

## **The Best Mentoring That \$265,741.44 Can Buy**

By Richard Russeth

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Back in 1983 when I was all of one year out of law school, my boss in the Pillsbury Legal Department gave me an assignment with our IT group (though it had some more cumbersome acronym back in the day) to help them negotiate a contract for some custom software – which was kind of a big deal at the time.

The lawyer (me) knew little about computer software contracts, the negotiations proved to be difficult, the owner of the software company we dealt with exceedingly paranoid, and the IT guys more than a little uncertain about what they needed. What could possibly go wrong?

Six month later the software company sued us for allegedly ripping off their [source code](#); their settlement demand was \$125,000 (*\$265,741.44 in today's dollars*).

After reviewing the demand letter, my boss studied the contract carefully for a day or two, and then called me into his office.

“Richard, “ he said. “Have a seat.”

Flipping through the very long contract, he said: “This is not a very good contract for us. I think we’re going to settle the case for their demand.”

Then, looking over his reading glasses at me, he said: “And then we’re going to find a good CLE course for you on negotiating software contracts.”

And then he said: “You got lunch plans?”

Thanks for reading.

[Richard Russeth](#)