



CEDR Accreditation: 2022

CEDR Panel 2022

Languages: English

Location: London, United Kingdom

“Calm approach... finding solutions for tricky problems... exceptional... second to none... A really true professional”

Client Feedback

Robin Somerville

Overview

Robin is a mediator specialising in shareholder, partnership, board, business, family business, commercial and technology disputes. He mediates, advises and acts as a mediation advocate, typically in respect of multi-million-pound business disputes. The largest to date is £120m involving six brothers and their children.

Prior to qualifying as a mediator in 2009, Robin set up, grew and successfully sold three start-up businesses. He was also involved in his family's third generation family business.

Robin was involved in his own personal commercial dispute as a claimant which itself settled at mediation. He is therefore uniquely placed to be particularly effective in understanding the commercial, relationship, risk and strategic issues involved with disputes. Robin quickly builds rapport with clients who value his approachability, responsiveness and pragmatic, problem solving and solution focussed outlook.

Robin also sits as a judge, arbitrator and adjudicator and was previously an Ombudsman at the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Robin has been a judge at the ICC International Mediation Competition in Paris since 2017 and the CEDR National and International Negotiation Competitions.



Expertise

- Shareholder disputes
- Derivative actions
- Board disputes
- Technology disputes
- S994 unfair prejudice petitions
- Family business disputes
- Business contract disputes
- IT software development and deployment disputes
- Directors' duties
- Partnership disputes
- Workplace & employment
- IT service contract cloud services and support disputes

Dispute Experience

Mediation & Mediation Advocacy

Over 15 years' experience. Mediator since 2009. Including:

- Three party S994 Companies Act unfair prejudice, unlawful extractions dispute - settled with buy out.
- Two party unfair prejudice, breach of investment agreement dispute - settled with buy out.
- Family business shareholder dispute following death of parents - settled with £1m+ buy out.
- Six party international joint venture dispute - settled via client division agreement.
- Eight party international partnership dispute - settled
- Two party family shareholder dispute incl £5m personal guarantees - settled via demerger.
- Shareholder, breach of directors and employee duties, restrictive covenant dispute.
- High conflict husband and wife board/shareholder dispute shortly before a £100m+ sale.
- Technology/ICT Leased equipment contract dispute with director guarantees.
- Commercial debt/agents commission dispute - settled with agreement to a new two year contract.
- CEO/Director employment/workplace dispute at a UK institution of the highest profile.
- Minority shareholder buyout dispute.
- Three party, shareholder dispute - one party the family of a shareholder who died intestate.
- Breach of covenants/director's duties by ex-director.

Litigation

Robin has been involved in over 1,000 cases spanning over 20 years in one forum or another.

Including:

- £120m partnership dispute between six brothers and their children.
- £15m S994 unfair prejudice claim between three brothers and their children.
- £3m directors' duties civil fraud claim.
- Multiple S994 unfair prejudice claims all settled before trial.
- Breach of partnership agreement brought by beneficiaries of a will of a deceased partner.



- Breach of directors duties by a director who speculated company funds with financial futures/derivatives without authorisation.
- Misrepresentation/breach of warranties claim against previous owner.
- Breach of covenants by ex-director.
- Multiple breach of contract (B2B) claims.
- Multiple share sale/exit negotiations up to £5m.

In addition to advising and representing clients and litigating for them before the High Court, County Courts and Tribunals and determining disputes in his judicial capacity or as an arbitrator Robin was involved in a shareholder and partnership dispute of his own before qualifying which settled at mediation. Robin since successfully brought a worker status claim in respect of his capacity sitting as a tribunal chair at the Nursing and Midwifery Council. This case reached the Supreme Court where the NMC's application for permission was refused.

Robin is a Visiting Lecturer on the Inns Of Court College of Advocacy for Bar Course.

Personal Style

Robin is relentlessly focussed on problem solving and solution finding as a mediator and in all areas of his practice. He creates an environment where parties at mediation are able to speak openly about what troubles them about their situation and assists them identify how these might be resolved by identifying a route to settlement. Robin tests realities where appropriate and helps parties identify their interests to assist in the development of workable solutions to resolve their dispute.

Commercial Experience

- 2018-present - Innovate UK - Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Assessment of applications for research and innovation grants for UK Research and Innovation.
- 2017-18 - Non-exec Board Member for Governance and Conflicts of Interest and Chair of Audit Committee - Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group. Strategic and audit advice to an NHS body for London's largest borough commissioning over £400 million of primary and secondary healthcare provision and support services for a population of 369,000 residents.
- 1999-13 - Owner and Managing Director - set up, grew and successfully sold three technology start-up businesses. An online comparison business generating over £50m of sales enquiries and orders for network of over 50 distributors including negotiating an equity stake by an £800m t/o trade body, a national distributor of innovative sustainable building materials and an internet development business.

- 2003-09 - Director - strategic development of family business. Responsible for profitability improvement from £50k to £250k per annum within 18 months, and management of 22 staff. Five commercial property transactions in excess of £10m with legal complications.
- 1999-2013 - Non-Exec Director - Reallymoving.com. Equity holding board member of UK's leading online comparison site for removals, conveyancing and home surveys. Advising on strategy, performance and systems.
- 1992-95 - Assistant Dealer, Money Market Desk - Sumitomo Bank Ltd. Short date US Dollar deposits, quoting prices, trading cash and derivatives. Personally responsible for managing \$2 billion daily. Appraising and valuing opportunities, analysis of complex data to inform decision making.

Professional Skills

- Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator - CEDR & ADR Group
- Accredited Workplace Mediator – CEDR
- Advanced Mediation Advocacy - SCMA
- Course Tutor - LLM Legal Tech - Queen Mary, University of London
- Ombudsman - Financial Ombudsman Service
- Masters in Law (LLM) - International and Comparative Dispute Resolution - Queen Mary, University of London
- Accredited Investigator - Employment and workplace investigations - TCM Group.
- Bar Professional Training Course

Feedback

- *"I highly recommend Robin Somerville. He is incredibly calm, helpful, and patient, with excellent communication skills. He creates a safe and supportive environment, ensuring that both parties feel heard and respected. His proactive approach to finding solutions helps bring both parties together effectively. I truly appreciated his professionalism and guidance throughout this process."*
- *"Mr Somerville was excellent. He has a good, direct manner. He listened closely to the parties and he was able bring the parties together to bridge the gap. The mediation was successful."*
- *"first class results"*
- *"10/10"*
- *"worked tirelessly... assistance was invaluable"*
- *"client and counsel are both very happy with the way you handled the mediation"*

- *“sensitive and professional leadership of the mediation”*
- *“I heard today that you were great! ...it is great to be proven wrong [that the mediation would be unsuccessful]”*
- *“thoughtful, observant and a positive contributor to the process”*
- *“Exceptional professionalism, legal expertise, and personal approach”*
- *“Goes way above and beyond the norm”*
- *“amazing and above all kind and understanding”*
- *“up to speed amazingly quickly”*
- *“without doubt, the best money I have ever spent... a conclusion was reached much quicker than I would have thought”*
- *“significant upside multiple on his fees”*
- *“very satisfactory outcome... enabled me to reach a deal and put an end to the stress of the last 10 months”*

