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Lisa Collins Werner  
Photos by Ruth White

# Don't litigate,



# mediate

By Susan Watson

Consensus Mediation Group is part of a growing trend nationally for settling all sorts of disputes out of court. Divorces, internal employer/employee issues, pre- and post-merger business decisions, real estate contract matters, business to business arguments, inheritance matters – all can often be managed without the costs and pressures of going to court. Sessions can be scheduled quickly, with no long waits for court dates. With mediation, there can be fewer or no attorney fees, and most importantly, participants will feel ownership in the process and in the decision that is made. Participants can better cope with and accept a decision when they actually work it out themselves, rather than accepting the decision of a judge who may be a total stranger. Consensus Mediation Group has extremely positive results. Eighty-five percent of cases that go to mediation come to an agreement out of court.

The trend to mediation is being led in Knoxville by Lisa Collins Werner. Her company, Consensus Mediation Group, is the only stand-alone mediation firm in Knoxville. Lawyers do mediation, as can some counselors and non-profit agencies, but Consensus Mediation is the only company devoted completely to the mediation business. They will give you their full attention – that's all they do.

Lisa Collins Werner is an Oak Ridge native. She attended UT, graduated from Tennessee Tech, and after law school at St. Louis University she remained there and founded The Esquire Group in 1993, an innovative legal services placement company. Eventually selling that business to an international staffing company, she ultimately returned to Knoxville and founded Consensus Mediation Group to fill a need she saw in our legal and business communities.

One thing that makes Lisa's company unique is her commitment to conflict resolution coaching. Mediation is an end result which can avoid a court case, but there are opportunities even prior to mediation which can be most effective in dealing with conflict. Lisa can provide training for staff and management prior to issues surfacing, teaching employees how to watch for potential problems and head them off. A second level, still pre-mediation, is for Lisa to meet with supervisors about already-identified problems. She can learn the issues, then interview staff and objectively "take the temperature" of the company and advise staff and managers, perhaps enabling them to avoid the formal mediation process.

If you or your company would like more information about the services of Consensus Mediation Group, contact Lisa at 691-0400. The facility, located at Advantage Place, 308 N. Peters Road off Cedar Bluff, is available for the business and legal community to retain for mediation services. The office was custom designed to provide a warm environment where parties can feel comfortable. Their two conference rooms, four small caucus rooms, a full kitchen, and complete audio-visual, telecommunications and wireless internet capabilities are available for lease by the day or half-day.

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of cases that go to mediation come to an agreement out of court.

## Consensus Mediation Group

**691-0400**

Advantage Place • 308 N. Peters Road off Cedar Bluff  
consensusmediationgroup@comcast.net

