

# R20KBRIDGE

## PROFESSIONAL BIO

Jim Merkel, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Rockbridge

Rockbridge founder and CEO James 'Jim' Merkel has over two decades of experience building and leading successful hospitality, investment, and operating brands. Jim has always focused on creating great teams while providing a vision for how to grow, lead, and identify opportunities for success in what is an ever-evolving industry landscape.

Jim founded Rockbridge with his partners in 1999 and has been leading the company through a 20-year anniversary celebration, which he branded as R20. The R20 brand identifies four core themes that drive Rockbridge's success. The company refers to them as its Rocks: Relevance, Relationships, Resilience and Responsibility. The R20 brand symbolizes slowing down to move forward, showing gratitude, being reflective, strategic and planful.

Under Jim's steady hand, Rockbridge continues to evolve and grow. Currently, Rockbridge has raised eight hospitality-focused funds and executed over 260 hotel investments in 38 states with transactions totaling over \$8.6 Billion. Through Jim's vision, Rockbridge develops, designs, and builds award-winning, independent and branded hotels that have delighted guests and investors, alike. Jim also formed RBHD, a leading hotel development and construction business. In 10 years, RBHD has performed \$1.4 Billion in renovation and ground up construction in 42 hotels.

Jim's passion and vision extend beyond Rockbridge and drive a strong commitment to making a difference in the communities in which Rockbridge operates. Jim created and launched RTRX, a leadership and innovation event that inspires curiosity, ignites conversation, and enables meaningful action. RTRX raises awareness and funding for high-risk cancer research and benefits Pelotonia, a 2-day cycling event in Columbus, Ohio. Through RTRX, Rockbridge has raised nearly \$6 Million in eight years. Additionally, Jim is the top, individual fundraiser in the nation for Big Brothers Big Sisters. His leadership

has driven Rockbridge to raise over \$1.2 Million dollars for BBBS. Because of Jim's dedication to the community, Rockbridge has been honored for three consecutive years as a top, philanthropic company in Central Ohio.

Over the past 20 years, Jim has held key leadership positions on multiple industry boards, including AHLA Board of Trustees, Hilton Hotels & Resorts Owner Advisory Council, Davidson Hotels & Resorts, Hospitality Ventures Management Group, Makeready, FHG Advisory Board, ILC Advisory Board, and the Lodging Industry Investment Council. He was honored as the C-suite Executive of the Year in Central Ohio in 2018. He is also a member of the Columbus Partnership. Additionally, Jim was recognized in 2019 as a Power 100 Executive in Columbus and was inducted into the Junior Achievement Central Ohio Business Hall of Fame. In 2020, Jim was honored as a Smart 50 Business Executive in Central Ohio.