

Kluwer Mediation Blog

The Road to Becoming a Mediator

Virginie Martins De Nobrega (Creative Resolution) · Monday, July 10th, 2017 · Young Mediators Initiative (YMI)



As a spiritual junkie, I like to read empowering quotes on the internet. This one I like: *“The only time success comes before work is in the dictionary”*. Why? Because the road to becoming a mediator is a journey. Interesting, enriching, but sometimes this journey feels like an eternity.

As you attend your first training in mediation, you discover, in awe, either that you have been a mediator all along, or that mediation is the way ahead for you. The excitement and the willingness to change the world (Yes, just that. I know) – or at least to contribute – make you declare loud and proud “I am a mediator and I want to mediate full-time”. Logically, you invest in training and conferences. You meet good and great speakers and participants, some of whom will give you useful piece of advice (If only I had listened to all of them...) and others become colleagues and friends.

Sometimes you engage in partnerships to develop a practice. Some last. Some don't. The more you build up your skills, the more you want to mediate. If you are crazy enough (hopefully, I wasn't the only insane young mediator in the room), you introduce yourself as a mediator in those same trainings and conferences.

Then, one day, after what can feel like a long journey, you have your first mediation because you advise clients to mediate, or because someone thought of you (maybe presenting myself as a mediator was not insane after all), or maybe because life rewards your insanity with a little bit of luck. Who knows?

With the first mediation, you atone yourself. You also face the reality of mediating. Luckily enough, I had a few people to call to exchange ideas and experiences, to reflect with, and to listen to.

When the process ends, you look at your to-do list: "First mediation....checked ✓". At that moment, your smile is as big as the smile of the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland.

Then reality sets in. What is next?

Well, the cat and mouse game continues.

You try to shadow senior experienced mediators, you invest time, money and energy, you build a community of peers, you volunteer and you learn and grow along the way. Progressively, you mediate more, but not enough to be a full-time mediator. Still. The desire is as strong as ever. And, the skill set of being a mediator enhances your other competencies, which is priceless.

If you are lucky enough, you train lawyer trainees and students. With them, you give back what you received and you go the extra mile to provide them with a road map and advice (some of them are probably as stubborn as I was in not listening, but they may remember some of your advice one day). Through teaching, you go back to fundamental legal concepts: confidentiality, enforceability of the mediation agreement, good faith, fairness, etc. (God, I like law!).

Your journey continues until one day you may become a full-time mediator, unless your journey leads you elsewhere. Again, who knows?

Oh....Yes...I almost forgot.

Not only are we super enthusiastic, but we are also delusional. As little experienced as we may be, we don't see ourselves as "young" mediators, but as talented, underexploited mediators.

I told you.

A long journey, but worth it.

Enjoy the summer and keep mediating!

Virginia Martins de Nobrega

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