

SPEAKER BIOS



Ross Gibson

Director – Client Services

The Richards Group

Ross Gibson is a leadership and organizational development consultant/facilitator. As the Director, Client Services, Employee Benefits Practice at The Richards Group (TRG), Ross works with organizations to help develop positive leadership growth. Prior to working as a consultant, Ross held a number of senior HR roles. Ross has a BA in Social Psychology from Tufts University and an

MA in Management from Brandeis University. He is currently on the Board of the Governor's Institute of Vermont (GIV) and is the immediate past-Director of the Vermont State Council of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM). He is also a past-President of the Northeast Human Resources Association (NEHRA).



Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett

New Hampshire-based workplace-communications coach

Kimberly works with business professionals to help them deliver well-crafted and on-time reports, correspondence, speeches, web and marketing content, and other workplace communications. She is a former journalist for news organizations throughout New Hampshire and the Pacific Northwest, including a decade as a reporter, columnist, and

editor for *The Seattle Times*. Kimberly is also the author of a book on the American civil rights movement and a frequent writing instructor for the Nackey S. Loeb School of Communication in Manchester, NH.



Jim Merrill
New Hampshire Director
The Bernstein Shur Group

Jim Merrill is one of the Granite State's most respected public affairs professionals. He serves as Managing Shareholder of the Bernstein Shur law firm in New Hampshire while also serving as New Hampshire State Director of The Bernstein Shur Group. In that role, he uses his extensive public affairs and communications experience as part of a bi-partisan public affairs firm to provide legislative, strategic, grassroots and media solutions for corporate, non-profit and political clients engaged in complex matters.

Over the past 20 years, Jim has also served as a senior advisor to the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush, Mitt Romney and Marco Rubio, helping each of them navigate New Hampshire's historic and demanding First in the Nation presidential primary. Jim has significant State House experience as well, having served for over two years on the staff of former New Hampshire Governor Stephen E. Merrill.

Working with a wide array of local, regional and national clients, Jim develops a plan unique to the circumstances, creates a persuasive message and identifies targeted audiences. By leveraging his networks and years of campaign experience, Jim helps his clients reach and influence those targeted audiences through innovative legislative, communications and grassroots strategies, while managing each element of the campaign to allow his clients to focus on their daily business. He works with members of the media frequently and is regularly sought out for comment and context on emerging political issues.

In 2023-2024, Jim was named by *Best Lawyers in America* as one of New Hampshire's top government relations attorneys. In 2021, Jim was recognized by *New Hampshire Business Review* as one of New Hampshire's 200 Most Influential Business Leaders. He was recognized in 2009 by *Business NH Magazine* as one of New Hampshire's '25 Leaders for the Future'; in 2008 by *New Hampshire Magazine* as a "Rising Star" and in 2004 by the *New Hampshire Union Leader* as one of the state's emerging 'Forty Under 40' business and community leaders.

A 1994 graduate of Gettysburg College, Jim served on the staff of New Hampshire Governor Stephen E. Merrill from 1994-1997 as a legislative aide and Liaison to the Executive Council. From 1997-1998 Jim worked at the NH Department of Health and Human Services, handling legislative and policy matters before beginning law school at UNH Law (formerly Franklin Pierce Law Center) in the fall of 1998. Jim graduated from law school with his J.D. in 2001 and began his legal and consulting career at a large local law firm before joining Bernstein Shur in 2013.

Jim presently serves on the Bernstein Shur Board of Directors, the Business and Industry Association of NH Board of Directors, the Union Leader Corp. Board of Directors, the Greater Manchester Mental Health Center Board of Directors, and the Advisory Board of the NH Institute of Politics at St. Anselm College. He is also a Trustee of the Mackey S. Loeb School of Communications, serving on the fundraising committee for the school's annual 'First Amendment Award' event for the past ten years. He previously served as a director of Easter Seals NH, where he chaired the annual fundraising campaign three times, the Daniel Webster Council-Boy Scouts of America, whose annual 'Distinguished Citizen Award' fundraising event he has chaired three times, and the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center.

Jim has lived in Manchester for over 20 years and resides in the North End with his wife Kristy, their two children and two dogs.