

up front

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a purple blazer over a dark patterned top and black pants, stands in front of a large window. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. The background shows a blurred outdoor scene with greenery and a building.

workplace wars

Mediator Amy Lieberman resolves office conflict

BY **Susanne Tso** PHOTO BY **Anna Peña**

WHEN THERE'S CONFLICT brewing on the job and hostilities are interfering with productivity and souring the environment, what's an employer or employee to do? A growing number turn to mediation and Amy Lieberman, in particular.

Lieberman, executive director of North Scottsdale-based Insight Employment Mediation, refers to herself as a "full-time neutral." She is a mediator with the training, skills, experience and ability to help parties resolve conflict outside of court.

'Some people call mediation win-win; sometimes lawyers call it lose-lose. I have a different view. I call it can-live-with — can-live-with.'

It's a niche she's carved for herself that suits her background and skills perfectly. Lieberman, 48, draws from her undergraduate training in psychology and her legal knowledge as a noted practicing lawyer to help bickering parties explore options, develop communication and ultimately reach an agreement.

Legal knowledge and credibility are critical to gaining buy-in from clients, says Lieberman, whose name has appeared on the list of Best Lawyers in America for Alternative Dispute Resolution since 2004. In January, she was recognized in the Phoenix Business Journal's list of "Who's Who" in the local legal community, and a couple of months later the Journal acknowledged her as one of 50 Outstanding Women in Business.

An understanding ear is an essential part of the reflective process, which helps clients feel affirmed emotionally and become open

to other views. Addressing and validating emotions, she asserts, can free clients to set them aside and look at realistic expectations. Once accomplished, Lieberman establishes ground rules, expectations, confidentiality and a sense of dignity for hurting parties.

"But it's also an evaluative process," explains Lieberman, citing the importance of legal expertise should the parties decide to go to court. "If you go to court, it's win or lose," Lieberman tells clients. "Some people call mediation win-win; sometimes lawyers call it lose-lose. I have a different view. I call it can-live-with — can-live-with."

With half of her clients referred by lawyers and the other half referred by professionals and companies in the human resources field, Lieberman's reputation for delivering results has spurred her business's continued growth.

A well-known and highly respected alternative dispute resolution lawyer, Lieberman is a past chairman of the State Bar ADR section and serves as mediator for a number of organizations, including the Arizona Association of Realtors and varied government agencies. She also is a sought-after speaker and teacher on mediation and helps companies establish internal mediation programs.

The job can be emotionally taxing, admits Lieberman, and she looks forward to going home to her husband, Rick, son, Aaron, 15, and identical twin daughters, Claire and Elise, 14, at the end of the day. "But even when I'm exhausted there's no better feeling than helping people resolve conflicts."

Insight Employment Mediation is located at 21090 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Call (480) 246-3366 or visit www.insightemployment.com. ■