

Category A2: Kristin Valette Wirth, PADI

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BIOGRAPHY

Kristin Valette Wirth, Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer for PADI Worldwide, is responsible for setting the direction for the PADI brand in the global marketplace, implementing marketing programs to attract non-divers and divers into PADI's scuba diver and freediver training programs, acquiring and retaining individual, dive center and resort members, and developing effective promotions and marketing programs to meet sales goals. She is also responsible for determining and leading the strategic direction of the company and overseeing key business development opportunities for the PADI brand. She is a member of the PADI Worldwide executive team who is responsible for the overall operations of the global company.

Wirth came to PADI more than 21 years ago to work in the Legal and Risk Management Department where she stayed for two years before moving to the Project AWARE Foundation (an environmental non-profit organization created by PADI) where she assumed the role of Executive Director. During her time with the Foundation, she managed the development of public awareness and education campaigns, public service announcements, instructional curriculum and environmental events.

Her articles and contributions have been published in numerous industry magazines, web sites and manuals. She has given educational and marketing presentations throughout North America, Central & South America, Asia Pacific and Europe, and has testified in front of state and federal legislators on a variety of issues.

With 24 years of experience in the scuba diving industry, including several years managing a dive center in Santa Barbara, California, an MBA in Marketing, and a PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer rating, Wirth brings a unique combination of experience and passion for diving to PADI Worldwide.

ISSUE STATEMENT

In running for the DEMA Board of Directors, I'm asked to write a short statement about a major issue facing the dive industry today. The problem is, we face more than one: environmental damage, government regulations, competing recreations and shifting spending patterns due to online commerce. But, of all the challenges we face, probably the most urgent (from a business perspective) is the number of new divers entering our sport. As Baby Boomers and Gen X'rs age, we increasingly rely on younger generations to fall in love with diving. As a DEMA Board Member, I would collaborate with fellow industry stakeholders to reach outside of our industry and creatively appeal to the future generation of divers.

Although the dive industry faces challenges, doesn't every industry? And, let's face it, this won't change – as we overcome today's trials, we take on tomorrow's. This isn't a problem – it's what an industry does as long as it exists. Prevailing over our struggles isn't always easy, but that's neither new nor unique to diving.

I wholeheartedly believe we will not only overcome these challenges, but diving can experience significant growth in the coming years, if we make some changes. The most important is that dive industry stakeholders must address these key issues with unified, collaborative actions. If we continue with disjointed individual efforts, we won't see significant growth. Although we're competitors internally, as we address our mutual challenges we must set this aside as we aggressively recruit new divers, re-attract inactive divers, embrace changes in consumer trends and demographics, and take on the legal and environmental problems we face together.

The DEMA Board must be made up of passionate people who believe in the same goals and priorities, and have the fortitude to drive toward them. This core group will influence a "critical mass" that will carry out the plans to dramatically uptrend diving's growth curve.

I'm running for the DEMA Board this year because I believe in our industry, I believe in its future growth, and I believe in working together toward shared goals. It's not only possible, but essential, that we do so.