



## 25TH ANNIVERSARY

# Attorneys look back on years of partnership, growth

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Every attorney knows that a lot can happen in 25 years.

Careers change, cases are won and lost, firms are built and expanded, and – especially if your names are on your firm's letterhead – people see you as role models.

As you look back, hopefully you can be proud of what you and the people around you have accomplished.

Five attorneys at Maddin, Hauser, Wartell, Roth, and Heller P.C. in Southfield are celebrating 25 years together this year.

A merger between two smaller firms brought Michael and Richard Maddin, Mark Hauser, Harvey Heller and Richard Roth under the same umbrella in 1982, and together they have built a firm that makes them proud.

To mark the anniversary of their work together, the Maddin brothers, Hauser, Heller and Roth recently took time to reflect on their firm's success, which they believe depends on many factors: putting clients' needs first, creating an environment of support and trust, and encouraging the growth of their firm's members and staff.

Hauser and Michael Maddin serve jointly as managing directors of the firm. Hauser handles the financial responsibilities of the practice, and Maddin also serves as president of the firm. Heller, Richard Maddin, and Roth are shareholders.

Prior to 1982, Michael and Richard Maddin worked together at Maddin and Maddin in Detroit, a firm their father had founded after completing law school. They were known for their work in real estate.

Hauser, Heller, and Roth came from the other firm. Southfield-based Weiner, Hauser, Wartell and Roth were known for their real estate work, but also their work in taxation.

Both firms had performed work for the same client, who thought it was evident that they should work together.

"Both sides of the table were friends," Michael Maddin recalled. "[Our client] saw a good opportunity. In reality, he was absolutely right that we could better serve clients together...we all thought, 'Wait a minute. We're doing well individually, and if we collectively pool our resources and talents, and if we can get along doing it...'"

Hauser recalled the common goals that he and Maddin shared for the new firm.

"We wanted a law firm that only handled certain kind of matters, that tried to only represent certain kinds of clients, that also had partners that were very active in the community," Hauser said.

Twenty five years later, the partners know they made the right decision.

Their approach to partnership speaks of an underlying trust in each other and a willingness to talk through any problem.

"Mickey said, 'The true test of a partnership is whether the dust settles on the agreement.' I absolutely believe that to be the case," Heller said, recalling a conversation he had with Michael Maddin during the firm's early years.

"We wrote up our documents and then put them away," Maddin said of the firm's partnership agreement. "With an agreement, if you have to read it, then there's a problem."

They appreciate how working in partnership has enhanced the quality of work they can do for their clients and the support they can provide for each other.

"I think, when I look back, we each have a lot of respect for each other, and I think without that it wouldn't have worked," said Richard Roth.

"In other words, I know that I could've gone to Michael or Harvey or the others and said, 'Please help me with this,' and, one, unequivocally they would help – they don't challenge 'why' [or] 'if'; and, two, you know that it would be a quality job where they take good care," Roth continued.

"It's a lot easier when you're smaller to have fun but nevertheless, I still enjoy coming in here everyday and we're certainly better off," Hauser said.

"You know, a bunch of us could probably make as individuals or small groups more money if we were just on our own," Hauser continued, "but it's just nice being together, having the security of the firm and knowing that if you need somebody to cover for you that somebody's here and will do a really good job. And that we can expand what we do for our clients based on the specialties that some of us have that others don't have."

Heller emphasizes the fact that every step in the firm's growth has followed a logical progression.

"We said, 'Where do we go as we expand?' One of our partners said, 'Well, let's pretend we cut a tree in half, and we're looking at those concentric rings. Here we are at the center. [We said,] 'What's the next logical step? Let's not go out to another tree.'

"We've always followed that philosophy, to make sure anything we do in terms of expansion – whether it be starting from real estate, to transactional, to litigation, to professional liability, employee benefits, estate planning – have a logical progression to them."

"We do have long-range plans, but we really are servicing our clients' growing needs," Michael Maddin added. "That's the best way to describe the way we've grown. We have not looked to have five offices somewhere else. We've not looked to say that we're bigger than someone else, because if we're bigger we're therefore better."

For Maddin and his colleagues, there is a central question that drives the services they provide to clients.

"[We ask,] 'What is the client's goal, not our goal?' The reality is, in this economy, the bottom line is clients are consumers," Michael Maddin said.

"We keep saying to ourselves, 'How would we want to be treated?' Well, the client doesn't want me to come in and make decisions that they should make. We never stop looking at that end result," Maddin continued.

True to that philosophy, Heller created a model process for handling litigation matters in the firm called the Result-Focused Case Management System®, which recently received copyright registration.

Heller's system "looks to the end" and attempts to establish the straightest line to results for the client using high quality service.

"The life of a transaction can be anywhere from six weeks to three months, and the life of a lawsuit can be anywhere from 18 months to three years," Heller said. "At the beginning, we say, 'What needs to be accomplished? What is the end result for that client?' That's where we're looking.

"They didn't come here to buy legal services," Heller continued. "They came here to get something done. At the end of the day, we want them to have that widget."

Listening to the partners talk about Maddin-Hauser, it is easy to understand the values they share.

"We're each unique - very different personalities, but there is a core, a basic ethic in terms of the practice itself," said Richard Maddin. "To strive for excellence is a product of what we've done together."

The Maddin brothers, Hauser, Heller and Roth know that many people have contributed to the firm's success over the years. In fact, they all agree that the growth of the firm goes hand in hand with giving members of the firm room to grow.

"We have people in our office who have changed their careers - from a litigator to an arbitrator, from a litigator to a transactional [attorney]. We give them the opportunity to show us that they have what it takes to do it.

"We'll train them, [and say,] 'Just be really good at what you do.'"

The partners are proud of the culture they created in the firm. When they look around, they see the fruits of their efforts.

There are at least three generations of attorneys in their practice, and they see "excitement at all levels."

Even younger attorneys are given opportunities to interact with clients and help conduct seminars that the firm sponsors.

"Our firm puts on a very successful tax symposium for over 350 CPAs," Roth said. "It would be very easy for us to be the speakers. But we don't. We bring in these young associates and let them speak to...the CPAs so that they can have the exposure to the accountants."

They encourage attorneys to get involved with the community and keep their family lives in focus.

"We have gone overboard to try to make sure it's a pleasant working environment," Roth said. "First of all, we tell everybody that family comes first...We try to relieve the pressure, try to make sure everybody's OK, and [tell them] that they can stop and take a break."

"I think people find this a refreshing place to work, and I'm proud of that," said Michael Maddin. "We're all proud of that."

The firm has had their share of big cases and success stories.

"We can really say we've had some very major deals that have affected the community or the business climate of the community," Roth said.

The five principals take pride in defining their success broadly, beyond simply looking at large settlements and multi-million dollar deals.

One of the partners mentioned the time Heller resolved a matter between people who had been fighting for five years. Richard Maddin counts among his personal successes taking a deal that was going to fall apart and using his creativity to get people to change their positions.

"One of the things that still gets me excited about what we do is making a difference in our clients' lives," Michael Maddin said. "What makes us different? I think it's that we do get a lot of satisfaction out of making things work better as part of our process.

"It's easier to be a good, technical attorney. It's a little harder to do the conflict side of what we do, and really help people solve their problems."

Individually, each of the five senior shareholders of the firm has developed a successful practice, and each has made contributions to the firm's collective success.

Each of them is actively involved in the legal community and the community at large, chairing sections of the State Bar of Michigan, and serving as board members of community foundations.

Among the many things he's accomplished over the years, Michael Maddin takes pride in providing a good succession plan for the firm. Richard Maddin appreciates the mediation skills he has honed throughout the years. Richard Roth takes pride in the attorneys he's been able to recruit to the practice, based on his own solid reputation. Mark Hauser values the role he plays in running the business. Harvey Heller created a new practice area that he now manages in the firm.

They use words like "stability" and "support" to describe what they value most about the firm they created together.

"Whatever successes I've had, I couldn't have done it without the kind of support here," Heller said. "I suppose I'm an example of where there's support you can grow something."



Five of the senior shareholders of Maddin, Hauser, Wertell, Roth, and Heller P.C. celebrate 25 years of working together since a merger brought them together in 1982. Leading the firm are (left to right) Richard Maddin, Richard Roth, Mark Hauser, Michael Maddin, and Harvey Heller. Photo courtesy of Maddin-Hauser.