

THE MEDIATOR

Mediation Offices of Michael Becker, Esq.
Experience Matters

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This Month in...

In September, 1957, Central High School in Little Rock Arkansas was integrated under US Army escort, after Governor Faubus had surrounded the school with National Guard troops to prevent racial integration.

Quote Me on It

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

We're Online!

After much ado, we finally have our website up at **www.michaelbecker.net**. Check it out from time to time for useful information and news. We'll still be publishing this newsletter, as well as maintaining the site. See you online!

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New Rules for Attorneys:

Advertising Must be Filed

The Connecticut Legislature has enacted **new rules which require attorneys to file advertisements and other communications with the Statewide Grievance Committee.**

All filings must be made electronically, and attorneys can request a written advisory opinion regarding a communication in advance, for a \$100 fee.

Once filed, the Statewide Bar Counsel's office will randomly select filings to determine their compliance with the Rules of Professional Conduct.

There are some important exceptions: (1) telephone directory ads and basic professional announcements, (2) communications to existing or former clients, other professionals or certain prospective clients, and (3) an attorney's website are all exempt. But it is important to note that attorneys still must provide their website's URL on a quarterly basis.

The rules are in Practice Book sections 2-28A & B. An excellent demo showing how to file required materials is available at the CT Judicial Branch website under the 'E-Services.' link.

Corporate America Gets It:

Happy Marriage, Work Better

The Wall Street Journal reported recently **that some companies now offer relationship training to employees because they have found that happy workers are more productive.**

The workshops often involve helping partners to improve listening skills, set goals in a relationship, and learn to resolve disagreements productively. In many cases the training involves not only the employee, but his or

her significant other as well. The programs are usually offered free of charge or at highly subsidized rates, and can range from a simple lunchtime seminar to a full-blown retreat.

The relationship training programs are part of a larger trend in which employers now offer programs which don't seem to be work-related — such as weight loss and childcare — but in fact are aimed at making workers happier, and therefore more productive.

Alimony Tax Stuff: Get Withholding Right

Alimony is a common part of many divorce agreements. If the tax rules are met, the alimony payments are usually tax-deductible to the payor and taxable to the recipient. This shifts the income from the payor's tax return to the recipient's, and that often yields an important tax savings.

Structured properly, this amounts to a subsidy for the family. This is because the alimony will ordinarily be taxed at a lower rate when the recipient is in a lower tax bracket than the payor.

Here's the catch: **alimony payors should adjust their withholding downward** so they can reap the financial reward of their alimony tax deduction throughout the year, to increase their cash flow. **And recipients must ordinarily make quarterly income tax payments** to avoid penalties and interest at tax filing time.

It's best to consult with an accountant to make certain to get this right.

Tools & Tips

William Ury, co-author of the seminal book, *Getting to Yes*, is at it again. This time he's written a solo book called *The Power of a Positive No*. I can heartily recommend this book to mediators, lawyers, clients, parents, and anyone else who negotiates with anyone.



As a parent, I know the word 'no' is one of the first words children learn to use — yet it is one of the most difficult for adults to use well. Many people are afraid to say 'no' for fear of being disagreeable or blowing agreements.

Yet Ury explains that using 'no' is all about setting limits with others. He reveals the paradox that **using 'no' effectively — through what he terms a "positive no" not only doesn't destroy relationships, but actually enhances them** by making sure that agreements serve everyone's interests.

Michael Becker, Esq. is an attorney and former accountant practicing mediation full-time in Westport, CT. One of the most experienced mediators in our area, he is a founding Director and two-time President of the CT Council for Divorce Mediation, and now on the Legislation Committee. Michael is an ACR Advanced Practitioner Member, and a Master's Degree candidate in Fairfield University's Marriage and Family Therapy Program.

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