

Does your personality affect your mediator style?

Heidi Smith outlines the results of her thesis into how personality and demographics determine a mediator's style. Also details on the pilot study and facilitator role.

The research findings showed that a mediator's preferences for perceiving information and making decisions influences their subsequent focus in mediation.

A mediator should be aware of these biases in decision-making and information processing to ensure that they objectively define the problem and direct the focus of mediation.

The research demonstrated that personality predicts how a mediator defines the problem and their focus in the mediation (narrow or broad mediator style¹), where as training background and demographic variables predict how a mediator defines their role and their ability to remain neutral (facilitative or evaluative mediation style²).

A mediator's definition of the problem and focus in mediation was predicted by the Jungian personality dimensions of sensing/intuition and thinking/feeling. The sensing/intuition personality preference represents an individual's preference for the way in which they perceive information. It is represented as either a focus on facts and clear and concrete information (ie what currently exists; sensing) or a focus on a broader view of what is possible (focus on meanings and possibilities; intuition).

The thinking/feeling personality preference represents a focus when judging information. Those who prefer thinking decisions tend to make decisions based

1 Based on Riskin's theory of mediator styles:

- Narrow mediator style. Mediators with a narrow orientation tend to encourage parties to focus on resolving the technical issues in dispute.
- Broad mediator style. Mediators with a broad orientation help parties understand and fulfil their interests as well as resolve the technical or legal points of dispute.

2 Based on Riskin's theory of mediator styles:

- Facilitative mediator style. Mediators that have a facilitative orientation assume that participating parties have their own internal resources and ideas and that the mediator's role is to simply direct the consensus building process.
- Evaluative mediator style. In contrast to the mediator with a Facilitative orientation, the evaluative mediator will review relevant legal documents, assess the law and facts in the dispute and make evaluations for particular outcomes.

more on objective criteria or facts whereas those who prefer to make feeling based decisions give more weight to values and feelings in the decision making process.

Demographic variables of mediator training background, years of experience, gender, and forms of alternative dispute resolution practised predicted the facilitative/evaluative mediator style. Specifically:

- Mediators with a legal background were more likely to display an evaluative mediator style. Mediators with a background in psychology were more likely to display a facilitative mediator style.
- Mediators who practiced facilitative ADR displayed a more facilitative and broad mediator style.
- Years of experience significantly predicted facilitative/evaluative style. More experienced mediators were more evaluative.
- Compared to women, men were more likely to display an evaluative mediator style but there was no significant difference between men and women when it came to the narrow/broad mediator style. This was mediated by years of experience and background.

How a mediator defines their role, and their neutrality as a third party is predicted by a mediator's experience and training.

[For a summary of the thesis results >>](#)

Mediator style training

Heidi Smith is promoting and refining a training program based on the Mediator Style research conducted in her thesis. [See Mediator Style Training >>](#)

“This training is designed to increase your awareness of how personality plays a role in conflict and its resolution,” said Heidi. “It will help you understand more about yourself, your clients, and your role as a mediator. “

“Differences in perception and judgement are the source of much conflict. If disputants, or even the mediator do not understand these differences, and assume everyone processes information and make decisions the same way an impasse may be reached regardless of the substance of the dispute.”

“In addition, your personality will also influence your decisions as a mediator and approach to dispute resolution.”

Pilot study; free training event

To help refine the training based on her research, Heidi is conducting a pilot study on Saturday 20 June at 137 Edward Street, Perth WA 6000.

Registration is free. Places are limited to 14 people.

The pilot study will run for a full day. The personality profile (MBTI assessment) and study guide are included.

[To enrol in the pilot study, click here >>](#)

Seeking facilitator/trainer

Mediator Style Training is seeking experienced mediators willing to travel and grow their facilitation skills for the development of fellow mediators. A background in psychology and/or certificate IV in workplace training and assessment would be an advantage.

Essential criteria

- 3 years mediation experience
- Training or group facilitation experience
- Desire for contract work.

Desirable criteria

- Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment
- Background in Psychology.

For this role you need to be available several times a year for 1-2 days at a time to travel interstate and deliver a one-day workshop. You will be employed on a contractual basis.

Please send a resume and cover letter to: hsmith@mediatorstyletraining.com
For more information about the company and the training program please visit www.mediatorstyletraining.com/