

## **New Books & Media**

*Preparing for Mediation: A Dispute Resolution Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., by Deborah Lynn Zutter. Vancouver: Abundance Solutions Inc., 2007. 172 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Peggy English

For 30 years I have practiced family mediation, and each year I have become more aware of the positive effect of informed, prepared clients. During my pre-mediation sessions I have often wished there was a little book to recommend to clients; something that is easy to read, concise and relevant to many situations. *Voila*, I found the book.

In the second edition of *Preparing for Mediation: A Dispute Resolution Guide*, Ms. Zutter has combined over 25 years of experience and research in law and mediation. Her research findings showed that preparation for mediation directly influenced the quality of the mediation outcome. Her book outlines the key parts of a mediation and the necessary tools for all the participants – the clients, their lawyers and the mediator – to resolve their disputes using mediation.

The 11 chapters walk the reader through all the steps in the dispute resolution process: deciding which form of ADR is suitable for the participants and their dispute, identifying and selecting the parties who should be at the table, convening the mediation, determining the best mediator for these particular participants, analyzing the dispute, identifying the necessary skills, gathering data and information, making procedural choices and (finally) thoroughly discussing the use of pre-mediation meetings. In order to both simplify and demystify the mediation process, Ms. Zutter attaches a glossary that transforms the jargon to precise, understandable language.

Readability and interest are maintained throughout the book with real-life stories gleaned from a variety of mediations in organizational, family, personal injury, insurance, buyer and seller, contract, wills and estates, elder care, child protection, commercial lease, human rights, malpractice and employer/employee disputes. To appeal to the international audience, there are often references to mediation in jurisdictions in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, the United States and Western European countries.

The core of the book is the 43 pages dedicated to checklists that present the reader with criteria and variables, issues to consider and questions to ask during the course of mediation. In case that is not enough, each chapter ends with "Deb's tips", 33 gems to keep in your hip pocket as you – take proactive, informed, objective steps to meet the process and outcome objectives set for your mediation.

I recommend this book to clients, lawyers, mediators and trainers. It is, as its name suggests, a guidebook with a map, a tool box and a cache of tips for success in preparing for mediation.