

## **Benjamin Rafter named President and CEO of Aqua Hotels & Resorts and it's Portfolio of 12 Waikiki Hotels**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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WAIKIKI BEACH, Hawaii – Mike Paulin, owner and Chairman of Aqua Hotels & Resorts, announced the appointment of Benjamin Rafter as President and CEO of the Waikiki-based hotel company which operates 12 hotels under the Aqua Boutique and Aqua Lite brands. In this position, Rafter is charged with advancing the company's global growth strategy.

“Ben is a genuine rising star in the hospitality and technology industries, contributing a broad range of leadership experience to the Aqua team,” said Paulin. “His background says it all, as he has co-founded or led e-commerce and travel companies in Seattle, Las Vegas and Honolulu. He worked in marketing and distribution at Westin Hotels & Resorts and his relationships with Cambridge Technology Partners and Wasserstein & Co. have provided him a broad view of corporate America.”



“Ben is well equipped to deal with the challenges of Hawaii's ever changing and competitive marketplace. He shares our vision that Aqua is on its way to becoming an international brand renown for service and cultural authenticity. His appointment allows me to expand my role working with our hotel owners and delivering on Aqua's service standards and promises to our customers,” added Paulin.

Rafter said, "Aqua brings a new, refreshing approach to the Hawaii-hotel experience. As the only employee-owned hotel company in Hawaii, all team members and owners share in our success." Rafter adds, "Aqua is well positioned to capitalize on the current downturn as hotel owners seek more effective options to current management. I'm excited about expanding Aqua's local-boutique experience to resort destinations worldwide."

Paulin adds, "As I enter my 50th year of working in Hawaii, I am more than comfortable turning over the day to day operations of a growing hospitality company to as energetic and dynamic a person as Ben. He possesses the experience, intellect, and affability to grow Aqua into one of the most respected global brands based in Hawaii."

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Rafter has spent more than 15 years guiding successful technology and travel companies. He has created global innovation centers, acted as a principal strategist for Fortune 500 and startup companies and founded thriving companies of his own.

Most recently, he was president and CEO of JetAway/Travelworm, a Las Vegas-based online travel retailer focusing on casino and leisure vacation markets across the United States. Prior to Travelworm, Rafter was CEO of Get2Hawaii, a Honolulu-based dynamic packaging technology company and online aggregator of travel inventory. Previously Rafter directed Cambridge Technology Partners' Innovation Center and NewCo Solutions practices. In 1996, he and two partners founded Innerlinx (renamed LiveBid) which was acquired by Amazon.com. He began his career in the marketing and distribution department of Westin Hotels & Resorts.

High-rez DIGITAL IMAGE is available upon request.

#### **About Aqua Hotels & Resorts**

Aqua Hotels & Resorts is a full-service hotel management company founded in 2001 by Hawaii hotelier Mike Paulin. In 2005, the Aqua Boutique Collection was launched, with a focus on service, experience and value, appealing to today's budget conscious traveler. In 2006, the Aqua Lite Line was added to represent the company's transitional and best rate product. 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 Oahu's value leader and TripAdvisor's most 'honored' hotel company.

Visit [www.aquaresorts.com](http://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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