

## MEDIATE THIS !

## A FREE SPIRIT, A NEATNIK AND A CUBICLE SHOJI SCREEN

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

This week's column of expert tips on resolving everyday conflicts focuses on tensions between two colleagues working in close proximity.

**Dear Mediator:**

My IT employees work in pairs of cubicles with low dividers. One cubicle pair is occupied by a genuine odd couple, a free spirit who eats meals at her desk and talks on the phone a lot, and a neatnik who has become quiet and withdrawn. Last week, the neatnik brought in a small Shoji screen and positioned it to block her view of the free spirit. Now the whole office is on edge. As the manager, I need to intervene, but I don't know how.

*Seeking Detente in Sorrento Valley*

**Dear Seeking:**

Mediators are fond of the "open floor plan" workplace because it brings us so much business. As countless studies have shown, packing people close together day after day puts

them on a fast track to angst and strife.

This universal problem could be (and increasingly is) fixed by incorporating alcoves and other interior design features. But that isn't something you could do easily or quickly.

Your immediate challenge is to help two unhappy co-workers regain emotional equilibrium.

Managers in your predicament make two common mistakes. They try to put a good spin on things: "This isn't so bad!" Or they take a hard-line stance: "You just have to make the best of it."

Denying reality and demanding compliance will not establish the trust required to settle this conflict. You will need to respect your subordinates enough to be honest about their circumstances and considerate of their feelings.

Begin by meeting separately with each employee. In these private sessions, your task is to listen attentively and learn more about each person's situation. When you acknowledge that someone is beset by real stress, you take the first



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**This week's conflict involves a supervisor who must manage two employees who have different personalities but share a close-quarters working environment.**

step in alleviating that stress. And the therapeutic value of venting is on a par with chicken soup.

The one-on-one talks will reveal underlying issues that have fed the conflict. The free spirit may be on the phone with her preschool child who is missing his mother. The neatnik may be struggling with a chronic logjam that requires total concentration.

Once armed with this knowledge, invite the colleagues out for a quiet lunch. (Breaking bread is a timeless peacemaking tool.)

Start the conversation with an icebreaker topic. What drew them to information technology? What are some of their proudest achievements or funniest client encounters?

Mutual acknowledgment is the key to the next stage.

Ask each woman to tell her colleague directly about the underlying issues that cause her anxiety. Then ask the colleague who listened to summarize what she has heard.

Mediation breakthroughs occur when adversaries arrive together at a new level of empathy and understanding. From there, you can move on to practical steps for mitigating office

stress, like eating meals and taking personal calls in a designated common area.

To engage the entire unit, schedule team-building exercises to brainstorm about improving the work environment. As a health promotion measure, everyone should be urged to take regular breaks to go outside and breathe fresh air.

We all spend too many hours sitting at our computers because we believe our work is too vital to be interrupted. And we are all wrong.

As for the Shoji screen, it could be a smart idea in the right context. Good fences make good neighbors when the neighbors agree on installing them.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San-Diego based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003.

Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Please share your story with The Mediator via email at [mediatethis@ncrconline.com](mailto:mediatethis@ncrconline.com). All submissions will be kept anonymous.

## NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

## PUBLIC SAFETY: TERI FIGUEROA

## Effort to aid domestic violence victims

There's now some extra help available for domestic violence victims in Lakeside through a new partnership between the Sheriff's Department and a nonprofit group.

On Thursday, the department and City Hope signed agreement that lets deputies from the Lakeside substation ask a volunteer from the nonprofit to show up at domestic violence incidents in the community.

The idea is to get the victims help, including crisis counseling and shelter arrangements if needed.

City Hope, which works with people in crisis and in need, has a team of 16 volunteers trained in crisis counseling. The volunteers are available all at hours should a deputy ask for their help at a domestic violence incident.

Sheriff's Lt. Karen Stubkjaer said the partnership allows for "a more focused, longer-term assistance" from trained advocates.

"While the deputies focus on the legal aspects of the crime case, City Hope can focus on strengthening families and hopefully

breaking the cycle of violence," Stubkjaer said.

Other on-scene help the volunteers can provide includes arranging for transportation for victims and their children, assistance in making safety plans and help navigating the courts, such as seeking a restraining order.

The volunteers are also well equipped to provide follow-up counseling, Stubkjaer said.

In addition, volunteers and deputies will routinely meet to talk about progress in cases or to identify people who might be at risk.

In 2017, deputies from the Lakeside substation made 267 arrests for suspected domestic violence.

More information on domestic violence resources can be found at [sdsheriff.net/dv](http://sdsheriff.net/dv), and on the District Attorney's website by going to [sdca.org](http://sdca.org), clicking on "helping victims" then selecting "domestic violence."

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## ARTS: JAMES HEBERT

## 10 S.D. groups receive NEA grants

The National Endowment for the Arts may have been threatened with elimination by the Trump administration last year, but for now the agency is surviving (with a funding boost from Congress, no less), and continuing to award grants to nonprofits.

In the just-announced first round of NEA funding for 2018, 10 San Diego cultural organizations received a total of \$180,000. That was a respectable number — not as high as Los Angeles (with 27 grants) or San Francisco (37), but better than San Jose (one).

**Diversionsary Theatre:** \$10,000 to support the premiere of "The Loneliest Girl in the World." The musical by Gordon Leahy and Julia Meinwald has its world premiere at the LGBTQ-centered theater in May.

**Media Arts Center San Diego:** \$20,000 to support the 25th San Diego Latino Film Festival and related public programming.

**Old Globe Theatre:** \$40,000 to support the New Voices program, which showcases the latest work by rising dramatists.

**Pacific Arts Movement:** \$20,000 to support the 19th San Diego Asian Film Festival.

**Jean Isaacs San Diego Dance Theater:** \$10,000 to support Trolley Dances, a series of site-specific dance performances along the San Diego transit system.

**San Diego Museum Council Inc.:** \$10,000 to support Kids Free in October, a countywide initiative to encourage children to attend museums.

**San Diego Repertory Theatre:** \$15,000 to support the world premiere of "Beachtown," a new "immersive" work by resident playwright Herbert Siguenza that has its world premiere in May.

**San Diego Symphony:** \$20,000 to support a festival exploring the connection of rhythm and beat in the human experience.

**La Jolla Music Society:** \$10,000 to support the annual SummerFest chamber-music festival.

**Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego:** \$25,000 to support an arts-education outreach program that serves middle and high school students.

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## THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

## Readers send thoughts to new owner

We heard from business people and official-types last week about the anticipated sale of the Union-Tribune to biotech entrepreneur Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong and his investment firm, Nant Capital. Now let's hear from you, the regular-folk readers, many of whom have subscribed for decades.

Soon-Shiong plans to buy the U-T and the Los Angeles Times from Tronc (previously Tribune Publishing) for \$500 million, and he would assume \$90 million in pension liabilities. He would be the U-T's fifth owner since 2009.

I asked readers on the U-T's Facebook subscriber page what they would like to tell the prospective new owner. Here are the responses:

**Judy Collier of Ocean Beach** — "I would like to see more in-depth coverage of local news, including neighborhood news. I read the Voice of San Diego, the OB Rag, and the Peninsula Beacon to fill this gap. I would like you to continue to stand fast and run both La Cucaracha and Mallard Fillmore, David Horsey and Michael Ramirez. The extremes provide balance."

**Erik Battenberg of Bay Park** — "Congratulations on the purchase. I'm generally happy with the editorial approach and hope you will let that continue."

"That said, I also hope you will improve home delivery services. Based on my experiences and what I've read on social media, some people get their paper on time every morning and others have repeated problems with late or missed deliveries."

"The people in the circulation department are very nice and I can tell they care, but they seem to be hamstrung by the vendor who handles the final steps in getting papers delivered. After several months of frustration, I switched to a digital-only subscription because of the problems I experienced, and I know others who had similar problems and simply canceled their subscriptions because they don't like the digital format."

**Jeff Hooton of Point Loma** — "Pump up the amount of local news. There should be a weekly column the day after the City Council and County Board of Supervisors meetings that detail and analyze the agendas."

"And bring back the military news every Sunday — I ... found the two pages of news and tributes to Medal of Honor winners very informative."

**Edward J. Zell of Point Loma** — "The

Union-Tribune deserves an owner that will allow journalism professionals to provide their readers the most timely, comprehensive, and wide ranging news and commentary possible."

**Adam McLane of Rolando** — "I'd like to see more local sports coverage and the U-T take stories from the L.A. Times for NFL coverage. Hate seeing local resources supporting a league that decided to leave."

**Ray Ramage of San Diego** — "I would like to see some coverage of professional cycling. Heck, I'd like to see some coverage of local competitive cycling. We have a newly resurfaced velodrome in Balboa Park. Our track has produced Olympic track cycling champions such as Dave Grylls, Sarah Hammer, and Jennifer Valente, yet we see zero coverage of cycling, either at the local or world levels."

**Jim McDonough of Oceanside** — "San Diego metro is a city of around 3 million people. There is probably a lot more going on than appears in local news reporting. It would also be good to pay more attention to what's going on in Sacramento. ...

"It would improve the paper if it could be printed locally. ... I sometimes feel like I'm reading an East Coast paper because late West Coast scores are reported a day late."

"Ignore the griping about editorials and opinion pieces. You can't win."

**Steve Dolan of Alpine** — "I'd like to see the U-T write balanced stories that give both sides of the issue without bias. Let the reader decide from there."

## U-T forum on sexual harassment

The U-T Community Advisory Board will hold a discussion on sexual harassment from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice Theatre on the University of San Diego campus. The theater is at 5998 Alcalá Park.

A five-member panel will include Irene McCormack, the first woman to publicly accuse former Mayor Bob Filner of sexual harassment. Registration starts at 5:30 p.m. Seating is limited. To reserve a seat go to [sandiegouniontribunesexualharassmentforum.eventbrite.com](http://sandiegouniontribunesexualharassmentforum.eventbrite.com).

The USD School of Law is co-sponsoring. The advisory board has also held community forums on homelessness and immigration.

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## FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

## MOB FIGURE SLAIN

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

Friday, February 11, 1977

In February 1977, reputed mob boss Frank Bompensiero was gunned down at a Pacific Beach pay phone. It was later learned that Bompensiero had been an FBI informant. In 1980, Aladena "Jimmy the Weasel" Fratianno, an admitted Mafia hit man turned government informant, testified in court that the gunman in the Bompensiero killing was Thomas Ricciardi. Ricciardi had been charged in the slaying but died during open heart surgery before the case could be tried.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

## SAN DIEGO CRIME BOSS IS SLAIN GANG STYLE

FRANK BOMPENSIERO, SAN DIEGO CRIME BOSS, SLAIN GANG STYLE

By Mitch Himaka and Neil Ball, Staff Writers, The San Diego Union

Frank Bompensiero, 71, described as one of the top three Mafia bosses on the West Coast, was shot to death last night gangland-style, a few steps from his Pacific Beach home.

Police said Bompensiero, who lived at 4205 Lamont St., Apt. 7, appeared to have been shot four times with a .22-caliber automatic pistol, a weapon capable of being silenced and often used in gangland executions.

Officers said robbery was not the motive since his wallet was found on his body.

Bompensiero, also known as Frank Gavin,

was found on the sidewalk at the head of an alley that runs west from Lamont Street, about half way between Thomas and Reed avenues.

Police said he appeared to be alive when they arrived at the scene but was pronounced dead on arrival at Mission Bay General Hospital.

Bompensiero was found about 8:30 p.m. in a pool of blood with his trademark, a well-chewed cigar, at his side. Around the body were four spent, .22 caliber cartridge cases.

Capt. Wesley Allen, commander of the crimes against persons detail, said there were no witnesses to the shooting. He said no one reported hearing any shots or hearing any



cars speeding away. The cartridge cases indicated he had been shot with an automatic pistol.

Police said a neighbor in the 4200 block of Lamont Street called police reporting an injured man in an alley. They said Bompensiero often took evening walks in the neighborhood.

## MANY CRIME TIES

Law enforcement intelligence officers said Bompensiero was a known associate of such organized crime figures as Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonanno, deposed New York-New Jersey Mafia boss now living in virtual exile in

Tucson, Ariz.; James (Jimmy the Weasel) Fratianno, described by a Los Angeles intelligence officer as "West Coast executioner for the Mafia"; the late Jack Dragna, once named as the state's top racket boss; the late Nick Licata, and the late Mickey Cohen.

Licata was identified by Joseph Valachi, the late mobster who testified before the McClellan Committee in 1957, as the Los Angeles Mafia chief.

Police listed Bompensiero as one of the three men in line for the top spot after Licata's death in October 1974.

Others named as possible successors to Licata were Frank Regace of Los Angeles and Bonanno.

## DATED TO '28

Bompensiero's crime record dated back to 1928 with a bootlegging conviction. He also was convicted in 1954 for bribing public officials in a state liquor license scandal and served five years in prison.

Bompensiero and Fratianno both were charged in connection with an Imperial Valley trucking scandal in 1966 but charges against Bompensiero later were dismissed for lack of evidence.

In 1941, Bompensiero was arrested by Los Angeles police on suspicion of kidnapping and murder in connection with the mysterious disappearance of Victor Carlino, an employee of the Rainbow Bar in San Diego.

Carlino's bloodstained car was found abandoned on University Avenue. Bompensiero was released from custody after police failed to locate witnesses and the body.

ONLINE: View this and other anniversary front pages online at [sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years](http://sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years).