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Extreme Mediation

What Top-Tier Mediators Know That You Can Learn

I am as excited about my 3,700th mediation as I was about my first. This is a bring-your-A-game business. You have to be as strong on Friday as you are on Monday. If you make them know you are glad to see them and psyched for the task at hand, they'll be back.

Eric Galton

You're a natural: you know in your bones how to bring a room full of chaos and conflict to harmonious closure, and you just keep getting better and better. You've been a professional mediator for a while now, and there doesn't seem to be an upper limit to your improvement. You love what you do, and people want to be around you—you radiate energy. They'll even pay a lot of money to work with you and learn from you. You don't have to think about it: life is good. There's nothing else you would rather be doing.

This is how every single top-tier mediator I know experiences his or her profession. If this is how mediation makes you feel, you've got a real shot. But please note: these super-successful mediators are standing at the top of a pyramid that has a very broad base.

You've probably heard the 80-20 rule: 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work. That's as valid in mediation as it is anywhere, and perhaps more so. In mediation—whether it's commercial, employment, family law, dispute resolution, or any another



You Gotta Have Heart

You've got to have fun doing it. You have to have a passion. You put your energy where your heart is. You put your treasure where your heart is. If your interest is truly there, you put your resources there. Money will not give you a mediation business. It requires your time and effort in interacting with other people.

Robert Jenks

specialty—the mediators on the bottom tier of the pyramid are constantly scrambling for work, losing heart, and returning to their former careers or searching for a new path. Those who do manage to rise up to the small middle tier—about 15 percent—stay busy, make a good living, but never quite break through. Meanwhile, the top 5 percent—for our purposes, the highest earners in a given region—have calendars that are filled months in advance and bank accounts that are bulging at the seams.

Some of this success depends on one's niche. It's no surprise that mediators who work primarily on panels or part-time or in family law or neighborhood disputes are unlikely ever to see the kind of money that a full-time mediator who settles multiparty construction cases brings in regularly—even if their negotiation skills and personalities are in every other way equal. That may not seem fair, but—at least for now—that's the way the mediation market is set up.

Mediation is an extreme career. Many describe it as a calling. It's a field in which you *can* be wildly successful—think Tiger Woods, Martina Navritolova, Lance Armstrong—but only a relative few make it to that top tier and thrive. Those who do can't imagine

doing anything else. Like Paul Monicatti of Michigan, they say, “Mediation is my passion, and it is also so much fun for me that if I didn’t have to pay bills, I’d do it for free.”

If you can say the same, then you’ve found your calling as a mediator. If you don’t have the energy, the love, the passion for mediation that the top people have, the truth is that you’ll probably never join them.

FALLING OFF THE MEDIATOR BANDWAGON

It seems as though everybody wants to jump on the mediator bandwagon these days. As New Orleans mediator Robert Jenks says wryly, “You can’t swing a cat without hitting a mediator, but you can swing a lot of cats without hitting a good mediator.” Toronto’s Cliff Hendler agrees: “Virtually every lawyer who appears before me in mediation says, ‘I could do that.’” And in Minnesota, Michael Landrum says, “I can’t remember the last time I was in a mediation when one of the lawyers didn’t say, ‘Well, I’m a mediator too!’” I, too, have had this experience many times over.

Not surprisingly, our profession is packed with people who are trying to get a piece of the ever-expanding mediation pie. If you’re a mediator, you’ve probably been through at least some basic mediation training. The number of trainers and programs seems to be exploding, and they are turning out hopeful new mediators almost daily. For many would-be mediators, this career choice seems like a no-brainer. Unlike the person getting a credential to become a teacher or a law degree to become a lawyer, or putting in years of study to become a doctor, you don’t need years of dedicated schooling and a special degree to set up a practice. And look at the payoff: the most successful mediators are shining examples of what might be—they’re making a lot of money, they seem to enjoy their work, and they make it look easy.



Only a Few Survive

The mediation pie can expand, but the number of people eating that pie expands geometrically. So if business doubles, we've got quadruple the number of people wanting to be mediators. But only a small number of people are going to sustain themselves as mediators long term in the private sector. The volume of people interested in being mediators is always going to exceed the number who are really able to do it.

I think too many people go out there and train as a source of income—and you can make an okay amount of money. If people are taking the training to skill enhance, that's fine. But I get a résumé once a week from a person who says, "I've just been through mediation training; I want to get into this field. Do you have any jobs for me? If you don't, can you give me advice?" And I do give them advice. But the truth is, making a good living in mediation is a very difficult thing to do.

Robert A. Creo

Crash! Most of the freshly minted newcomers who burst out of basic programs raring to go stumble at the first gate. What they're stumbling over is their own skewed idea of the reality of a mediator's life and what it takes to achieve success.

The first hard lesson newcomers learn is that experience and success count for a lot in this business, and they have yet to acquire it. Southern California mediator Nina Meierding says, "I receive dozens of calls from people who want to 'take me out to lunch' so that I can tell them how to be an instant success. The brutal reality is that there is no instant success—it takes commitment, a



Field of Dreams

I, too, initially had the *Field of Dreams* approach: “If I build it (mediation), they (the public) will come.” I believed that the concept of mediation was so good and so right that anyone would immediately see its value. This is not true. The need for mediation is greater than the demand; and if you are to make your career in mediation, you must be strategic, thoughtful, thorough, and self-evaluative in your approach.

Nina Meierding

healthy dose of risk tolerance, a solid business perspective, and faith in yourself.” Chris Moore, who specializes in dispute resolution at CDR Associates in Boulder, Colorado, says, “One of the things that makes the biggest difference is a track record. Which means that it’s harder for a new mediator to leap in and have a successful business. You need to estimate that it’s going to be about five years before you have a sustainable practice—if you get there.”

Five years?

For Geoff Sharp, a successful commercial mediator in Wellington, New Zealand, the first few years were anything but glamorous. “My story,” he says, “involves lonely days at the afternoon movies in my first year of practice, wearing suits to an empty office and putting the kids’ school fees on Visa. Seven years later it involves doing rewarding work in my chosen field and telling wannabe mediators to get staunch, do the hard yards, and realize this is no ordinary profession with established pathways to practice.”

Getting a track record of successful settlements entails having clients—and that means courting contacts, and that means getting

out there and doing the hard marketing: selling yourself, but in the most effective and personable way possible. And, for many, it also means learning how to run a business and keep it going on a very short shoestring. Often it means working more hours than you sleep and staying sharp enough to do it all again the next day.

The majority of people who say, “Hey, I could do that!” and complete a forty-hour basic mediation course quickly discover that making a living in this profession is not nearly as easy as it looks from the outside. In fact, it’s not easy at all. Sooner or later, those for whom the hard work outweighs the fun drop away.

NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

As the old saying goes, “Many are called; few are chosen.” Pursuing a truly successful mediation career is not for the faint of heart. As Geoff Sharp says, mediation is no ordinary profession—and there is no one golden road to success, financial or otherwise. Each of the relative handful of super-successful mediators has his or her own road story to tell. Some left successful litigation practices because helping people resolve disputes without rancor felt better than arguing one side over the other. Philadelphia lawyer-turned-mediator Ben Picker recalls, “I became a lawyer primarily because of my desire to work with individuals in a collaborative effort to solve their problems. Until I began my mediation practice, the greatest satisfaction I received from the practice of law was from my work on public interest and pro bono matters. As a mediator, far more so than when I was a trial lawyer, I engage in a collaborative effort to solve problems and in a process where the people are as important as the issues. As a consequence, I feel more than at any other time in my professional life that I am adding value to the profession.”

Some, like former insurance professional Cliff Hendler, left actuarial or accounting careers because they found a truer calling in working with people around the same issues they used to resolve on

paper. Others, like Chris Moore's business partner Bernie Mayer, found their way to mediation and dispute resolution from the helping professions—teaching, social work, psychotherapy—bringing their training and sensibilities to resolving personal or community disputes or to working with social issues on a larger scale.

All, however, have what has been called a “unique ability” for mediation. They are passionate about what they do, and doing it comes naturally. If you agree with all—not merely most—of the following statements, you're echoing the feelings of every top-tier mediator I know:

- I love mediating, and I'm energized by it.
- It's easy. When I'm in the middle of a mediation, everything flows.
- I always get good results, and I often get better results than I'm expecting.
- I experience personal growth from my work in mediation. The more time I spend on it, the more powerful it becomes.
- I get positive feedback from clients and colleagues about my work.
- Mediating, thinking about mediating, and being a mediator give me an overall feeling of satisfaction.
- I can't imagine being happy doing anything else for a living.

Successful mediators enjoy meeting new people, talking with them, and learning about them. They get energy from social interaction and seek it out. Most intuitively understand “how to make friends and influence people.” In some sense they are salespeople,



Doing Good and Doing Well

The major reason that I and my colleagues at CDR Associates entered this field was our values about resolving disputes, not to get rich. We wanted to promote effective collaborative decision making and support the peaceful resolution of serious differences.

For me, I can do work that is related to social justice and building peace and it's congruent with my values—and I can make a living at it. It's pretty amazing. But I am not alone in this. Most of the people in this field are very value driven.

The people I know who work in the public policy and dispute resolution field have a very high level of value motivation. They're concerned about the issues in the arena they work in. They're also concerned about developing collaborative solutions, solutions that are transparent and cost-effective, and they see it also as a way of promoting democracy—it's a nonadversarial form of democratic decision making that meshes with more traditional legislative or administrative decision making. The level of participation by key parties, the quality of input, and the degree that customized integrative solutions are developed that have consensus support make outcomes far superior to normal legislative or administrative decision-making processes.

Chris Moore

and the product they are selling is peace between parties. Surprisingly—or perhaps not so surprisingly—many describe themselves as “conflict averse.” They may be hotshot negotiators, juggling five parties with five points of view and getting them to settle, but they’d rather pay sticker price for a new car and drive it off the lot than haggle with the dealer to get the best deal. Often that’s the reason for leaving a law practice. They receive much more satisfaction from helping parties reach a mutually satisfying resolution than from ensuring that one party “wins” a case at the expense of another.

WHAT TOP-TIER MEDIATORS HAVE IN COMMON

If you aspire to a flourishing, lucrative practice in the field of mediation or dispute resolution, you will do well to emulate the men and women who are in that position right now. In my experience, top-tier mediators have the following in common:

- We love to mediate, and we’re very good at our job.
- We inspire trust.
- We cultivate champions, developing relationships with people who are in a position to refer cases.
- We work hard.
- We charge more than the going rate, even for routine cases.

We’ll look more closely at all of these—and other important issues, including marketing, business models, money, and more—throughout this book. Right now, let’s touch on each of these



An Undiluted Passion

Dwelling in the field of mediation, as I have since 1988, has been not only a source of intense interest but an undiluted passion for me. What is it about this new but really very old form of conflict resolution that seems to still have me firmly in its grip? While it is true that I am paid well, particularly when mediating large complex and multiparty cases, it's certainly not just the money.

Prestige? While I have had my hotshot periods, mediating flashy cases and fending off the press, being president of this and that, I seem to be learning some humility. While I used to say, "I settled that case," I now understand that I'm really a guest, managing the process with as light a hand as possible, and it's the parties and their lawyers who settle cases in mediation, not me.

"I dwell in possibility—/ A fairer house than prose—/
More numerous of windows / Superior—for Doors—." These lines from Emily Dickinson got me thinking about what it is that fascinates me so much about mediation. Much of the allure, the kick, the deep satisfaction and insight into the human psyche as we struggle with conflict is . . . the abundant presence of possibility, all those windows and doors offering creative paths not just to resolution, but sweet closure, sometimes life-altering relief; the tantalizing choice in the settle-litigate decision between certainty or uncertainty. Getting to be a part of all this, each case and the cast of characters different from the last, getting to experience the human drama of change: a "fairer house" indeed.

Harry Goodheart

fundamental factors and what top-tier mediators have to say about their work.

We Love to Mediate

Harry Goodheart, working in Florida and North Carolina, has been a successful mediator for more than seventeen years. Even after nearly three thousand mediations, in addition to trainings and seminars, he calls his practice “an undiluted passion.” Like most successful mediators, it’s not just the money that brought him to mediation and keeps him there.

Money is the scorecard, but it can’t be the whole ball game. Along with most mediators I know, I have worked pro bono if a dispute calls for it. A few years ago, for example, I was struck by a photo of a family on the cover of a legal publication. The parents claimed that their son had been discriminated against on his high school baseball team because he was Jewish. This dispute between the family and the school and the coach had entered high-powered litigation; the lawyers representing the family were from one of the top firms in Los Angeles, and they were handling the case pro bono. The case appealed to me—I was Jewish, I was a mediator, I had attended Dodger fantasy camp—and I felt that I might be able to help. I decided to call the lawyers both for the family and for the coach and the school district to see if there was anything I could do. The lawyers knew of me, and they were happy to accept my offer to mediate the case pro bono. We were able to avoid court, settle the case, and smooth out some emotional issues for all the parties. It was a very satisfying experience for me and the kind of case that I strongly feel those of us who are in the top tier should be taking on more often.

Ultimately, the only true measure of success is our own sense of satisfaction. But unless we are truly and purely altruistic, that personal feeling of success will be reflected in a more tangible outer success: we will make a good or even great living doing what we love to do.



I View My Work as a Calling

I am not entirely sure why I have been successful while other very talented mediators have struggled, but I would guess that these are the contributing factors:

1. I genuinely like working with lawyers, have been very active in the bar, and am relatively well known among lawyers. I was president of the county bar association and have served on the board of bar examiners and on lots of bar committees. I have done plenty of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) speaking, and I continue to do so.
2. I regularly advertise in bar publications and occasionally write articles. My ads are simple reminders that I am available and are not full of the usual adjectives. They include a photo. I find that when I meet people for the first time, they recognize me and seem to know me because of the ad.
3. I treat nearly every contact I have with lawyers and businesspeople in the community as a potential opportunity to explain what I do and how I can be of service.
4. I view my work as a calling and am dedicated to lifelong learning and improvement. I try to treat each case, no matter how mundane, as an opportunity to provide a service that uniquely suits the needs of the parties. The feedback I receive from lawyers seems to indicate that they notice and appreciate this.

Susan Hammer

We Inspire Trust

Perhaps the most important key to being a successful mediator is that your clients and potential clients—whether they are lawyers, helping professionals, families, or community leaders—feel they can trust you to be fair and to help them grapple with the life-changing issues that arise in mediated negotiations.

All top-tier mediators will tell you that inspiring trust is paramount. “The mediator must be able to find connections with the parties so that they feel like this person can help them work through



The Biggest Fear

The biggest fear most people have is that they’ll be taken advantage of. So any marketing message must include the emotional appeal, “You will not be played for a fool in my office.”

Most of what mediators are taught is self-defeating. In many situations one or the other of the parties feel they’ll be at a decided disadvantage. If you talk to a mediator and you feel you’re not a good negotiator, and the mediator says, “I’m going to be *neutral*,” you’ll feel that you’re going to get screwed. Mediators have been taught to say this, and it sounds good, but it scares the hell out of people.

Good mediators can overcome that because they have a presence, despite their words, that people can trust. The best mediators know how to pick up on cues that a person is anxious, and they work to sell the message, “You’re not going to lose in this mediation.”

Robert Benjamin

difficult issues—a personal bond,” explains Chris Moore. “If people are going to be in a lifeboat on a stormy sea, they want someone with them they trust and have some connection with. But they also don’t expect you to be totally partial to them—they expect you to be fair. And they hope you can help them talk to the other side, people whom they have historically found to be difficult to talk with. You facilitate and design a process that helps them talk *and* reach agreements.”

In my own work, I try to cultivate trust in all my interactions with potential clients, from first contact to final settlement. At the outset, when they inquire if I can help, I begin by talking to them, asking questions almost as a doctor would, trying to “diagnose” their conflict by learning more about what’s driving it. And I listen. Often mediators assume they need to “sell” themselves to clients. But when you let others do the talking, you’re showing concern for their pain and respecting their needs—you’re not trying to sell them anything. By the end of the conversation they understand that you care and that you can solve their problem. And once you’ve gained their trust and they’ve booked a place on your calendar, you do everything you can to ensure that you keep their trust throughout the mediation process.

We Cultivate Champions

A passion for mediating and terrific natural skills can take you only so far. You need to cultivate champions—influential people who believe in you as a mediator and who are more than happy to help you get your name out there to larger groups. I have been fortunate enough to have had several important champions who paved the way for me, introducing me to important potential clients and polishing my reputation. If you have even one such champion, you can consider yourself fortunate indeed. But note: they will not always come into your life by chance. You need to cultivate these relationships.

Early in my career, I met and made friends with a lawyer who was known as the “godfather” of employment law, a really powerful



Success

There are different kinds of success. For some people, having a job that allows you to focus on your chosen work is successful. Making a lot of money is another kind of success (although, as a social worker and the child of two social workers, I've never had that as a goal). For me, what's successful is that I am able in my work to help people deal with the conflicts they're facing. Successful means that people ask me to provide help that is constructive and appropriate to their situation, and that I am able to provide that help and make a living by doing so.

Bernie Mayer

force in this area. He saw right away that mediation was a good thing, and I thought he might be a champion for me in the employment arena. He had an organization of like-minded employment lawyers, and from time to time he invited me to their meetings to speak about mediation. I couldn't have asked for a better platform or intermediary. He was an influential person among a lot of people. Having this respected professional singing my praises and introducing me to potential clients was much more effective than any number of cold calls I might have made.

I am lucky to have another of my champions on my side; being on the bad side of powerful and influential people can be an instant career killer. Once a year, a couple of lawyers I am friendly with invite about five hundred trial lawyers to a big meeting where they do a blow-by-blow review of all the arbitrators and mediators in town—and by now there are hundreds of them. Still, they go

through them one by one, saying, “Stay away from this one” or “This one’s great.” Fortunately, they have always recommended me at these meetings, and that has gone a long way toward encouraging others to try my services. After a while, more and more people retained me as their mediator, until I reached a critical mass in the marketplace and became established. Being established is the breakthrough everyone in this business strives to achieve.

We Work Hard

Many newcomers to mediation think it’s going to be an easy way to make a buck—or at least a lot easier than the career they want to leave. But successful mediators, virtually without exception, work hard—all day and almost every day. Rod Max practices in Alabama and Florida. He says, “There are a lot of individuals who want to be mediators. They’re great lawyers, judges, businesspeople—but to establish the network that gets you cases and fills your calendar takes a lot of work. A lot of work! I have dedicated myself to working this on an everyday basis. I’m motivated to assist lawyers and their clients.”

“You have to be committed,” says Toronto’s Rick Weiler. “Lots of people are getting certified, but the vast majority fall by the wayside because they think it looks easy—access to the field is easy, and mediators look like they have it made. But they’re not prepared to do what’s necessary to get to the point where they would be broadly acceptable to a critical mass of lawyers. It’s about understanding how the process works and being prepared to commit to it. It’s like anything else. If you are setting the goal for yourself that you will be in the top 5 percent, you have to work hard, develop a strategy, continually upgrade your skills, and have the drive to keep going.”

“You can’t do this part-time and be successful,” explains Pittsburgh mediator Robert A. Creo. “The people who are really successful work hard.”



On the Power of Persistence

Successful mediators are persistent—they hang in there, doing what it takes for as long as it takes to make sure every mediation settles. This tenacity carries over to their career as a whole. Despite setbacks, during lean years, they persevere, doing what they need to do to ensure they stay in the field and enjoy growing success.

One of the biggest criticisms I hear is that a mediator gives up too soon. Good ones follow up with phone calls, a second session—they hang in there. They have tenacity.

Michael Landrum

I work hard and know what I'm doing. People know that I will work really hard to get a case settled. Their past experience with me and my reputation tell them that I'm committed to the people and the process.

Cliff Hendler

Perseverance and following up are critical factors for mediators. People hire me because I won't give up on a case. Even if a case doesn't settle on the day, people know I'll stick with it and follow up.

Rick Weiler



A Day in the Life

One of the ongoing challenges of a full-time mediator is the calendar. During travel and breaks, I return telephone calls, follow up on unsettled cases, and communicate with my office via cell phone. My phone has a voicemail. I have my office call me to leave substantive messages when I am out. I respond via telephone or email when the schedule permits it. Here's my calendar for one recent Monday:

- 9 A.M.–noon: Mediation of a two-party personal injury claim involving a woman injured in an auto accident.
- 12:15–1:30 P.M.: Meeting of the bar association dispute resolution committee.
- 2:00–4:00 P.M.: Adjunct professor teaching international dispute resolution at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.
- 4:30–6:00 P.M.: Meeting with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center risk management team to review upcoming educational conferences for lawyers and submission of new cases to mediation.
- 6:00–7:00 P.M.: Quick meal and travel. Return calls on the road.
- 7:00–8:00 P.M.: Presentation on asymmetry in mediation to Western Pennsylvania Council of Mediators.

8:30–10:00 P.M.: Watch TV show 24; read *New York Times*.

10:00–11:00 P.M.: Review submissions for next day's case.

11:30 P.M.–midnight: Review and respond to emails.

Robert A. Creo

We Charge More Money

It's no secret: the most successful mediators charge more money than the middle tier of mediators in their region. When parties are truly committed to settling a large case, they are willing to pay what it takes to get the job done. And when people like to say that you're a mediator who always gets the job done, you have every reason to be paid what you are worth. That's why the top 5 percent of mediators charge in the top range of fees, and that's why they get it.

Counterintuitive? Yes. But if you can back up your fee schedule with results, it works. Clients are often more than willing to commit to a higher-priced mediator with a great reputation because they want to make sure the job gets done right. For the very same reason, you're more likely to hire a higher-priced but guaranteed excellent firm of builders to remodel your kitchen. And you're certainly going to look for the best orthopedist in town to repair your knee—hang the cost. Admittedly, there's some degree of snob appeal involved. Just as many lawyers prefer to be seen driving BMWs rather than Toyotas, they also prefer to tell their clients that they've signed up "the best mediator in the business"—and point to your fee schedule to back up their claim.

Setting high fees takes a bit of fearlessness—you must be willing to lose some business in order to get a different kind of case.



Do You Have What It Takes to Be a Success?

- 1. Successful mediators love to mediate, and they are very good at their job.**

You live, breathe, eat, and sleep mediation. You'd rather be mediating than doing any other job. Mediating gives you intense satisfaction, and you get better at it every day. If this describes you, super success may be within your reach.

- 2. Successful mediators are likeable and inspire trust.**

You enjoy people, and people enjoy being around you. Clients, former clients, and prospective clients give you continual feedback about how great you are at your job, how many good things they've heard about your work, how safe they feel about putting their clients' lives in your hands. If you can inspire this level of trust, you might make it to the top tier.

- 3. Successful mediators cultivate champions: they make relationships with people who are in a position to refer cases.**

You understand intuitively who will be able to help you expand your network, and you actively seek out relationships with them. You create a mutual admiration society that spills over into all of your champion's social contacts. If people are hearing good things about you from influential others, your business should increase exponentially.

4. Successful mediators work hard.

You work hard in mediations to ensure a successful outcome for everyone, and you work hard outside mediations to build your network of contacts, market your business, increase your knowledge and skill base, and share your expertise with others. You understand that a career in mediation is not for those who enjoy long vacations and twelve hours of sleep every night, and you wake every morning eager to get to work.

5. Successful mediators charge more than the going rate, even for routine cases.

You know your fees are higher than what other mediators around you are charging, but you're worth it. If clients want you—that is, if they want their case settled by the best mediator in business—they'll understand that paying your fee is an investment in a successful settlement.

Rick Weiler says, "I price myself aggressively for our market, so I don't get the garden-variety case. The people hiring me believe there's a special reason to pay more for me." And Cliff Hendler says, "I charge a lot of money. I priced myself out of the smaller-end market. I concentrate on bigger cases. And it works—people pay it."

GETTING TO THE TOP

No matter how high he or she rises, every mediator starts in the same place: at the bottom. Simply getting started in the business is basic math: you begin with one case and meet two lawyers. If you're successful, those two lawyers tell more lawyers about you. Your business



How to Have a Successful Career as a Mediator

Be open to opportunities. Be willing to invest your time and capital. Be patient. Give back. The best thing you can do, in spite of all the above, is to do good work as a mediator. If it's meant to be, it will be.

Tracy Allen

picks up, you schedule and settle more and more cases, and somewhere along the line—breakthrough! You've reached a critical mass in your contacts, and the ripe fruit is dropping off the trees and into your hands.

Is it that simple? No, far from it. If you want to climb to the very top of the pyramid, you're going to have to put some of your life on hold and pour massive amounts of energy into achieving that goal. It's not easy, and it doesn't happen overnight. If this sounds like some kind of fun, welcome to the club!

TOP-TIER STRATEGIES

1. Be willing to work hard.

If you want to be among the most successful mediators, you must be willing to narrow your focus and devote a tremendous amount of energy toward your goal. This means early mornings, late nights, busy days, and—at least in the beginning—less time to spend with family and friends.

2. Never give up.

The road to success is not straight and sure, and it doesn't happen overnight. If you begin your career by accepting the fact that you will be working toward your goal for a few hard years, you will be much more likely to persevere and—eventually!—reach the top.

3. If mediation is not your passion, find another career.

If you are not willing to eat, sleep, and dream mediation—and enjoy virtually every minute of it—you will not be able to stay the course long enough to become a highly successful mediator. Think about this seriously: If you have the passion and dedication real success in the business takes, welcome to the club!

