

MEDIATION MODELS AT A GLANCE

A Strategic Comparison of Modern Conflict Resolution Frameworks

“Most mediation models are designed to settle a dispute. The Partnership Model is designed to repair the system that allowed the dispute to happen in the first place.” — Nance L. Schick, Esq.

When an internal workplace conflict escalates beyond a manager’s baseline capacity, leadership often looks to external mediation. However, not all mediation is created equal. Different practitioners operate under wildly divergent philosophies. Some will push for a fast structural settlement that leaves underlying resentments simmering, while others focus strictly on emotional healing at the expense of operational reality.

To choose the right tool for your team, use this comparative guide to evaluate the four primary models of mediation against your goal of long-term operational sustainability.

Mediation Methodologies Comparison Matrix

Mediation Model	Core Objective	The Mediator's Role	How the Parties Are Treated	The Operational Risk (Sustainability Test)
Evaluative Mediation	Reaching a settlement based on legal rights, anticipated court outcomes, and structural compromise.	An active legal evaluator (often a retired judge or senior attorney) who points out weaknesses in each side's case and predicts litigation risks.	As adversarial litigants. The focus is strictly on their legal positions, documentation, and risk exposure, rather than their daily human reality.	High Risk of "Hollow Victory." It focuses entirely on legal compliance floors. It frequently results in non-disclosure agreements and financial payouts that bury the cultural issue while driving high performers into "Resentful Staying."
Facilitative Mediation	Assisting the parties in reaching a mutually acceptable, contract-style agreement through structured negotiation.	A process manager who controls the dialogue, uncovers hidden options, and guides parties toward an agreement without offering legal advice or opinions.	As negotiating partners in a transactional dispute. The parties maintain control over the final outcome, but the focus remains on the current problem.	Variable Sustainability. It is excellent for resolving clear, isolated contract or boundary disputes, but it often treats the conflict as a static, one-time event rather than a symptom of broken workplace architecture.

Transformative Mediation	Empowering the parties to recognize each other's perspectives and transform their underlying relational dynamics.	A supportive guide who follows the parties' lead, stepping back to let them control both the structure and the emotional depth of the conversation.	As autonomous human beings caught in a relational breakdown. The primary focus is on emotional validation, moral growth, and healing the personal rift.	Operational Drift. While profoundly human and restorative, it can completely ignore business realities, regulatory boundaries, and operational constraints, leaving managers without concrete, repeatable workflows.
The Partnership Model <i>(Third Ear / HAQ)</i>	Aligning individual interests with operational realities to build a resilient, self-governing workplace ecosystem.	A systems architect and neutral mediator who helps the parties slow down their judgment, look past defensive positions, and inspect the structural design flaws.	As long-term stakeholders in a shared business purpose. Individual human dignity and corporate operational survival are treated as completely inseparable.	None. It establishes a continuous resolution workflow. By using the HAQ Standard and the KARR Training Method, it converts a localized dispute into an active upgrade to the organization's daily operating rules.

How to Select a Mediator

If you are hiring an external professional to step into an escalating workplace fracture, do not simply ask for their resume or hourly rate. Ask them about their model:

- ☐ **Beware the Settlement Machine.** If a mediator brags about a 95% settlement rate but focuses entirely on financial terms and liability waivers, they are likely practicing Evaluative Mediation. They will leave your operational structure just as broken as they found it.
- ☐ **Demand Systems-Level Thinking.** Look for practitioners who understand that employment is a continuous partnership relationship, not a series of isolated transactions.
- ☐ **Verify the Follow-Through.** Ensure the mediator's framework includes an explicit mechanism to check back in on the health of the agreement after thirty, sixty, and ninety days.