



## **Swander Pace Capital invests in Reliance via its Branch Brook Holdings partnership to accelerate growth of PlantFusion brand**

**New York and San Francisco (January 23, 2017)** – Swander Pace Capital, a leading private equity firm specializing in investments in consumer products companies, completed its investment in New Jersey-based Reliance Holdings Inc. and its *PlantFusion* brand. *PlantFusion* represents one of the leading plant-based protein brands in the natural channel, and Reliance remains a differentiated formulator and manufacturer of powdered vitamin and mineral supplement (VMS) products.

Swander Pace Capital made its investment through Branch Brook Holdings, which was formed in 2012 as a strategic partnership between Swander Pace Capital, United Natural Foods Inc., and Jefferson Capital Partners. Financial terms of the investment were not disclosed.

“The Reliance team has done an exceptional job with the *PlantFusion* brand and its continued innovation with powdered products, and we look forward to working alongside this talented group of people to accelerate the company’s growth,” said Rob DesMarais, managing director at Swander Pace Capital. “Our ability to leverage our experiences and share best practices from our other VMS companies, as well as our 20-year history with health and wellness brands, will help Reliance capitalize on the robust demand for plant-based protein.”

The investment in Reliance marks the third such venture for Branch Brook, whose past investments include [Kicking Horse Coffee](#) (#1 organic and fair-trade coffee brand in Canada) and [Oregon Ice Cream](#) (#1 organic ice cream brand, *Alden’s*, as well as the leading organic ice cream brand in the natural channel, *Julie’s*). Further, Swander Pace Capital also owns several additional health and wellness businesses, including Swanson, a leading online and catalog marketer of Swanson-branded and third-party healthy living products, and Captek, a leading manufacturer and distributor of softgel products for domestic and international VMS brands. Previously, Swander Pace Capital owned Renew Life, a global leader in probiotics and other digestive care supplements, prior to its 2016 sale to Clorox Company. These current and past investments will be very helpful to Reliance as it executes its growth strategy.

Branch Brook will partner with Reliance owner Phil Vigeant and his management team to accelerate the growth of the *PlantFusion* brand while simultaneously maintaining the company’s proven leadership in the private label and co-manufactured VMS products industry.

“We have known the Branch Brook team for years, and I am confident that this partnership is the perfect step to help take my company to the next level,” said Vigeant, CEO of Reliance. “Their collaborative partnership mindset, collective expertise in health and wellness, experience

working with high growth brands, and unique relationship with United Natural Foods were extremely attractive to me.”

“As more and more consumers pursue healthy lifestyles and understand the benefits of protein supplements in both powdered and ready-to-drink formats, innovative leaders like Reliance with its differentiated *PlantFusion* product line are incredibly well positioned to meet this growing demand,” said Linda Boardman, president of Branch Brook Holdings. “We see tremendous opportunities with this company and look forward to our partnership with Phil and his team.”

### **About Swander Pace Capital**

Swander Pace Capital (SPC) is a private equity firm that invests in companies that are integral to consumers’ lives. SPC’s consumer industry expertise informs the firm’s strategic approach and adds value through access to its proven SPC Playbook and extensive network. The firm partners with management teams to help build companies to their full potential. SPC invests in businesses across three domains of consumer lifestyles: Food + Beverage, Body + Wellness, and Home + Family. With offices in San Francisco, New Jersey, and Toronto, SPC has invested in more than 45 companies and raised cumulative equity commitments of approximately \$1.8 billion since 1996. For more information, visit [www.spcap.com](http://www.spcap.com).

### **About Branch Brook Holdings**

Branch Brook Holdings LLC represents a strategic partnership between Swander Pace Capital, Jefferson Capital Partners, and United Natural Foods Inc. The partnership was formed in 2012 to invest in organic, natural, and specialty consumer product companies in North America. Branch Brook is fully integrated into Swander Pace Capital and remains uniquely positioned to serve as a valuable partner given its extensive history investing in these types of companies and its unique relationship with United Natural Foods. For more information, please visit [www.branchbrookllc.com](http://www.branchbrookllc.com).

### **About Reliance and its PlantFusion Brand**

Reliance is a family company that was born in the aisle of a natural products store in Maplewood, N.J., with the goal to develop a brand of private label products that could become the premier line in the store. Since 1978, Reliance has extended that concept to other retailers and branded companies, enabling these businesses to differentiate themselves through exclusive, premium private label products. In **[2010]**, the company launched its *PlantFusion* brand to more fully leverage its capabilities and better capitalize on the robust demand for plant-based protein supplement products. Its development team continually searches the world for the latest discoveries in nutrition to select the best ingredients for its products. For more information, visit [www.plantfusion.net](http://www.plantfusion.net) and [www.reliancevitamin.com](http://www.reliancevitamin.com).

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