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Features:

Christopher W. Madel

— Attorney of the Month





Christopher W. Madel

Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi L.L.P.

Serving His Clients with Legal Expertise, Creativity and Outside-of-the-Box Thinking

By Lynette Carrington

Christopher W. Madel of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi L.L.P. is a rare breed of attorney. He can steadfastly defend as easily as he can prosecute and eagerly embraces the opportunity to do either. It seems that for Chris Madel, the attraction that he felt for the legal industry came to him naturally, due in part to a few key childhood moments.

The Young Legal Eagle Spreads His Wings

“I’ve always wanted to be an attorney since I was a little kid,” noted Madel. A few experiences he had as a kid growing up in Waseca, Minnesota, drove the point home. When he was only four, Chris was in the car with his mother when they were rear-ended by a teenager. To his mother’s horror, when the offending driver’s parents showed up at the scene, Chris grabbed his neck and began to scream, “Whiplash! I have whiplash!” (His mother quickly assured everyone, “no,” her son did not have whiplash.) Later, in fourth grade, another lesson was learned when the fledgling legal eagle got tangled in a shoplifting issue involving fishing lures. After being caught by the shop owner, nine-year-old Chris called his friend (and cohort) to tell him that their parents only knew of the lures and nothing else. Unbeknownst to young Chris, his friend’s mother was listening in on the phone conversation. When Chris learned of the breach, he referenced his father’s admonition that no one should ever listen to another person’s phone calls and argued that the eavesdropping should not be fairly considered. Although his “exclusionary rule” argument didn’t work with his parents, young Chris apologized to the shop owner, who has remained a family friend and who, appropriately enough, Chris has subsequently represented after honing those early legal skills.

These two experiences perhaps best relay why Chris Madel is now one of the most sought after attorneys for representation of corporations and individuals in connection with sensitive and serious matters. In early 2012, for example, he represented an officer of a federally insured bank against an extensive federal indictment for bank fraud and other federal charges. After a three-week trial, Madel’s client was acquitted of all charges. Madel’s client’s two co-defendants were not so lucky; the U.S. government is seeking 10-year prison terms for both of them.



Despite his win, Madel remains outraged. “That prosecution was unfair from start to finish, and my heart goes out to [the two co-defendants] to this day,” he said.

Madel’s practice is not limited to criminal law. “My practice is a little unique insofar as that I do both white-collar criminal defense and I also do a lot of civil work, too,” he explained, “And in fact, many of my cases, even the civil ones, frequently involve some criminal element to them.” His more notable civil cases include successfully representing minority investors in a lawsuit relating to the venerable (and exclusive) Yellowstone Club, real-estate investors (including professional golfer Jesper Parnevik) in

a fraud-based lawsuit against international defendants in Denver, and a public debt-collection company against numerous class actions that have been consolidated in federal court in San Diego.

The Fiesta Bowl—A Legal Touchdown

Throughout his career, Chris Madel has had notable legal landmarks, many of which have occurred during his 12 years at Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi. One of the most compelling cases was as lead counsel representing an independent three-member special committee of the Fiesta Bowl Board of Directors, headed by a former Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. That special committee was put in place to look into allegations of improper Fiesta Bowl expenditures, and that the Fiesta Bowl had reimbursed employees for contributions to various campaigns and that prior to that time, an investigation had concealed criminal conduct. (An ethics investigation of at least one person involved in the case is still ongoing.)

During the course of the five-month investigation, a total of 87 interviews were conducted and a review of an ensuing 55 gigabytes of data and over 10,000 hard-copy documents. The investigation resulted in a final report of 276 pages with 1,562 footnotes and thousands of pages of spreadsheets, schedules and additional pages of evidence. Madel was also quick to point out the expert assistance that he had received from within the firm. "...My team did it incredibly efficiently and incredibly quickly," stated Madel, "I wish I could take all the credit myself, but I can't." He gives kudos to his entire team and specifically, his partner, Sara Poulos, for her writing and attention to detail.

In support of Madel, his team and the entire investigation, NCAA President, Mark Emmert stated, "The [Fiesta Bowl] special report was obviously extremely detailed and outlined behaviors none of us would be supportive of and I think the board was forthright in putting all that information before the various bodies." The case was also covered or commented on by The Arizona Republic, Sports Illustrated, Arizona Attorney General, Tom Horne and The Bowl Championship (BCS) Task Force.

Pro Bono Done Right

Another case of note was a pro bono case wherein Chris Madel was lead counsel in defending a Minneapolis Police Department veteran of 20 years, who is also a two-time Medal of Valor recipient. The charges included disorderly conduct, interference with an emergency call, arrest without authority and felony false imprisonment. The case involved some very intense allegations surrounding the circumstances of some minors in connection with allegedly breaking into a car in the officer's neighborhood. The court dismissed the arrest without authority and felony false imprisonment charges for lack of probable cause. Jury-trial acquittals followed on all remaining charges. The Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune noted that Chris Madel's cross examination was "searing."

Welcome to the Real World—The Trial Practice Center

One particular asset to which Madel's clients, witnesses and experts gain access, is his law firm's Trial Practice Center. The Michael V. Ciresi Center for Exceptional Advocacy provides a simulated, yet very realistic, courtroom setting in which to prepare for cases. "Our associate development committee, led by Matt Woods, starts our associates very early going into that courtroom and learning the nuts and bolts of true trial law..." Madel said. The state-of-the-art Trial Practice Center features a courtroom layout that can be specifically arranged to mimic any courtroom set-up. Quality audio and video feeds can be sent to and from conference rooms, viewing rooms and even the jury deliberation rooms. The "jury results" from a wireless system can be graphically charted instantaneously for both clients and attorneys. Audio, video and data from the jury-response system can also be recorded in various formats for future review.

The real-world setting provides Madel's clients and his team the experience of going through the trial, learning what to expect and knowing how it will feel when the day of the big case arrives. It allows clients to get on the stand and learn how to properly proceed through their case in a way that is effective, constructive and compelling to a jury. When asked if he thinks The Trial Practice Center has boosted their success rate at the firm, Madel answered, "I do. Absolutely." He feels that when attorneys at his firm go through the processes at the center, they come out as better attorneys and advocates.

The Internet and Going Social

In thinking about how the Internet and computers have changed the legal field, Chris Madel explained, "I kind of grew up with it, so I think it was probably a little easier for me, but it has changed [the legal field] remarkably." He noted that, "It has helped associates out a lot." E-filing is a lifesaver. Although email can be a time-saver, what is more interesting is how social networking and one's "Internet footprint" has helped him in many a case. Now, the Internet and social networking sites are used in every case in one regard or another.

Going back to the case that Madel won for the Minneapolis Police Department Medal of Valor recipient, the youths involved in the case claimed that they were "scared" when the decorated police officer allegedly used a bad word when he confronted them in their misdeeds. Madel's investigation of those same kids' Facebook pages revealed that they were absolutely littered with that same "scary" word. "The cross examination of these kids was not exactly what I would call the most difficult in the world, but I've got to admit, it was one of the most professionally satisfying," said Madel. When the officer was acquitted of all charges and allowed to return to his job, it "...was about as good of a feeling as you can get from the law."

At a Glance



In Closing....

Madel's trial victories have made him a "go-to" candidate in the media for his opinions and legal experience. He has been quoted in and covered by The San Diego Union Tribune, Chicago Tribune, Forbes Magazine, The Miami Herald, The New York Post, Sports Illustrated, The Washington Post, Bloomberg News and The New York Times among many other fine publications. And it's becoming more and more rare that he has to correct mispronunciations of his last name with the friendly, "Madel'; it rhymes with 'paddle.'"

Creativity and ingenuity continue to be used daily by Chris Madel in the course of his work for his clients. "There [are] a thousand different ways to skin the cat," he mused, "And you need to keep looking at different ways of doing things; and just because something is traditionally done one way over and over again, doesn't mean that it's right." Because he has experience on both sides of the courtroom, he provides his clients a strategic edge and professional flexibility that perhaps other practices don't have the experience to offer.

Whether it's seeing to it that justice is served or ensuring that his clients are acquitted, Christopher Madel represents either side of the table with integrity, staunch loyalty and legal expertise that continue to set the benchmark in local, regional and national cases.

Christopher (Chris) W. Madel

Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi L.L.P.

- Partner, Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi L.L.P.
- Member of the Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi L.L.P. Executive Board
- Chair of Government and Internal Investigations Group

800 LaSalle Avenue, 2800 La Salle Plaza

Minneapolis, MN 55402

T: 612-349-8500

Email: CWMadel@rkmc.com

Website: www.rkmc.com

Areas of Practice

- Business Litigation
- Government and Internal Investigations
- Corporate Governance and Special Situations
- Antitrust and Trade Regulation

Education

University of Michigan Law School, J.D., cum laude (1992)

Macalester College, B.A., magna cum laude, with highest honors, Phi Beta Kappa (1989)

Government Experience

Trial Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice, 1994-95

Professional Memberships

- Hubert H. Humphrey Policy Fellow
- Minnesota State Bar Association
- American Bar Association (Sections on Antitrust Law, Criminal Law and Litigation)
- National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Community Activities

Board of Directors, Council on Criminal and Justice

Board of Directors, Illusion Theatre

Professional Awards

- "Attorney of the Year 2011" by Minnesota Lawyer, 2012
- Named a "Super Lawyer" by Minnesota Law & Politics (2002-2012)
- Named "Top 40 in Criminal Defense" by Minnesota Law & Politics

Favorite quotes

- "That rug really tied the room together." Jeff Bridges (a/k/a The Dude) in "The Big Lebowski."
- "Cinderella story. Outta nowhere. A former greenskeeper, now, about to become the Masters champion. It looks like a miracle... It's in the hole! It's in the hole! It's in the hole!" Bill Murray (a/k/a Carl Spackler) in "Caddyshack."
- Several quotes from "99 Problems," Jay-Z, from "The Black Album."