

SMS | Steven M. Sepassi

Professional Biography



MEDIATION SERVICES

- ▶ Personal Injury
 - Vehicles/Motorcycles
 - Premises Liability
 - Products Liability
- ▶ Business
 - Business Disputes
 - Transactional Disputes
 - Insurance Bad Faith
- ▶ Real Estate
 - Broker/Agent Malpractice
 - Fraud/Failure to Disclose
 - Transactional Disputes

EDUCATION

J.D., Southwestern School of Law
E.D.C.E., University of So. California
M.S.C.E., University of Missouri
B.S.C.E., University of Missouri

AFFILIATIONS

Judge Pro-Tem, L.A. Superior Court
L.A. County Bar Association
San Fernando Valley Bar Association
U.S. Bankruptcy Court ADR Panel
L.A.S.C. ADR Panel | Former

The famous phrase by the late Jim McKay of ABC Sports, “the thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat” is a powerful expression that is now commonly used in the context of sports and the realm of competition. As I see it, this expression touches upon certain distinctions and emotions that are just as much a part of litigation as they are part of sports and a competitive culture. For example, there is a winner and a loser; there are risks and rewards associated with participating; the outcome is all or nothing; and there are a variety of tangible and intangible costs involved irrespective of whether you win or lose. What is more interesting is that athletes or competitors who taste “the agony of defeat” often have a second chance to win or redeem themselves - they can have another shot at the title. Except in rare circumstances, a party involved in litigation, who loses the case, does not get a second chance. In short, determining the winner and loser in the context of litigation has an air of finality about it.

Perhaps the foregoing explains the popularity of mediation and other ADR processes to resolve cases. What makes mediation such an effective tool in resolving cases is that there are no winners or losers. Rather, with the aid of a skillful mediator, both sides negotiate the terms of a settlement that is acceptable to both sides. Furthermore, the mediation process places control over the outcome of the case squarely in the hands of the parties as opposed to a judge or a jury, who are far removed from the parties’ emotional and financial investment in the case.

Since starting my law practice in 1995, I have handled a multitude of personal injury, real estate and business litigation matters, to name a few. I have handled hundreds of low, mid, and high exposure cases. As a result, I am familiar with the usual life cycle of a case, and as a mediator I frequently use my litigation and trial experiences to assist the parties to predict or forecast the possible outcomes or scenarios that they may face if the case settles or if the litigation continues. Most importantly, having represented both plaintiffs and insured defendants in litigated matters, I believe I have a firm grasp on the relative interests about which each side is concerned.

As a mediator, my task is to ascertain from each side the acceptable and the unacceptable outcomes (i.e., the points that are deal-makers and those that are deal-breakers), and then guide the negotiations towards the sweet-spot where the agreed-upon outcome is considered a win by both sides. Whether or not a case settles, my goal is to ensure that the parties and their counsel deem both the process and the outcome as being fair - that is the essence of being a third-party neutral peacemaker.