

Help Shape the Next Generation of Mediators!

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Wherever we look, there is a variety of articles, blogs, keynotes and workshop topics all talking about the necessity to develop future leaders, understand the next generation(s) and attract the right talents. The mediation profession is no exception.

With this article, I am encouraging every reader to actively develop and shape the future generation of mediators by committing to the concept of mentoring. Guiding young people to move their careers in the right direction through mentorship programmes can be a rewarding experience for both mentor and mentee. I experienced the great value of mentoring first-hand and I feel very privileged to this day to have gained valuable insight and encouragement from my mentors. If we take a look at the mediation profession, we realise that the majority of successful mediators are not, shall we say, fresh-out-of-college twenty-somethings. They have years and years of experience. Let's share this valuable experience with new mediators eager to one day become independent, well respected and successful mediation practitioners.

Ask yourself the following line of questions: Do you find mediation to be a lonesome line of work? Do you sometimes wish that you could discuss how the mediation went with another mediator who observed it first-hand? Are you interested in the perspective of a fresh set of eyes? Are you willing to share your know-how and experience with others? Do you enjoy encouraging and motivating others? If your answers to these questions are yes and you are willing to share your private mediation world with an apprentice eager to learn, then I strongly encourage you to become a mediator mentor. And here is why:

When beginners graduate from basic mediation training, they have most likely participated in numerous role plays, read many books and articles, maybe joined a mediation community and, if lucky, witnessed a real life mediation. But they soon realise that there is a gap between their training and how to get started as a mediator. Indeed, there is an impossible irony in the mediation profession in which a mediator seeking to gain professional experience as a mediator one must somehow already have professional mediation experience! In many countries, the market also requests that mediators obtain a mediation accreditation, but if you take a look at such programmes, many require field experience! In spite of one's best intentions, this vicious circle creates a massive, virtually impossible challenge for new mediators. By giving new mediators the chance to obtain mediation experience as mentees/apprentices, you are giving them the opportunity to break out of this vicious cycle, while also gaining fresh perspective on your own mediation practice.

Mentoring is not limited by country borders. There are many ways to support and guide the mentee over longer distances, such as: Providing overall advice regarding training programmes, suggesting reading material, answering questions and eliminating concerns and identifying field experience opportunities. Mentor partnerships that allow the mentee to observe real life cases allow the young mediator to apply what has been learned in theory, in a risk-free environment. It is in the hands of the mentor to progressively increase the mentees hands-on practice in a measured manner. There are many great articles and books on how such mentorships could look and we find plenty of advice on how to structure the process. "Mentoring and Evaluating New Mediators" by Evan Ash at www.mediate.com is one of many great examples.

So, if you are a trained and highly experienced mediator or mediation advocate, with an interest in assisting new mediators in their quest to gain experience, I highly encourage you to reach out to young mediators today. There are several ways that you can advertise your motivation to become a mediation mentor. The [Young Mediators Initiative \(YMI\)](#) is one example. At its heart, YMI initiates the process of matchmaking, ensuring that experienced mediators find suitable mentees. YMI supports the first contact and is available for support during the mentorship process. In addition, the [ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition](#), taking place in Paris this week (5 -10 February 2016), is known for its excellent networking opportunities between experienced mediators and the future generation of commercial mediators. This is a great platform to kick-off new mentorship programmes. Remember, mentoring can be a rewarding experience for everyone involved, personally and professionally.