

Michael Cover

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Background

Michael Cover has been a full time mediator since 2008. He was accredited as a mediator by CEDR in 2002 and now practises full-time as an independent mediator. He is a Barrister, Accredited Mediator and Chartered Arbitrator. He has been involved in around 270 mediations. He is a member of the mediation panels of many of the leading UK and international institutions. He has been trained as an Investor State mediator with ICSID (the World Bank), CEDR and IMI.

Michael's practice covers both commercial and family business disputes. He is accredited as a Commercial Mediator by CEDR and also as a family and family business mediator.

Michael has combined a 30-year career as a lawyer in private practice and industry with involvement in a range of leisure and legal information companies. He has, therefore, a rare mixture of legal and business experience and, although this allows him to get straight to the heart of contentious issues, it is perhaps his grasp of disputants' psychology that makes him such a successful mediator. He has a broad commercial mediation practice, although he is particularly strong on intellectual property, technology, maritime and insurance and is particularly adept at helping to solve cross-cultural and cross-border disputes. He comes from a family business background and, as a trained family mediator is, therefore, particularly suitable for disputes where commercial and family interests collide. Michael is a natural communicator, bringing to the parties a combination of charm and tenacity. He has not only the business skills to understand and deal with ancillary and financial issues but also the sensitivity to deal with children and other difficult issues in situations of high emotion.

He is a regular writer, speaker and presenter on ADR topics, including being on panels at the International Mediation Interest Group in Geneva. Michael has been a Judge at both the ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition in Paris and the UK Mediation Skills Competition in London. He spoke in December 2024 at the Mediation Conference in Hong Kong and acted as Mediator in the Final of the ICC International Commercial Mediation Competition there.

He has been a trainer on mediations at an event organised by the Energy Charter Secretariat and, in 2017, trained mediators for the CIArb in Kuala Lumpur, as well as speaking on hybrid dispute resolution processes in Bahrain and Rotterdam in 2018 and Rio de Janeiro in 2020.

He has a particular interest in mediation of cross-cultural disputes and has mediated disputes in the French language. Michael is listed in the mediation section of the Legal 500 directory.

Mediation Style and Approach

Michael combines facilitative mediation techniques with the ability to rigorously reality test the positions, needs, concerns and interests of the parties. He is patient and yet energetic in seeking the best deal for all parties.

Practice Areas

Advertising & marketing
Breach of contract
Commercial Agency, EU regulations & distribution agreements
Commercial contracts
Competition/anti-trust law
Construction & property
Corporate recovery
Cross-border & international Distribution, agency & licensing
Energy (Energy Charter Treaty), Oil & Gas Engineering
Environment
Family & divorce
Financial Services
Franchising
Intellectual property rights (including patents, trade marks, designs, copyright, domain names)
Information technology (IT)
Investor/state matters
Insolvency
International trade & shipping
Landlord & tenant
Manufacturing
Media, entertainment & the arts
Mergers & acquisitions
Music
Outsourcing

Partnership disputes
Product liability
Professional negligence
Public sector
Publishing
Retail
Sale of goods & services
Shareholder disputes
Shipbuilding
Sponsorship
Sport
Telecoms
Transport & logistics
Trusts, wills, probate and inheritance

Career History

2008 – present: Independent commercial mediator and arbitrator
2005 – 2008: Partner in Dispute Resolution and commercial mediator
1987-2005: Partner in IP/IT and dispute resolution in various City law firms
1973-1987: In-house Counsel in multinational food and drinks companies

Professional Qualifications and Affiliations

LLB The University of Southampton
Solicitor (now non-practising); Barrister (The Middle Temple, now unregistered)
Member of the Baltic Exchange
CEDR Accredited Mediator (2002)
Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
Fellow of the ACICA
Certified mediator with the International Mediation Institute and the Singapore International Mediation Institute
Fellow of the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators.
Certified Investor State Mediator, CEDR, ICSID, IMI.
Fellow of the Civil Mediation Council.

Member of the the panels of mediators of many leading international institutions, including:

AAA/ICDR, The Asian International Arbitration Centre, the Australian Centre for International Commercial Arbitration, CPR Panel of Distinguished Neutrals, the HKIAC Panel of Mediators, the SCCA Panel of Mediators, The London Maritime Arbitrators / Baltic Exchange Mediation Panel.

Legal Directories

Legal 500, 2025:

Michael Cover has significant expertise in information and communications technology disputes, as well as IP-related conflicts. Cover also has notable experience in international and cross-cultural disputes. In addition to his CEDR accreditation, Cover is accredited as a mediator by the International Trade Mark Association, and as a family and family business mediator.

Legal 500, 2024:

Michael Cover 'adds terrific value to a case through his experienced and balanced approach. His wealth of experience means that his commercial, yet empathetic, handling of difficult high-net-worth matrimonial disputes gives him the edge on other mediators'. Handling both commercial and family business disputes, Cover is actively building up his practice to incorporate Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, in addition to London and the UK generally.

Legal 500, 2023:

Michael Cover 'was great at managing the parties' time, and ensuring that the settlement was secured and signed many months after the main mediation'. Cover's core areas are IP, IT, and shareholder and partnership disputes, including many with international features. He recently mediated a major global trade mark dispute.

Legal 500, 2022:

Michael Cover is 'more willing than most mediators to make parties evaluate the weaknesses of their claims - he goes out of his way to engage with clients, so as to bring them together to find resolutions to disputes'. His track record includes the conduct of over 250 mediations, comprising disputes from his core areas of IP, IT and technology, as well as large family business cases.

Legal 500, 2021:

Michael Cover's key areas cover IP, IT and technology matters, as well as insurance and reinsurance, public procurement and maritime disputes. Recent mediations concerned shareholders, pharmaceuticals devices, telecoms services, partnerships, and the misuse of confidential information. Cover also conducted a two-day mediation in the UAE, which related to a complex joint venture shareholder and valuation-related dispute.

Legal 500, 2020:

Michael Cover of In Place of Strife is particularly focused on mediations involving IP, IT and insurance, as well as public procurement, international contract and maritime disputes. In 2018, he mediated disputes in relation to shareholders, professional indemnity insurance, international contracts, design disputes and pharmaceuticals.

Legal 500, 2019:

In Place of Strife's Michael Cover has been a full-time mediator since 2008 and has been involved in around 225 mediations. Cover's practice includes both commercial and family business disputes, and he is particularly well known for IP, technology and insurance mediations.

Who's Who Legal, 2022:

Michael Cover enjoys an “excellent reputation”, and is highlighted for being well versed in commercial and family business disputes.

Who's Who Legal, 2019:

Michael Cover is a first-class mediator with extensive experience of handling complex commercial and family business disputes.

Interests

Michael's main interests are in sailing, skiing and railways. His language skills are in French and German.

Client Feedback

“Michael Cover was very good. He was personable and was very helpful in getting the parties to look at the wider implications, including commerciality and litigation costs and risk, etc. The mediator was strong but friendly and he also had a good sense of humour, which was a bonus since this is a difficult and complex case and the parties' family connection (especially in the context of the company's fraud claim) make achieving a resolution very challenging.”

“Michael quickly understood the dispute and slowly brought the situation to an understanding between both companies. He was successful in his efforts and both companies agreed a formula for settlement. He is to be commended for his patience and grasp of the problem.”

“Quickly grasped the attendees' psychology.”

“His decision to bring the clients together when all seemed lost was the masterstroke.” “Excellent mediator who grasped the issues. Good pace and determination to succeed”

“We had a successful outcome and Michael worked for it. During the mediation, he was empathetic and was trying to get a settlement. He was fully prepared. We chose him because of his expertise.”

“ Michael's skills as a mediator enabled the ill-will that was evident at the outset to be diffused during the course of the day ”.

“ I do not believe that you could have done more to encourage both parties to engage properly in attempting to reach a satisfactory conclusion. I would like to express my appreciation of your best endeavours during the three days that we were together”.

“We thought that [Michael] did a good job as the mediator – this was not just because we achieved a settlement but because we felt that the change in the other side's stance over the course of the day to an altogether more reasonable attitude was in large part due to him.....One of the attendees was a US lawyer with extensive experience of mediation over 50 years and his comment at the end was that not many mediators could have achieved the result Michael did.”

“Michael...was measured, dealt fairly with us and handled the difficult opposing party well. 5 out of 5.”

“Michael was extremely helpful and discreet and handled what was obviously a distressing issue for the client sensitively.”

“He was effective in achieving movement on both sides.”

“On top of the issues and empathised well with both sides positions.” “Charming and persuasive.”

“We felt that without your input and guidance there would have been no resolution reached at all.”

These comments, taken from direct user feedback, represent a fair and balanced summary of the responses received.

Case Examples

Cases mediated include civil and commercial disputes (see practice areas), high end family and family business matters, with substantial finance and property elements, and also inter-generational disputes.

A particularly difficult passing off case between two parties which had previously had a relationship of supplier and distributor. That relationship had broken down when the distributor sourced its own competing product under very similar packaging without telling the supplier. Michael was able to facilitate and guide the parties to their own solution, which resulted in the legal action being stayed and a sum of money changing hands. This was despite the mediation taking place very close to trial and costs being perhaps the major issue. The previous and by then broken commercial relationship between the parties added to the mix and Michael was able to deal with this and bring to bear also his expertise in intellectual property law.

Costs mediations.

Dispute on substantial legal costs in a family dispute, with a counterclaim for professional negligence. Dispute between a law firm and a client relating to legal costs.

Dispute between the parties on the assessment of costs in a case where judgement had been handed down but the assessment of costs remained to be resolved.

Public procurement: disputes in energy, finance and telecoms.