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Building on a Legacy: Kim Taylor and Nate Brooks Propel JAMS Forward

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JAMS may be the largest private provider of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services today, but the company got its start in 1979 with a simple, ambitious vision. Founded by Hon. Warren Knight (Ret.), JAMS was created to provide a better way for people to resolve legal disputes outside the courtroom. What began as a small operation has grown into a global leader known for its exceptional panel of neutrals and a steadfast commitment to helping clients settle their most complex cases through mediation and arbitration.

Now, JAMS is entering a new chapter of leadership and innovation with the launch of JAMS Next, an initiative aimed at embracing cutting-edge technology and forward-thinking practices to drive the future of ADR. Kim Taylor, who has been with the organization for over two decades, has officially taken on the role of CEO and president. With her deep experience in operations and extensive legal background, Kim is uniquely positioned to guide JAMS into its next phase of growth. Alongside her, Nate Brooks, who previously served as senior vice president and chief financial officer, is expanding his role to include chief operating officer, bringing fresh insight into operational strategy and business development.

In the sections that follow, Taylor and Brooks outline their approaches, with Taylor emphasizing her focus on leadership and client service, and Brooks detailing his operational strategies for expanding JAMS' reach and capabilities.

Kim Taylor: A Leader With Vision

"I was fortunate to join JAMS as a business manager in 1999 as the company celebrated its 20th



anniversary. I had practiced law in Ventura County, California, also clerking for the presiding justice of the 2nd District Court of Appeal, Division Six. I had no management or operations experience at the time, but I applied some of the things I loved best about being a lawyer to this new role: identifying and addressing challenges, finding solutions and helping the organization and our clients move forward.

One of the things that attracted me to JAMS then, and is still true today, is the organization's commitment to delivering the highest-quality client service through a stellar panel of neutrals and exceptional case administration. As I progressed through the organization—it has remained true to its commitment to exemplary client service while we also live out our values of neutrality, integrity, innovation and diversity.

I am excited to lead JAMS at this particular time, as the business and legal worlds have emerged from a global pandemic more resilient and flexible than ever and are embracing accelerated technology tools like artificial intelligence. I am so proud of JAMS' agility and innovation and look forward to continuing to

solidify and expand JAMS as a leader in ADR services,” said Taylor.

Nate Brooks: Expanding the Role of Operations

“I joined JAMS at the start of the pandemic as the CFO. At that time, none of us could have predicted that the pandemic would stretch over years, not just weeks or months, and profoundly reshape the ADR landscape. I was extremely impressed by the speed with which JAMS transitioned to virtual arbitrations and mediations, setting a new industry standard. Even today, JAMS continues to embrace cutting-edge technology, including AI, to meet our clients’ needs through in-person, hybrid or fully virtual hearings.

I am honored to expand my role as CFO to include COO responsibilities. I am excited to continue aligning practice and business development with streamlined processes and enhanced operational efficiencies. One key benefit of the virtual ADR model has been our ability to enter markets where JAMS may not have a physical presence, allowing us to serve clients nationwide. This virtual expansion has also opened doors for physical growth, positioning JAMS to meet client demands wherever and whenever they arise.

Over the past four-plus years, the senior management team has worked collaboratively to develop the strategic pillars that guide JAMS and advance the ADR industry. These pillars serve as the foundation for our operational tactics, ensuring JAMS’ long-term financial success. I look forward to facing the challenges ahead and celebrating our shared achievements,” stated Brooks.

The Legacy of Chris Poole

Taylor went on to explain that when Chris Poole was named CEO in 2007, she had been with JAMS for about eight years. “The company was well-run under our prior CEO, Steve Price, and I was impressed with Chris’ embrace of and respect for Steve’s and our founders’ vision of ensuring that JAMS set the standard of excellence by which all dispute resolution services would be measured,” added Taylor.

She further explained that Poole brought unique skills to the role based on his prior executive and technology experience, but he didn’t try to disrupt a

thriving organization. Instead, he harnessed the great talent of JAMS neutrals and associates and—employing his unique professional background—navigated the company during a 17-year period of sustained growth and success.

“On a personal note, Chris has been a great mentor to both of us, intentionally planning for his eventual succession to ensure JAMS’ ongoing success. We are thankful he is continuing to serve the organization as CEO Emeritus for the near future,” said Brooks.

JAMS’ Strategic Goals and Future Outlook

Both Brooks and Taylor look forward to building on Poole’s legacy, driving continued innovation of ADR services and keeping the organization at the forefront of technological advancements to meet the evolving legal landscape. “We plan to expand our presence both globally and domestically, entering new markets that align with our core strengths, leveraging virtual platforms that are not necessarily dependent on brick-and-mortar locations. Enhancing client service will be a key priority,” stated Taylor. “By refining our processes, leveraging AI and cutting-edge technologies and fostering a client-first mindset, we will maintain our competitive edge and continue delivering exceptional value to our clients,” concluded Nate.

The Evolution of ADR

As more people realize the undisputed benefits of ADR mechanisms, the industry will continue to grow. Eventually, the word “alternative” won’t be needed because mediation and arbitration will be the most common ways for parties to resolve their disputes. In some places, that may mean more regulation of the industry, which JAMS is well positioned to handle.

The leadership transition at JAMS marks a significant moment in the company’s history, with Taylor and Brooks stepping forward to continue the legacy of innovation and excellence in ADR services.

