

The Formative Role of MTI in Mediation Today

Mediation Training Institute International (MTI) and its founder, Dan Dana, have played a formative role in the development mediation since 1979. Indeed, Dr. Dana has been called “one of a small handful of true pioneers in the field of mediation.”

This report is intended help clients and website visitors appreciate the significance of MTI’s innovations, its influence on the modern history of mediation, and its reputation as a primal contributor to mediation as practiced today, particularly as related to the prevention and early resolution of workplace conflict.

The Origin of Preventive Mediation

Dan Dana’s entire career has been devoted to workplace conflict management and mediation. The title of his doctoral dissertation (PhD, Psychology, University of Missouri, 1977) was “Categorical intergroup bias in natural groups: An empirical study of conflict in organizations,” which studied psychological factors in the occurrence of conflict between employees.

During his pre-doctoral internship (1975-1976), he specialized in systems-oriented marriage and family counseling, gaining experience in applying neutral third-party strategies to the resolution of conflicts in familial relationships. Although not yet termed mediation, he developed a theoretical model for the role of the neutral intervener in changing attitudes from adversarial to cooperative. This innovative model was to take a central role in his later innovations in mediation of employee conflicts.

In 1977-1978 Dan headed a one-year consulting project to establish one of the first employee assistance programs (EAP) in the executive branch of the United States government (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, housed in the office of Secretary Joseph Califano). Naturally, he emphasized employee conflict management as a key function of the EAP he designed. Indeed, much of Dr. Dana’s early experience as a workplace mediator occurred during this pivotal year.

Being of academic temperament and having interest in theory-building, Dan discovered through his mediator interventions during 1977-1978 that mediation can be simplified so that non-professionals can perform it effectively under certain defined conditions. He first articulated these key concepts in an invited book chapter titled “Mediating interpersonal conflict in organizations: Minimal conditions for resolution” (*Conflict Resolution Technology*, edited by Donald W. Cole, Organization Development Institute, 1983). These ideas subsequently evolved into the essential process of mediation as taught in MTI’s proprietary learning programs, the Manager-as-Mediator Seminar™ and the Self-as-Mediator Seminar™. These seminars enable all employees, managers and non-managers alike, to apply the core competencies for managing workplace conflict: Managerial Mediation and Self Mediation, respectively. In later

years, they have become the central component of the MTI Training System™, a cafeteria plan for strategic management of organizational conflict.

In these early years, the notion that managers can mediate conflicts between their own employees was a provocative and controversial idea. Indeed, the profession of mediation was not initially receptive to Dr. Dana's pioneering innovations. However, in recent years professionals and business leaders alike have come to recognize that prevention and early resolution of conflict by employees themselves are vital elements of any effective organizational dispute resolution system.

Conflict Assessment Instruments

Another landmark innovation by Dr. Dana was the development of a method of calculating the financial cost of mismanaged conflict. First appearing as an article ("The cost of organizational conflict," *Organization Development Journal*, Fall 1984) and later reprinted in a popular book (*Best Practices for Teams*, edited by Glenn Parker, Human Resource Development Press, 1996), the methodology is now contained in a proprietary on-line instrument (*The Dana Measure of Financial Cost of Organizational Conflict*) hosted on MTI's website, www.mediationworks.com. Requests by website visitors for use of this instrument now constitute the largest source of client inquiries. Further, its use as a benchmarking and reassessment tool for calculating the return-on-investment in conflict management and mediation training is integrated into the MTI Training System™.

Accompanying the *Dana Measure* in MTI's on-line "toolbox" of instruments is the *Dana Survey of Conflict Management Strategies*. Developed in 2003 with colleagues Kathryn Jones, Ph.D., and Barbara Hillmer, Ph.D., the *Dana Survey* was the first, and is still the only, instrument designed to uncover the conflict management strategies imbedded in the culture of the client organization.

Academics and Publications

In 1978 Dr. Dana accepted a faculty position at the University of Hartford (Connecticut) Graduate School of Business where he developed what is arguably the most popular course in the graduate curriculum, "Managing Organizational Conflict." Students regularly report that it is the most practical course they have ever taken (signed student comments are available for inspection). Although he left full-time teaching in 1985, Dr. Dana continues to teach the course annually at the University of Hartford, and has also taught it for Syracuse University's Summer Institute on Conflict Resolution (Maxwell School of Government) and other institutions. His in-class simulation for the experiential study of conflict and its management, "The General Case Study Company," gives students practical experience in applying the concepts underlying Managerial Mediation and Self Mediation. Dr. Dana has personally taught the course over 100 times, and it has been adopted by several other universities and colleges.

Dr. Dana captured the methods of preventive mediation in *Managing Differences: How to Build Better Relationships at Work and Home*, first published in 1988 in English and subsequently in five additional languages (English and Spanish language rights have been retained by MTI). *Managing Differences* (now in its fourth edition, 2005) serves as the sourcebook for the Managing Differences Seminar Series, which contains the Manager-as-Mediator Seminar and the Self-as-Mediator Seminar.

Upon resigning his faculty position in 1985, Dr. Dana founded the Mediation Training Institute International (although he had been using the business name since 1982). Initially, MTI was simply the name of the host of open-enrollment seminars in Managerial Mediation conducted by Dr. Dana himself in the United States, Canada, Hong Kong, the UK, Sweden, and Turkey. Soon, however, MTI evolved into the organizational home of consulting as well as training in its proprietary content by Dr. Dana's early colleagues and associates who learned his methods.

The Internet Era

Perhaps the most significant landmark in the evolution of MTI as a global enterprise was the development of the Internet and the establishment of the MTI website at www.mediationworks.com in 1996. It immediately became the top result at Yahoo! and every other major search engine for relevant searches. Upon the appearance of Google in 1998, MTI's site became the #1 earned (non-paid) search result for "mediation training" and related search terms, and has remained in that position every day since Google's creation, which evidences the value of its informational content to the field. A summary of MTI's 2006 website statistics is available on request.

The prominence of its website has made possible the development of an extensive calendar of Certification Conferences in Managing Workplace Conflict, whose primary purpose is to prepare professional trainers (internal and external human resource development consultants) to deliver MTI's proprietary seminars. Today, the worldwide Certified Trainer Network is comprised of over 1000 individuals on six continents who deliver the training in English and Spanish. Additionally, rights in Japanese, Korean, and Romanian languages have been assigned to entities in those countries, and several other similar assignments are pending.

MTI also offers basic and advanced 40-hour Mediator Certification Courses in open-enrollment and in-house formats for corporations, government agencies, and private groups.

In 2001 MTI (in the name of its corporate owner, Dana Mediation Institute, Inc.) received an \$8,444,000 award by the United States General Services Administration to deliver training for federal agencies. The GSA award is currently in its second renewal period, which expires in 2010.

In review, MTI has achieved its current status as the most prominent provider of workplace conflict management and mediation training without benefit of financing, professional management, or even a business plan. Rather, its organic and unplanned growth is largely attributable to the recognized value of its products and services. Dr. Dana, an academic by temperament and preference, acknowledges that MTI's growth these past three decades has been hampered by his personal distaste for managing a business. He recognizes that his talents are better suited for a role in research and product development than one of leadership. Perhaps 2007 is the year in which the enterprise may be restructured to achieve the potential of which it is capable.