

2023 Jack D. Rittenhouse Award Honors Steve Piersanti, Founder and past President of Berrett-Koehler Publishers



Seattle, WA – PubWest, the leading trade association of small- and medium-sized book publishers, has awarded its 2023 Jack D. Rittenhouse Award to **Steve Piersanti** of Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

The Rittenhouse Award was established in 1990 as a way to thank and honor those who have made an important contribution to the Western community of the book. The award is given annually in memory of Jack D. Rittenhouse, the West's legendary bookman.

Steve accepted the Rittenhouse Award from Awards Committee Chair Amy Barrett-Daffin of C&T Publishing during the PubWest 2023 conference, February 2, in Seattle, Washington.

Before founding Berrett-Koehler, Steve Piersanti spent 14 years at Jossey-Bass Publishers, rising from the rank of copywriter to become CEO from 1989-1991. He was fired from that position by Macmillan, the company's then-parent owner, because he refused to lay off staff during a period of record profits. The publishing community was shocked, and the publishing grapevine worked quickly. The very next day Steve was inundated with phone calls from community members who were unhappy about what had happened – offering their support.

As Steve said: "I began creating detailed plans for launching a new publishing company. But the momentum for starting Berrett-Koehler came much more from answering my phone and working with all the energy coming to me than from my plans. That is the real story of how Berrett-Koehler got started: an outpouring of support from authors, suppliers, service providers, and other friends."

Berrett-Koehler's mission is "connecting people and ideas to create a world that works for all." Steve designed BK to be driven by a commitment to stewardship: the notion that all those who contribute to the success of the organization should be equitably compensated for their contributions. Thanks to his leadership, the company is administered for the benefits of all stakeholders: authors, staff, customers, shareholders, business partners, the local community, and the environment. Similarly, Berrett-Koehler is owned, not by a handful of elites, but rather by hundreds of stakeholders who are deeply committed to the company's long-term success. In 2015, Steve guided BK to be the first book publisher to be both a Certified B Corporation and a California Benefit Corporation, thus preserving its mission under state law.

In addition to signing and editing hundreds of bestselling business books by such luminaries as Ken Blanchard, Brian Tracy, Meg Wheatley, the Arbinger Institute, and many others, Steve has demonstrated a career-long commitment to signing books that advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the workplace. As Berrett-Koehler President, he championed unique BK practices such as radical financial transparency and BK's signature "Author Day," which ensures all authors become full partners in the publication of their books. Steve stepped down from the role of President several years ago, but he continues to serve as the company's most esteemed and prolific signing editor and as a member of the company's board of directors. He also founded the organization Latter Day Saints in Publishing, Media, and the Arts; he served as that organization's first president and now serves as their director of conferences.

Perhaps one of the best quotes we've read about Steve is this from BK's Editorial Managing Director Jeevan Sivasubramaniam: "Real leaders don't prattle on about leadership. They just do it. And that's what Steve does."

About PubWest: PubWest is a nonprofit trade association for North American book publishers—from small independent presses to publishing companies with worldwide operations—and related professionals, such as printers, designers, binderies, and publishing freelancers. For more information, please visit www.pubwest.org.

For more information on PubWest, PubWest 2023, Jack D. Rittenhouse, the Rittenhouse Award, and past recipients, please visit <http://pubwest.org/>.

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