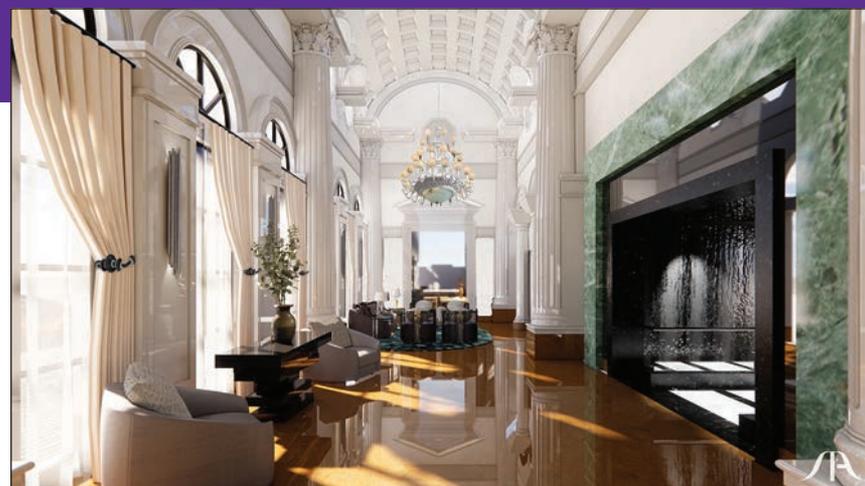


## Dream Maker Culture

An Interview with  
**Deborah Yager Fleming, Chief Executive Officer & Partner,**  
**Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach**



Rendering of the new lobby at Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach

**EDITORS' NOTE** Deborah Yager Fleming joined Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach in March 2004 after having served as Vice President, Sales & Marketing, at Island Outpost where she managed marketing campaigns for 12 boutique hotels. She also garnered valuable experience in New York at Leading Hotels of the World where she held senior management positions and implemented the design of worldwide sales strategies and innovative marketing programs.



Deborah Yager Fleming

**PROPERTY BRIEF** With a lushly landscaped 4.5-acres of seaside bliss, world-class restaurants, curated amenities and spacious rooms and suites, all with balconies and water views, Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach ([acqualinaresort.com](http://acqualinaresort.com)) is at the center of Miami's Sunny Isles Beach providing an exclusive experience and an ultra-luxurious beach lifestyle. The property is the recipient of the coveted Forbes Five Star Award and the AAA Five Diamond Award. Acqualina was recently recognized by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, a division of ISSA – The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association, as a confirmed GBAC Star accredited facility acknowledging Acqualina's increasing best practices and protocols for sanitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Will you provide an overview of Acqualina Resort and what makes the property so special?**

The magic begins as guests enter through gilded wrought iron gates and ascend upon a cobblestone path that curves to reveal an impressive domed cupola and the first of many artistically designed fountains. Beauty and artistic features flourish throughout the property. Guests are welcomed and greeted by a warm and passionate team who care about what they do and love going out of their way to create "WOW" stories. It has resulted in numerous awards – one we are most proud of is the TripAdvisor award, based on guest comments, as the best luxury beachfront hotel in the U.S. In addition, we are a Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond awarded resort. We offer a 4.5-acre backyard of seaside bliss, excellent restaurant options, and large rooms

and suites, all with balconies and water views. As Florida's only hotel of its kind, built open to the sea with no structural or visual barriers, Acqualina evokes a Mediterranean lifestyle steps off the pristine sand into the Atlantic. The lush grounds are dotted with umbrellas in the resort's signature red color and lounge chairs punctuate the blue and green hues of its natural surroundings. The gorgeous beachfront location has outdoor living room settings with lounge furniture surrounded by

palm trees. Our five-star service and pristine grounds blend both luxury and convenience for our guests. Our attentive team makes sure every need is met. That includes everything from serving a Mediterranean lunch on the beach to organizing exclusive beachfront dinners at night.

**Acqualina Resort is committed to continuous improvement and investment in the property. What can guests expect from the property as they look to the coming year?**

We have been working on the new lobby designs and look forward to transforming the space into an even more beautiful gathering place for our residents and hotel guests in the coming months. The new designs allow us to modernize the space while keeping the magnificent "bones" of our beloved gallery and condominium lobbies. We commissioned STA Architectural Group to help us to achieve this objective. The palette is influenced by the emerald green waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The stately architectural features of the space will be enhanced and highlighted with varying shades of whites. The furniture will be a selection of contemporary luxury brands, in addition to magnificent area rugs. Our gallery will still be very dramatic and warm and welcoming for all who enter.

We are also looking to enhance our guest rooms and suites at Acqualina. We have selected a new design concept for all our bathrooms inspired by the Classic European Style. We will be using "Vena Oro" marble with a white base and touches of figuring in the veins creating a light and fresh look that will brighten the entire space. Light textured wall coverings will complement the marble with the intent of further lightening up the space,

while a modern wall-to-wall edge-lit mirror completes the fresh, new look. Additionally, we are changing the overall color palette from ivory to white. Our guests will see this throughout, including our slippers and robes and other room touches we have planned. It's always an exciting time at Acqualina as we continue to offer an exceptional lifestyle with unrivaled amenities.

**How did Acqualina Resort adapt its business to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and how proud are you to see the resilience of your team during this unprecedented time?**

We focused on key feeder domestic markets as well as on new local markets. Our sales team continuously promoted our resort through various digital events. We conducted wellness checks and maintained a connection with our guests and the travel advisory community. We adjusted our marketing communications to offer more visuals and wellness, romance, epicurean and family time programs. In addition, we launched campaigns featuring our spacious suites to include 38 two-bedroom suites and several three-bedroom suites, many with private office space ideal for those wanting to work remotely in a resort environment or for homeschooling.

Our incredible team had to and continues to pivot to address the ever-changing guidelines regarding the pandemic. We continue to remain agile and to adjust our operations by following guidelines set forth by local government officials and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Our team has been supportive every step of the way throughout these challenging times. Their commitment and efforts have helped us maintain our repeat business and have increased our guest satisfaction score to 96 percent. Our leadership regularly meets to ensure we provide a safe environment for all of our team members, residents and guests which has provided a great level of confidence and peace of mind to all. I am extremely proud and grateful to have a passionate, dynamic team. Every team member goes above and beyond to take care of our guests. Their resilience throughout the pandemic continues to be a source of inspiration for me.

**What has Acqualina Resort done to enhance its health and safety protocols coming out of the pandemic?**

We are among the first hotels in the world to become Sharecare Health Security VERIFIED™ with *Forbes Travel Guide*. This comprehensive facility verification helps ensure that guests and travel planners can book with confidence at Acqualina based on the hotel's compliance with expert-validated best practices that minimize the risk and impact of COVID-19 and potential future public health events. Acqualina also achieved global sanitation accreditation by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council as a confirmed GBAC Star accredited facility. This makes Acqualina Resort one of the few hotels in the world to receive both accreditations. The GBAC certification and guidance assisted us in building strict processes regarding health security, and Sharecare and *Forbes Travel Guide* verified that our practices and protocols were implemented successfully. Attaining the highest seals of approval in outbreak prevention reinforces our commitment to providing great living and lifestyle experiences with the most rigorous health and safety standards in place.

Our resort's extensive safety measures include the use of innovation sanitation technology in all interior and exterior areas including electrostatic disinfectant tools that combine EPA-approved chemicals with electrostatic molecules to sanitize all spaces ensuring that every area of the property has been effectively and regularly cleaned to the highest standard. This is in addition to our superior level of cleaning and hygienic protocols in place already, as well as frequent hand washing, use of gloves and face masks.

**Will you discuss Acqualina Resort's commitment to service and focus on employee training?**

Our Dream Maker Culture of inspired team members who deliver daily "WOW" moments to our guests creates the foundation for our success. We ensure through our



*Deluxe One-Bedroom Oceanfront Suite living room*

training programs that our team members feel prepared and have the tools they need to be successful. We continuously invest in a quality employee experience with our company and believe in empowering and entrusting each team member to be a dream maker. Our goal is to provide a place where our team members can be confident and effectively communicate and enthusiastically deliver the highest level of service. We take time to appreciate and recognize each team member and openly listen and understand their needs. We have open forums and opportunities for our team members to share new insights and ways we

can work together to achieve greater success. We have dedicated GEMs (guest experience managers) for each guest and invest in technology platforms to share information quickly and fulfill our guest requests.

**How do you define a true luxury hospitality experience today?**

I believe it is fulfilled through human connection and a consistent commitment to a quality experience. We need to provide our guests with options that they are comfortable with such as using the Acqualina app to request service or access to individuals that can offer assistance. We strive to give each guest a great living experience through trust and great value. Our care and attention to each person are key to making a welcoming and great place for our guests to feel at ease and connected to us. Investing in quality to maintain and offer enhanced benefits continues to be necessary for luxury.

**What advice do you offer young people interested in a career in the hospitality industry?**

There are so many facets to the hospitality industry that makes it exciting every day. The ability to connect with people from different places and learn about them can be truly rewarding. When you work in hospitality, you become a part of a community, a village of individuals who work together to achieve common goals and support one another. Innovation and creativity are greatly welcomed as well as diversity and inclusion. There is always an opportunity to advance in hospitality – you can constantly grow and learn. Ask for help if you need it, and it will be there for you. ●



*The front lawn of Acqualina Resort & Residences on the Beach*