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**DEALER
PROFILE**

DEALER PROFILE:

AQUA RESOLUTION: MAKING THE MOVE FROM ANOTHER WATER COMPANY TO HIS OWN RAINSOFT DEALERSHIP.



After selling water treatment systems for two other companies, Tom Norton (left) decided to strike out on his own in 2013 and opened Aqua Resolution, the exclusive RainSoft dealership for the Chicagoland area.

Tom Norton is a moneyman.

He started his career as an investment banker in Chicago. Then moved to Las Vegas where you might say his bank got broke. Returning to Chicago, he fell into a job selling water treatment systems for a RainSoft competitor. Discovering that he was pretty good in this new role, Norton soon became a sales manager. He was making pretty good money, but something was missing.

With his entrepreneurial drive, Norton found himself wanting to go out on his own. And there was something intriguing about the possibilities of owning a RainSoft dealership.

“Being in the water business I obviously knew that RainSoft was a major player,” said Norton. “But more important than their name was their reputation. I had reps working for me who used to sell RainSoft, and they never had anything but positive words to say about the company and their products. That spoke volumes.”

The deal closer.

“Then some other associates clued me in about The Home Depot relationship. That got me interested enough to arrange a meeting with RainSoft Regional Director Alan Kniffen. There was a lot that Alan had to tell me that day, but the deal closer was definitely The Home Depot affiliation.”



Prior to making their appointed in-home water tests with consumers later that day, the Aqua Resolution sales team undergoes a training session.

"Everybody knows The Home Depot brand," said Norton, "which is why it appealed to me so much. Selling water treatment for another company, the number one objection I got from customers was 'we've never heard of you, we don't know who you are.' But when you can attach The Home Depot name to your company, nobody wonders who you are anymore." (More on The Home Depot later.)

So in 2013, Tom Norton founded Aqua Resolution LLC, the exclusive RainSoft dealership for Chicagoland and northern Illinois.

Getting started.

"With other water treatment companies there was no training, no support," said Norton. "But right off the bat RainSoft sent in Ryan Kraft, their regional sales trainer. Ryan helped me recruit my reps and train them on the RainSoft process. Alan Kniffen also joined in, and the two of them got everybody comfortable and confident."

"RainSoft's lifetime warranty was a big deal to my reps, because other warranties in the industry were limited to just the tank, not the valve, not the electronics, not everything like RainSoft's. The iPad presentation was also huge," Norton added. "It made the pitch books we used with other companies seem prehistoric."



"I've worked with other water treatment manufacturers, but they're not even close to being in the same ballpark as RainSoft."

Tom Norton, Founder of Aqua Resolution LLC

Off to business school.

In addition to on-site training, there's also RainSoft University. "It's where they teach you the entire business of water," said Norton. "It's a weeklong seminar covering all the ins and outs of how to run a profitable service business. Service is the key word, because service is something we didn't do at those other water companies. But with RainSoft, service is key to repeat sales for filter replacements, routine maintenance and upgrades far down the road."

Into The Home Depot.

RainSoft University also gave Norton insights on ways to use The Home Depot as a marketing partner. "Once we were approved by Home Depot as an Authorized Service Provider, we began placing water test kit displays in the 52 stores in our area."

With headlines asking the question: What's in Your Water? The test kit display offers customers a free



As a prime source for lead generation, Aqua Resolution offers free water analysis with displays set up in 52 Home Depot stores along with surveyors who walk the aisles.

water test if they take home one of the display's sample bottles, fill it with tap water and return it in the postage paid envelope. A follow-up call gives the consumer the test results of the sent sample, along with an offer to do a more extensive in-home test. It's run in conjunction with an iPad presentation that tells homeowners about the benefits of RainSoft treated water as they see, taste and feel the difference that water can make.

"We also staff stores with our own surveyors who walk the aisles polling people on their water," added Norton. "This leads to even more in-home appointments. In addition, we get leads on customers who sign up for Home Depot's Appliance Longevity Program."

"Another great aspect about Home Depot is the options they present for financing," said Norton. "If they want, customers can make their purchase with their Home Depot credit card. Or they can arrange for financing with no interest for 12 months, even if the lead didn't come through The Home Depot."

Valuable, experienced advice.

If all that isn't enough fuel to power a dealership's startup, there's dealer networking. Since every dealership has its own exclusive sales territory, there's no competition between them and that leads to a lot

of calls and emails between dealers for experienced advice on how to handle operations and marketing.

There are also regional sales conventions, and every two years an international convention.

"The best part about the conventions are the training sessions," said Norton. "You're hearing from the best of the best. Very successful people. I had already been selling for a while, but I learned things at my first convention that I never would have thought of. The other thing that amazed me was the family-like atmosphere. They call it the RainSoft Family. And I really saw and felt that family connection even though I was the new kid on the block."

Norton's take on his business venture.

Summing up his first two-and-a-half years as a RainSoft dealer, Norton said: "Business is pretty good. We're in a growth stage. We need to expand. We're moving into a new office and we need to recruit more good people."

Then he added, "I've worked with other water treatment manufacturers, but they're not even close to being in the same ballpark as RainSoft. The support I get from my regional director and my regional trainer has been overwhelming. They've helped me with everything. It doesn't get any better than that."

"The number one objection I got from customers was 'we've never heard of you, we don't know who you are.' But when you can attach The Home Depot name to your company, nobody wonders who you are anymore."

Tom Norton, Founder of Aqua Resolution LLC

Homeowners Only Please



**FREE WATER
TEST**

It's simple and only takes a minute.
Please respond within 48 hours.

DO YOU KNOW
YOU

**HOME
SERVICE**

"Homeowners Only"
Please follow these instructions:

1. Turn on cold water of kitchen sink and let run for 2 minutes.
2. Fill small plastic bottle with water.
3. Please complete all questions on survey.
4. "Insert" bottle and survey form in return mailer provided.
5. "Place" mailing in mailbox.

FREE WATER
And Quality
Home Depot

This is a complimentary service with City Water or County Water. Number and name of test. Offered only for the counties of Home Depot, including all independent businesses.



About RainSoft

Headquartered in Roselle, Illinois, RainSoft, a division of Aquion, Inc., is an international company with over 150 authorized and independently owned dealerships in the U.S. and 20 other countries. The company is dedicated to producing the world's finest water treatment systems, all of them manufactured in the U.S.A. and backed with the industry's strongest lifetime warranties. For more information, visit RainSoftDealer.com or call 1-866-4RAINSOFT (866) 472-4676.