

Stephen Townley has combined successful careers in both business and law, earning him the reputation of an “entrepreneurial lawyer”. His extensive experience has been gained from roles in a variety of legal firms in the UK and Asia and business organisations across the globe. He founded and was Senior Partner of Townleys which was widely recognised at the time as the first and largest boutique international IP law firm in the sports sector outside of the U.S. He co-authored what is believed to be the first legal, business and tax textbook on intangible assets. He performed in-house roles simultaneously with his role as senior partner in Townleys, such as General Counsel to the International Tennis Federation. In terms of ongoing legal roles and apart from pro bono legal work for charities and environmental matters, he is helping the brand management specialist firm Stobbs in the role of Special Counsel, Sport & Entertainment Brands.

For 25 years he has been Chairman of a management consultancy Active Rights Management Ltd (ARM). This specialises in the rights and tech sector monetising IP and intangible assets. Clients have included the Royal Ascot Racecourse, the English Premier League (EPL) through Football Data Co, and the Singapore Sports Hub, amongst others.

He has served on public and private boards including Chair of the IFSA World’s Strongest man which was originally Nasdaq listed.

Some examples of other roles performed in business include:

- Chairman, Synchro Arts Ltd., 2011-2021. During Mr. Townley’s period as Chairman, the company and/or members of its team received an EMMY and an Academy Award in the technology category, and two Queen’s Awards for Industry, one for technology and the other for exports.
- Co-founder and Board Member, NetResult Ltd., 1999-2013. NetResult offered a cost-effective solution for major rights owner and media companies such as F1 and the NFL to police and report and take down global infringements of its proprietary audio-visual content. NetResult was sold to Thomson Reuters in 2013.
- Member of the Board, World Sport Football Limited (Hong Kong), 1996-2009, which was at the time the largest football business in the middle east and Asia.
- Member of Advisory Board, Global Sustainable Sport, 2025.

While Mr. Townley admits to a love and passion for the law and justice, he believes that resolving disputes through ADR first requires listening. For mediation, negotiating skills are essential and working within different enterprises provides experience of that every day. It is this unique blend of business acumen and legal experience that Mr. Townley believes defines his successful ADR approach, particularly within the IP and tech sectors.

Mr. Townley’s skill of finding creative and robust legal solutions to business problems, including disputes, has also been applied in many jurisdictions, circumstances, and cultures. His ADR work has ranged from cross-border IP and rights issues to stakeholder, investor, and contractual disputes across Europe, Asia, India, the Middle East, and North America. He has acted as a sole arbitrator, panel member (including ad-hoc), mediator, and external counsel. He has handled complex rights and intangible asset disputes worth many billions of dollars.

Focused practice areas of international and cross border ADR work include:

- Matters involving commercial rights and assets including their creation, ownership, monetisation (through licensing or sale), management, protection, and enforcement. This encompasses IP and contracts including copyright, trademarks, patents, design rights, and frequently involve, by way of example, content and related issues concerning

media, data, sponsorship, franchising, licensing, brand reputation and damage, brand extension, access control, betting, and image rights.

- Disputes arising within and between enterprises, individuals and other entities connected with their operations and supply chains such as ownership, management, control, valuation, and governance. This would include, by way of example, disputes with funding providers, investors, shareholders, partners, licensees, joint ventures, and owners, including succession issues, risk management, allocation, and underwriting such as insurance.
- Consequences arising from the impact of sustainability and ESG compliance obligations throughout the supply chain which can increase relationship friction with regulators, business partners and others, which is best resolved efficiently through ADR. Mr. Townley has recently been shortlisted for a lifetime achievement award for his work in using sport to help advance awareness of ESG issues such as child protection.

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

Mr. Townley has been engaged in dispute resolution, often through arbitration and mediation in Hong Kong, Japan, Dubai, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, Singapore, New Zealand, India, the United States, the United Kingdom, and throughout Europe. He lived in Asia for a number of years as well as the UK.

- Long-term engagement in connection with the resolution of a media rights dispute in a US\$1billion plus cricket agreement in India through arbitration and related court proceedings including challenges to arbitration through an anti-suit injunction that was decided by the Indian Supreme Court. These claims involved activity in five jurisdictions with related arbitrations in Singapore and India under the rules of the International Chamber of Commerce and the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996. These involved a range of commercial, regulatory, alleged fraud, and criminal related issues. Mr. Townley successfully led legal teams that discharged a previous arbitration award.
- A series of engagements since 2012 handling high-profile sports disciplinary allegations in connection with the FIFA Presidential Elections and Asian and Caribbean Football bodies. These multijurisdictional matters involved hearings before internal sports disciplinary panels, national courts and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). These included requirements for complex dispute resolution skills, reputation, and media management, working alongside and managing other professionals such as forensic accountants, investigative specialists, and legal teams in several countries. These included allegations of fraud.
- Conflict resolution including a successful mediation leading to the settlement of a multi-party cross border dispute following cancellation of football tournaments throughout Asia because of Covid in 2020/21.
- Successful mediation to resolve a complex financial services dispute between over 100 investors and a regulated fund manager in the high-tech engineering sector in the UK.
- Successful mediation to resolve shareholder, investor, and partner disputes in the entertainment and media sector to achieve amicable exit arrangements in Japan and the US.

- Successful mediation to resolve IP and contractual issues between two rival organisers of competitions in connection with eSports and augmented reality games based respectively in New Zealand and Sweden.
- A number of appointments as an arbitrator with CAS both as chair of the panel and co-arbitrator.
- Member of the ad-hoc panel of the Commonwealth Games.
- Appointment as a panel member in the UAE arbitrations under ICC and Dubai rules.

HONORS, APPOINTMENTS, MEMBERSHIPS, AND PROFESSIONAL ADR ACTIVITIES

- Completed virtual ADR training conducted by the JAMS Institute, the training arm of JAMS. JAMS Neutral, 2019–present.
- Arbitrator, Court of Arbitration for Sport, 1996–present.
- Mediator, Court of Arbitration for Sport, 2012–present.
- Mediator and Arbitrator, World Intellectual Property Organisation, 2018–present.
- Nominated arbitrator under International Chamber of Commerce rules.
- Industry Expert in the Sports Sector; Singapore International Mediation Centre; 2015–present.
- Accredited Mediator, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, 2009–present.
- Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, 1999–present.
- Founder of LawAccord co-hosted by CAS as part of the International SportAccord Convention, which was a significant development in the international sports marketplace, 2003-2023.
- Member, Advisory Board, Melbourne Law Master’s Sports Law Program, 2003-2012.
- Honorary Member of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children’s Council in recognition of Mr. Townley’s support for the NSPCC’s work for children, 2006-present.
- Board Member, Sports Lawyers Association, US 1996–2008.
- Honorary Legal Adviser, General Association of International Sports Federations, 1995–2001.
- Chair, Sports and Gaming Committee, International Bar Association, 1989–1993.
- Advisor and honorary fundraiser for various charities, including the NSPCC and Ark, and increasingly advising on regulatory matters connected with UK rivers and waterways arising from Mr. Townley’s interest as a keen fly fisher.

EDUCATION

LLM University College London following an intercollegiate master’s programme in marine law and company law with the London School of Economics after which he undertook a training contract in shipping law in the City of London focusing on litigation prior to admission in 1978 as a solicitor.