



Caroline Vincent

Beam Me Up, Scotty



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I have long loved the *Star Trek* directive to Lt. Commander Montgomery Scott, “Beam me up, Scotty!” The idea that someday, somehow, I wouldn’t need to commute to my office or get onto an airplane or travel by boat or rail, has always intrigued me. I could just ask Commander Scott to “Beam me up,” and get tele-transported to wherever I needed to be in person. No parking, no traffic, no packing my bags to go to the office, no Google driving directions to survive LA traffic.

Then came the pandemic of 2020. And it was necessity that motivated the world of dispute resolution to be thrust into the future. No longer able to convene in person at our mediation offices, the world went virtual. Courts were closed. Mediators like me became commanders of Zoom in trial by fire.

Today, after two years of Zooming rather proficiently, I realized that my vision of “Beam me up Scotty,” as a means to make it easy to “travel” remotely, had become a reality. Even though the courts are back in person to a certain degree, mediation through tele-connectivity will remain an essential part of our toolkit.

I often speak with counsel about the benefits of Zoom, in-person, and hybrid formats. It’s fantastic for lawyers and their clients to have a range of options. Zoom avoids long-distance travel in both time and expense. Plus, the ability to do work during downtime, and privately in a remote setting, is a huge benefit of Zoom for lawyers, insurance carriers, clients, and experts. Video conferencing makes that a cinch and multiple other projects can be spread out on one's desk, while Zooming on screen.

As much as we enjoy the convenience of Zoom, I have seen a resurgence of in-person and hybrid formats (all in-person, some in-person, some on Zoom, some by phone). Process design as to who attends and by what method is increasing. Some lawyers prefer to bring their clients in-person to a mediation office to avoid the distraction of their own offices. Some parties may convene in person, while others remain remote. Rooms at ADR Services have wall-mounted monitors, along with quality microphones and sound systems to facilitate hybrid and remote communications.

I customarily bring lawyers together at the beginning of a session into a special Zoom room (or in-person) to create a collaborative working relationship that through the course of the day may entail using email, texts, or phone in addition to Zoom. I use text messages to signal when to come back into a room and also exchange text offers that

are short and need no explanation. As commanders of the Zoom process, mediators have the ability to design dispute resolution to fit the needs of every case.

Technology has enabled mediators and lawyers to keep cases moving forward for the good of their clients. More than ever we can think outside of the box for the convenience of the participants, while maximizing our joint resources to improve the chances of resolution.

“Beam me up, Scotty” may not be happening the way I originally thought it would. But Zoom makes mediation the next best thing to being there. If only I could dematerialize and rematerialize for my upcoming trip to Europe ... where is Lt. Commander Scott when I need him?

I invite you to call me directly at 310.617.2042 to discuss how I can help you resolve your cases.

Caroline Vincent is an attorney mediator, neutral evaluator and arbitrator with ADR Services, Inc. in Los Angeles and Orange County. She specializes in employment, complex business and real estate, personal injury and other torts, probate/elder abuse, insurance, entertainment/IP and professional liability. She can be reached at cvincent@adrservices.org, 310-201-0010.