

COMMERCE

Delta board member George N. Mattson named CEO of Wheels Up

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Mr. Mattson will bring 25 years of industry experience to the role. Image credit: Wheels Up

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Private aviation firm **Wheels Up** has appointed a new chief executive.

George N. Mattson, a longtime member of United States-based travel player Delta Airlines' board of directors, will step into the role of CEO at the jet charter company, taking over for Todd Smith who served as an interim option and will remain onboard as CFO. In the wake of an emergency cash infusion reviving Wheels Up's chances of survival, Mr. Mattson will begin his tenure in the top-ranking position next month.

"In 10 years, Wheels Up has grown from a startup into a global leader in private aviation, with a strong consumer brand and loyal member community," said Mr. Mattson, in a statement.

"I look forward to leading the Wheels Up team, with the operational, commercial, strategic and financial support of Delta and our other new investors," he said. "Delivering best-in-class operating performance and exceptional customer experiences, consistently and profitably, will attract more members to our community as we begin the next chapter of the Wheels Up story.

"Our alignment with Delta provides an incredible opportunity for the first time in aviation history to create seamless experiences between the separate ecosystems of private and commercial travel."

Airborne rebound

Mr. Mattson has been working in the aviation industry for over two decades, counting roles as a strategic advisor, financier, entrepreneur and director among his credentials.

The executive wields a wealth of business experience, having served as co-head of the Global Industrials Group at investment banking firm Goldman Sachs from 2002 to 2012. Since 2014, Mr. Mattson has remained chairman and lead investor of Tropic Ocean Airways, a Wheels Up partner and the globe's second-largest seaplane operator.



A new CEO arrives as the company attempts to recover from severe post-pandemic losses. Image credit: Wheels Up

As CEO, Mr. Mattson will be based out of Atlanta, where the company recently opened a state-of-the-art Member Operations Center. Delta Airlines is also headquartered in Georgia's capital city.

A long-standing investor in the membership-based model, Delta Airlines' leaders speak highly of Mr. Mattson's expertise and abilities, their support playing a key role in the corporation's success, last month helping raise \$500 million to keep Wheels Up afloat ([see story](#)).

"George is an exceptional business leader whose background will be instrumental to the continued success of Wheels Up," said Ed Bastian, CEO of [Delta Airlines](#), in a statement.

"With new leadership in place, Wheels Up is well-positioned to drive strategic, operational and financial improvements for its customers and stakeholders in the months and years ahead."

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