

# LS2group Overview

February 2020



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# *What others may do, we strive to do **better.***

LS2group is a bipartisan public relations, marketing, and government affairs firm headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa.

- + public relations
- + marketing
- + crisis communications
- + public affairs
- + social media
- + government affairs
- + event planning
- + international counsel



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# LS2group Background

- + 2006: Founded in West Des Moines, as a bi-partisan public affairs firm.
- + Quickly expanded into public relations, government affairs, crisis communications, marketing, and social media out of our clients' needs for reliable, professional assistance to achieve success.
- + Headquartered in Des Moines; more than 50 employees across the Midwest and Washington, D.C.
- + Built on hard work and strong relationships.
- + Big enough to provide strong expertise and reach, not so big that clients get lost.
- + Relationships with national, regional, and local media to provide extensive reach to our clients.



# Clients



ENERGY TRANSFER



HARRIS VACCINES™



SIOUX CITY



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# Accessibility

- + We work to embed our team into our clients' culture.
- + Our work requires flexibility and adaptability to rapidly shifting landscapes.
- + We have presence throughout the Midwest and will provide onsite team members to assist as needed.
- + We devote 100% of our resources towards a successful outcome.

# Ongoing Relationships

- + We have an "all in" approach.
- + Regularly monitor media for issues in need of quick response.
- + Adapt in real time.
- + We work with companies and organizations of all sizes in a variety of sectors to strategically build out integrated public relations and marketing plans that get results.



# Testimonials

“LS2group is our partner in proactively positioning Harrisvaccines with national, industry, and local media. Whatever our need, we turn to LS2group.”

Joel H., Head of Sales and Marketing, Harrisvaccines

“LS2group has a thorough understanding of our needs and responds quickly to our requests, coupled with a vast network of strong relationships.”

Cary K., Director of Development, Rock Island Clean Line

“The work ethic at LS2group is beyond compare. They will literally not give up until they deliver a successful outcome.”

Jim E., CEO, Four Oaks

“LS2group is incredible when it comes to developing and implementing strategies to address complex problems.”

Meggan A., Principal, ADVOCATESincDC



## ***Ford Motor Company***

Identifying and advancing compelling themes and storylines that demonstrate the client's values.

For ten years, LS2group led a multi-faceted, grassroots communications and influencer engagement program on behalf of Ford Motor Company throughout the Midwest. That effort included event management and regular product and corporate storytelling to traditional and social media outlets and relevant stakeholders in the region.

LS2group conducted aggressive exploration of Ford Motor Company's network of engineers, dealers, customers, and manufacturing facilities to identify and pursue new, localized stories that reinforced Ford's values and industry leadership.

Through the team's ongoing efforts, we achieved:

- + Several hundred unique media pitches and positive earned media placements, including cover stories of major Midwest dailies
- + Coordination of dozens of events throughout an eight-state region, including product unveilings, jobs announcements, marketing tours, and charitable events
- + Development of strong relationships with key media and community stakeholders
- + Successful navigation of multiple crisis communication issues, including with local dealers and manufacturing facilities
- + Increased local brand awareness and favorability



# Case Study

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## ***Life Time Athletic Des Moines***

Developing an exciting, local narrative to successfully drive membership growth for a new business entering the market.

As Life Time Fitness – The Healthy Way of Life Company was building its first and only Iowa facility, it enlisted LS2group to increase brand awareness, favorability, and drive membership growth prior to the grand opening. Our team closely coordinated with Life Time to develop a comprehensive communications and events strategy, incorporating targeted outreach to key influencers and local media.

LS2group successfully leveraged relationships with stakeholders to establish positive connections with Life Time officials and create local brand ambassadors. Consistent, proactive outreach to targeted local media produced several positive media placements around the soon-to-open facility, including morning show interviews featuring the Kids Academy and an interview with the General Manager.

These efforts resulted in the following:

- + Execution of custom VIP events for key stakeholders within the community, including a day-long immersion trip to an existing facility in Minnesota
- + Consistent, positive buzz around the community within target demographics
- + Five major media outlets covering the grand opening in-depth, including a multi-page spread with several photos in the Des Moines Register
- + A cover story in the Des Moines Business Record on Des Moines health facilities which heavily featured Life Time Athletic – Des Moines
- + Six months of record-breaking membership sales ahead of the facility opening to the public

# Case Study



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# Case Study

## ***Harrisvaccines***

In 2014 and 2015, LS2group was able to help Harrisvaccines boost its brand awareness in a sea of competitors. The World Pork Expo boasts 20,000 annual visitors and around 400 exhibitors - it was crucial to differentiate Harrisvaccines to draw attendee interest.

Harrisvaccines had revolutionary products and processes so it chose to forego a more traditional large booth, instead using resources in wayfinding efforts. Success would be found in customer engagement, regardless of booth size.

To maximize success, LS2group implemented the following:

- + 380' banner running along the entrance to the grounds
- + 15' tall vaccine bottle-shaped sign
- + Pillar wraps and sponsored aisle signs throughout the Varied Industries Building
- + Booth swag and giveaways
- + Informational video in portable, branded packaging
- + Complemented marketing with robust media relations play - setting interviews for Harrisvaccines leadership with key outlets



**HARRISVACCINES™**



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# Case Study

## **Rembrandt**

Rembrandt, an Iowa company and the third largest egg producer in the world, lost millions of laying hens as the avian influenza outbreak swept across the country, despite industry-leading biosecurity protocols. A staggering 50 million chickens and turkeys were lost in total.

Throughout this crisis period, LS2group worked closely with Rembrandt, Iowa elected officials, federal leaders at USDA, members of Congress, and the media in order to effectively communicate key messages and updates, share best practices, and – most importantly – reassure consumers of product and personal safety.

LS2group served as a Rembrandt spokesperson during this time, and provided media training to key members of the company's leadership team – ensuring their preparedness for on-camera interviews. The team also created and implemented a comprehensive crisis communications plan and structure at the company that will remain in place well into the future.

Avian Influenza's negative impact was felt across the globe, but Rembrandt maintained its stellar reputation, despite arduous circumstances, and emerged as an industry thought leader.



# Case Study

## **Walmart**

Walmart enlisted the assistance of LS2group for public relations work in Iowa and in five other Midwestern states. For more than five years, LS2group showcased the company's new store openings, promotions, charitable contributions, and community partnerships while raising awareness of Walmart's positive impact on the community.

As the public relations and public policy consultant to Walmart, LS2group developed a 12-month annual strategic plan to advance Walmart's image and protect its market position. To this end, LS2group educated news media, community leaders, and elected officials on the value of Walmart's presence in the community.

As a result of LS2group's efforts, area consumers viewed the Walmart brand more favorably than before the campaign. Specifically, several stores reported higher sales after positive stories ran in their areas. Store associates were more engaged in store activity and community activity.





## Charles Larson

### ***Partner***

Charles Larson, Jr. specializes in communications with the legislative and executive branch of the federal government, media relations, and international business and trade.

Charles Larson was appointed by President George W. Bush to be the U.S. ambassador to Latvia. After confirmation by the U.S. Senate, Chuck was sworn in by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Jan. 7, 2008,

and served in this capacity until Jan. 20, 2009.

Prior to his appointment, Chuck served from 2003 to 2007 as an Iowa senator. From 1993 to 2001, he was a member of the Iowa House. While serving in the House, Larson chaired the House Economic Development Committee and the House Judiciary Committee.

As a major in the U.S. Army Reserves, Chuck served for a year in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service in combat and the Combat Action Badge. As a result of this experience, Chuck wrote *Heroes Among Us*, which profiles 29 heroes from the War on Terrorism. It was released in January 2008 by Penguin Publishing Group.

Chuck served on the Pearl Mutual Fund board of directors from 2006 until his appointment. He prosecuted as an assistant county attorney in Jones County, Iowa from 1997 to 1999. He was then named General Counsel for the ESCO Group, a Marion, Iowa, technology services firm with more than 250 employees. He served in this capacity until 2006. He was also chairman of the Republican Party of Iowa from 2001 to 2005 and served on U.S. Senator John McCain's presidential kitchen cabinet.

Chuck is a 1992 graduate of the University of Iowa, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics. He graduated with honors and distinction and is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honors society. He received his Juris Doctorate degree with distinction in 1996 from the University of Iowa College of Law. In May 2008, Latvian President Valdis Zatlers awarded Ambassador Larson the Order of the Three Stars, which is Latvia's highest award for his service to the country.

# Meet the Team

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## Karen Slifka

### ***Partner***

Karen Slifka specializes in developing and managing grassroots, grasstops, and public relations campaigns.

Karen works with clients to develop comprehensive grassroots campaigns, including grassroots and grasstops

mobilization, issue development, and media relations. She has also provided strategic and organizational services to candidates for office, state parties, and national campaign committees. She has extensive regional and national experience having worked in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Prior to starting LS2group, Karen served as midwest regional political director for the Republican National Committee, where she advised state parties and candidates for federal office in eight states throughout the upper Midwest. In 2004, she served in a similar capacity for President Bush's re-election campaign, and directed the grassroots campaign in the key battleground states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Her political experience also includes work with the National Republican Congressional Committee, several congressional and presidential campaigns, the Republican Party of Iowa, and Iowans for Tax Relief.

In addition to being a partner at LS2group, Karen is the founder and sole proprietor of Sgroup.

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## Joe Shannahan

### *Partner*

Joe Shannahan, partner, specializes in developing, implementing, and guiding public affairs and crisis communications activities for a number of private sector clients.

Joe has an extensive background in strategic communications and crisis communications.

By working directly with the client, Joe helps

individuals, businesses, associations, attorneys, and others navigate troubled waters by developing timely and targeted messages to help mitigate reputational damage and restore confidence during challenging times

From 1999 to 2002, Joe served as communications director and official spokesman for Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack. He also served as spokesman for U.S. Senator Tom Harkin's 2002 re-election campaign. Previously, Joe was the communications director for the Iowa Democratic Party and a research analyst for the Majority Caucus of the Iowa House of Representatives.

At LS2group, Joe directs and manages crisis communications efforts for a number of high profile clients entangled in national, regional, and state news events. He also provides on-camera media training for corporate executives, nonprofit organizations, government leaders, and others. With years of experience working with governmental entities, Joe assists LS2group clients in delivering targeted and unique messages to state and federal lawmakers. By building strategic alliances with unlikely allies, Joe creates coalitions that have a broader and deeper reach with policymakers.

Joe is a graduate of the University of Iowa. In addition to being a partner at LS2group, Joe is the founder and sole proprietor of Blue Sky Alliances.

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## Jesse Harris

### ***Partner***

Jesse Harris specializes in strategic campaign planning including the development, management, and implementation of grassroots programs.

Jesse has served in a variety of government and political positions, working to coordinate the activities of diverse partners including local, state, and federal candidate campaigns, organized labor, and other progressive organizations.

During the 2008 campaign cycle, Jesse was the coordinated campaign director for the Iowa Democratic Party and also assumed the role of early vote and get out the vote director for Barack Obama's general election campaign in Iowa. Prior to that, he served as political director for U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, and field director for Chet Culver's winning primary and general election gubernatorial campaigns in 2006. In those roles, he managed hundreds of employees, directed budgets, and developed field programs to support candidates running for state legislature, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, governor, and various other statewide offices.

In 2009, Jesse served as state director for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Change that Works campaign. In that capacity, Jesse developed a field, political, and communications strategy to engage membership and other activists in the federal health care debate. The following year, Jesse served as a senior aide to Iowa Secretary of State Michael Mauro, where he helped direct the business services division, supervised the office's communications operation, and assisted with administering the 2010 primary and general elections.

While at LS2group, Jesse has worked for a wide range of clients including Ford Motor Company, Alliant Energy, Iowa Fertilizer Company, and more.

Jesse graduated summa cum laude from Simpson College in Indianola with a double major in history and political science. He was named outstanding senior in both historical studies and political science.

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## Charles Midkiff

### ***Account Executive***

Charles specializes in national security, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism policy as well as political fundraising and political campaign management.

Prior to joining LS2group, Charles worked as a senior account executive with Wildfire Contact.

While there, he developed and coordinated direct mail communications for political campaigns and other organizations, provided insight to multiple campaigns on fundraising strategies and email programs, and analyzed polls and policy memos for his clients.

Charles additionally has served as finance director for the Andy McGuire for Governor campaign in Iowa, campaign manager for the Elizabeth Jones for Delegate campaign in Virginia, and a variety of other roles on numerous political campaigns. Charles has built and oversaw political campaign departments, developed and executed campaign media plans, organized grassroots field efforts, managed campaign budgets and fundraising, and worked closely with federal, state and local politicians.

Charles is a graduate of Syracuse University's College of Law where he received a Juris Doctorate and a Certificate of Advanced Study in National Security and Counterterrorism Law in 2017. He earned his undergraduate degree in 2013 at Radford University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in political science and history, with a minor in economics.

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*Thank you!*

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Thursday, February 13, 2020 at 9:34:51 AM Central Standard Time

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**Subject:** Call Follow-up  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 6:42:33 PM Central Standard Time  
**From:** Charles Midkiff  
**To:** Mike Saba  
**CC:** Chuck Larson, Karen Slifka, James Tobin, Kendall Benjamin  
**Attachments:** image001.png, LS2group Overview.pdf

Rep. Saba,

Good evening, I wanted to follow-up on our conversation this afternoon to thank you for taking the time to speak with our team. We really appreciated it.

Attached is LS2group's Overview as well for reference.

Thank you and please reach out if you have any questions.



**Charles Midkiff**

Account Executive

515.321.6076

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