
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: A Shot of Jules for What Ails You (and a Shout Out to Him)

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 Jules.

Jules Rappaport is right up there on my personal Mount Rushmore. He came into my life in 1996 when my career, while successful, was in a state of confusion. At that time, my partners questioned my business judgment in expanding the insurance defense/coverage practice in an old line firm generally handling real estate, corporate and tax matters, and I felt that I was the focus of negative attention at the firm. To assess the situation, they brought in an accountant who I felt knew little about my business or how to make it work within the firm. That threatened damage not only to my business, but to what I thought were deep relationships with partners in a firm where I had been since 1978.

Then Jules entered my life. We hit it off immediately. Jules has this no nonsense style about him that I found completely refreshing and relatable. We met once a month and in between Jules gave me homework. He helped me to focus on my strengths and convinced me to sign up for a wonderful program called Strategic Coach which met four times each year. I stayed in that program for 12 years. It helped me to sharpen my focus and Jules worked with me to supplement what I was learning there.

Jules is a natural. What you see is what you get, and what I kept and keep getting is a great education. After a while, my partners were mostly off my back and I was able to focus more on the growth of our Defense Practice and Coverage Group. If he felt I was drifting, Jules would snap me back on track. If I told him more than once that I would do something and didn't, he would look me in the eye and say "When? You aren't getting any younger, **ya know what I mean?**"

Every month for the last 20 years I have looked forward to my "shot" of Jules. He is as refreshing as an ice cold lemonade on a hot summer day. *Speaking of*

refreshing drinks, there is the story about him giving me a book to read which inadvertently had a picture stuck in the flap of him in a bathtub holding a glass of champagne, but that's as far as I can go in retelling due to a promise I made!

Jules will always be my friend, business therapist, guru, focus master, you name it. Twenty years plus and real value delivered at every meeting. You should all be as lucky as I have been in my relationship with this very special person. I know my technical expertise very well; unique business coaches like Jules guiding you to develop your business are priceless.

So, what does Jules teach that is a good lesson here? While there are many, first and foremost is to understand the needs of your client, to know what frustrates them, what their goals are, how we as service providers can make their job easier and maintain the confidence which caused the relationship to grow in the first instance, and of course to always be accessible and accountable. That's just a few of many. I consider all of the foregoing and then some when I look in the mirror regularly and say "It's not about you, stupid; it's about your client!"

Jules is now ailing due to serious medical issues. He is the one who needs a big shot of support (and prayer) for his speedy recovery. I wish him strength and comfort as he fights the good fight.

He knows what I mean.