



Ministry  
of Justice



# Marketing communication tips for family mediators



The Ministry of Justice and Family Mediation Council have put together this guide with ideas to help mediation services promote what they do and help raise the profile of mediation generally among the public.

Marketing communications is an important part of running a business, helping you present your service effectively, publicise what you do and get clients through the door. It sits alongside other elements of the marketing 'mix' which include getting the service itself right, offering it in the right places and in the way that customers want, and getting the pricing right. Effective marketing puts you in the best possible place to be meeting the needs of your customers and doing it in a way that provides you with the successful outcome that you want for your business.

Communications activity taken by services will complement the range of national communications activities being carried out making the overall effort more successful.

This document is designed to provide some marketing tips which may be useful to mediation firms, particularly those independent mediators or small firms who don't have the backing of administration or marketing staff.

The document mainly focuses on communications, but in the first part, it also touches on other aspects of the marketing mix. If you are interested in getting a fuller understanding of any aspect mentioned here you will be able to find more guidance online.

The document draws on findings from 'Overcoming barriers to mediation in intake calls to services: Research-based strategies for mediators'. *Negotiation Journal*, 29 (3), 289-314. by Professor Elizabeth Stokoe and Dr Frederick Attenborough of Loughborough University (Stokoe, 2013), and emerging findings from independent research commissioned by the MoJ into Mediation Information & Assessment Meetings.

We hope you find it helpful.

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## 1. Take stock

Some organisations have a clear view of their business vision and use this to help drive their marketing. However, not everyone has particular business or marketing expertise so this section offers a few points of advice for those who might find it useful.

Start by making sure you know your overarching business aim – for example, to bring in new business, to gain an ISO quality mark, to increase the profile of your business.

Then reflect on your current situation. This will help you set clearer objectives with more detail about what you need to achieve, with whom, and by when. Consider what is working well and what could be done differently or better.

### ***a. Understand your market***

Businesses sell to customers in markets. Any service business in a marketplace is likely to be in competition with other firms offering similar services (eg other mediation firms) – or other services or activities which may compete for people’s attention, time and money (eg court services). Successful businesses meet customer needs better than rival offerings.

- What opportunities are there that could help your business?
- What threats are there to your business?
- What are the client needs you are looking to address?

Make sure you have an understanding of the market you are in and keep yourself updated – markets are always changing. Whatever the nature of your business or service, it is important to ensure that your business model can be responsive to market trends and evolving customer requirements so you can take advantage of opportunities and find ways to manage threats.

Local councils usually have published demographic data which might help you better understand where there could be opportunities in your local market.

### ***b. Check you have your service, distribution and pricing right***

- What are your strengths as a service?
- What are your weaknesses where you could make improvements?

It may sound obvious but before thinking about any publicity, it is essential to ensure that what you offer is the right type and quality of service for the clients you are looking to serve. If you don’t get your service right, your business won’t succeed, no matter how much publicity is done.

Points to consider about your service, distribution and pricing:

- Do you have a clear vision for your business?
- Do you know who your competitors are? What makes you stand out from them? Why should clients come to you?
- Is the service you offer right for your target audience? Eg do you have a legal aid contract? are you offering the right types of mediation?
- Are you allowing enough time to assess clients effectively, enabling you and them to be really clear about whether mediation is right? The Mediation and Information Assessment Meeting (MIAM) is crucial in shaping clients' decisions, particularly those who are not very aware about mediation and those who feel compelled to be there.
- Are your opening hours right for your market? Is there a demand for early morning/evening sessions for working people?
- Have you thought about offering an after-sales service? For example, why not suggest a follow-up phone call with both parties after a year to see how things are going?
- Could you join up with other mediation providers, lawyers or other relevant organisations to offer clients a wider service offer? Please bear in mind any 'conflict of interest' limitations – you might want to review the FMC Code of Practice when considering this.
- Is your pricing strategy right for your target audience? Would your clients prefer fixed price fee packages?
- Do your premises/literature/telephone messages convey a professional service?

***c. Learn from your existing clients***

Look at the profile of existing customers and see if you can learn why they have come to you? This can help enable you to target your audiences (see below) and identify potential new customers.

Inviting, and listening to, feedback also provides valuable insight to suggest how you can make improvements to your service.

- You don't have to spend lots of money on research – many mediation firms use simple feedback forms. These can give you some indication of what you are doing well, what people like about your service, and where you might be able to improve. This can help you identify ways to make your service stand out from others.



## 2. Clarify your objectives and approach for marketing and communications activity

Be clear about exactly what you want to achieve through your communications – for example, this could involve:

- Raising awareness of your service;
- Establishing more referral links with other practitioners, e.g. lawyers, health practitioners
- Converting more enquiries into mediation;
- Increasing the number of clients for MIAMs;
- Reaching different types of clients; or
- Raising the profile of family mediation generally – by growing demand for the market as a whole, it is more likely that people will need your services.

### ***d. Know your target audience***

Different groups of people will have different communications requirements so it is important to consider whether you should ‘segment’ your audiences. Tailoring your messages and techniques for each audience group can make your communications more effective.

For example, it may be you can usefully divide your audience into groups in terms of levels of awareness, specific service features needed, different languages spoken, ways of accessing information, or types of information needed. You could also think about whether you need to take a different approach to meet people’s different attitudes to mediation, where they are in the process of resolving their dispute, or to reflect their marital or parental status.

### ***e. Make your objectives measurable***

Try to build figures into your objectives – e.g. % increase – as this will help you to decide where to focus your efforts and evaluate whether your activities have been successful.

Once you are clear about what you want to achieve, then you can work out the detailed approach.

### ***f. Work out how you are going to meet your objectives***

This is your strategy; the approach you are going to take. You’ve already defined ‘why’ you need to do some marketing. This is where you set out ‘how’ you will seek to meet your objectives. Once you have analysed who your target market(s) is/are (the ‘who’), this will help you work out:

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- What you will say to them (messages);
- Where and how you will get your messages to your target audience (channels);
- When you will communicate (timing);
- How much you will spend (budget); and
- How you will measure whether your objectives are being met (evaluation)

The next sections provide some tips on these areas.

### 3. Messages – know what you want to say

Firstly, be very clear about what you want your target audiences to know and/or do. Your messages should then provide the necessary information to enable them to act if they feel it is right for them.

- Tailor messages to different groups as appropriate (informed by your earlier analysis).
- Put yourself in the mindset of your client, starting from the basis that most will not know anything at all about the process and will need it explained in clear, simple language.
- Remember you are actually in the business of selling benefits first. The service you offer is the way you deliver those benefits to help address the client needs you've identified. So work out what you want to say about how your service can help solve problems – and be confident about it:
  - Focus on what you can, not what you can't, do. Explain why people should come to you and what sort of situations mediation can help with.
  - Tell people that mediation works! And it's usually cheaper, quicker and less stressful than going to court. These are all real benefits and the more these messages are used the more the messages will get through.
- Clients need to be able to make an informed choice about engaging and continuing with mediation. Make sure the client is clear about what mediation is and understands the options available to them:
  - Emerging research tells us that clients are unlikely to know that mediators may provide different 'offers' which are suitable for particular client situations. For example, some mediators offer shuttle mediation and take on higher conflict relationships than others. Explain that the client can choose different mediators and styles to suit them.
  - Explain at the outset what sort of mediation you offer and how this differs to the services that others provide.
  - Explain where clients can access supplementary or alternative services (such as legal advice and emotional support) where they are needed, so that clients do not approach the MIAM expecting to receive these services.
  - Make sure clients understand the difference between the MIAM and mediation itself so that they understand what is involved with each. Explain, how all the dispute resolution stages work, so they understand where they are in the process, e.g. Initial query > MIAM with party 1 > MIAM with party 2 > etc.

Think about reviewing your current messages to

- Check you are focusing on what people are looking for, and not just what you are offering or you want to say.
- See if you want to make any changes to be consistent with the **key messages** in **Appendix A**, including the availability of legal aid and the change in the law regarding MIAMs.
- Can you simplify your messages using plain English? Take a look at the tips on getting the language right in **Appendix B, Hints on producing your own materials**. The simpler the message the more likely people will remember it.
- Consider the 'script' you use for dealing with initial enquiries about MIAMs, take a look at **Appendix D** to see if there is anything you might want to change.
- If you want to **communicate with groups that are traditionally 'hard to reach'**, have a look at **Appendix C** for tips

And remember – check to ensure that your messages are accurate and not misleading.

## 4. Channels of communication – decide where and how best to use your messages to promote your business

Think about where your potential clients go for information and focus your communications efforts there to get best results.

Remember that those already aware of mediation may be searching directly for mediation or for services, but many will simply be focused on the problem they need to solve – whether it be splitting up, getting a fair split of money or assets, or sorting out disputes about children arrangements. Think about how you can reach your audience early in the process of deciding how to resolve a dispute.

Choose the best channels for the situation, considering:

- Nature of the channel – eg some are better at raising the public's awareness so they seek further information (eg posters); others are better at improving people's knowledge (eg leaflets) or encouraging them to take action (eg engagement);
- Ability to reach the audience (how many of your potential target market will receive your message through the channel (eg if they aren't big users of social media, then having a Twitter account may not be the best investment of your time); and
- Cost, and effectiveness (see if you can get an indication of whether a particular channel leads to 'sales', for example by going on past experience or asking similar businesses).

It is usually best to use more than one channel. This helps to ensure you reach audiences at different stages in their decision-making, as well as maximising the overall chances of your audiences seeing your messages.

Remember that different channels and media need different treatment. For example, posters require simple, short, easy to scan messages with as few words as possible; writing for a website has different requirements to producing a print-based leaflet. A search on the internet will give you plenty of tips which can help.

Don't forget to check that any use of personal data is legal. The [Information Commissioner's Office website](#) has useful advice for small companies and use of data for marketing purposes.

Consider:

- Personal contact – every single interaction that anyone in your firm has with the public is an opportunity to get across your messages and to demonstrate the values of your firm. Think too about attending relevant events, fairs, etc;
- Print – poster sites, noticeboards, direct mail (products: leaflets, flyers, posters, letters, exhibition stands);

- Media – local newspapers, magazines, local radio and TV (products: news releases, case studies, feature articles); and
- Online – websites, email, discussion forums and blogs. If using social media, think carefully about how best to use it.

See **Appendix E** for some suggested low cost activity you might want to consider.

**Appendix F** lists resources that are available centrally which may help save you time and money producing publicity materials.

### Talk the talk!

Remember that people in your own mediation service or firm need to be saying the right things! This is particularly important at these critical points in the client journey:

- **Initial enquiry** – remember, a high proportion of callers don't get past the first stage of enquiry so getting that initial interaction right is essential – whether it is through a discussion with a mediator or a member of support staff. See **Appendix D** for tip for **dealing with initial enquiries**.

If your organisation is big enough to have a receptionist or switchboard operator, really value the role they play in your business. Make sure they are properly trained to know what you do and what you don't do – including for example, being clear that legal aid is available for legal help for mediation as well as for mediation itself.

- **The MIAM** – focus on this stage as a real opportunity for you to see if your service can fit the needs of the client. Impressions made in this initial meeting will not only affect the chance of clients agreeing to try mediation but also whether they might come back again at a later date if they need further help. Perceptions of this meeting will also influence what they say to other people – positive or negative. So even if mediation isn't right for one person, if you make the right impression, they may recommend you to others.

## 5. Timing – when to focus your efforts

Think back to your objectives. Is there a need for a focused campaign or targeted activities throughout the year? Maybe the need is for a simple one-off activity?

There may be times when you are likely to get a 'bigger bang for your buck', when your audience is likely to be most receptive to your messages. For example, there appears to be an increase in requests for information about divorce in early January and late summer which suggests people are generally more likely to be looking for ways to sort out relationship disputes at these times. Make sure information about your service is in the right places for it to be seen when you know people are likely to be looking for help to address a need.

Check with your member organisation for any activity they have planned and keep an eye on the mediators' section of the [Family Mediation Council website](#).

Look out for hooks of national or other events that you can use for getting your own information out. For example:

- There will be national activity around the end of April 2014 when the new MIAM provisions in the Children & Families Act will be expected to come into force<sup>1</sup>. This would be an ideal time for everyone to join together in a big communications push.
- Resolution organised Family Dispute Resolution Week in November 2013, encouraging other mediation organisations to run activities of their own to tie-in with the national publicity carried out by Resolution and MoJ. Look out for other organisations which may be planning relevant events, on which you could add your own activities, such as court open days.
- There are other dates during the year which may provide opportunities for activity (e.g. Parents Day (July) or Grandparents Day (September)). The local media may be more likely to run a story if it links with a nationally recognised event.

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<sup>1</sup> Since April 2011 it has been an 'expectation' that parties would consider mediation in financial and private law Children Act cases. Subject to Parliamentary approval, from April 2014, new legislation will place a **requirement** on applicants to court to attend a MIAM to consider mediation before making a family application (as with the current Pre-Application Protocol, some exceptions will apply).

## 6. Budget – make the most of any money you have

Get the best value from any money or effort by:

- Prioritising activity where it is most needed and focusing on that;
- Ensuring good cost control throughout the project – and remember to value your and others' time as a cost to your business;
- Assessing what can be done in-house and/or by pooling resources with other organisations; and
- Focusing on low-cost publicity activities, rather than more expensive tools such as advertising – see **Appendix E** for some suggestions.



## 7. Evaluation – measure your success

It is helpful to find ways to measure whether your marketing activity is working. This makes it much easier to know whether your plans are having the desired effect so you can adapt/develop them if needed. It also helps to know where to spend your effort and money next time. Again, you don't have to spend lots of money on evaluation. Simple ways to get feedback include:

- When a potential client contacts you, at the end of the dialogue, ask them where they heard of you and log that information so you can review it once you have enough responses and see where your referrals are coming from.
- See if there are any relevant support networks or channels that you could use to run a simple survey to assess awareness of your organisation/campaign, or people's perceptions – are your communications giving the right impression of your business? For example, tools such as Survey Monkey enable you to set up and run a short online survey and are free to use.
- Look at other statistics such as your MIAM client numbers, conversion rates and number of requests for information. Consider number of hits on your website, demand on leaflets, requests for interviews, etc.
- If you use social media, there are various tools you can use to track activity and reach (e.g. Hootsuite).

The information gathered will enable you to see whether you have achieved your objectives and what more needs to be done. It will also help you learn any lessons for the next time.

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## A Key public messages

- The Government is committed to encouraging more people to resolve their disputes outside of the courtroom, which is why it is introducing legislation to require people to consider mediation before going to court.
- This means that, from 22 April 2014, if you are considering court action over a dispute about children or finances, the law says you must attend a mediation meeting first to see if it could help (unless there are special circumstances).
- Mediators are trained professionals who help to sort out disputes about arrangements for children and finances, which can happen after people decide to divorce or separate. They help you talk things through with your ex-partner and find ways to make things work for the future. Mediation is not about trying to get you back together.
- Mediation takes less time, is cheaper and provides better outcomes than drawn-out court hearings.
- Mediation is less stressful than going to court, especially for children.
- Mediation works because it helps people find practical solutions that feel fair. Mediation gives you more say in what happens – in court, a judge will make the decision based on his or her assessment of the case.
- Family mediation, and legal help for mediation, is free for people who are able to claim legal aid. This means that you may not have to pay if you are on a low income and have few savings. Check if you can get Legal Aid at <https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid>.
- You do not necessarily have to see a lawyer as a first step when you decide to separate or divorce – you can go straight to a mediator.
- You can ask for legal advice at any stage in the mediation process. For those eligible for legal aid for mediation, there may be financial support for legal help too.
- Even if you are not able to claim legal aid, you can still save money by trying mediation first, rather than going straight to a lawyer.
- Decisions made during mediation can be made legally-binding.

## B Hints and tips for producing your own material

If you are producing your own material, there are a few essential dos and don'ts:

### ***1. Get the language right***

When you are sure you know what your key messages are, check that you are using the right language. Most people have short attention spans so use simple messages and plain English.

- Vary the length of sentences – never make them too long. And avoid complicated phrasing.
- Use active sentences such as 'You should tell the mediator ...' rather than passive (e.g. 'The mediator will need to be told about...')
- Be consistent – e.g. if using 'you' stick to this and don't change to 'they' in places.
- Most people don't know what family mediation is, so avoid jargon, 'mediator-speak' and abbreviations. If acronyms are unavoidable, spell them out the first time they are used.
- Use clear simple English and short words where possible, e.g.
  - 'Big' instead of 'large-scale'
  - 'Now' instead of 'at the present time'
  - 'Help' instead of 'assistance'
  - 'Called' instead of 'referred to as'

Recent research<sup>2</sup> shows that it's important to be positive in the language you use to promote your service.

- Say what mediation is and does (and what mediators are and do) not what it is not and doesn't do.
- Be clear about the value you are adding to the process and how you, as a professional, will help.
- Explain how mediation fits in as part of the whole process of resolving the dispute, and what will happen in the next stages.
- Ask if people are willing to mediate, rather than asking if mediation is something that 'might help'.
- Avoid words like 'can', 'might' and 'should'. Use phrases like 'Mediation works because...' rather than 'Mediation can help ...'.

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<sup>2</sup> Overcoming barriers to mediation in intake calls to services: Research-based strategies for mediators. *Negotiation Journal*, 29 (3), 289-314. by Professor Elizabeth Stokoe and Dr Frederick Attenborough of Loughborough University (Stokoe, 2013)

- Avoid suggestions that it's up to the clients to make it work which can be off-putting. Tell people why mediation works.
- Explain that mediators are professional – trained and qualified to practise.
- Recognise that people who are going through separation may feel vulnerable and not be immediately ready to negotiate. Phrases such as 'your point of view is important' or 'you stay in control of the decisions' or even 'get the deal you really want' are more likely to be attractive to someone who initially fears a losing battle and is not yet in a frame of mind for compromise and consensus.

## ***II. Design and layout***

- Make leaflets attractive to pick up and easy to read.
- Ensure your name, address, opening times and contact details are prominent.
- Make it clear you are a professional service – use your logo, and that of your professional body. But avoid overloading your design with lots of logos – this looks unprofessional and distracts from the most important information.
- Avoid clipart at all costs – it never looks professional.
- Use appropriate images that are in a 'family' of images – mixing different types of images can look unprofessional too, as can stock image photographs.
- Keep the amount of text and images to a minimum – do not clutter. Stick to one typeface which is big enough to be legible, and avoid lots of different sized text.
- Remember to make your information accessible to people whose reading ability may be limited. And look at **Appendix C** for advice on communicating with hard to reach groups.
- Check spelling – poor spelling can give people a bad impression of your whole service.
- Help people find their way through information, using devices such as headings, bullet points, and boxes to highlight text. This makes the information more digestible as well as encouraging the reader to read on.
- In all cases, be careful how you use colour – 5% of people have colour blindness. See [advice from the Royal National Association for the Blind](#).

## C Communicating with hard to reach groups

In some cases, you will need to take extra steps to reach certain audiences. For example, this may include people with visual/hearing impairment, low literacy levels or low economic status, or people who come from a minority ethnic background and have different languages or cultural beliefs.

When developing plans for reaching these people, consider the following:

- Avoid grouping audiences together – e.g. ‘disabled people’ includes people with very different issues which need specific consideration; the South Asian community is made up of quite different groups.
- Keep messages simple – this is good practice anyway, but even more important for some audiences.
- Don’t assume that the group is, or feels, disadvantaged and don’t use a tone that patronises or talks down.
- Respect differences and be aware of cultural or social sensitivities. For example, making eye contact might be viewed as an aggressive gesture.
- Be sensitive with photography and imagery – some images are offensive to certain communities. For example, avoid images showing contact between men and women which can be seen as culturally inappropriate for some communities. And check that any images used fit with the language used – for example, don’t use Sikh images with Punjabi text.
- Consider diagrams which some groups can find helpful.
- Visit the [Office for Disability Issues website](#) for more on communicating with disabled audiences.
- Local media can be a good route to reach ethnic minority groups as they tend to have a strong sense of their local community.
- Translating material isn’t always the answer – in some cases, simple English, imagery or audio material can be more effective.

## D Guidance for handling initial enquiries to mediation services

This guidance is based mainly on research conducted by Loughborough University<sup>3</sup> on initial enquiry phone calls to both community and family mediation services. For tips on messages see [Appendix A](#).

- Remember that, generally, mediation is an **unknown** and often **unwanted** service. Callers do not phone to make appointments with mediators; they often call because they have tried to get help elsewhere (a lawyer, citizens' advice, council, police) and been referred on. This tells us that most people want a service that can constrain the behaviour of the other party and that they want to talk to someone who is on their side. So be prepared to talk to people who do not know what mediation is and want to hear an empathic person on the end of the line.
- When explaining what mediation involves, stick to procedural, process-driven explanations of mediation (e.g., "What happens is that first we do X; then we do Y"). Avoid explanations that include phrases like "we don't take sides"; "we listen to their side of the story"; "we listen to their version of events").
- Say what mediation IS, and avoid phrases that say what mediation is not. Don't say that mediation has 'no power' or 'no authority'. Use explanations that show what the value mediation adds to the process of resolving the dispute.
- Say that 'mediation works because' rather than 'mediation might help' or 'can work if'.
- Use clear, simple language and avoid jargon. People generally won't know what 'shuttle' refers to, for example. Design your explanations for the public, not other mediators.
- Be ready for the fact that callers will say 'no' to mediation by saying that the other party is the kind of person who won't mediate, or is the kind of person you can't talk to.
- Say something empathic after callers provide the first iteration of what their problem is (e.g., "that must be really difficult for you"). This will help the caller to know they don't need to spend a long time going over and over their problem. Impartial responses (e.g., "Mhm" or "yeah") are likely to result in the caller continuing to talk about their problem until they feel they have connected with someone who understands their situation.
- Use phrases such as "I assume you are looking for help to sort all this out" rather than asking questions like "Have you tried talking to Party 2". Such questions

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<sup>3</sup> Developed by Professor Elizabeth Stokoe and Dr Frederick Attenborough, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University

generate strong responses from callers that Party 2 is the kind of person you can't talk to or is someone that they don't want to talk to, and trying to sell mediation as a talk-based solution straight after generating such strong statements from callers is likely to fail.

- Before moving into explaining mediation, ask people if they “know anything at all” about mediation / the organisation. This will tell the caller that whatever you say next will be tailored to them. This is better than simply stating “I'll tell you about mediation”. The phrase “anything at all” is easy to say ‘no’ to, and callers won't feel as though they ought to know already.
- Asking if people are ‘willing’ to engage in mediation (or a step in the process) is more likely to generate a ‘yes’ response than asking if people would ‘like to’ mediate or if they would ‘find it helpful’ (e.g., “So you'd be *willing* to meet with our mediators...” / “Would you be *willing* to attend a session as well?”). This is because parties are likely to have presented themselves as reasonable and moral throughout the call which makes it difficult to say that they are not willing to take a first step into mediation.
- To establish whether or not someone is eligible for legal aid, ask if the caller is working “at the moment” (rather than “are you working / have you got a job / are you on benefits”) as this enables those who are not in work to answer more easily (saying “no, not at the moment” is easier than saying / admitting just “no”). You can then follow this up by explaining that mediation is ‘free’ if the caller is eligible for legal aid. This is more effective than saying “it doesn't cost anything”.
- Emphasise that the MIAM provides a good opportunity to discuss how mediation will help the situation. Don't allow the way you refer to the MIAM to provide an easy way out for reluctant callers (e.g. don't say things like: “if Party 2 is unwilling there is nothing more we can do”; “they can say no”).
- Take opportunities to show the caller that their situation is normal as this will simultaneously promote the professionalism and expertise of the mediator (e.g., “we often find that that people in similar situations ...”).



## E Ideas for low cost activities to consider

- Raise the profile of mediation – what it is and what it isn't – amongst local professionals and advisers who work with families. For example, find ways to engage them, such as offering to talk to them or give presentations as this can result in referrals when the professional shares the information with their employees/clients/families. Consider:
  - GP surgeries (e.g. practice manager), community health teams, children's centres, occupational health departments, relationship and other counselling organisations;
  - Schools (in particular, parent support advisors);
  - Local government departments (e.g. social services) and agencies such as Jobcentre Plus (e.g. lone parent advisers) and benefits offices; and
  - Local Citizens' Advice Bureau or other community advice centres.
- Identify appropriate local businesses and organisations that might display your leaflets/posters – for example:
  - Health centres, sports centres, fitness clubs
  - Community centres/community noticeboards
  - Local Guilds, societies (Women's Institute, Rotary Club, Lions Clubs)
  - Libraries
  - Supermarket noticeboards
  - Transport hubs where people tend to gather
  - Local companies who might have an HR or welfare team dealing with staff relationship issues

(Some organisations may charge for displaying or providing your information.)
- See if there are other community or faith groups that may be interested in hearing more about how mediation might help their members. See [Appendix C](#) for tips on communicating with hard to reach groups.
- Consider whether any local organisations might be interested in an article, Q&A or interview for their newsletter or website.
- Local media outlets are usually interested in good case studies which illustrate human interest stories – if you have a case that you feel helps to explain how mediation can help, check with your clients to see if they're happy for their story to be used in your local paper or on local radio. In some cases, clients may be willing to speak directly about their experiences in other forums or in the media. Otherwise, an anonymous testimonial can still help prospective clients to see how family

mediation could help them. Use careful judgement when approaching clients and ensure you don't make them feel pressurised in any way.

- In addition to the publicity you do locally, the Government is working with the Family Mediation Council to promote mediation nationally as a first port of call for people separating or divorcing. So if you have clients who would be willing to help with this by sharing their experience – either anonymously or by speaking to a journalist – please email [communications@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:communications@justice.gsi.gov.uk)
- Do you have your own website? Off-the-shelf website software can help you provide inexpensive but professional looking sites. There is a lot of online advice on ways to increase the chances of your site being picked up by search engines. It isn't always necessary to spend a lot of money on this.
- Take part in online forums where people often look for advice on dealing with problems (e.g. Netmums, Mumsnet, dad.info) – but remember, always make it clear if you're taking part in a professional capacity. Try searching online to see the forums that exist – for example, using the terms 'discussion uk relationship'.
- Offer yourself as an 'adviser/expert' – perhaps as an agony aunt / uncle dealing with relationship concerns in a local paper/website. Or maybe start your own blog?
- Are there any local charity events that you can piggy-back on, either by attending or using their PR activity? Are there any relevant local support groups, open days or fairs you could attend?
- Advertising costs money but may be helpful in some cases – are there any local directories or newsletters that have listings which are likely to be read by your target market? For example, these could include town/council websites or local support/charity groups. Advertising could be online or in print.

**Consistency is vital** – Think about the experience that your clients have and see what could be done to use that to help convey your key messages. For example, if one of your messages is about the high quality service you offer, make sure that clients experience that quality in whatever way they come across your firm (reception/switchboard, signage, customer service, website – and of course, the actual mediation meetings themselves). If your messages say one thing but clients then experience something different, the communications will not be successful.

## F Resources available to help you

Working with the Family Mediation Council, the Ministry of Justice has produced generic materials about the benefits of mediation that you can use if you don't have your own – or perhaps to supplement materials that you do have:

- [Poster and introductory leaflet\\*](#) – available to download in both English and Welsh as:
  - Online version – for using on websites, emailing, etc – if printing, go to your printer settings and select 'flip on short side' in the two-sided printing section (to get the pages the right way up)
  - Print version – for use when sending to a professional printer (these have registration marks)

The leaflet has space for you to stick on a label/stamp with your own firm's details on.

- Simple eye-catching '[What is family mediation](#)' video\* – explaining what family mediation is. Can be embedded in your own website.
- Further advice on some key marketing communications subjects that may help you, such as producing a press release and how to write for the web – coming soon on the new Family Mediation Council website

*\* These materials are being updated to take into account the expected legislative changes in April 2014. MoJ will contact FMC Member Organisations to let them know when these new versions are available.*

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