

Case Study: An Incomplete Estate

Susan and James thought they had a wonderfully drafted estate plan. It was important to them to provide for their children and grandchildren, because Susan and James' post-retirement life revolved entirely around their close-knit family. The couple hosted beautiful brunches almost every Sunday morning in their home, complete with a centerpiece of fresh flowers from their garden.

Susan and James wanted nothing more than to ensure they left their favorite people with the resources and capacity to continue family traditions. They crafted their estate plan with the intention that it provided the maximum dollars that could flow to the next-generation estate, and be done so tax-free. The proper trusts and provisions had been arranged to take care of their loved ones, their actions rooted in strong family ties.



While the plan appeared beautifully executed before White Oaks took on the clients, it was soon apparent to us that Susan and James' existing draft was incomplete. The ownership of the assets within the estate had not been changed. We noted multiple ways to alter insurance and retirement plan beneficiary designations to maximize the use of the trust. If these details had gone unchecked, it could have resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars lost in estate tax.

We identified assets to place in Susan and James' revocable living trust to maximize the drafted plan. The beneficiary designations for their life insurance contracts were altered to indicate that the beneficiary would be the trust itself, in order to minimize the transfer tax upon payments of proceeds.

We were able to close the loops on Susan and James' incomplete estate plan with no additional legal costs, only careful follow-through on the original concept and keeping focused on the couple's goal to provide the most they could to their family.