

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025

Signature Resolution takes private equity investment to fuel national expansion

The move follows a broader influx of private equity and other investors into legal services. The investment is expected to help Signature expand its geographic footprint.

By David Houston

Daily Journal Editor-in-Chief

Signature Resolution, which shook up the alternative dispute resolution market when it was launched eight years ago by a group of high-profile former judges, has agreed to accept private equity investment as it prepares to expand further in California and into other major litigation markets across the United States.

The firm recently closed a deal with Levine Leichtman Capital Partners, a Beverly Hills private equity firm with decades of experience investing in business services, including outsourced legal services. Financial terms were not disclosed, but both sides described the investment as significant, with Signature's founders and leadership remaining in control of the company.

Dario Higuchi, a founding partner and CEO of Signature, said in an interview Thursday that the company had resisted several offers from other outside investors but believed the time – and the right partner – had arrived when Levine Leichtman came calling. “The last couple of years, we’ve seen a lot of interest in our firm,” Higuchi said. “After saying a lot of nos, we figured, well, let’s talk.

“And after a lot of talk, and understanding everyone’s objectives, we decided to move forward,” he said.

The deal was inked last Friday, Dec. 12.

Partner Matthew Rich said Levine Leichtman concentrates on middle-



Matthew Rich, Dario Higuchi and Ethan Caskey | Ricardo Pineda / Daily Journal

market companies in four sectors: business services, specialty manufacturing, education and training, and franchising. Within business services, Rich said, outsourced legal services have been a major area of focus. Those investments have included companies ranging from law firm marketing and expert witness businesses to legal software, workflow platforms and information services.

“So, we’ve invested in and around the legal marketplace for the last decade, really successfully,” Rich said.

The move follows a broader influx of private equity and other investors into legal services, including ADR providers, as court backlogs grow, litigation costs rise and demand increases for alternatives to traditional courtroom proceedings.

Higuchi said one factor that led Signature’s partners to consider outside investment was watching other ADR providers take on external capital. He pointed to Veritext Legal Solutions’ acquisition this year of three ADR firms: Florida-based Upchurch Watson White

& Max; the Washington, D.C.–area McCammon Group; and Wisconsin-based Resolute Systems.

In 2024, Thompson Street Capital Partners acquired National Arbitration & Mediation, a firm with a nationwide panel of arbitrators and mediators, following an earlier growth equity investment by Sageview Capital aimed at supporting expansion. More recently, in October 2025, Rockbridge Growth Equity made a strategic investment in Miles Mediation & Arbitration, a multi-state ADR provider.

Private equity has seen less success in the legal sector than in other professional services, largely because most U.S. states prohibit nonlawyer ownership of law firms. That landscape may be shifting. In recent weeks, the New York boutique Cohen & Gresser and the global firm McDermott Will & Schulte have announced plans to accept private equity investment, with other firms expected to follow in 2026.

Signature is Levine Leichtman's first investment in the ADR space. Rich said the investment firm was attracted to ADR "because it's a very large and growing industry that's supported by a number of structural elements."

"I'd also add that it's cycle resistant, in that that it is an industry that is not affected broadly by the wider economy," he said.

Signature Resolution was founded in 2017 in Los Angeles by four former judges—Michael A. Latin, Louis M. Meisinger, Enrique Romero and Richard A. Stone—along with Higuchi, a former executive at another ADR provider. From the outset, the founders said they aimed to operate at the highest levels of

the legal market, a strategy that has helped the firm grow to more than 100 neutrals, including many of California's most prominent judges and attorneys.

Rich said the founders' story attracted Levine Leichtman to the firm. "We were started by two entrepreneurs – Arthur Levine and Lauren Leichtman – who had a thesis that an investment firm started by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs would be more successful in generating consistent returns for investors, and that proved true."

Learning Signature's history – "a business started by neutrals to serve and support neutrals" – "that story was very familiar to us, and we could see the parallels," Rich said.

Rich said Levine Leichtman particularly liked Signature's focus on recruiting and supporting top-tier neutrals.

"They had a very unique neutral-centric approach where they were attracting and retaining the top panelists," he said. "They were providing the most resources to support them, investing in technology, sales and marketing, et cetera, to help them grow their businesses."

Higuchi said that talent-first philosophy has been central to Signature's strategy since its founding.

"The ADR industry is talent driven," he said. "And if the industry's talent driven, Signature has to take care of the talent."

"If they're all very successful, that attracts others, and then all of a sudden, you know it kind of snowballs," Higuchi said.

A key part of that support has been Signature's proprietary case management software, which the firm began developing even before it officially opened its doors.

"We hadn't even opened and was already trying to see how we could design it best to help efficiency for the staff, accuracy," Higuchi said, noting the importance of conflict checks and disclosures in the ADR space.

The platform includes portals for staff, neutrals and clients, document management and, more recently, AI-driven tools that help neutrals prepare for mediations and arbitrations by summarizing briefs and organizing timelines and key players.

"Providing this support for that neutral so that they can do their

job better," Higuchi said, "that's ultimately the thing."

Levine Leichtman Managing Director Ethan Caskey said seeing that technology in action reinforced the investment firm's confidence in Signature's model.

"It just resonates," Caskey said. "Everyone was mesmerized by the homegrown software tool that they've built. It's just a perfect fit for ADR practice."

The investment is expected to help Signature expand its geographic footprint, starting with additional California markets such as Orange County and potentially Sacramento, and moving into major metro areas nationwide. "Top 20 metro markets," Higuchi said.

Both sides emphasized that growth will be deliberate, with an emphasis on maintaining quality.

"It's no good if we open an office in New York and we do not get the best people and then once we get them, we do not support them adequately," Higuchi said.

david_houston@dailyjournal.com