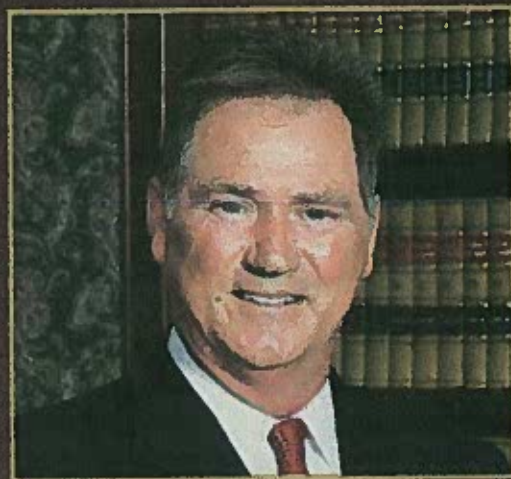


Congratulations



Bob Langdon
2010 Missouri Lawyers Weekly
“Legal Champion”

Langdon & Emison congratulates our partner and friend, Bob Langdon, and all Missouri Lawyer of the Year award recipients. Your service to the profession and to your clients provide benchmarks for us all.

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Bob Langdon

LEGAL CHAMPION

Scored a \$23 million verdict in a significant Ford rollover trial

WHEN HE BEGAN practicing law, Bob Langdon didn't read novels in his spare time. He read trial transcripts.

He sought out good, successful lawyers, studied their strategies in opening or closing a trial and examining witnesses and tried, in his own style, to emulate them. The practice has served him well, and 2010 proved a banner year for Langdon and his Lexington firm, Langdon & Emission.

A key success came when Langdon took a situation many people are familiar with, a Ford Explorer rollover crash, dug deep and offered evidence of corporate indifference. It was strong enough to convince a conservative jury to award a quadriplegic single mom \$23 million.

Langdon credits his upstanding client, Cynthia Castillo, as a major reason for his success in the case, which he tried over several weeks last year in a court in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. That court already had held two trials featuring similar Explorer

rollover crashes and the same defense attorney as in Castillo's. Both ended in defense verdicts, he said.

But Langdon walked the jury through Ford Motor Co. management's knowledge of handling defects with the Explorer, especially in similar crashes after a rear tire de-treaded at highway speed. He told jurors the automaker fixed the same problem in Venezuela for \$3.5 million but refused to spend \$500 million to make corrections for its sport utility vehicles in North America.

Langdon, who works out of North Kansas City, has a few key points for success that worked in this trial and which he regularly shares with young lawyers. First, it's important to have a good client. Regardless of how bad the injury or defective product is, he said, if the plaintiff used alcohol, or even didn't buckle the seatbelt, juries aren't sympathetic, and the case will be tough.

Second, he said, finding evidence of a company lying plays well with juries, no matter which court or state you're in.

Also, he said, some lawyers rely too heavily on multiple experts or documents, which can tire or confuse a jury. He prefers to keep it short and simple and rarely uses more than 10 documents per case. More might end up in the court file, he said, but in speaking to a jury, it's better to hone in on the best than to overwhelm them.

Langdon & Emission had another big verdict last year, this one closer to home. The family of a 2-year-old permanently disabled when the driver's seat collapsed backward onto her during a crash won \$8 million from a Platte County jury, the largest ever in that venue, according to the firm and Missouri Lawyers Media's V&S Search database.

In that case, Langdon dropped the negligence and punitive damages claims against the defendant seat maker, Johnson Controls Inc., leaving just strict liability. That trial strategy robbed Johnson Controls of its main defense, that its product met the specifications Chrysler gave it.

— Kelly Wiese



Bob Langdon. Supplied photo