

# The path to mediation excellence - not a sprint but a marathon!

Kluwer Mediation Blog  
August 30, 2017

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Please refer to this post as: Angela Herberholz, 'The path to mediation excellence - not a sprint but a marathon!', Kluwer Mediation Blog, August 30 2017, <http://mediationblog.kluwerarbitration.com/2017/08/30/path-mediation-excellence-not-sprint-marathon/>



Today I want to encourage all mediators who are at the beginning of their quest for mediation excellence! I am by no means "there yet", but I accomplished a professional milestone this year and would like to share how.

## "Mediation does not equal meditation"



In 2010, I learnt about mediation when my classmate told me about an extracurricular course she was taking to become a commercial mediator. I admit that, back then, I probably would have confused mediation and meditation, but my attention was triggered. By the way - if you Google images or GIFs on mediation today, 89% of your results still display *meditation*. But this is a different point I will return to in the near future.

So, I started reading about mediation and was immediately hooked! Eight months later, I had spent most of my weekends and a large amount of money to graduate from the commercial mediation course my classmate had recommended. At the end of the programme, and as part of our graduation, we organised a conference where experienced mediators and ADR professionals were invited to share their mediation insights, lessons learned and even some secrets.

One particular message, that was made over and over again, both surprised and shocked me. It was: "You can only become a mediator when your hair turns grey". There I was, 27 years old, at the finish line of my mediation training and far from having grey hair, being told that I was too young to become a mediator? I had two choices: dye my hair and hope to age quickly; or demonstrate that competency in mediation comes from a combination of personality, skills, motivation, training and experience!

With this in mind, I co-founded the Young Mediators Initiative (YMI) under the umbrella of the International Mediation Institute (IMI), to help like-minded mediators who possess a great personality, a good skill set, high motivation and sufficient training in mediation to gain hands on experience! Being able to engage with peers facing the same challenges, and to help each other come up with solutions, was, and still is, of great value to my mediation path. Since the birth of YMI, I have dedicated my free time to being a PR agent for alternative dispute resolution and a supporter for the next generation of mediators, to which I look forward to be part of.

## "Create your own opportunities"



Seven years later, I still have no grey hair but neither do I mediate often, or do I? Throughout the years I encountered the same statement many times and I almost believed it, almost! Although I don't make a living from mediation, over and over again I have demonstrated that mediation has become an intuitive and integrated part of me. The ability to help friends, colleagues and family members in dispute to talk to each other, offering a trusted environment and helping them to overcome disputes, is what makes mediators effective. My mentor assures me that mediation happens everywhere, no matter how you label it. I thank him for that encouragement and would like to share this advice with all newly trained mediators!

Don't wait for the mediation to come to you. Create your own opportunities and demonstrate your outstanding personality, skills, and motivation to gather as much experience as you can.

## "Shadow, observe and assist"

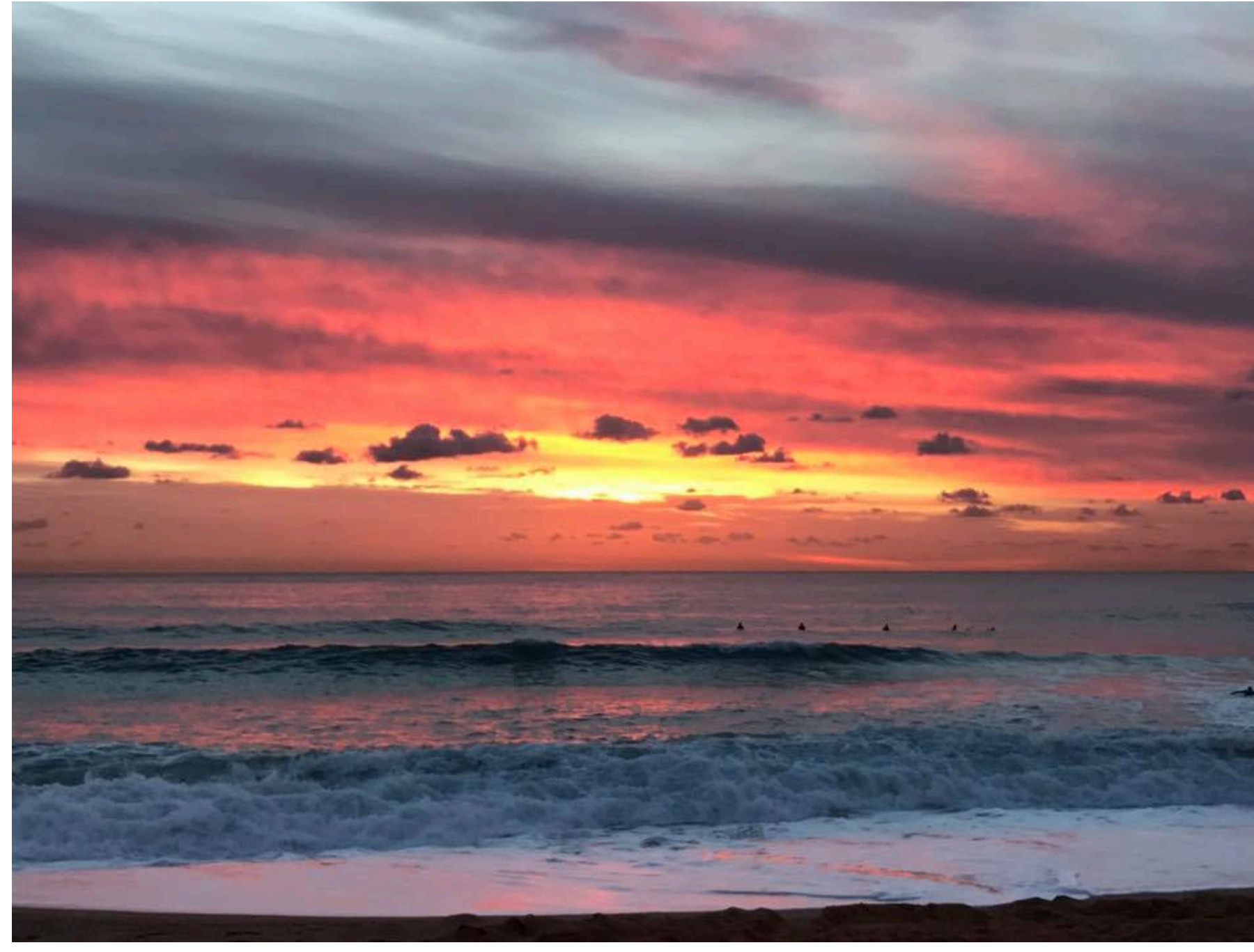


In addition, I find the opportunity to shadow, observe and assist in so-called "real live" mediations to be of the utmost value. I learnt that it does not matter if you are not a specialist in, for example, construction law. You can still observe the mediation process extremely well, and learn a lot. These sessions not only offer you a



preview of where you are heading, they also open the door to discovering different techniques that help shape your personal mediation style.

**“Challenge accepted”**



This is the year to underline that age is not related to mediation competence. Challenging the statement and myself, I took part in another mediation training programme and aimed for their internationally recognised accreditation status. Why? Recently I was part of the discussion group organised by the [International Chamber of Commerce \(ICC\)](#) and the [International Mediation Institute \(IMI\)](#) here in Paris, France. One clear message that I kept from that day was that all parties seeking support from the ICC Centre for ADR in finding a mediator choose the ones that have mediation accreditation. The mediators that are appointed by the ICC have excessive experience and impressive case numbers to display and yet the party's first selection criterion remains "accreditation".

We young mediators are yet to gain these years of experience. But, what we can do with hard work and dedication is to get accredited and use this to display our credibility. And, that is what I have done this year. I successfully completed the mediation training and accreditation assessment and am ready for what comes next. No time to take a break though! I am not waiting for the quality standard to create opportunities for me!

However, I count on this accreditation as a mark of my credibility and I am more motivated than ever to demonstrate that my passion, skills, dedication and experience make me a great mediator!

I am happy to conclude that competency in #mediation is not based on grey hair!

A special thanks to [Bill Marsh](#) who ensures that I am not "giving up" my mediation dream and for the continuous support along the way. Also, I would like to thank all mediation mentors around the world that support, through YMI, the next generation of mediators.

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