases those are logically addressed by the top management.

Workplace Mediation (WM) may be a solution to this. In WM, the mediator, being a trained neutral professional, speaks with parties involved, the staff member/s in dispute, their manager/s, HR professionals before conducting a mediation session. Issues causing conflict are identified and likelihood of the mediation succeeding is ascertained. As a part of the mediation process a separate and thereafter a joint discussion is made with the conflicting employee/s, manager and with HR of the conflicted parties. In case of inter departmental dispute, top management is also involved.

Litigation or resignation / removal of employee, is a generally outcome of the workplace differences or conflict. This generally fails to address root cause/s and leave room for further exposure to business by way of cost of litigation, waste of man hours and energy in identifying the new resource, and impact on business continuity etc. It is essential to note that to hire a right resource is a time-consuming process and cultural fitment of the resource once hired is also another big challenge before organizations.

Salient features of Workplace Mediation: -

- Involvement of a neutral trained professional to facilitate resolution of disputes.
- Neutral dispute resolution process.

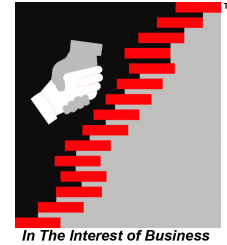
ASSARKAR & CO LLB, CFE

Advocate, Legal Advisor & Mediator

Mobile 9820549733

Email-manish@assarkarco.in,

Website:- <https://assarkarco.in>



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- Resolution of differences/ disputes directly by the disputing parties. Mediator facilitates the resolution of differences/ disputes.
 - Opportunity of being heard is given to all parties.
 - Disputes are addressed before they escalate out of control or kept lingering.
 - Mediation reduces the stress and anxiety associated with conflict.
 - It reduces the risk of litigation and costs of conflict.
 - Mediation helps to cultivate a happier, healthier and more harmonious working environment.

By asking parties to collaborate in an open conversation about the conflict, workplace mediation promotes dialogue, compassion, empathy, respect, trust, and tolerance. It's a values-based and person-centered process. It helps to improve the business productivity and inter-personal relationship.

Workplace Mediation will certainly play a crucial role in maintaining the harmonious relationship within the organization, which is key for the business growth.

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