

Courting peace

Managers plump for mediation

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IF experienced mediator Carolyn Manning could offer businesses one piece of sage advice it would be this — address conflict early.

“A dispute between staff can infect the whole workplace, a bit like a virus,” the owner of Dial M for Mediation said.

“It can bring down morale and negatively affect performance, not only for the parties directly involved, but also colleagues who get dragged into a conflict.”

The costs for businesses could also be significant.

“Staff in conflict are less productive, less focused on the task at hand and more likely to stress,” she said.

“They may take more sick days and more time off work. The whole thing can suck up a lot of time and energy.”

While courts solved most workplace conflict 15 years



Office conflict among staff can have a devastating effect on productivity.

ago, more of today's businesses are using mediation.

It's cheaper and details of the dispute and agreement remain confidential, which is better for reputations.

The parties in the dispute are happier with the result, because they work together to shape it, rather than accepting a court decision.

But they could make the

whole process a whole lot easier, Ms Manning said.

“By the time I typically get involved, the conflict has been going on for some time ... it doesn't have to be that way,” she said.

Murray Bickerdike, of D W Bowe, said a traditional workplace misconduct investigation did little to resolve disputes amicably.

“Investigations don't get down to the underlying issues,” he said.

“People in a damaged relationship are even less inclined to work together at the end of an investigation.”

The Department of Education and Training is seeking a contractor for a conflict resolution support service. The tender closes on Friday.