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Settle or Sue:What Else Can I Do?

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FOR THE BOOKSHELF

Settle or Sue: What Else Can I Do?

By Beryl Blaustone, Nicholas Kambolis,
Marie Noto and Helayne Weiss

National Institute for Dispute Resolution,
Washington, D.C. 1993.

36 pp. \$10.

By Lela Porter Love

This 36-page workbook, written by Beryl Blaustone with three of her colleagues from CUNY School of Law at Queens College—Nicholas Kambolis, Marie Noto and Helayne Weiss—is a welcome resource for the disputing public and for educators. It includes information and advice about negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation, as well as descriptions of the minitrial, summary jury trial and early neutral evaluation.

After presenting information about a topic the workbook, designed for readers at the eighth-grade level, asks people to answer questions by filling in blank lines left in the text. This effective device encourages readers to examine their particular disputes in light of relevant considerations.


As executed, however, the plan has several flaws. Readers would learn more if *each* question asked were set in a frame that explained the importance of the answer. (Sometimes such a frame is given and sometimes it is not.) For example, instead of just asking "Am I willing to explore different solutions to my problems?", the text immediately preceding or following the query should emphasize that such a willingness may be a key ingredient in a successful mediation.

The workbook also includes compound and repetitive questions that might frustrate even a diligent reader. Finally, since workbooks cost \$10 each, it might be useful to separate the question and fill-in answer pages from the rest of the text so that a booklet could be used more than once.

Lela Porter Love is a professor and director of the Mediation Clinic at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

A multiple choice questionnaire, exploring characteristics of the dispute and the interests and priorities of the reader, would be a useful companion to this workbook. Many workbook users might be willing to check off multiple choice answers, but unwilling to write thoughtful essay responses. An accompanying key to the questionnaire could indicate which dispute resolution process might be optimal given the configuration of the readers' answers.

In any case, the authors and the publisher have helped address general American ignorance concerning dispute resolution processes. Texts like **Settle or Sue** can connect disputants to processes optimal for their particular cases. This task has a growing urgency in a society riven by escalating conflicts in which the parties frequently perceive no recourse except violence.

To order **Settle or Sue**, contact The National Institute for Dispute Resolution at 1726 M Street, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036-4502. Tel. 202/466-4764, ext. 318. Fax: 202/466-4769. Discounts are available for bulk orders. 

Articles Welcome

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