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CHAMPIONSHIP PEDIGREE Bruce Edwards' background was in psychology before going into law. "I realized our traditional legal system and its formalized approach to dispute resolution was archaic and ignores the human element of conflict. I attempted to address this by building a better process. I started mediating in 1985. At age 30, I opened one of the first mediation companies in the United States, the Bates Edwards Group. It merged with Endispute in 1993, then a year later Endispute merged with JAMS."

EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE Edwards estimates that he has mediated more than 7,000 cases since 1985. "That probably makes me one of the most experienced mediators in the United States." His cases tend to be large multiparty matters, including construction and environmental. "You might have 30-50 parties, including emotional and insurance issues. These require creative approaches." He also provides teaching and training. "I opened Edwards Mediation Academy several years ago. It was the first online ADR training platform. I've now taught mediation in more than 20 different countries using online materials." Edwards recently returned from Rwanda, where he is helping implement mediation in the civil justice system. "We trained the first group of judges and lawyers. I'm particularly proud of this."

FUTURE VISION Edwards also looks for ways to inspire successful commercial mediators to employ their skills in noncommercial settings. "In May, I'll be in Edinburgh at the International Academy of Mediators. We're inviting mediators from around the world to look for ways to identify and address a variety of societal problems and insert themselves into some of those issues to pursue civil discourse." Mediation skills can also be used preventatively. "I've been involved in teaching mediation competency skills in a variety of workplace trainings focused on how to employ mediation skills to minimize disputes before they escalate."

