

Aqua Hotels & Resorts is Hawaii's first 'employee-owned' hotel company

Owners Mike and Aida Paulin give employees a 'piece of the rock'

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii – Mike Paulin, Owner & CEO of Aqua Hotels & Resorts, a full-service hotel management company, executed the final details of the Employee Stock Ownership Plan that converts Aqua into Hawaii's first 'employee-owned' hotel company. This significant achievement makes it possible for Aqua's 500 employees to become 'co-owners' of the growing Waikiki-based hotel company.

Aqua's new and unique hotel ownership status is unprecedented in the Islands. Aqua believes hospitality is a highly personal business and this model further motivates employees, who are the cornerstone of the company's success, by giving them a 'piece of the rock' for their diligent work and loyalty.

According to Paulin, "Aida (Mrs. Paulin) and I are sharing 30% of the company with our employees. Each member of the Aqua ohana is eligible to become a co-owner of Aqua after a fixed vesting period." The value of the initial percentage share of the company is just over \$8 million. At a later time, the Paulin's plan to allocate more ownership of Aqua to their employees.

Paulin believes that the company's product is its employees and its structure is the service it provides. "I have no doubt that Aqua's ESOP will attract the best people in the industry to our organization contributing further to our highly regarded service," added Paulin. "Our ESOP comes at a time when Aqua's excellent customer satisfaction ratings are leading Waikiki hotels."

Currently, three Aqua hotels rank in the top 10 of the consumer-driven TripAdvisor ratings and Aqua Waikiki Wave was awarded "Hawaii Region #1 "Best Hotel Values for 2008" by Budget Travel magazine.

While still a fairly 'new' company, Aqua's employees have worked very hard to provide excellent service to their guests and create a highly respected Hawaii hotel brand. "Employee ownership is our way of thanking our ohana for making Aqua the Waikiki leader in guest service and we're thrilled to make Aqua the first employee-owned hotel company in Hawaii," added Paulin. "Employee briefings to explain the benefit and qualification process are scheduled. There is no cost to the employee for their participation in this benefit."

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Since January 2008, Aqua has added three hotels to its growing portfolio – Park Shore Waikiki, Aqua Waikiki Beachside and Aqua Honolulu Prince, increasing its Waikiki presence to 13 unique properties and adding new employees who will also become eligible to share in the success of the organization.

About Aqua Hotels & Resorts

Aqua Hotels & Resorts, a full-service hotel management company, was founded in 2001 by Hawaii hotelier Mike Paulin who started out as a merchant seaman sailing Hawaiian waters in the 1950's. Since then, he has launched several Hawaii hotel companies including Colony Hotels, Marc Resorts and, with Andre Tatibouet, grew Aston Hotels to International prominence. In 2005, the company launched the Aqua Boutique Collection, appealing to the sense of style and attitude of today's savvy traveler. In 2006, the Aqua Lite Line was added to represent the company's transitional and value product. In late 2007, the Aqua Elite brand was unveiled offering sophisticated style and a unique combination of exceptional guest service and innovative technology appealing to both business and leisure travelers.

In 2007 and 2008, Aqua Hotels & Resorts was ranked the #8 'Fastest 50' growing Hawaii Company by Pacific Business News.

Currently, Aqua's chain-wide inventory of unique properties is located exclusively in Waikiki where it is TripAdvisor's most 'honored' hotel company.

Visit www.aquaresorts.com for more information about the company and individual hotels. For reservations, see your preferred travel agent or call Aqua toll free at 1-866-406-2782.

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