

Wisconsin Law Journal

Valentyn finds true match in entrepreneurs

By: MaryBeth Matzek, Special to the Wisconsin Law Journal | August 31, 2017 2:05 pm



Connor Valentyn, lawyer at Murphy Desmond (Staff photo by Kevin Harnack)

Coming from a family of legal professionals, Connor Valentyn was pretty certain he would become a lawyer himself. The real question was: What type of practice would he pursue?

Now a lawyer at Murphy Desmond in Madison, Valentyn found his match while working with the University of Wisconsin School of Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic.

"I really enjoyed helping new businesses getting started. You get caught up in the excitement," Valentyn said. "Entrepreneurs are intelligent and great to work with."

But while Valentyn enjoys working with entrepreneurs, he said not all new business owners recognize how lawyers can help them.

"Attorneys play a critical role in helping businesses get off the ground. We can help with structure and not just about choosing an LLC vs. a partnership," he said. "There can be discussions ahead of time about what decisions should be made as a team vs. a decision one of the owners can make on their own."

Valentyn looks to present the different options that entrepreneurs have and help guide their decisions.

"It is also important to look closely at operation agreements," said Valentyn, who worked as a law clerk at a business-law firm in Chicago before joining Murphy Desmond. "You never want to rush into anything."

Although Valentyn was not initially sure what type of law he would pursue, his family's ties to the profession made some sort of business law likely. His brother work on corporate-law cases and his dad serves as executive vice president-general counsel for Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation in Madison.

"To me, working at the Entrepreneur Center cemented that I wanted to work with new business owners," he said. "As a newer attorney, I am getting exposure to other kinds of cases as well. I have found every case teaches you something about practicing the law."

Wisconsin Law Journal: What makes your work important to you?

Connor Valentyn: As a business and startup attorney, helping a client's business idea come to fruition is extremely rewarding and gives my work a sense of importance. Additionally, working within the emerging startup and entrepreneurship community in Madison is very exciting and makes my work feel that much more important.

WLJ: Who is your hero in the legal field?

Valentyn: My hero in the legal field is my father, Tim Valentyn. He has been an attorney in Madison for a long time and I have had the opportunity to watch him interact with clients and colleagues and learn from his experiences. He is a wealth of knowledge regarding the practice of law and an extremely valuable resource and sounding board for me as a young attorney.

WLJ: What do you do outside of work to deal with stress from the office?

Valentyn: Exercise and try to get outside as much as possible, especially in the summer. I also enjoy exploring new bars and restaurants in Madison.

WLJ: What is one thing many people get wrong about what you do?

Valentyn: Generally, I think business attorneys are viewed as a necessary evil to their clients as opposed to a valuable resource. Often, early-stage startups do not see the value in consulting with an attorney because their main focus, rightfully so, is getting the business off the ground. However, consulting with an attorney early on can prevent a lot of headaches down the road, particularly with entity formation, intellectual property, and internal governance issues.

WLJ: What is your favorite memory from law school?

Valentyn: During my second year, I competed in the Fordham National Basketball Negotiation Competition at Fordham Law School in New York City with five other UW Law students. We competed in two-person teams against other law students from across the country. Although we did not advance to the later stages of the competition, it was a great experience and it gave me the opportunity to compete on the same team as my brother (UW Law Class of 2016).

WLJ: Is there a certain case that stands out to you?

Valentyn: I have only been practicing a short time so my case experience is limited, however what stands out to me in a general sense is the amount of time, preparation and care that goes into each case.

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