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This paper will deal with the increasing trend amongst mediators to do away with a joint session (where the parties meet face-to-face) at mediation in favour of meeting with the parties privately and adopting a shuttle mediation model.

This is an especially topical debate amongst mediators with some advocating that a purely private session or caucus model of mediation where the parties never meet saves time and is what the market now requires. This compares with other mediators resisting the demise of the joint session, saying it is at the heart of what mediators do and of what mediation is.

For some while now, especially in "mature mediation markets", for instance in California, there has been a tendency to do away with the traditional joint session between the parties attending mediation. This is especially true of personal injury/insurance type disputes.

In the writer's view, there are distinct advantages to making the joint session integral to our mediation model and any move to a purely private caucus model is detrimental to the mediation process raising many issues for our field.

The writer will advocate that joint sessions and private sessions need be used strategically by the mediator and a good mediation will involve varying degrees of both, depending on the circumstances presenting at each mediation.

This paper will canvass both sides of the debate and *look at some of the factors that a mediator will need to be aware of in determining the correct mix of private and joint meetings.*

I will draw on my experience of commercial mediations in both Canada and USA and contrast them to the practise in New Zealand where universally joint sessions are the norm, other than in specialised niche areas such as employment.

The paper will also look at *effective techniques* for both mediators and advocates in joint sessions and look at the different role each plays in joint and private.

In this way I hope to provide practical lessons for both mediators and advocates.