

# Top Women Lawyers 2011

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TOP WOMEN LITIGATORS

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**Linda M. Savitt**

BALLARD ROSENBERG GOLPER & SAVITT LLP

**Location:** Glendale

**Practice type:** Litigation

**Practice specialty:** Labor and employment

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Savitt uses a particular strategy in her communications with jurors: Keep it simple.

Consider one of her complex cases, involving alleged payroll irregularities.

"These were complex payroll issues," she said. "I sat around for three days, every night. How do I explain it?"

She went low-tech and worked up a chart.

"It was a very simple solution, and it took a little while for me to figure out, but then it clicked," Savitt said.

She also keeps alert to the shifting dynamics during a trial.

"You have to be conscious of the dynamics of a trial, so that you can adjust your strategy to what's going on in the courtroom," she said. "If you are doing something that is not working, get off it and do it in a different way."

While you have to go in fully prepared, she said, "You have to be able to deviate from what you thought of doing," she said. "And you have to be aware when enough is enough. I could tell when a jury is ready for the case. Sometimes, you have to scrap your best-laid plans."

Savitt served as lead counsel in about 50 cases a year.

Among her notable cases, Savitt received defense verdicts in 2010 in a case alleging sexual harassment, sex discrimination, wage and hour violations and wrongful termination, (*Mendoza v. ABM, BC 406444, L.A. Super. Ct.*).

In a 10-day trial, Savitt received a defense verdict in a case involving allegations of breach of contract and discrimination, (*Bond v. Azusa Pacific, BC 408879, L.A. Super. Ct.*).

Another one of Savitt's strategies: "I do not use a lot of graphics," she said. "When I got a defense verdict, one of the jurors said to me, 'We were so glad you didn't use Power Point. We really like the fact that you told us a story and engaged us.' They said, 'You had all of this information, and you tied it together, and it really helped us.'"

After trying 70 cases before juries throughout the course of her career, Savitt said, "You can get stale.

You have to stay fresh, and a story is so important to jurors. You want to hold their interest."

Being on the defense end of employment cases can be tough, she said, with employees often viewed as the underdog.

"You have to explain to the jury the problems that your own client has, and how they tried to work with the plaintiff," she said. "The challenge is to humanize the defendant and show that they have challenges also, and did everything they could for this particular person."

Companies are often seen as being impersonal, Savitt said.

"But companies are made up of people," she said. "I think that the plaintiffs bar in employment cases tries to show how unfair their client is being treated, but it's unfair to evaluate this in a vacuum. Nobody wants to invest a lot of time and money in a person only to have to fire them, with all of that knowledge and experience gone. You don't want to do that unless you don't have a choice."

Her advice to aspiring litigators is equally straightforward: "If you like to talk to people, you can be a good trial lawyer," Savitt said. "That is the secret."

— Pat Broderick

# California's Top Women Lawyers Receive Honors



Robert Levins / Daily Journal

Linda M. Savitt, left, and Holly House