

## Signature Resolution CEO Talks About East Coast Expansion

By James Mills

Law360 (March 31, 2026, 4:10 PM EDT) -- Dario Higuchi, CEO and co-founder of California-based Signature Resolution, has seen the alternative dispute resolution business evolve since Signature first opened nine years ago.

With that evolution and rising demand for its high-end services in California, Higuchi thinks the time is right to take Signature's brand of ADR to the East Coast.

"I think it's worked out timingwise for us. It makes sense for us to expand nationally," Higuchi said. "The whole goal is having this premium brand across the country. The natural maturation of the dispute resolution industry is lending to that."



Dario Higuchi

Earlier this month, Signature announced the first step in its East Coast expansion via a partnership with Commonwealth Mediation and Conciliation Inc., a Boston-based ADR firm. That partnership will ultimately bring CMCI's nine neutrals and three offices under the Signature Resolution umbrella.

Meanwhile, Signature is gearing up to open in even more East Coast locations in the next year.

The ADR firm started in Los Angeles in 2017 with the goal of offering premium-level services to its clients. The aim was to be the "the Four Seasons of the mediation world, the Ritz-Carlton of the mediation world," as Higuchi phrased it in a 2025 interview.

Signature currently has over 100 neutrals on its roster and seven California offices: downtown Los Angeles, Century City, San Diego, Oakland, Santa Clara, San Francisco and Bakersfield, plus virtual services in several other areas.

Law360 Pulse chatted with Higuchi about why Signature chose Boston for its first East Coast office, where it hopes to open next on the East Coast, and its expansion plans for California. The interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

### How did this partnership with Commonwealth Mediation and Conciliation Inc. come about?

We have worked with Paul Finn, who is the founder of CMCI. We have co-mediated a number of cases with Paul. When I say "we," I mean one of our neutrals has mediated a couple of cases with Paul. On occasion, Paul came to our offices here on the West Coast and was very impressed with our operations.

He expressed an interest at that time: "I wonder what it would be like to work together."

So, we've been talking for the past year. When Signature really decided to make this concerted effort to go into the East Coast, this felt like a really good opportunity for us to come in and have Paul and his established group there join Signature Resolution. CMCI has been around since 1992. They have a great reputation.

Since this has all started happening, we would see clients who are based in Massachusetts or Boston. When we've floated the CMCI name out to them, they would be very complimentary of Paul and CMCI as a group. It felt like a really natural fit and transition for us.

### **And you're going to focus on growing that Boston office?**

CMCI currently has nine neutrals listed on their website. Since we've been talking, we are already adding two more people there who were already going to join CMCI or were thinking of joining CMCI. So that growth is happening immediately, which is exactly the idea of Signature Resolution, and it's offering a more robust platform for them. And we definitely see CMCI continuing to grow.

### **Signature has been thinking about expanding for a while now.**

We can try to replicate what we've done in California on the East Coast via a very neutral-centric platform that gets the best people to join. The reason why these are the best people is they get results. So, it's a results-driven, neutral-centric approach to dispute resolution. It obviously has worked very well for us here in California, and we think it will be on the East Coast as well.

I think the natural transition for us is to say: "Look, there are lots of talented people in the East. There is a ton of work in the East. I think we can bring this model out there and replicate what we've done here [in California] over there."

### **Any expansion plans in California?**

We're going to be opening this year in Orange County, and we are exploring Sacramento. By the end of this year, we will have offices in all major markets here in California.

We're going to announce Orange County pretty soon. Our office is going to be on [upscale shopping mall] Fashion Island in Newport Beach. There are a dozen office buildings surrounding that mall. Opening there fits our brand.

### **Outside of Boston, where else on the East Coast are you thinking about?**

The idea will be to have Signature Resolution offices in the major markets. Within the next few years, we want to expand to all the major markets on the East Coast — Boston, New York, D.C., Atlanta, Miami. Then go to Chicago and Dallas and Houston.

So, now that Boston is done, New York is up next. I spent this last week in New York. I spent four full days in New York. I had a number of recruitment meetings. We're in significant conversations with a number of successful people there. It would be starting from scratch as a Signature office and adding some neutrals that have significant books of business. The trip also included my going and looking at office space in New York. So, I think naturally that is where our next office will be.

**It sounds like two different approaches to expansion — merge with an existing ADR and open your own office.**

It's two different types of strategies of expansion. Boston is more of acquiring a firm or teaming up with a firm that already has a group, so long as it matches the Signature brand.

The other one, which is what we're doing in New York, is saying, "We're opening the New York office with these independent folks that were previously independent and had significant books of business and joining their forces to start Signature."

One [approach] is getting a whole group and one is trying to get the best people all together in one place.

**This is rather ambitious for a 9-year-old organization.**

The dispute resolution industry has grown quite significantly. I don't consider it the "alternative dispute resolution" anymore, I consider it the "dispute resolution" industry. With that comes the maturation of the industry and the amount of work that is available. I think there are opportunities that get created. I think it's worked out timingwise for us. It makes sense for us to expand nationally.

The whole goal is having this premium brand across the country. The natural maturation of the dispute resolution industry is lending to that. We don't [currently] see a firm like ours out there on the East Coast. And this is from speaking with our clients. There is very significant and tremendous talent out there on the East Coast, but not collectively together in a firm, and that's what we're trying to build.

Our focus is on mediation. I'm going out and trying to get the talent as opposed to going out and trying to get [Signature Resolution] written into contracts [as the ADR firm that must be used to resolve disputes].

**What's your elevator pitch to people to get them to try Signature Resolution?**

People should give Signature a try because we are going to make the best effort to assemble the most successful group of mediators and arbitrators that are available to them. We want to have collectively the best group out there — folks that are tremendously supportive, the neutrals, the mediators and arbitrators that are going to be tremendously supportive to obtaining better results for their clients. We think our platform enhances the neutrals' performance, which means that it gets better results for their clients. That's why I think there will be value seen by the litigation community in Signature. I think that makes sense here in California. We really think this model of attracting the best talent and offering them collectively can be successful on the East Coast.

--Editing by Robert Rudinger.