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Top 100 Lawyers 2025

Craig Cardon

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Craig Cardon has spent 30 years building a reputation as the attorney retail executives call when data breaches and consumer class actions threaten their companies. At a time when businesses face mounting legal pressure over online marketing practices and privacy violations, he has positioned himself at the center of corporate America's most pressing legal battles.

Cardon traces his legal aspirations to an unlikely source: a childhood theater performance. "As an elementary school child, my parents took me to a summer stock theater production of 'The Devil and Daniel Webster,'" Cardon recalled. "I was fascinated by the lawyer, Daniel Webster, who took on the devil in a rigged trial and even agreed to put his own soul on the line to be able to argue to a jury for his client."

That early fascination with courtroom advocacy has evolved into one of the nation's leading mass arbitration practices, where Cardon provides strategic defenses for companies facing what he describes as "asymmetric proceedings" designed to extract settlements rather than address legitimate legal grievances.

Recent high-profile victories underscore Cardon's approach to corporate defense. In one recent matter, he successfully defended an egg producer against a consumer class action initially brought by PETA. The case attacked Vital Farms' business model centered on humane egg production. *Usler v. Vital Farms*, 1:21-cv-00447 (W.D. Texas, filed May 20, 2021).

"The plaintiff's strategy was clear — attack the best in class and it is then easier to attack the whole industry," Cardon said.

His work extends beyond individual cases to shaping legal precedent. The 9th Circuit's decision in one of Cardon's recent victories "provided some much-needed clarity on contract formation in the context of arbitration agreements," he said.

Cardon scored a victory for defendants in a major data breach class action, establishing precedent for arbitration analysis in that circuit. The win was particularly crucial because a separate mass arbitration had settled concurrently, making the appellate victory necessary to preserve the settlement's value and avoid additional liability from the class action claims. *Patrick v. Running Warehouse, LLC*, 22-cv-9978, (C.D. Cal. Oct. 18, 2022); 93 F.4th 468 (9th Cir. 2024).

The decision has become frequently cited by courts nationwide.

Cardon identifies a troubling trend in consumer litigation: the rise of what he calls "smallball" tactics. "Technology has now created a unique market opportunity for the plaintiffs' bar to run a high volume business based on nuisance level settlements," he said. Attorneys now send "hundreds, if not thousands, of demand letters based on statutes with penalty provisions and settling for less than the cost of initial defense."

This shift has prompted a counterresponse from corporate defendants. "Trials are back," Cardon said. Companies increasingly refuse settlement demands they consider meritorious, choosing instead to fight claims in arbitration or trial despite higher costs.

Mass arbitrations present particular challenges, combining "intellectual stimulation and cynicism as the matters rarely touch on the actual merits of the claims," according to Cardon. He advocates for courts to recognize these proceedings as attempts "to arbitrage a procedural quirk that can allow for crippling and unfair leverage."