

## **The Continuum of Power Series**

### **Part 5: Mediator Power Mapping**

by John Crawley

In Part 4 of this series: Charting the continuum of mediator influence and power, I promised some examples of power mapping. Let us start with a relatively simple one:

One party starts to use disrespectful language about the other during uninterrupted time e.g. 'she's just an idiot!'. There is range of behaviours you might use including:

- Just watching and waiting for the language to stop
- Looking sternly at the speaker
- Pausing the speaker using their name and acknowledging their feelings and asking for a change in behaviour
- Making a strong request for them to stop doing what they are doing
- Talking over the speaker and quoting a ground rule at the speaker
- Issuing a warning about the behaviour
- Threaten to stop the session if the behaviour does not stop.

I have arranged these in a sequence which I think is from indirect to more direct. In real life your choice of strategy may be influenced by:

- Your own reaction to the behaviour
- The reaction of the other party
- Where the parties are in the process
- What has happened up to this point in the mediation
- The range of strategies you are capable of and comfortable with.

Your role as an Interactive Mediator© (CMP's facilitative model) is to tailor the response to the situation in order to achieve maximum participation, while sustaining rapport, impartiality and balance. It is advisable to also leave room for more direct interventions if necessary by starting with a behaviour which is relatively low and does allow some movement along the directive continuum if necessary.

Here are some more examples of charting the continuum of mediator influence and power:

**WHEN THE PARTIES GET STUCK ON CONTENT – THEY ARE NOT MAKING THEIR ISSUES CLEAR TO ONE ANOTHER DURING DIRECT DIALOGUE**

INDIRECT		DIRECT		CONSEQUENTIAL	
Ask for clarification Reflect and check Reframe and check	Probing questions and verification	Saying what is not clear and requesting more clarification	Explaining what the process needs and make a strong request for clarification	Directly communicate the consequences of not getting issues clear	Take a break, firmly request clarification in side meetings

**INTERACTION – ONE PARTY DOMINATES THE OTHER - TALKING OVER, DEMEANING, ALWAYS ANSWERING FIRST, SHOWING IMPATIENCE WHEN THE OTHER SPEAKS**

INDIRECT		DIRECT		CONSEQUENTIAL	
Pay attention and let them go to collect information about the pattern of behaviour	Encourage the less dominant party to explain how it feels to be in this dynamic	Pause the process, and reflect back what you have noticed using non-blaming language	Re-sequence the conversation asking more quiet party to go first and draw them out	Reduce the participation of the dominant party and explain why	Strongly request a change of behaviour – point out the effect on the process and other party

**TRY THIS ONE YOURSELF**

PROCESS – PARTIES KEEP GOING BACK TO THE PAST AND ARE RELUCTANT TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE, EXPRESS NEEDS AND EXPLORE OPTIONS

INDIRECT		DIRECT		CONSEQUENTIAL	

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This article is Part 5 out of 5 in this series.



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CMP Resolutions work to Close, Manage and Prevent disputes at work through skills development, mediation and investigation services.

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