



# Rasky Partners

## MEET THE EXPERT 2018

A roundup of conversations with Rasky Partners' leading experts in the areas of communications and public affairs

# Rasky Partners

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# MEET THE EXPERT

Larry has more than 30 years of experience in public policy and media relations. His work includes working on U.S. Presidential and Senate campaigns as well as working with organizations, trade associations and corporations in the energy, education, nonprofit, financial services, and technology industries. Clients who have benefited from his well-honed abilities include start-ups, major Fortune 500 companies and government officials.

## LARRY RASKY, CHAIRMAN & CEO

### **What interests you most about PR and public affairs?**

What interests me most is solving problems. The great thing about this job is that you come in every day and there is a new problem to solve. It's the nature of the world that we live in that the problems are getting bigger and more complicated. As the firm has grown and my experience has grown with it, there's more interesting work to do.

### **You've been working in the industry for more than 30 years now. How has it changed over the years, and how have you adapted in the process?**

Some things have changed over the years, while others have not. Obviously problems are still problems. Sometimes good people do bad things, rules change, challenges in business erupt and our services are required. This hasn't changed and it will always be the way things are. As long as there are people and business and free enterprise, there will be issues to navigate. Navigating politics, business and the media is our secret sauce.

On the other hand, technological changes have been dramatic. Most importantly, the number of media outlets have risen exponentially and evolved both in terms of how many outlets there are and the mediums they operate over. When I first started in politics, the average community had three TV stations and maybe another PBS station. This was before cable.

When I first went to Iowa to work on Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign, I didn't have a cell phone or a laptop. There were no computers or even fax machines. We had mimeographs, and the big technology was the electric typewriter. We had to drive press releases and schedules around to all the TV stations and newspapers to make sure they got them.

### **Public relations is a constantly evolving industry. Where do you see the field headed and what can pros do to keep up?**

If you're going to be a professional in this industry going forward, you're going to have to be adept at handling the technology. You're going to have to be able to communicate on whatever medium is being used. Many times this is being driven by the press corps. We went through a period just a few years ago where reporters would no longer take press releases over fax. You'd have to send a press release to them as an attachment; otherwise they wouldn't communicate with you.

Professionals need to understand how technology is evolving. The fact that Snapchat has a news director covering the 2016 presidential campaign is amazing in and of itself. If you're going to be in this business, you have to keep up with the technology. But you still have to have the basic skills of storytelling, and particularly writing, to be a professional in this industry.

You almost have to have your personal brand now, too. Your company certainly needs to have its own brand. At Rasky

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Partners, we have always prided ourselves on our credibility. We want to make sure that when our people call a reporter, that they're not wasting that reporter's time – that they're smart and prepared. The same is true with our lobbyists. That's why we're as good as we are: because people can come in and represent our clients and really understand the subject matter as well as the people that they're pitching.

For us, credibility is very important. So too is having your personal brand, which is now more important than ever before because you're so visible. Now everybody can see you on LinkedIn and Facebook. You're no longer some disembodied voice on the telephone.

## **How has your experience in national politics – and particularly your communications work on Vice President Joe Biden's past campaigns – shaped your work today?**

Presidential politics is always at the cutting edge of changes in the media. That's where technology often first gets applied. Campaigns are always looking for an edge. I remember walking around with then-Senator Biden in the middle of Iowa in 2007; I looked down at my Blackberry and there was an alert that said "Campaign surprise: Times endorses Biden." In the story it talked about it being the first endorsement of the 2008 presidential campaign. And then I saw that it read the Storm Lake Times had endorsed Joe Biden for president. But the alert came from one of the key political reporters for the New York Times. That surprise and confusion aside, everybody who had the alert set to Joe Biden was getting that information at the same moment. Through these kinds of tools you become more aware of what's going on in the world and in a much quicker fashion.

We had an interesting experience these last few months of 2015 because I was deeply involved in the discussions about whether or not the Vice President was going to run or not. Every major political reporter from every news outlet was calling here, every day, looking for information. I remember telling my assistant, Kristyn, to be ready because this was all going to stop as soon as he decides. All of these people who think I'm the most important person in the world right now are going to stop calling. And it's going to happen just like that.

One thing presidential politics teaches you is proportion. You start to realize what really matters. Other people's problems become more manageable because you know how certain stories are going to go. You understand how to manage. You test yourself as to whether you're capable of working with The New York Times and The Washington Post and the major networks, all at the same time. If you can do that then you can do anything in this business.

So I think working in politics definitely prepares you for crisis management and just the general pace of managing day-to-day news.

“ You have to have credibility with the media and also with your clients. You have to be willing to fight for your clients. We're in the business of client service. This is not about us getting our name in the paper. This is about how our client is being covered. ”

*- Larry Rasky, Chairman & CEO*

## **You mentioned credibility. Is it this, or are there other factors that set Rasky Partners apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public relations and public affairs?**

You have to have credibility with the media and also with your clients. You have to be willing to fight for your clients. We're in the business of client service. This is not about us getting our name in the paper. This is about how our client is being covered. That's whether it's marketing a community bank or managing a major disaster. We treat everybody the same

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– with a serious sense of purpose.

Our staff is also key. Our formula for hiring is not really that complicated. You have to be smart. You have to have the intellectual heft to be able to handle complex subject matter and broadly across various industry spectrums – across healthcare policy, energy, financial services, international affairs. This is not kid's stuff. This plays into credibility because you have to be willing to get deep enough into it to discuss it with credibility. You also have to be willing to work hard because this is not a 9-5 job. Our people all know that they're not on that schedule and will do whatever it takes to satisfy and service a client. Now more than ever, everything with the media is 24/7.

You also have to be honest because that goes back to our brand. No one from Rasky Partners will ever deceive a reporter. We won't lie to them. Sometimes you have to tell a reporter that you can't tell them something. That's more important than being nice to reporters or giving them everything they want. That's not our job. Our job is to make sure that our client's story is told and that the press understands that point of view, and that our client's point of view gets told whatever the circumstances are.

Those are the keys: brains, ethics and hard work. The world is not much more complicated than that to me in terms of the qualities I'm looking for in people and what drives our firm.

## **What client campaign are you most proud of in looking back at your time with the firm? Why?**

I would say there are two. One is the 2007 presidential campaign when Senator Biden lost, but lost in a way that raised his credibility; when he lost in a way that made him the natural selection for President Obama to pick him as his running mate. Losing gracefully is very difficult, particularly in presidential politics. It's a business that chews you up and leaves you on the side of the road. At the start of that campaign – on the day of our announcement – the Vice President was being attacked for calling the President "clean" and "articulate." We could have been out of the race in a week. But we fought through it. We demanded he be heard and not be typecast unfairly. And there were some key reporters – Maureen Dowd chief among them – who had covered the Vice President for years and stood up for him and gave us a seat at the table. Then once we got in the debates he was able to demonstrate the quality of his intellect and character. I always say "character reveals itself." You think you know somebody, but you really don't until you see how they behave over time.

The other campaign was the sale of the Red Sox, which was a great experience for Joe Baerlein and me as we worked closely together on that on behalf of John Henry and Tom Werner when they bought the team. That was like a political campaign. It was on the front page of The Globe every day. When we started, nobody thought the guys we were working for had any shot of being awarded the franchise. Everyone thought it was going to go to a local bidder.

There is nothing more cherished in Boston than the Red Sox, so the fact that we were able to demonstrate that our guys were credible stewards of this historic franchise and helped give them the opportunity to be selected was a great experience.

Winning it was incredible because we worked on that for more than a year. Then we won the contract to be the agency of record and the lobbying firm for the Sox. That was such a thrill to be such a part of that. Then going on to the World Series in 2004 was just the icing on the cake.

We've had plenty of business that didn't go our way, but we've enjoyed many successes as well. I always say, "God deals the hand and you play the cards." Every day I come in and pick up my hand. The good news is that I'm still getting dealt cards, so it's all about figuring out how to turn a pair of deuces into something more.

## **If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Be honest. Be true to who you are as a company. Reporters are professional BS detectors. In the world we live in, sooner or later the truth does come out. You don't have to tell people the second they want to know. You have to be able to talk

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in a way that while you know your own reality, you have to know what you can say and when you can say it. You have to recognize that the media has a job to do as well. And most of them actually do it with a lot of integrity.

Sometimes in business I think there's this general view that reporters are always out to get you. That's not always the case. Many times things go haywire because the news cycle and the business cycle are different. For example, when reporters are trying to cover a deal, deals don't get baked in real-time and don't follow the news cycle. You sometimes have to explain to reporters that you can't give them news that's not ready to announce. Businesses, and especially public companies, are more concerned with quarterly earnings and how they're interpreted. They don't want to get out over their skis in terms of telling stories that are wrong because the stock market is so much about expectations – making sure you meet expectations and are not measured as coming up short.

That's where many of the problems come in. There are times when there's no recognition by reporters or the people that they're covering that they're on different cycles. It's like reporters, business and politicians as well are dealing with different forms of currency. The currency for reporters is the news. They're not interested in money, but the story itself. Politicians are interested in votes and how the public is going to view what they're doing. Only businesses are judged on profits and losses. So you have to act as a translator and also be able to help your client see what the needs are of the people they're dealing with, which is often times not about money.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Ron Walker plays a key role in operations, finances, and strategic growth at the firm. He is a nationally recognized business leader and workforce development expert with extensive public and private expertise in corporate strategy, government, banking, customer acquisition, executive level management, business integration, and strategic planning. Prior to joining Rasky, Walker served as Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development under Governor Charlie Baker. Previously, he was co-founder and President of Next Street Financial, LLC, a merchant bank, and has held several corporate executive positions in large financial institutions.

### RON WALKER, COO

#### **What interests you most about the work Rasky Partners is doing?**

What interests me most about the firm is the actual strategic communications, media, government, and procurement solutions work with companies local, national, and international. Rasky Partners does this with expertise and relationships on both sides of the aisle, which is extremely effective in getting results for our clients. And being able to leverage my previous experiences in business and government to the strategic offerings at the firm really piqued my interest.

Importantly, the team here at Rasky Partners is phenomenal! They are experts in their field, passionate about their work, and create a positive and productive culture here at the firm.

#### **You have known Rasky's CEO, Larry Rasky, for some time now. You served on Rasky's board of advisors and have now transitioned into your role as Chief Operation Officer. In your opinion, why is it important for agencies in this industry to have a strong leadership team, including a COO?**

It is extremely important for all businesses including agencies to have a strong leadership team to guide and execute a strategy. In the agency business the pace is so fast and real time that you constantly have to make sure that you remain focused on the key performance indicators for the firm as well as the client.

In this role of COO at Rasky Partners, I work directly with Larry, the senior leadership team, and the advisory board to ensure that we are running the agency as efficiently as possible on a day-to-day basis. What is unique about this COO role is that it is both operational and client focused. I believe strongly that in order to be fully productive, you have to be involved in customer acquisition.

#### **Before joining Rasky, you most recently served as Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development under Governor Charlie Baker. What insights did you gain in this role that have helped you become a better professional in the private sector?**

I gained a deep appreciation for how decisions are made at the executive level and across Secretariats. In addition, I also further recognized how complicated it could be for an individual or company to leverage the vast offerings and resources within the Commonwealth to grow their business. My experience as Secretary has increased my ability as a private sector professional to understand the power of understanding how government can have a material impact on your business.

#### **What do you see as your greatest achievements as Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development?**

First of all, any of the accomplishments made in my Secretariat were a direct result of the Governor's leadership in these areas. In fact, the Governor has been the top-ranked governor in the country since being elected.

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I am most proud of the fact that more people are working in the Commonwealth today since the data has been tracked. In that light, the administration achieved record unemployment rates during my tenure as Secretary. Also, we had a focus on the chronically unemployed and made great progress in getting people to work. This was a direct result of working closely with companies across the Commonwealth to understand the “demand” side for talent and connecting industry with the “supply” side of the workforce system within the Commonwealth.

In addition, we were able to move the Department of Unemployment Assistance to the cloud as the first agency in the Commonwealth, and I believe in the country.

The last thing that I will mention is the creation of the Workforce Skills Cabinet by executive order (I was appointed chair by the Governor) that brought together the Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Housing and Economic Development to focus on impactful solutions around skills training and jobs. With the Governor’s leadership, we embarked on an initiative with vocational schools which resulted in the Governor successfully filing \$45 million in capital grants to upgrade equipment skills training. These grants would also include community colleges and partnerships with businesses.

“ **My experience as Secretary has increased my ability as a private sector professional to understand the power of understanding how government can have a material impact on your business.** ”

*- Ron Walker, COO*

**Prior to your appointment in the Baker Administration, you were co-founder and president of Next Street Financial, LLC, a merchant bank that provides strategic advice and access to capital to companies and entrepreneurs nationally. How has your experience as an entrepreneur and executive proven beneficial in your role here at Rasky?**

My direct experience as a banking executive and business owner of a strategic consulting firm that serviced small and midsize firms like Rasky Partners is an asset in this role. It is also very helpful that Larry Rasky hired me as his strategic advisor. Moreover, we hired Rasky Partners to assist us in federal government relations.

As an entrepreneur, I clearly understand the importance of strategic growth and profitability through a disciplined strategic and managed process.

**When it comes to strategic growth and planning, what important trends should business leaders be aware of going forward into 2018 and beyond?**

Despite the strong and diverse economy, business leaders of firms like ours have to recognize that companies are being very disciplined in their decision to hire outside firms. In addition, there is a leadership transfer going on in the market which means new strategic thinking. As a result, companies need to constantly understand the market demand for their services and what success looks like now.

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**What are some of the key factors companies and organizations should consider when selecting a PR and public affairs firm?**

One of the key factors is demonstrated performance and strength of the talent at the leadership level of the firm. Also, the level and depth of the relationships the firm has on both sides of the aisle to deliver results. Lastly, the strength and diversity of the portfolio of the firm and its proven value system.

**There is no shortage of PR and public affairs firms in Boston and Washington, DC. What sets Rasky apart from the rest when it comes to our approach?**

What sets Rasky Partners apart are the strong and deep relationships on both sides of the aisle from Massachusetts to Washington DC, nationally, and abroad. The firm also has deep proven domain expertise in each of our service areas, a phenomenal track record of over 28 years with results in some of the most interesting and complex matters, and strong leadership from the CEO and throughout the team.

**If you had to give one piece of advice to a client about strategic growth, what would it be?**

What gets measured gets managed!



## MEET THE EXPERT

George is responsible for government relations, lobbying, procurement and business development representation, ballot initiatives and grassroots organizing. He has extensive experience representing his clients' interests before local and state government throughout New England. George is also a veteran of many political campaigns, including pivotal statewide ballot questions and serving as a senior advisor and New England political director for U.S. Sen. Joseph Biden's 2008 Presidential campaign. Prior to joining the firm, George was at the Choate Group, the government affairs subsidiary of the Boston law firm Choate, Hall & Stewart.

### **GEORGE CRONIN** **MANAGING DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

#### **What interests you most about public affairs?**

Certainly the fast-paced nature of the work and the fact that there are a lot of similarities between traditional political campaigns and corporate public affairs campaigns.

#### **With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see the industry headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

The first trend I see focuses on the pronounced need to deliver your message from external resources and not just put all of your resources in the inside lobbying element of the overall strategy. The development of a winning narrative, and the use of external allies and voices to carry that message are critical. The second trend we've seen over the past few years is an increasing number of clients that have a revenue agenda as opposed to just a policy agency, which has resulted in more business development opportunities and more opportunities to help corporate clients sell their product into the public sector.

To keep up with all of this, you need to be able to spot the trends and identify opportunities for your clients. Many of the opportunities for our clients will come as a result of policy initiatives. Whether it's on the revenue side or the policy side, reacting and getting ahead of public policy is the way that we can stay ahead of the curve.

#### **You served as a senior advisor and New England political director for Vice President Biden during his 2008 presidential campaign. How did this experience help shape your work today?**

This experience provided a great perspective in that it allowed me to see how political campaign tactics and strategies can be used in corporate public affairs settings and how important it is to organize and mobilize around a particular cause or candidate.

#### **Your extensive local and state public affairs experience includes working with clients from a variety of different industries. How do you and your team remain nimble so you can quickly learn and represent the interests of each of your clients?**

It starts with understanding public policy and the politics behind public policy. When you can figure out how to let your clients achieve their business objectives and simultaneously allow the policymakers to achieve their policy objectives, that's a dynamic that typically results in great success. In terms of remaining nimble, it's constantly anticipating the news that drives the politics that drives the policy.

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*- George Cronin, Managing Director*

**Rasky Partners has a fantastic record when it comes to ballot measure campaigns and other lobbying and policy efforts, including the passage of Question 3 in Massachusetts in 2016. What in your mind sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public affairs?**

I think what sets us apart is our methodical approach. Our proven track record of success ties back directly to the formulas that we have developed that line up underneath our client service models for the different vertical categories in our practice. Whether it’s state government relations, grassroots campaigns, business development or ballot questions, we have the formulas that line up underneath each one of those categories. What we’ve found over the years is that if we are disciplined in our approach and stick to tried and true formulas, more often than not we’ll have success.

**What do you see as the key components to executing a successful ballot campaign?**

Research dictates the overall strategic direction. Other important tactical elements that make up the overall effort include message development, coalition building, earned media, paid media, digital strategies and mobilization.

**How have digital and technological advances played a role in shaping ballot campaigns in recent years?**

Similar to candidate campaigns, digital advances play a critical role in helping to disseminate and amplify a messaging platform and in organizing allies. For example, the culminating mobilization effort that leads up to Election Day includes an incredible reliance on digital and electronic platforms.

**What do you see as the most effective mediums to deliver a campaign’s messaging?**

What I see as most effective is a coordinated group of surrogates using a combination of traditional earned media and paid advertising, direct mail, TV and radio, and social media.

**As we look ahead to the 2018 ballot questions in Massachusetts, how do you anticipate this year’s landscape differing from years past?**

I actually think the ballot question landscape will be similar to what we’ve seen in previous years in that the traditional categories of tax and revenue, workers’ rights and healthcare will all be part of the debate.

**Which measures should we expect to see on the 2018 ballot in Massachusetts?**

There will be proposed tax increases and proposed tax decreases as well as provisions dealing with a minimum wage increase and earned sick time. We’ll also see a proposal regarding nurse staff ratios and a proposed repeal of the transgender law.

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**What has been the most memorable ballot question campaign you worked on during your time at Rasky?**

All the victories are special, but the 2006 retail alcohol sales and 2012 physician-assisted suicide campaigns stand out.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Trust data over your instincts.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Sandi directs the firm's nonprofit, education and consumer practice. She has more than twenty-five years of experience in advertising, public relations and marketing firms, cultural institutions and government agencies. Sandi began her career at the Massachusetts Office for Children, followed by a stint at Arnold Worldwide as part of the agency's Public Relations team. For more than a decade, she directed Goldfarb Communications Group (GCG), which was founded following her thirteen-year tenure as head of Communications/Member Services at New England Aquarium.

### **SANDI GOLDFARB**

#### **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, NONPROFIT, EDUCATION AND CONSUMER**

**You've been working in the industry for more than 25 years now. How has it changed over the years, and how have you adapted in the process?**

One of the most significant changes in media relations is the explosion of news outlets, the expansion of cable and the evolution of the 24-hour news cycle. Equally important is the role and rapid growth of social media and its impact on traditional media. Today, fresh content and speed matter. Anyone with a smartphone or a Twitter account can be considered a reporter.

**As you well know, public relations is a constantly evolving industry. Where do you see the field headed and what can pros do to keep up?**

In addition to understanding and employing new technologies, it's important to keep up with new outlets. For example, The Boston Globe has launched new sections, both in print and online, and beefed up its coverage of health, life sciences, technology, business, politics and the Catholic Church. We need to maintain long-time contacts and continue to develop solid working relationships with folks who may be new to the market.

**Before joining the firm you headed the Communications/Member Services team at the New England Aquarium and then directed your own agency (Goldfarb Communications Group). How did these in-house and entrepreneurial experiences prepare you for your current leadership role at Risky Partners?**

Whether working in-house or in an agency setting, I've always been involved with nonprofits, both large and small. Understanding nonprofits from the inside, out, helps me better serve my clients. They know I "speak the language;" that I understand the demands and expectations they juggle every day.

**You have worked with a wide variety of clients during your career that include nationally-known brands such as NOVA, Ford Motor Company, Zipcar and the National Park Service. In what ways is working on these bigger brands similar to and different from managing smaller ones?**

While the budgets are often more flexible, the process is generally the same. In each instance I still had to identify the factors that make a client unique, find ways to insert them into the larger conversation and engage reporters and producers. In the end, it's still about storytelling.

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**You lead the firm's nonprofit, education and consumer team. What do you enjoy most about working in each of these practice areas?**

I work with some of the best brands in the market, including UMass Amherst, Mass General and the Museum of Science. Besides raising awareness, garnering media attention for nonprofit and education clients can help attract donors, volunteers and supporters. For example, a story we secured in The New York Times for a Massachusetts-based nonprofit resulted in a sizable gift. Knowing that we make a difference to the clients we serve reminds us why we got into this business.

“

I work with some of the best brands in the market, including UMass Amherst, Mass General and the Museum of Science. Besides raising awareness, garnering media attention for nonprofit and education clients can help attract donors, volunteers and supporters.

”

***- Sandi Goldfarb, Senior Vice President***

**What sets Rasky Partners apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public relations?**

The fact that senior staff work on every account distinguishes Rasky Partners from other firms. In addition, clients appreciate that our agency background is enhanced by experience in their sectors.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

I have a client who, at the outset of our engagement, asked what she could do to “be a good client.” This simple question resulted in a terrific conversation about roles and responsibilities and her organization’s definition of success. It’s always best when clients consider their PR agency an extension of their communications divisions – recognizing that we’re all on the same team with shared goals and challenges.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Graham provides public affairs counsel to firm clients in a variety of business sectors, including health care, higher education, energy and defense. He helps clients achieve their goals by effectively communicating their issues and navigating a diverse yet interconnected universe of influencers and decision-makers in Washington and across the country. Prior to joining the firm, Graham worked for over a decade for the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

### **GRAHAM SHALGIAN** **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

**With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see the industry headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

While some of the tools have evolved, particularly in the use of digital media, the fundamentals remain. Maintaining and continuously developing a strong network of relationships and understanding the intricacies of politics and policy are critical to success.

**You worked for over a decade for the late Senator Ted Kennedy. How did this experience help shape your work today?**

Senator Kennedy was hard working, incredibly thoughtful and a legislative giant whose fingerprints are all over major sectors like health care, higher education, biotech, defense, the arts and human services to name just a few. To see first-hand the impact that his leadership and commitment had on these sectors was not only exciting but educational. I learned a great deal from him about the power of advocacy and the importance of legislative champions.

**What is the greatest personal or professional lesson you learned from Senator Kennedy?**

I learned much from Senator Kennedy about hard work, compromise and the value of hand-written notes in developing and strengthening relationships.

**Your extensive public affairs experience includes working with clients from a variety of different industries, including health care, higher education, energy and defense. How do you remain nimble so you can quickly learn and represent the interests of each of your clients?**

We're well versed in policy issues relevant to numerous sectors, but our real expertise is in navigating Washington, DC – identifying and educating stakeholders and recruiting champions for our clients. That formula holds true no matter the industry.

“ We're well versed in policy issues relevant to numerous sectors, but our real expertise is in navigating Washington, DC – identifying and educating stakeholders and recruiting champions for our clients. That formula holds true no matter the industry. ”

**- Graham Shalgian, Senior Vice President**

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**What in your mind sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public affairs?**

The integration of our government and communications offerings and the day-to-day involvement of senior level strategists on all accounts.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Always allow for open communication with your public affairs team. The more we're informed about your business, the more effective we can be on your behalf.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Bethany provides strategic counsel to a wide variety of federal government relations clients across the firm's business sectors. With a focus on defense, telecommunication, healthcare and energy and environment, Bethany develops comprehensive communication strategies with high-level influencers throughout all levels of government. Previously, Bethany served as legislative team chief in the Office of the Secretary of Defense at the Department of Defense and has also served as a policy advisor in both the Boston and Washington offices of the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

### **BETHANY BASSETT** **SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

#### **What interests you most about public affairs?**

Public affairs is the nexus where government and policy meet communications. When devising a public affairs strategy, I enjoy the challenge of determining the best way to convey a message to the stakeholders in and around that nexus.

#### **With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see it headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

I believe that the industry will continue to evolve and expand in the digital space requiring more technical expertise. That said, I also don't believe that traditional public affairs (media relations, crisis communications, op-ed writing, etc.) is necessarily devolving. I think the best thing public affairs professionals can do in this era is to be agile—if there's an opportunity to learn a new skill on the job, take that opportunity.

#### **You served as the legislative team chief in the Office of the Secretary of Defense at the Department of Defense for nearly four years, working on a number of important efforts including the integration of women in combat and the implementation of the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." How did this DoD experience help shape your work here at Rasky Partners?**

In working at the Pentagon, I was lucky enough to work for three Secretaries of Defense. That job taught me a great deal, and one of them was the importance of agility I mentioned earlier. In an environment like that and often with the client issues we face at Rasky, missions are ever changing as organizational leadership shifts. You have to be ready to adapt at any time to accomplish the goals of the principal/client while also not being afraid to tell them when you disagree.

#### **You also worked as a policy advisor in both the Boston and Washington offices of the late Senator Teddy Kennedy. What impact did this experience have on your work today?**

Working in a Senate office had a major positive impact on my career. I was able to work firsthand on the legislative process while also learning policy intricacies in both the defense and veterans industries. I apply both of these skills to my work here at Rasky every day.

#### **Your government relations experience at Rasky Partners includes working with defense clients as well as others from a variety of industries. How do you remain nimble so you can quickly learn and represent the interests of each of your clients?**

I remain nimble by monitoring policy shifts both in the commercial sector and in the government. I regularly collect intelligence from policy makers on the Hill and from colleagues throughout the industry while also keeping up with the latest trends through news and social media.

# Rasky Partners

“

In an environment like that and often with the client issues we face at Rasky, missions are ever changing as organizational leadership shifts. You have to be ready to adapt at any time to accomplish the goals of the principal/client while also not being afraid to tell them when you disagree.

”

*- Bethany Bassett, Senior Vice President*

**As you reflect on your time at Rasky Partners and in the industry itself, what in your mind sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public affairs?**

Rasky is a package deal. When I was looking to move on from the Administration, I considered a number of firms and one of the many reasons I wanted to work at Rasky is that we truly do offer the full suite of strategic communications services. We have specialists in all of the communications fields and we are arguably one of the best at developing strategies and tactics that leave no stone unturned.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Own your brand. Whether you're working on a boutique policy issue or expanding grassroots support, recognize your strengths and how you can use them to maximize any weaknesses you may face.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Jeff devises and implements legislative and regulatory lobbying campaigns on the federal, state and local levels, and develops grassroots organizing strategies and builds and manages coalitions. He also leads the firm's Codes and Regulations consultancy. Previously, Jeff served as political director for Robert Reich's 2002 campaign for Governor, as the legislative director at the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, as well as legislative aide at the Legislature's Committee on Taxation and issues director for Rep. Jim Brett during his 1993 Boston Mayoral campaign. Most recently, Jeff served on the Transition Team for Mayor Marty Walsh.

**JEFF TERREY**  
**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### **What interests you most about public affairs?**

For the first ten years of my career I worked on political campaigns and in political offices. I enjoyed working to help government fix problems. Public affairs is an extension of this work. It is about problem solving. I have the opportunity to work closely with clients, understand the problems or hurdles they are facing and then figure out ways to solve their problems.

### **With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see the industry headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

Technology is allowing elected officials to be in closer contact with their constituents. This goes both ways. It is easier for constituents to let their elected representatives know what is important to them and it is also easier for elected officials to tell their constituents of their priorities and successes. Public affairs professionals are moving to embrace this development by leveraging social media.

### **You're leading Rasky Partners' new Codes and Regulations consulting service. What types of services and industries are involved in this consultancy?**

Almost every manufacturer is impacted by some type of code, whether it is a fire code, an energy code, electrical code or building code. How a product is impacted by the codes can have a significant impact on the product's ultimate success or failure.

The code development process is a long, multistep process that involves national model codes with open and transparent stakeholder processes and then ultimately a process where the federal government or states adopt the codes and put them into effect.

Stakeholders advocating for a code change must understand the entire process and take the right steps to ensure that they are prepared. Our Codes and Regulations consultancy can help companies throughout this entire process. We can help first with an overview of the process and outlining of the right stakeholder engagement strategy and then develop the right messaging platform. From there we can work to engage stakeholders to gain support for a proposal or mute possible opposition. We can then work to represent a client during the code writing process to make sure that our message is being heard and understood by regulators. Finally, we follow through to the state level, working with regulators and if necessary, political leaders, to ensure it is finally adopted and enforced.

# Rasky Partners

**You've been at the center of the firm's work with the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association. What do you see as the greatest successes Rasky and FEMA have achieved during this time?**

We have worked closely with the Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association since 2003. We have represented them in all of their state and federal government relations. During this time we have successfully changed fire codes in more than 25 states to make fire codes stronger and safer and to ensure that portable extinguishers are not removed from buildings in cost cutting moves.

**You have had extensive experience on political campaigns here in Boston and across Massachusetts throughout your career, including most recently serving on the Transition Team for Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. How have these experiences helped shape your work today?**

Working closely with elected officials and politicians on gubernatorial campaigns, mayoral races and others has given me an understanding of how to work with elected officials so that a client's interests are best served. It has also given me a solid network of other former campaign staff and volunteers who are now working throughout government.

“ Working closely with elected officials and politicians on gubernatorial campaigns, mayoral races and others has given me an understanding of how to work with elected officials so that a client's interests are best served. ”

*- Jeff Terrey, Senior Vice President*

**You've taught a course on political advocacy for the arts at Boston University for the last six years. What have been the most rewarding aspects of this experience?**

I had the opportunity to work with an arts advocacy client for several years early in my lobbying career. This gave me insight into the challenges facing the arts community as well as the resources the community can bring to bear. Teaching at Boston University has been a great experience where we can have an open discussion every week on how arts organizations can increase their political profile.

**There is no shortage of public affairs firms in Boston and across the Commonwealth. What sets Rasky apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public affairs?**

We are very lucky here at Rasky Partners to have the staff that we do. We have a tremendous diversity of experience and relationships throughout our staff that we can leverage for clients. Our staff have experience gained from working in the media, federal, state and municipal campaigns and government offices. There are not many political leaders with whom someone in our office does not have a relationship.

Relationships however, are only half of the battle. We have the ability to design the right strategies for clients to accomplish their goals. Being a full service public relations and public affairs firm gives us the ability to use traditional lobbying, grassroots advocacy and the media to deliver a client's messages.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Get involved in an issue early. The earlier you get involved in an issue, the better. It allows you to be more strategic, develop better relationships and build stronger coalitions. You can of course do this later in a process, but being early helps.



# MEET THE EXPERT

Kristen develops and implements strategic communications and governments relations strategies for a range of public affairs clients. Prior to joining the firm, She served as the legislative and communications director for former State Senator, now Congresswoman Katherine Clark. Kristen started her career as a broadcast reporter working for local ABC and NBC affiliates and has also worked as a campaign manager and communications director on federal, state and local political campaigns.

**KRISTEN CULLEN**  
*SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

## **What interests you most about public affairs?**

Public affairs is all about thinking strategically. Our work spans many different industries and organizations, but how we approach an assignment stays pretty consistent. Our clients come to us with a wide range of objectives, and we work closely with them on a strategy. I like the ability to pull from my background in media, campaigns and government to develop a strategic and creative approach for our clients depending on what they want to accomplish.

## **With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see it headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

Like so many fields, public affairs is evolving as new technology, social media and the 24/7 news cycle continues to change the way the public digests information. While new technology has made government and media more accessible than ever, it has also made it increasingly difficult to target your message to break through the noise.

We look at the big picture and take into consideration a number of factors in this evolving industry as we think strategically on how to get to the best results. This can include using a number of tactics and tools at our disposal as public affairs professionals. The great part about working at Rasky Partners is that we work alongside many professionals with a range of communications and industry experience that we can utilize depending on the assignment.

## **From a public affairs perspective, what has fascinated you most about the 2016 presidential race thus far?**

It was interesting to watch Donald Trump win the Republican nomination with a limited field and paid media plan. As of August (2016), he has not spent any money on paid media, relying successfully on earned and social media to carry his message and lock in the nomination. Recent reports show he's now working to ramp up his fundraising game, but it's still tough to tell if he'll be prepared to go on TV or organize a significant field operation post-Labor Day. As his negatives start to rise, paid media specifically will be an important tool he will need to use to control a message that has been unfocused at best.

## **In what ways has your State House and campaign experience helped you in your role here at Rasky Partners?**

Working at the State House was an incredibly valuable experience. While I often covered state legislatures as a reporter, it was very interesting to work on the other side to craft and pass legislation. This experience gave me a deep understanding of the process and the long and complicated steps it takes for a bill to become a law. As we advise our lobbying clients, it's very helpful to pull from this experience as we work to determine the best strategy for success.

# Rasky Partners

**Earlier in your career, you spent several years as a broadcast reporter that included coverage of the Iowa Caucuses and New Hampshire Primary in 2008. What insights did you gain as a journalist that have proven valuable now working in public affairs?**

My experience as a reporter, which included covering campaigns, state legislatures and the legislative process, was particularly valuable in that it broadened my ability to see different perspectives of any particular issue. One of the tenants of journalism is objectivity. As a reporter you have a responsibility to craft your stories in an unbiased way and that captures different perspectives.

This has translated easily into the work we do in public affairs where it's important to understand your opposition in order to be successful. The press is many times a significant piece of the puzzle for our clients when we develop our strategy. Understanding how the media will approach a particular story can influence how we approach our work.

“ Firm-wide we bring a significant amount of experience and expertise to the table. When it comes to ballot questions, we know what it takes to win and we work closely with our clients to get those results. ”

*- Kristen Cullen, Senior Vice President*

**Rasky Partners has a tremendous record when it comes to ballot measure campaigns and other lobbying and policy efforts. What in your mind sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public affairs?**

It's all about client services. That's our top priority and what I think consistently sets us apart from our competitors. Firm-wide we bring a significant amount of experience and expertise to the table. When it comes to ballot questions, we know what it takes to win and we work closely with our clients to get those results.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Anne manages the day-to-day communications activities for clients involved in litigation, regulatory uncertainty, product recalls, as well as government contractors and other organizations facing communications challenges. She has held senior positions in both the private and public sectors, and has worked for both public affairs agencies and as an in-house corporate communications officer. Earlier in her career, Anne was the sole in-house public affairs, public relations and communications officer for a major defense contractor. She has also worked on Capitol Hill and for a boutique public affairs firm in Alexandria, Va.

### **ANNE TYRRELL, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT**

**Public relations and public affairs are constantly evolving fields. Where do you see them headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

The explosion of social media and subsequent rise of citizen journalism as newsrooms shrink are the most significant changes in the communications field in recent years, and we need to adjust to those realities. But successful communications campaigns require the same approaches they always have: accurate, consistent and compelling messaging coupled with a smart strategy and capable people.

So, in my opinion, the way to keep up is to understand the evolving ways that information is being exchanged, alter tactics as necessary, but never stray from the general principles that effective PR people have always relied on.

**You worked as a communications director on Capitol Hill prior to joining Prism Public Affairs, which merged with Rasky in 2014. In what ways did this Congressional experience help shape your work today?**

At Prism and now Rasky Partners, I have represented multiple clients facing regulatory uncertainty. There's a congressional component to nearly all of these engagements, regardless of which regulatory body is involved. My time on Capitol Hill exposed me to how these matters are handled in Congress, how quickly a Member of Congress can alter the discussion (both positively and negatively) and what drives them to become involved. Those insights have served our clients well.

**You also previously worked as the sole public affairs, PR and communications officer for a major defense contractor. What kinds of lessons and insights did you gain in-house that have proved beneficial now that you've transitioned to agency life?**

Working for a defense contractor showed me that every industry faces a unique set of communications challenges and that to effectively support any client you need to make certain you understand the world in which they operate.

For defense contractors, one of the biggest challenges is that they are often contractually limited in, or even prohibited from, discussing the work they do for the U.S. government. That's a frustrating position for a communications person to be in, and it requires creative thinking as well as very close coordination with the contractor's customer. A communications professional never wants to be in the position of upsetting their client's client, so understanding the industry is imperative.

As for working in-house, I think the biggest lesson learned was the importance of internal communications. Employees deserve to know what's happening at their organizations but the priority is often placed on external audiences. At Rasky Partners, I often still provide our clients with internal communications support based on my experience working in-house.

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**You have become well versed in crisis communications over the course of your career. What do you see as the major challenges for crisis communicators today, especially given the rise of digital and the 24/7 news cycle that it has created?**

I think a major challenge for crisis communicators, particularly in today's around-the-clock news cycle, is determining the appropriate level of response for a given situation. While we need to react quickly, we also need to step back and assess every situation to determine first, if we are facing a true crisis, and then a smart approach to handling it.

Whether an organization is faced with a full-blown crisis or just a problematic situation, there is almost always a reasonable explanation for how it came about. I have seen organizations ignore their own crisis with the hope it will just go away. That rarely happens. But in saying nothing, the organization has allowed others to tell their story. At the same time, overreacting to a problem can bring more attention to a difficult issue than it would otherwise draw.

“ While we need to react quickly, we also need to step back and assess every situation to determine first, if we are facing a true crisis, and then a smart approach to handling it. ”

*- Anne Tyrrell, Senior Vice President*

**With you having held a variety of positions in the industry, what in your mind sets Rasky Partners apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to PR and public affairs?**

Rasky Partners benefits from a wide range of experiences. Our website says: “We’ve been where you’re going, and we know how to get results.” That’s true. Members of our staff have worked on Capitol Hill, in the White House, in federal and state campaigns, in the media, and in a variety of business sectors.

But we also benefit from our size. I think we strike a good balance of having enough people with diverse sets of expertise while remaining small enough to give our clients the senior-level attention they deserve.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Providing consultants with as much information as possible is essential. We need to know as much as possible in order to succeed on your behalf. Getting up-to-speed at the outset is always one of the most time-consuming aspects of an engagement, but it’s critically important because it allows us to develop an informed strategy that will help lead to a successful campaign.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Jessica works with federal clients creating and executing successful legislative strategies in a wide range of sectors. She has over a decade of experience working with federal, state, and international governments. Previously, Jessica served on the Trump/Pence Presidential Transition Team for Health Care and Small Business. She also served as Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam and Director of the Asia Pacific Counsel of American Chambers. Jessica brings extensive experience in government relations after having worked at BGR Group on Homeland Security, Healthcare, Government Procurement, and Appropriations issues for clients.

### JESSICA TOCCO

#### SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

##### **What interests you most about public affairs?**

I love having the ability to change public policy and make a direct difference on government decision making.

##### **With public affairs being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see the industry headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

Over the last decade the industry has really shifted from basic Hill lobbying to broad based public policy strategies that include thought leadership, message positioning, leveraging media, and also leveraging the agencies. Especially with the end of earmarks, the agencies have the growing ability to influence and execute their will through public grants and procurement. To be successful, industry professionals must be mindful of the big picture.

##### **You previously served as Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam and Director of the Asia Pacific Counsel of American Chambers. How did these experiences help shape your work today?**

We live in a global economy and having been overseas for several years has given me an advantage when it comes to understanding trade policy, national defense, foreign direct investment, and global markets. Having a global perspective is very important when representing clients at all levels in all industries.

##### **You're now rejoining Rasky Partners after launching your own successful government relations firm, A10 Associates. How did your time as an entrepreneur help you become a better industry professional?**

Being an entrepreneur taught me how to be a better "hunter" both in terms of business development and especially when achieving outcomes for clients. With my success at A10 Associates, it gave me the confidence to know that I can compete against the best that's out there to achieve a given result for a client.

##### **You're an Indiana native and have enjoyed a longstanding political relationship with Vice President Mike Pence and his team. How has this relationship evolved over the years?**

I first met Vice President Pence back in high school at his yearly "picnic for Pence" where I would volunteer to bus tables in order to get to meet the then Congressman Pence and the other national leaders who attended. I loved politics and this was my favorite event for many years. As I continued my political career at the national level, both as the National Chairman of College Republicans and a member of the Rove World team, I was able to work with the Pence team on many issues. The Vice President is one of my biggest role models and he and his team have been great mentors over the many years I've known him.

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## **What do you consider one of your greatest professional accomplishments?**

One of my greatest accomplishments came recently when I was asked to volunteer on the Trump/Pence Presidential Transition Team. Given my affinity for the Vice President, I was proud to have the opportunity to work closely with the larger team on the important task of putting the new administration in place. This opportunity gave me a chance to leverage my previous experience in the Bush Administration to help the new leadership.

“ One of my greatest accomplishments came recently when I was asked to volunteer on the Trump/Pence Presidential Transition Team. Given my affinity for the Vice President, I was proud to have the opportunity to work closely with the larger team on the important task of putting the new administration in place. ”

*- Jessica Tocco, Senior Vice President*

## **The political landscape in Washington has quickly shifted with Donald Trump as president and the Republicans controlling both the House and Senate. Given this changing landscape, what do you see as the greatest challenges and opportunities ahead for public affairs professionals?**

Massachusetts is in a unique position given our state's opposition to the President in terms of the electorate as well as our delegation to Washington. This creates an opportunity for the business community to go directly to decision makers and focus on policy instead of politics. Massachusetts companies have so much to offer especially in the areas of healthcare, life sciences, technology, defense, cyber security, and education.

## **There is no shortage of public affairs and PR firms in Washington. What sets Rasky apart from the rest when it comes to its approach?**

Rasky Partners understands exactly what it means to provide holistic solutions to clients. When joining the business, I met with several firms in the region and saw directly that this organization is one of the few that can fully integrate municipal, state, and federal government relations with public relations and policy advocacy. Our experts provide a coordinated host of services that effectively serve clients whether they are looking for positioning, handling a crisis, or even trying to grow their bottom line.

## **If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

The key to public affairs is to believe in what you are fighting for, and work with a partner that you can trust. What I love about Rasky Partners is that we put the client first and continue to empower each other to execute advocacy victories.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Kirk has more than 25 years of experience working with top U.S. and international corporations, trade associations, non-profit organizations and foreign governments. Previously, Kirk was director of communications for the Business Roundtable and held senior positions at Ketchum Public Relations and Ruder Finn. He was also founder and principal of an award-winning, nationally ranked public relations firm. Early in his career, Kirk served on the Washington, DC staff for U.S. Senator David Durenberger. He has advised and served as media liaison to two Presidential Inaugural Committees.

### **KIRK MONROE, SENIOR ADVISOR**

#### **What interests you most about public relations?**

I love the breadth and variety of issues and topics. No two clients or campaigns are alike.

#### **With PR being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see it headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

As the use of social media and technological advances in our orbit increase, I would suggest initiating and fostering meaningful relationships; with reporters, with clients and with community leaders.

#### **Prior to Rasky Partners, you served as the director of communications for the Business Roundtable and were the founder and principal of an award-winning, nationally ranked PR firm as well. How did these in-house and entrepreneurial roles prove helpful as an executive vice president here at the firm?**

At the Business Roundtable, I was the client, where I managed an agency team of 18 and a multi-million dollar budget, all of which helped me understand how to maximize the agency-client relationship. The years running my very small firm taught me much about the business and financial side of an agency as well.

“ I learned firsthand how policy is formed and what public forces influence legislation, which to this day guides tactics and tools we deploy for clients. ”

*- Kirk Monroe, Senior Advisor*

#### **You also served on the Washington, DC staff for former U.S. Senator David Durenberger earlier in your career. In what ways did this experience on The Hill help shape your work today?**

I learned firsthand how policy is formed and what public forces influence legislation, which to this day guides tactics and tools we deploy for clients.

# Rasky Partners

**There is no shortage of public affairs and PR firms in Washington. What sets Rasky Partners apart from the rest when it comes to its approach?**

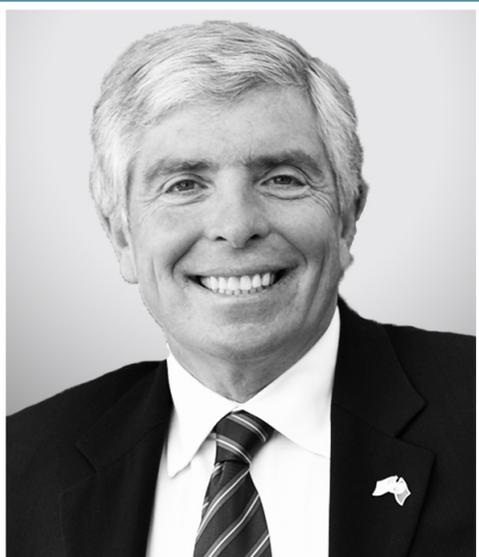
There is a genuine comradery amongst my colleagues, and our commitment to our clients is personal. Having worked in and hired mega firms, you don't see much of that.

**What client campaign are you most proud of in looking back at your time with Rasky? Why?**

I would have to say our work with the Japanese Embassy over the past two years. As a team we were successful at generating ongoing positive coverage through a series of multi-state media tours.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

As so many of our clients do, it is critical to include and engage us as early as possible. The sooner we come in, and the more open our channels of communication, the more effective we can be at executing strategy.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Robert is a senior advisor and advisory board member at Rasky, where he plays a key role in business development and strategic growth opportunities to help the firm continue bolstering its growing client portfolio in the U.S. and internationally. Prior to joining the firm, Robert served as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Portugal from 2014-2017. In honor of his work in Portugal, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator in March 2017. Before his ambassador post, Sherman was a founding member of the Boston office of Greenberg Traurig.

### **ROBERT SHERMAN, SENIOR ADVISOR**

**Prior to joining Rasky Partners as a senior advisor, you were a founding member of the Boston office of Greenberg Traurig, and served as U.S. Ambassador to Portugal under the Obama administration. How have your experiences shaped your work today?**

I think a constant thread is my desire to help others by devising strategies to find solutions to problems. That was instilled in me at an early age, growing up in Brockton, Massachusetts. My dad was an immigrant from Russia who never went to college, but managed to talk his way into law school. He had a small general practice and often in the evenings, he would meet with clients in our house. The issues spanned the spectrum – people who wanted to form a business or write a will, or who had been injured in an auto accident or arrested. The house was very small, so I would overhear their stories and listen as my dad advised them on the path to pursue to resolve their issues. Even as a U.S. Ambassador, my job included resolving disputes, not only with people, but with countries as well. I think the problem-solving skill sets I developed throughout my legal and diplomatic career align perfectly with the services offered at Rasky Partners. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and assisting the firm's clients.

**What originally drew you to the area of international relations and law?**

It was the natural evolution of my law practice. My last several years as a practicing lawyer, I specialized in Foreign Corrupt Practices investigations and compliance. That work took me to numerous countries on five continents. I realized, to paraphrase Tom Freedman, how flat the world had become and how interdependent the world community was. When President Obama asked me to serve in his administration, I felt my experience was best utilized internationally. I was honored to be one of only a handful he selected to be a U.S. Ambassador. As a result of my international law practice and diplomatic career, I have a deep understanding of global relations as well as a network of contacts around the world.

**Which projects or initiatives did you undertake during your time as Ambassador to Portugal that you are most proud of?**

I took a very non-traditional approach to my role as ambassador. I ran the embassy more like a business than a government agency. By that, I mean I empowered people to make decisions, to take on risk, and to know if they did so and occasionally failed as was inevitable, I had their backs. Creative thinking was rewarded and bureaucratic responses completely disfavored. I also stressed collaboration among all embassy personnel and agencies. Many things I take great pride in were the result of that collaboration and culture of creativity. For instance, we scrapped the traditional way the State Department messaged. Instead, I learned to ride a Harley and traveled much of the country by motorcycle (also promoting an American product by the way) and chronicled the trips on social media. The Portuguese people loved it! We became famous in the country for being able to communicate serious messages in an interesting and often fun or humorous way, and thus developed a strong following. Perhaps the project I am most proud of is Connect to Success, which I established with my wife, Kim Sawyer, who is a very successful entrepreneur in Boston. C2S is a women's entrepreneurship and empowerment initiative that brought mentoring and support services to women starting businesses.

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This was a novel program within the State Department and one which, had we asked for advance permission, would never have been approved. But it became a smashing success, winning major awards on both sides of the Atlantic. Today there are over 950 women in the program. Kim still serves as executive director and we are looking to expand C2S to Africa.

## **What was the most rewarding aspect of your time as Ambassador to Portugal?**

I came to Portugal at a difficult time. Shortly after I arrived, Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, the economy in Greece melted down, and ISIS rose in the Middle East spreading terror into Europe. Portugal is a founding member of NATO, an EU member and a member of the coalition against ISIS. When it comes to these organizations, the United States does not operate alone and in order to act, consensus must be achieved. In essence, each member holds a veto over all others. This requires a considerable degree of diplomacy and consensus building within the individual countries. That was a strong focus of mine and I take pride in the result. I believe I made a strong contribution to the safety and security of the United States and indeed the world. The magnitude of my responsibilities was reinforced every day I arrived at work at the embassy, where the first thing I saw was the American flag flying proudly. As I entered through the gate, the Marine at Post One would snap to attention with a sharp salute. That was not for me personally but for the fact that I represented the President of the United States and the American government in a foreign country.

## **During your time as Ambassador, you championed bilateral investment between the United States and Portugal. As we become a more globalized world, what is the importance of international cooperation, and how can businesses improve upon their global standing?**

Economic statecraft was a term coined by Hillary Clinton when she was Secretary of State and expanded during John Kerry's tenure as Secretary. It essentially means using economic means to pursue foreign policy goals. There was no question in my mind that strengthening the economic ties between Portugal and United States was not only in both countries' interests, but in America's foreign policy interests as well. I gave as an example earlier Portugal's membership in the coalition against ISIS. When countries have close ties economically it spreads to other arenas such as diplomatic and military engagement. And economic engagement brings with it the spread of American values. In a globalized world, there is great opportunity for American companies to expand their businesses and take advantage of opportunities across the world. Here's a simple example: a company that does business solely in the U.S. has a market for its products or services of 323 million people. If that company only expands to EU countries, it adds another 511 million people to that market! Globalization is here to stay and any American business which fails to recognize that fact risks being left behind. The challenge is to develop the strategic plan and contacts to take advantage of that opportunity.

## **How has globalization affected international law and international relations?**

The world is too complex for any one country to be its policeman – not China, not Russia and not the U.S. We are stronger when we act together as countries who share common interests. Notice I did not say friendships. An example is the P5+1 talks that led to the Iranian nuclear agreement. No one country could have negotiated that deal. And we need to remember that the members of that successful negotiating coalition included not just our staunch allies like England, France and Germany, but also China and Russia. The key was common interests. I think we are seeing that play out in the current crisis in North Korea. If a non-military solution is to be achieved, the United States will have to partner with other key players in the region. Currently that focus is on China, which has the economic power over North Korea no other country has. We may be averse to China as it seeks dominance over the South China Sea, and compete with them economically, but it is a critical ally if we are to escalate the tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

## **As Ambassador to Portugal, you were very involved in strengthening engagement in cyber security issues. Why is cyber security a pressing issue, and how will your insights help you in your new role at Rasky Partners?**

Prior to the current North Korea crisis, if former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, Admiral Jim Stavridis were asked what kept him up at night, his answer was "cyber". Former CIA director John Brennan shared that view. A destructive cyberattack

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has the potential to devastate American infrastructure and the American business economy. It can come from state actors, terrorist groups, or a lone wolf sitting in his apartment. The fact is that we are still poorly prepared to defend against a cyberattack. This week's news concerning the Equifax data breach is a sad but timely example. Sensitive personal and financial data of 143 million Americans (more than half of the country's adult population!) including credit card numbers, social security numbers, and drivers licenses are now exposed. This illustrates the fact that many government entities and private businesses simply do not have the necessary protocols in place to identify and prevent a penetration into their systems. And even the ones that do are networked with suppliers and partners that do not, making them vulnerable to attack through their own network. A 2017 Bloomberg survey found this is not just a problem in the United States, as 88% of companies in 79 countries surveyed self-identified as "very concerned" or "concerned" about cyber threats. As ambassador, I spent considerable time on this issue working alongside the U.S. military commands. I believe I can be a resource in helping the business community in establishing resilience tools to hacking threats.

“ This illustrates the fact that many government entities and private businesses simply do not have the necessary protocols in place to identify and prevent a penetration into their systems. And even the ones that do are networked with suppliers and partners that do not, making them vulnerable to attack through their own network. ”

*- Robert Sherman, Senior Advisor*

**One of your responsibilities at Rasky is to assist in crisis communications, especially regarding data breaches and cyber security. In an increasingly technological world, how can companies adapt to protect themselves and their online property from cyberattacks?**

Companies have two responsibilities. One is to protect themselves to the fullest extent possible from a breach. The second is to manage that breach quickly and competently in order to minimize damage as well as alert employees, customers, clients and anyone else for whom they hold personal information, that their data is at risk. The current Equifax breach is a case study. The breach occurred in mid-May but was not even discovered by the company until July 29th. That time lag gives the cyber criminals an incredible head start to not only do serious damage with the stolen information, but to cover their tracks as well. It demonstrates the magnitude of the problem that companies face. Equifax is a victim – its reputation and business have been catastrophically damaged. But so too are the 141 million people whose sensitive information is now unprotected. It was over five weeks after the company's discovery that it acknowledged the breach and its magnitude publicly. And since Equifax warehouses its information from other sources like credit card companies and retailers, people may not be aware that they are affected. I could be a victim, as could you. The individual notifications are only now being communicated via letter. This is the paradigmatic example of how a crisis communication firm is essential in the process. That firm should be brought into the C-suite from the moment of discovery, advising on the recipients of notification (regulators, customers, management, board, public, etc.), the manner of notification, and the contents (including advice to potential victims as to remediation steps). The notifications must be customized based on legal requirements, the objectives of the company, the interests of those individual affected, and the need to minimize the spread of further damage. There is only one chance to get the communications right and if it is not handled properly, the secondary damage may indeed be as bad as or worse than the original problem. The Equifax disaster – and it is a disaster – should be the latest wake-up call to all companies, no matter the size and scale, that they need to bring in knowledgeable consultants to evaluate their cyber security. Rasky Partners is a great resource in identifying those resources, as well as handling the crisis communications in the event of a cyber breach.

# Rasky Partners

**There is no shortage of PR and public affairs firms in Boston and Washington, DC. What sets Rasky apart from the rest when it comes to our approach?**

Upon leaving my position as ambassador, I had many opportunities. What thoroughly impressed me about Rasky Partners are the substantive knowledge, practical decision-making, collaborative atmosphere and results-driven approach of the professionals here. This is a fully integrated firm from Boston to Washington that is capable of handling an array of clients' needs in the public relations, public affairs and crisis communications space. The firm has an extensive reach in the business world as well as in government and both Republican and Democratic politics, meaning it is "one-stop shopping" for companies that utilize their services. And often overlooked but very important is the fact that besides being serious professionals, Rasky's staff are extremely nice people who enjoy what they do and working with each other as a team. That is the tone set at the top, and it transcends the whole organization. I am thrilled to now be part of such an exciting and dynamic organization!



## MEET THE EXPERT

Andy serves a broad range of clients in the firm's financial services, energy and telecommunications practice. Prior to joining Rasky, Andy implemented a successful digital and mail message strategy as the campaign manager for Representative Joe Driscoll's race for Norfolk County District Attorney. Previously, Andy worked in the Massachusetts Legislature as an Aide to Driscoll. His experience includes internships at the National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum and in the Office of Senator Edward Kennedy.

### ANDY HOGLUND

ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCIAL SERVICES, ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

#### What interests you most about public relations?

The variety. Each day brings new surprises. I think that's pretty unique for most jobs, frankly. But client service demands grace under pressure, a need to be both thoughtful and empathetic. It affords the chance to learn about a wide range of issues by pursuing expertise in a number of verticals. I think that's pretty cool. Given the different spaces our firm is involved in, I believe we have a wealth of knowledge that more boutique firms inherently lack.

(I'll try to avoid any declarative grandstanding from here on out.)

#### PR is a constantly evolving field. Where do you see it headed and what can professionals do to keep up?

Technology continues to open up "new frontiers" in the ways people communicate, which provides both enormous opportunities and challenges for PR professionals. Adapting to these new modes of communication and how people engage, interact, etc. is critical for established firms trying to meet this ever changing landscape. How we juggle these new tactics, reconcile them to strategy and present them as "value" is central to client service. It opens up a lot more narrative avenues: providing clients with new and imaginative ways for telling their story.

#### Prior to Rasky Partners, you served as a legislative aide to Massachusetts State Representative Joe Driscoll and as the campaign manager in his race for Norfolk County District Attorney. How have these experiences proved helpful in your associate vice president role here at the firm?

Working at the State House, and on the campaign trail, was the perfect foundation for a life in public relations. It was trial by fire. In a sense, there's no difference acting as a surrogate for an elected official or candidate than on behalf of a client. Messaging, tone, implementing a strategy, enacting deliverables for third parties – it's the same skill set. Representative Driscoll was a great boss, and I'm grateful to have cut my teeth learning from him, whether at a committee hearing, town hall or an early morning commuter rail station in Norfolk County, waiting for voters to arrive.

Working with him out of school was a nice marriage of my interests in communication, politics and policy, all while meeting the challenge of reaching people in a very digestible way. There is certainly an extension of that here at Rasky Partners. We recognize that communication is becoming more sophisticated – it's important to possess a deep understanding of the larger world if you want your story told in a way that the average person can appreciate and relate to.

# Rasky Partners

**In addition to your role at Rasky Partners, you're also a contributor to Huffington Post, Vice and Newsweek, among others. In what ways have these more journalistic roles helped you become a better a PR professional?**

It's been extremely helpful for honing my ability to pitch, write and think outside the box. It goes without saying, the ability to write in a meaningful way is a baseline qualification for working in PR. Thus, freelance writing is helpful in that way. Personally, it helps me understand what readers want to hear and what editors care about. So, it's a tremendous asset.

“ It goes without saying, the ability to write in a meaningful way is a baseline qualification for working in PR. Thus, freelance writing is helpful in that way. Personally, it helps me understand what readers want to hear and what editors care about. ”

*- Andy Hoglund, Associate Vice President*

**The financial services team won a Bell Ringer Award for Best Community/Consumer Affairs Campaign from the Publicity Club of New England last year for your work with Belmont Savings Bank. Can you offer a quick background on the campaign and share what you're most proud of when looking back at the work you did?**

Becca Pizzi was a Belmont resident as well as a customer at Belmont Savings Bank. As an avid runner, she decided to run seven marathons on seven continents in seven days as part of the World Marathon Challenge. Pretty incredible! She was the first American woman to accomplish this. Becca had all sorts of sponsors, with the bank serving as her local sponsor.

We sensed early on that some of her larger patrons didn't have their finger on the pulse, so to speak, in terms of the real story, so we stealthily reached out to reporters and positioned the bank's CEO, Bob Mahoney, as the voice from the local perspective. He became the surrogate for the average Belmont resident watching in awe as one of their neighbors made history. In addition to the bank throwing her a parade which garnered substantial TV coverage, there were a series of press opportunities leading up to, during and after the challenge. The coverage we secured speaks for itself. It included local and national hits, covering the whole nine yards.

To me, the campaign speaks to the idea that one should always be looking out for the next opportunity and be ready to take advantage of the news cycle.

**You've worked at Rasky Partners for six years now. In your mind, what sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to public relations?**

We're the best of both worlds. We're the largest independently owned firm in the country, so we have the flexibility and specialization of a boutique shop but also possess the resources and range of a larger firm to address communications challenges with a commitment to serve our clients. Whether it's financial services, energy, tech, healthcare, education or nonprofit, we're deep in that space in terms of both expertise and experience. Anywhere you see new and exciting things happening in Boston/DC, we've got a foothold. Our exactness and specialization is equally matched by the capabilities usually afforded by larger firms.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Well, clients have a range of expectations, needs and capabilities, so it's hard to give a general piece of advice. But broadly speaking, it's all about accessibility, cultivating relationships and identifying the right messaging for the right audiences. Making yourself available to reporters – while keeping your company's messaging in mind – is the best way to invest in your brand long term.



## MEET THE EXPERT

Lauren implements strategic communications campaigns for a variety of nonprofit, education and consumer clients. Prior to rejoining the firm, she served as Director of Public Affairs for Semester at Sea, managing communications and securing international and national media coverage. Lauren formerly served as Program Manager of Media Relations and Social Media for Boston's Museum of Science. Earlier in her career, she was account executive at the firm.

### **LAUREN JUDGE**

**ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, NONPROFIT, EDUCATION AND CONSUMER**

#### **What interests you most about public relations?**

I find it very fulfilling to help a client craft a message about their brand or various initiatives that then shapes the public's perception of that business. I think it's especially rewarding to help a client navigate communication around a challenging issue. Whether in business or social situations, I believe that there's always a way to communicate a message, regardless of how sensitive or uncomfortable the topic may be. It can be very satisfying when you find an approach and language that reflects your values and true stance on the matter at hand. I'm proud that our firm excels in assisting clients publicly define who they are, what they stand for, and why they matter.

#### **With PR being such a constantly evolving field, where do you see it headed and what can professionals do to keep up?**

The obvious answer is to stay current on the evolution of the social sphere and all things digital, but as the industry evolves with new waves of communication platforms and strategies, I think that many in our line of work have become hyper-focused on digital and often abandon all-encompassing communication tactics. Given that anything can be so easily publicized these days, it's more important now than ever before to keep a pulse on communication with every audience of a given business – internal staff, consumers, board members, alumni audiences if applicable, social followers, etc. – and make sure that all messages are unified. With social media omnipresent, everyone has become a reporter in a sense. People feel more empowered to share their personal stories from the workplace or elsewhere. This could have wonderful implications for a brand that is doing all the right things, or it could present challenging situations and reveal some skeletons. Companies need to assume that anything can become public knowledge, and PR professionals need to approach client work with a focus on every audience—not just the external audiences. Even if a company has the best values and intentions, if those intentions aren't clearly expressed in their communications or are conveyed to a limited audience, other PR efforts could be fruitless.

#### **Prior to Rasky Partners, you served as the Program Manager of Media Relations and Social Media for Boston's Museum of Science as well as the Director of Public Affairs for Semester at Sea. How have these in-house roles proved helpful as an associate vice president here at the firm?**

My two in-house roles provided me with a much more holistic view of the "client" as well as the opportunity to observe all of their various avenues of communication. I found it especially rewarding to be able to influence brand messaging in every aspect of the business, and integrate all communications efforts to ensure that everyone is speaking with one "voice."

Nonprofit communications teams (or a single person in many cases) often face the same PR expectations as major corporations, but without the luxury of a significant budget or a robust team. That is often due to the fact that their board

# Rasky Partners

members represent major corporations with large budgets and teams. I found that obstacle to be an exciting challenge – an underdog opportunity of sorts – in my in-house roles, and good insight for me to have now that I’m back on the agency side of the business.

Working for Semester at Sea was one of my most rewarding and challenging roles. We were a very small yet nimble team with a lot on the line. When I joined the team, the organization was going through a time of major transition. Senior leadership roles and faces were changing, the organization needed a new shipboard campus due to the financial challenges of ship ownership, and it was in the process of parting ways with now former academic partner, the University of Virginia. The program was also celebrating its 50th anniversary and there was a great deal to honor during a tricky time. In addition to those more “corporate” challenges, the program was sailing around the world with roughly 600 college students visiting 10 – 15 countries over the course of a semester. This presented us with constant PR risk – whether related to student behavior, world health and/or political events that impacted the voyage, or other concerns. At times it was easy to be a positive part of the news cycle given our progressive and global comparative focus, but it also presented some PR challenges depending on current world events. While juggling various PR matters and media worldwide, I was also responsible for drafting internal, prospective student, and alumni communications, the magazine and marketing collateral, advancement and presidential communications, leadership remarks, and more. Like most nonprofit communication positions, it was a job that took a lot of patience, balance, and teamwork, and during a time of high uncertainty and stress relative to major company changes. I think my SAS teammates would agree that our belief in the program and reliance on one another made us succeed, which is true for many nonprofit communication teams. And it didn’t hurt to be in close proximity of Virginia wine country...

Returning to the agency side of the business, I try to recollect the unique challenges and opportunities of in-house communicators. More often than not these professionals wear many hats, so I aim to be mindful of that with client work. My in-house experiences have also tested my ability to remain even-keeled in times of crisis or high stress. I think that’s an important quality for agency folks to maintain in any context as the client looks to the agency for guidance and reassurance.

“ Returning to the agency side of the business, I try to recollect the unique challenges and opportunities of in-house communicators. More often than not these professionals wear many hats, so I aim to be mindful of that with client work. ”

*- Lauren Judge, Associate Vice President*

**You were actually an account executive at Rasky earlier in your career. What has it been like to return to the Rasky family and in what ways has your previous experience here been valuable to you?**

Rasky was my first job out of college and I was determined to work here. It was the best decision I made for my career. It’s a very unique place. It’s a company where former employees are highly valued and often remain part of the family. To this day, I consider former Rasky employees and working moms Melissa Monahan and Kelly Lynch two of the best mentors I could have ever imagined. Through their graceful lead, constructive feedback, and model work ethic, I was able to develop my skills and confidence in this industry and build a strong foundation for my career. With workplace gender equality and the unique challenges of working moms rightfully garnering much attention these days, I feel fortunate for the example these two women set for me as a young professional.

# Rasky Partners

I returned to Rasky knowing that my work would be meaningful and I'd be alongside some of the best and brightest PR and PA executives. My Rasky colleagues are tenacious and creative. And fun. Our clients are inspiring and are often leaders in their industries. It's an honor to be a part of this firm and work alongside such impressive professionals.

**Your in-house experience along with your time here at the firm give you a unique perspective on the industry. In your mind, what sets the firm apart from the rest when it comes to its approach to PR?**

Of course I'm biased, but I think our firm does a great job in getting to know our clients, their work, their challenges, and their goals on a deeper level. We aren't afraid to have tough and honest conversations when necessary. When I was at the Museum of Science, I worked closely with Rasky. The client-to-firm relationship always felt very fluid, like Rasky was an extension of our internal team. It allowed for a very trusting and open relationship which is so critical to perfecting strategic communications.

**You're a former member of the U.S. National Synchronized Skating team, competing in four world championships and even performing on NBC's TODAY show. What have you learned from your years on the ice that has been of benefit as a PR professional?**

The art of spinning – whether it's a pair of skates or a story. JK, bad humor. In all seriousness, teamwork is everything. Absolutely everything. Your results are going to be stronger if you have multiple brains and perspectives working on a given project, plain and simple. But teamwork should be more than simply project collaboration; it's an opportunity for development and encouragement, both personally and among the other members of the team. It helps the team and the business if you applaud a teammate when they do a good job. It helps the team and the business when you respectfully coach a teammate in need of guidance. It helps the team and the business when you too are willing to accept advice from a teammate and recognize when you need some guidance – and you accept it with grace. The best results are realized when you collaborate openly, honestly, and respectfully. A true team player doesn't keep all the work to herself because it's the "only way she knows it will get done." You trust that your teammate can assist. If you're unsure if they have the necessary skills for a particular project, you still give them a shot and offer constructive feedback if the work needs finessing. Teamwork in business is not only about sharing work; it's about believing in one another and demonstrating that belief through everyday conversation and actions.

My skating team was national champions and among the top five teams worldwide each of the four years I was on the team not only because we relied on each other and believed in one another, but because we had a coach who accepted nothing less than our best efforts. She also expected excellence off the ice. Each of us was fully committed to achieving excellence – putting our best self forward not only athletically, but ethically. I once had a manager tell me that "nice girls don't go anywhere." I respectfully disagree. You can be nice and bold at the same time. A nice girl doesn't mean she doesn't have a backbone. She can be nice and take a strong stand when necessary. I think my years of skating taught me that and it's something I carry closely with me every day.

**If you could offer clients one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Identify your company's finest values and make sure they guide every decision you make and are reflected in every message you convey.

# Rasky Partners

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