



J.A. (Jay) Felton

Partner

Kansas City

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When Jay Felton says he is focused on the success and satisfaction of his clients, he means it literally. Jay starts each year with a simple bull's-eye chart of the client goals and objectives he plans to focus on and shares this target list with the other attorneys on his teams – ensuring that everyone has the same end in sight: what is best for the client. Jay is so invested in the clients he represents that his business plan has always been simple, “To only work with clients I believe in – those businesses I am willing to fully go to battle for. Protecting them from risk is the hill I am willing to die on.” And his clients appreciate this commitment to making their lives easier. As one corporate counsel said, “When I have a case with Jay, I feel a level of comfort that is greater than with other firms – that we are aligned together and moving in the right direction.”

For more than 20 years, Jay has worked with his team to get to know clients' people, competition, strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats so the solutions his team suggests will help clients to best manage their risk. He explains, “We hit the ground running, actively setting the cadence of the matter – not passively waiting for the matter to develop – with the goal of fighting on the issues that most favor our client's position, business strategy, core values and intended outcomes.”

Jay's hard-charging work ethic can likely be attributed to his first calling: farming. He grew up working on the family farm, helping to raise purebred Hereford cattle. He remains a proud fifth-generation farmer and is still strongly involved in his family's row-crop operation. His attorney-farmer background serves Jay's legal practice well. There is no such thing as a “day off” in the life of a farmer, and often in the life of an attorney too, and Jay has always relished meeting challenges head-on from any direction.

Areas of Focus

Services

[Litigation](#)

[Product Liability & Tort](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Class Action Defense](#)

[ESG Guidance](#)

[General Business & Complex](#)

[Commercial Litigation](#)

Sectors

[Agribusiness & Food](#)

Leading the firm's Agribusiness & Food group – the perfect role for an attorney-farmer – Jay serves the complex commercial, product liability and class action defense needs of Fortune 1000 clients in agribusiness, energy, environment, manufacturing, emerging technologies, chemical and other industries.

"I have always been curious and enjoy solving problems and helping clients overcome challenges – the tougher the better," says Jay. "I join forces with our teams and clients to bring them what they need, when they need it, and before they know they need it. It's what I love about being a business litigator – heading into each day with a 'game on' mentality."

As a firm leader and past executive committee member, Jay also embraces the importance of diversity and inclusion. He is known for developing and mentoring diverse teams, always seeking opportunities for diverse associates to work on interesting and complex matters and providing them with direct client contact. Jay knows that diverse teams enable the firm to better serve its clients, which leads to better attorney-client engagement and retention. One deputy general counsel stated, *"Jay's team understands our culture. With diversity, they meet or join us on that journey. It's not lip service; they are wedded to the cause."*

Jay builds client teams from the ground up, encouraging collaboration and providing continual training on how to deliver best-in-class client service. For one client, his team's mantra was simple: "Always be responsive. Always stay targeted. Always add value." This client's director of legal operations summed up this service dedication: *"Quite honestly, Jay and Lathrop GPM are the example for all firms to follow. I don't think there is another firm that is as good as they are on service."* This singular client focus helped Jay to be recognized as a BTI Client Service All-Star in 2022, one of only 565 attorneys nationwide honored for superior client service.

Jay delivers bottom-line value to his clients by implementing a boots-on-the-ground, rapid response approach to their legal matters. Whether creating the opportunity for decisive, favorable dismissal of an opponent's claims or facing a lengthy jury trial, he incorporates strategy, technology and knowledge-sharing to represent clients effectively and efficiently –always remaining laser-focused on the best interests of the client.

As one client stated, *"Jay cares about people, and genuinely cares about the people in the companies he represents. If there is a bet-the-company case, I know I can call Jay. If there is a success for the company, I know I can call Jay. And if there's a listening ear needed, I know I can call Jay."*

Experience

Jay serves as national panel counsel, national product liability counsel and/or warranty counsel for many clients. His client representation includes:

- A multibillion-dollar, multinational manufacturer with matters across the U.S. involving investigations as well as commercial, product liability and class action litigation.
- An industry-leading manufacturer, for which he coordinates defense of class action lawsuits and product claims.
- A multinational agribusiness, natural resource and manufacturing company, handling environmental and product liability litigation and incident investigations.
- A diversified global company, managing product liability, environmental and tort, intellectual property, litigation and related investigations.

In addition to serving in these roles, Jay has successfully handled matters across the country resulting in favorable defense outcomes, including:

- Resolution of national class-action product liability and warranty claims.
- Numerous summary judgment wins on multimillion-dollar product liability and warranty fleet claims.
- High-profile multimillion-dollar fire claims eliminated outright or resolved pre-suit.
- Successful trial verdicts on a variety of product liability and breach-of-contract claims.
- Favorable mediation of significant product liability and environmental claims.
- Resolution of product defect, whistle-blower and personal injury claims through pre-suit investigations.

A respected leader within both his firm and his community, a sought-after business mentor, and a valued member of his clients' internal teams, Jay has earned the respect and admiration of colleagues, clients, industry peers, business leaders and others, all of whom acknowledge that his deeply dedicated service to his profession and his community are a driving force in his success.

Credentials

Education

- University of Virginia School of Law, J.D., 1989
 - University of Virginia School of Law, Hardy Cross Dillard Scholar
 - *Virginia Journal of International Law*, Notes Editor
- University of Missouri - Columbia, B.A., 1986, magna cum laude
- Phi Beta Kappa

Bar Admissions

- Kansas
- Missouri
- Texas

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
- U.S. Supreme Court

Recognition

- Selected among *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2017-2025
- *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business*, Missouri Litigation, 2015-2024
- *Thomson Reuters*, "Stand-Out Lawyer," 2023
- *Missouri & Kansas Super Lawyers*, 2008-2011, 2015-2024
- "Client Service All-Star," BTI Consulting Group, 2022
- "Missouri 100," University of Missouri, 2012-2022
- "50 Missourians You Should Know," *Ingram's*, 2020
- Acritas Star Lawyer, 2016-2019
- *Client Choice*™ Award, Missouri Litigation, 2018
- "Business Litigator of the Year – Missouri," *Acquisition International*, 2014
- "Best of the Bar," *Kansas City Business Journal*, 2014
- Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Security Strategy Exercise, 2009
- U.S. Air Force Air War College, National Security Forum, 2008
- Martindale-Hubbell® "AV Preeminent" Rating

Presentations

- Speaker, "Nuclear Verdicts and Rapid Defense," RIMS Memphis Lunch & Learn, May 10, 2023
- Panelist, "[Our Best Investing Ideas for 2022 and Beyond](#)," FARMCON, January 5, 2023
- Panelist, "Top Business Minds, CEOs and Executives Talk Shop," FARMCON, January 16, 2020
- "Blockchain 101," Maryville, MO, April 2018

- "Attorney-Client Privilege and Attorney Work Product for the In-House Attorney," Indianapolis, IN, November 2016; Wichita, KS, June 2017
 - "Table of Experts: Agribusiness," Kansas City Business Journal, Kansas City, April 2016
 - "Impact of the 2015 Amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure," Indianapolis, IN, March 2016
 - "Trends in how to Best Utilize Outside Counsel," Wichita, KS, September 2015
 - "Successful Ways to Define Outside Counsel Work Projects," Inside Counsel SuperConference, Chicago, IL, May 2014
 - "Business Succession Planning," Maryville, MO, April 2014
 - "E-discovery Strategy & Tactics," Indianapolis, IN, November 2013
 - "Ag Industry Trends," Kansas City, MO, September 2013
 - Lathrop Gage's State of Litigation Conference, Kansas City, KS, June 2013
 - "Establishing Value Criteria," Inside Counsel SuperConference, Chicago, IL, April 2013
 - "Attorney-Client Privilege and Attorney Work Product: Issues and Recent Developments," Indianapolis, IN, April 2012
 - "Strategies for Effective Internal Investigations," Kansas City, MO, September 2011
 - "Assuring Satisfaction in Litigation," Association of Corporate Counsel Annual Conference, Boston, October 2009
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Publications

- Co-author, "[Convergence from the Inside and Out: Two Veterans Look at an Evolving Trend](#)," *ACC Docket*, June 2015
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Professional Activities

- Kansas City Area Development Council, Life Sciences Advisory Council, Chair, 2014-2016; Board of Directors, 2013-2016, 2018-2020
- Missouri Biotechnology Association, Board of Directors, 2006-2012
- University of Missouri, Jefferson Club, Executive Committee, 2004-2010
- University of Missouri Honors College, Adjunct Faculty Member, "Issues for the 21st Century," 1997-2005
- University of Missouri Alumni Association, Executive Board, 2001-2003

Community Involvement

- Kansas City Area Development Council, Life Sciences Advisory Council, Chair, 2014-2016; Board of Directors, 2013-2016, 2018-2020, 2023
- Aligned, Board of Trustees, 2019-present
- University of Missouri, The Missouri 100, Advisory Board, 2014-present
- Aphasia Hope Foundation, Board of Directors, 2003-present
- Kansas City Sports Commission, Board of Directors, 2008-2018
- Derrick Johnson's Defend the Dream Foundation, Executive Board, 2016-2017
- Boy Scouts of America, Pony Express Council Advisory Board, 1996-2015