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# Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: Dust Settles (Clients Want a Result, Not Paper)

By Harvey R. Heller

*I have used this space to tell stories about who I am and to introduce you to our group. My stories aren't about me, but about those who have had a profound impact on me. This month's installment is about Mickey.*

It's 1982 and I'm told we are merging with a firm called Maddin and Maddin. It consisted of an octogenarian father, 2 sons and another who thankfully departed in 1984. These were not my kind of folks. The 80-year-old father, Milt, was in my view at the time, the best thing about the merger. In his day, he was an excellent attorney who had a courtroom reputation of being able to cut your heart out before you knew it was gone. I had the pleasure of his company for too few days. He passed in March of 1984. By that time, I still had not warmed to the rest of the family. My most frequent contact was "Mickey" Maddin, one of our managing partners as a result of the merger. I liked to joke, he did not.

Well, sometime after Milt died, I had lunch with Mickey. Off to Wendy's we went for a cheeseburger. That was the day I had one of my best lessons.

The firm was growing, but I was not satisfied. I was a young partner with no say in anything, but wanting more. The partnership agreement was being amended and I had concerns over the future control of the firm. I can't remember what was bothering me. I do remember what Mickey said that day while discussing the then partnership agreement: "Harvey, you want to get these agreements done, have dust settle on them and only have to review them infrequently, if ever."

It's thirty-three years later and he could not have been more right. These agreements are needed to address internal problems (which one hopes rarely arise) more than they are for positive growth. When everyone shares a vision and rows in the same direction, that's what makes a business click. That's when I discovered that having a serious partner was not that bad! He is hitting a major milestone this year and I'm lucky to have the honor of being his law partner for most of my career.

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*So what's the point?* My lesson was a microcosm of what we do day to day. A client may need an agreement negotiated, a lawsuit defended or pursued, or an estate plan drafted. What the client wants, however, is a successful business venture, a proper resolution of the dispute and/or his or her heirs to receive his property. We provide that service. We understand it because we row in the same direction and we have the perspective of deep experience. Dust has settled on the agreement (that I can't find!), just like in every other successful business.

The newest member of our group, Jesse Roth, has written an interesting [article](#) about when marketing by an attorney becomes defamatory and pushes the limit on "litigation privilege."

*Good words of caution...enjoy!*

Harvey R. Heller