



International Academy of Mediators

INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE

INTERIM REPORT FOR

VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING on the 14th October 2010

The Board will recall that I gave the preliminary answers from the non-American members I polled to the questionnaire I sent them seeking their answers to some important questions. The difficulty IAM has tried to resolve over the years has been the conundrum of preserving our criteria for membership while expanding our members to include mediators from jurisdictions where mediation has not developed to the extent that it can support a full time mediation practice. This problem has been highlighted recently when the Board considered questions of diversity among our members. This in turn raises yet again the critical question of what we wish IAM to be. We are first and foremost an Academy and you will recall what that should mean in today's world (as opposed to 5th century Athens!).

This is a summary of the answers I have received from the non-American members who have answered:

Q1: Almost unanimously (disregarding current Covid-19 travel restrictions) one Conference a year alternating between a North American venue and a non-North American venue. In addition, all elected for an on-line conference in addition to an actual conference. No real appetite for local chapters. Real desire for inclusive membership.

My suggestion for the Board would be to have one actual and one virtual conference a year with one actual conference outside North America at least every three years. I would suggest that this proposal be put to the membership in due course.

Q2: The majority considered that the topics were not sufficiently relevant to the needs and interests of the extra-American mediation community. All considered that there should be more non-American speakers. Most considered that Junto was not an appropriate title for our discussions as an international body.

'Workshop' is a well tried and possibly over-tired title. I see that Jody's Hong Kong team use the title 'Capsule'. Might this work?

Q3: It was unanimous that members must attend an actual conference (when they are possible) at least every three years although quite a few thought that it should be every two years. All considered that a prospective member should attend at least one actual conference (when they are possible) as a precondition for applying for membership. Some considered that there should be more ambassadors charged with introducing potential new members to existing members to make sure that as many members as possible met potential newcomers.

I propose that we try and assign two or three ambassadors or guides to the new attendees at our actual conferences once they recommence and also introducing them at the start of all conferences (actual and virtual) so that everyone will recognise them and hopefully make an effort to speak to them personally.

Q4 All but one considered that the current membership requirements should not be attenuated to accommodate prospective members from jurisdictions where mediation is still unable to support a full-time professional mediator. There was one cogent argument to make special arrangements for the young mediators who will not have achieved the qualifying criteria.

This is something which Marven looked into at length in his paper on membership and diversity. It raises a lot of serious questions about the future of IAM. Wendy Kramer's recent missive suggested the possibility of mentees shadowing mediators. I consider the idea from Alicia, Jennifer and their committee an excellent one and worth serious consideration. If our upcoming three day Symposium is as successful I am hoping, I wonder whether we should try and replicate that in other emerging countries to encourage and develop mediation in those jurisdictions and invite local mediators, not yet IAM members to take part. There are several ways in which IAM could expand and develop the "I" without reducing the current membership criteria. Another idea is being put forward by Gene Moscovitch in respect of IAM's support for the ICC annual mediation competition.

Almost all those who replied considered that the annual membership fee was too high particularly for those who have to travel, huge distances to attend an annual conference.

More than one member suggested that the conference fees should be reduced for those having to travel long distances and usually losing two or three days in addition. One suggestion was that there should be a \$500 refund of the annual membership fee for those attending an overseas conference involving a day or more travel. I do think that the Board should consider some mechanism by refund or subsidy to encourage attendance from those jurisdictions where mediation is still growing.

On the question of IAM reserves and their possible use, most considered that the reserves should be used to subsidise conferences and/or annual fees.

One very vociferous member replied: "I think that the funds should be used to subsidise the cost of dinners /cocktail parties at conferences so as to eradicate the ridiculous "ticket system" for drinks or to provide professional entertainment at dinners." From my experience giving lawyers a free bar would triple the conference cost at least! I recall being at a wedding reception at the Savoy Hotel in London and was amazed how the champagne seemed to be endless. I got chatting to the sommelier and he supplied the explanation. He said we always ask the organisers the occupation of the majority of the guests, and for lawyers and journalists we simply triple our costings!!

Q6 All replies were to the same effect. This is a fair summary:

- 1. IAM is an Academy not in the sense of teaching or training in the true sense but should simply promote the exchange of ideas by professional mediators or interesting academics who are well versed in the practical aspects of mediation.**
- 2. Membership provides a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas for professional development and to learn from other members and speakers from other countries.**
- 3. Nothing should be done or changed which diminishes the current status on IAM as an elite body of professionals**

In short, Rod's admirable drive for membership using the WWL directories seems to be bearing fruit without the need to reduce our criteria. I notice that the current 2020 Directory contains lists of mediators in several emerging mediation jurisdictions. We might consider 'tweaking' our criteria to include those who feature in the Directory provided we can verify some of the accolades, but that scrutiny is carried out in any event by the Membership Committee.

I hope that this summary provides a useful base for considering our next step which would be to seek the views of the North American membership on the questionnaire and the answers from the other parts of our world membership

Michel Kallipetis