SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY

FEBRUARY 2025
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media kit



FROM THE PUBLISHER

Sharm El Sheikh, Red Sea, Egypt. Photo Credit: John Walker

IT'S DIVE SHOW SEASON: WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO OUR INDUSTRY?

Boot in Germany is done, as are the Sweden and Finland shows. Boston and New Jersey are on the near horizon, along with ADEX in Singapore, the Long Beach Dive Show, and many more. **What value do these shows offer to our industry?** That's like asking if we need water to dive – it's essential to our sustainability and growth as a global industry.

These show organizers provide an invaluable service to you and your customers. They facilitate **human connections** in diving that simply can't happen on the back of a dive boat. That personal connection is one of the most crucial aspects of our industry, and without it, we would not survive.

Come See us at Beneath The Sea, The Scuba Show in Long Beach, and the DEMA Show in Orlando this year!

If you've been following our magazine over the past 14 months, you'll notice a recurring theme: **we support dive shows** – both consumer and trade. For dive retailers, this means actively promoting your regional dive show instead of **worrying about customers "jumping ship"** to another retailer exhibiting at the event. That short-sighted concern won't prevent a single customer from leaving your store. Instead, secure a booth and show up for your customers. If staffing is an issue, ask a loyal customer to help for the weekend – they'll love the experience and likely become a **lifelong ambassador** for your business.

If exhibiting isn't financially feasible, encourage your customers to attend the show to explore the latest in travel and equipment. Better yet, organize a group trip and attend together. You or a team member can **act as a guide**, strengthening customer relationships while offering a unique dive show experience.

As an industry, we have spent too much time competing against one another **instead of working together**. In contrast, industries like skiing collaborate for the betterment of their sector. Dive shows provide an opportunity to do the same – fostering connections, sharing knowledge, and strengthening our industry as a whole.

Exhibitors invest thousands to participate in these shows, so show them your support by engaging with them and dropping your business card in their bowl. And if you're a travel company, resort, manufacturer, liveaboard, or training agency, **here's my message to you: Exhibit**. Budget the necessary funds and staff to participate, especially in regions with a high concentration of B2B customers. In the U.S., that means the East and West coasts.

Remember, the primary audience at a consumer dive show is, of course, the consumer. However, many exhibitors fail to realize that a significant percentage of attendees are instructors, divemasters, and retail staff – key influencers within the diving community. Our estimates suggest that their collective influence reaches approximately **2.4 million consumer divers** in the U.S., driving an **astounding $483.1 million** in equipment, travel, and training sales. See you at the shows!

William Cline, Publisher

email William

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SAFETY

Situational Awareness Pt. 2 – It's All in the Details

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



As I addressed in my January article in *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine: Situational Awareness,* being situationally aware while scuba diving, involves comprehending and understanding the dynamic circumstances going on around us during a diving experience. The situationally aware diver gathers relevant information, analyzes it, and makes informed decisions in order to be prepared to successfully address any potential risks, hazards, or events that might affect their safety or the safety of those they dive with. Once a dive begins, the components of situational awareness should include, but not be limited to, such things as:

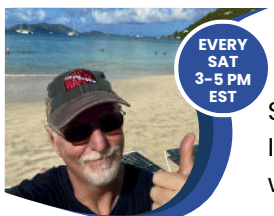
1. Breathing gas supply (Yours and your diving companions). In research conducted by Divers Alert Network (DAN) and published in 2008, the number one triggering event in diving fatalities (41%) was "running out of breathing gas underwater." As part of your dive plan, there should be a predetermined and agreed-upon point when you "turn" the dive so that you and your diving companions have sufficient breathing gas to return to the planned exit point and to deal with any unforeseen emergencies. As an example, on a shore dive I was doing, we noticed that there was quite a bit of boat and jet ski traffic in the area where we had planned to dive. Therefore, we planned our dive using the "Rule of Thirds," similar to what is used when diving in overhead environments (one-third of our breathing gas supply going out, one-third coming back and one-third in reserve). We also, of course, had our dive flag/float to indicate our presence. Divers should have agreed-upon hand signals to be used to communicate remaining breathing gas supply and when to "turn" the dive and return to the exit point. Regularly communicating breathing gas supplies will help prevent anyone from running out of breathing gas during the dive.

> "Situational awareness will help prevent incidents, so they don't turn into accidents"

2. Bottom time relative to your dive plan. Having a maximum bottom time as part of your dive plan that applies to you and your diving companion is an essential component of diving safety. The maximum bottom time selected should take into account the no–decompression limits and what your dive plans are, not only that dive, but for the entire dive day. If you plan to make multiple dives that day, you may want to limit your bottom time so that you stay well below the no decompression limits. Dive computers now have bottom time limit warnings that can be pre-set before diving. If, however, you near your planned maximum bottom time, there should be communication between diving companions to make sure you do not violate that part of your dive plan.

If you do happen to violate your maximum bottom time, there are things you can do to mitigate any increased risk. You can ascend to a shallower depth, making sure that your dive computer now adjusts, keeping you within the no-decompression limits. You could also reduce your planned bottom time or extend your safety stop to help mitigate any increased risk for going beyond your planned maximum bottom time. These are all contingencies that should be discussed with your diving companions prior to diving. It may also be wise to develop and share any hand signals you would use to communicate your change in plans.

3. Depth, current, surge, visibility. Exposure to any of these can affect your safety. As previously discussed, your dive plan should include the maximum planned depth during the dive, however in the event you exceed your maximum bottom time, as with anything that causes changes in your dive plan, consider discussing with your diving companion how you can prevent any future violations of your dive plan, protocols or procedures. Diving against a current or dealing with the effect of surge caused by overhead wave action can cause a diver to work harder than they expected, increasing their consumption of breathing gas and, subsequently, increasing the amount of nitrogen absorbed by their tissue. That can potentially increase the risk of decompression sickness (DCS). Increasing the work of breathing can also increase the risk of immersion pulmonary edema (IPE). IPE was discussed in the December 2024 issue of *Scuba Diving*



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Industry Magazine. If any of these things happen, there are things you can do to mitigate any increased risk. As mentioned before, you can ascend to a shallower depth, reduce your planned bottom time, or extend your safety stop. These are all contingencies that should be discussed with your diving companions prior to diving. Visibility, while not necessarily a direct threat to safety, can limit your ability to keep track of your diving companions and your directional awareness. It certainly can reduce the enjoyment of the dive for some. On a recent dive trip, where visibility had been averaging 100 feet (31 meters), as we approached the bottom, the visibility was less than 15 feet (4.6 meters) with a mild current. Since we were all unfamiliar with the area, we decided to abort the dive, complete a safety stop, and move to another location. It was the best decision, allowing us to make a safer and more enjoyable dive.



4. Position/Location relative to the planned exit point. It is always best, from a safety and enjoyment perspective, to end a dive at or near your planned exit point. Unless, of course, you are drift diving, where the dive boat is following you on the surface. Surfacing a significant distance from your planned exit point may require a long-distance surface swim, possibly against surface wave action, winds, or currents. That unplanned workload can compromise your safety and certainly detract from the enjoyment of the diving experience. An increased workload caused by a long-distance surface swim can increase the risk of IPE. Divers are advised to keep their regulator in their mouth for any surface swims as that provides an uninterrupted flow of breathing gas as compared to surface swimming while breathing through a small diameter snorkel. Surface swimming while breathing through a snorkel can increase the chances of ingesting water if the wave action is higher than the length of the snorkel, plus heavy breathing through a snorkel may increase the risk of IPE.

5. Workload. Doing more work on a dive than you expected is certainly not fun. The saying, "If you are working hard on a dive, you must be doing something wrong," certainly applies. In my opinion, recreational diving should be relaxing and enjoyable without any undue stress or strain. Increased workload can be caused by many things. including trying to keep up with a rapidly swimming buddy or dive guide, poor buoyancy control (where you have a significant amount of air in your BCD either causing you to be almost upright in the water), or simply increasing your surface area causing an increased drag in the water. The late Dr. Glen Egstrom said that doubling the surface area you present to the water while swimming in a partially upright position increases your workload by a factor of four. Increased workload while diving can cause you to consume your breathing gas more quickly and increase the amount of nitrogen being absorbed by your tissues which, to reiterate, increases your risk of DCS. I believe divers should discuss the pace of movement underwater prior to beginning any dive. In my opinion, moving at a slow pace allows divers to see more, reduce their breathing gas consumption, and get more enjoyment out of the diving experience. And, not to belabor the point, but increased workload during a dive may also increase the risk of IPE.

6. Overhead conditions. In research conducted by DAN and published in 2008, the number two triggering event in diving fatalities (20%) was "entrapment," mostly from diving in an overhead environment without being qualified to do so. It is important not to get into overhead conditions where you do not have direct, vertical access to the surface without the proper training or equipment. Diving without the proper training, equipment, and recent experience can seriously compromise your safety and the safety of others you dive with.

7. Anything that could compromise your safety or the safety of fellow divers. By being truly situationally aware and understanding those things in diving that may compromise your safety, you can make adjustments during your dive that help you avoid or mitigate potential risks. Being observant is also an essential safety skill. For example, if you observe another diver whose scuba cylinder is floating unusually high off their back, this may indicate that the diver's cylinder is getting low on breathing gas. That may be an opportune time to ask how much breathing gas that diver has remaining.

Scuba diving is one of the world's most enjoyable recreational activities. As we enjoy the underwater world, safe divers understand that the diving environment is very dynamic and can change during our diving experience. As such, situational awareness is a dynamic, continuous process that involves continually checking and evaluating things going on around you, comparing what you see with what you know to be within your dive plan and safe behaviors. Scuba diving safety, after all, is no accident.

email Dan Orr

TRAVEL

Dive Into Europe: The BOOT German Show Report

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



The European dive scene is very much alive and vibrant, with plenty of interesting and nicely organised events to attend. Europe comprises 44 countries, of which 28 have coastlines along the sea. Many of these have their own dive communities and events. My last count stood at around 20 events. The most significant is the German Boat Show, Boot, which is the biggest marine show and most prominent public dive show in the world.

Boot show is truly a unique beast. It is attended by over 200,000 visitors, a third of them from abroad. Seventeen large exhibit halls are crammed with everything and anything related to water, from billionaire mega yachts to swimwear, and, of course, diving.



BOOT, Düsseldorf Germany

I didn't see much new dive equipment. Most gear has long since reached a level of technological maturity that only leaves minor refinements and new fashion styles to be applied. With a few exceptions, masks, fins, wetsuits, BCDs and more are mostly the same as last year, perhaps with new colours and different panels.

Dive operators from all over the world attend with many from the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Asia. There were several new liveaboards, and the vessels appeared to be getting bigger and more luxurious, with some being very spacious superyachts with interiors and services like five-star hotels. Several of these new liveaboards are also embarking on new itineraries in Asia and opening up new reefs in the Saudi Arabian Red Sea archipelago. What also stood out was the Gallipoli Historical Underwater Park, which had arguably the best-looking and structured booth in the dive halls. The park features war wrecks from the famous battle around the Dardanelles during World War I. (Dardanelles is the strait that connects the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.)

Boot is superbly well-organised and is streamlined German efficiency at its best. As Boot is a nine-day event, it is best for a visiting dive industry professional seeking to network to come midweek, which is much quieter, and avoid the weekends when the public fills the halls. Boot can also be quite a fun event – especially after 1800 hrs (6 p.m.), when the show officially closes and the exhibitors let loose, get out the beer and wine, crank up the boom boxes and party a little. Lots of exhibitors stay as late as 11 p.m. to socialize.

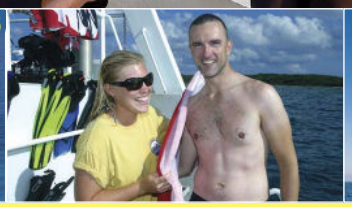
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BUSINESS EDU

Diving Risk Management: Establishing a Culture of Safety and Care

– by Al Hornsby, owner, Al Hornsby Productions, Singapore
Recently retired after more than 42 years as a senior executive with PADI, Al is regarded as one of the industry's most experienced risk management litigation executives.



While diving is an activity with risks that can never be completely eliminated, accident analysis over the years has shown that accident rates (which can be used to infer the likelihood of accidents occurring) can be reduced by a dive center establishing **clear, documented procedures** that guide in-store activities for both dive training and recreational diving operations, and through the ongoing promotion of continuing diver education. Also significant are the positive effects in defending potential litigation when a customer accident may happen. The following input has been developed specifically considering related errors and the less-than-optimum defenses available in dive accidents and litigation occurring in recent years. And, in a dive claim, plaintiffs' attorneys (especially the experienced ones) are also typically familiar with the common 'misses' when it comes to procedures and paperwork that may be involved or linked with dive accidents-misses which can be used to discredit and/orcast blame on the associated dive professionals.

The starting point for all of this should be an overall **store procedures manual**, used in training new employees and contractors when they come onboard, and to be re-reviewed when subsequent procedural changes occur (both of which should be documented in their records) This manual should also be available for ongoing reference and reminder. Such manuals, once created, are fairly easy to keep current because most stores' (and dive boats') procedures, once established and utilized, don't typically need changing very often. The guidelines covered should reflect the store's important activities – student sign-ups (especially paperwork such as releases and medical history forms), equipment rental procedures and forms, air-fill procedures and forms (especially when mixed gases are provided), dive-excursion paperwork, and the proper retaining and storage of the paperwork completed. It should be noted that, of the two major dive litigations in recent years, one involved an incorrectly-completed dive medical form and the other, a **poor rental-gear protocol** that led directly to a tragic, completely avoidable diver fatality.

Along with such day-to-day procedural aspects, a safety culture can also be significantly affected by the mix of training courses promoted. Through a study of dive accidents carried out and published by PADI some years ago, it became clear that divers with different dive training and certification levels could have surprisingly different fatality rates. Programs rich in continuing education, not surprisingly, could generally expect lower accident rates than programs chiefly focused on Open Water Diver training programs. For example, overall, the **fatality rates for Rescue Divers and Specialty divers were roughly ½ the rates** for those certified just as Open Water Divers.

From this, not unexpectedly, one could anticipate that for dive centers with a clear, documented focus on dive safety, and with an increased percentage of ongoing dive customers having **higher levels of training** and experience (as a result of a healthy continuing education program), there can be some corresponding reduction in the probability of dive accidents occurring. Over time this could be significant, not only in aiding diver safety in the first place, but also providing a meaningful defense for litigation should an accident occur.

email Al





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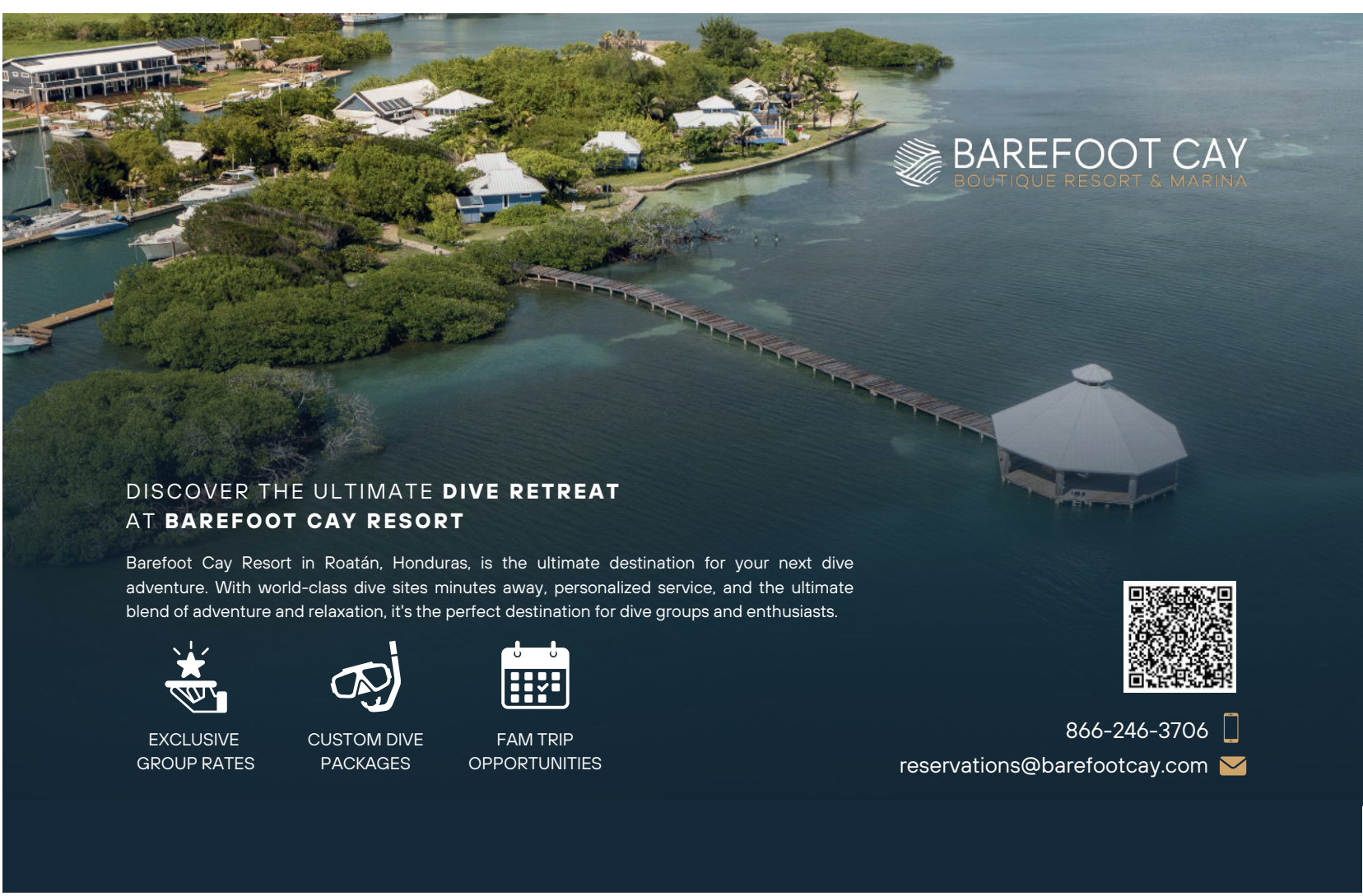


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RETAILING

Part 3: Moving Your Happy Dive Group onto the Next Trip

– by David Prichard and Lily Mak, Enchanted Sea Images, Inc., Dallas, TX



As the Trip Leader, you successfully guide your dive group through a "trip of a lifetime," and everyone returns home happy and full of wonderful memories. Many of your group may have new dive certifications (if you are a Specialty Instructor) completed on the journey. So, your job is done – "mission accomplished!" Or is it?

During the dive trip, while everyone is full of enthusiasm about experiencing such a great adventure, a successful Trip Leader is already laying the groundwork for the next targeted dive trip. "I'm glad you are really enjoying this adventure, but let me tell you about what we have planned for next year!"

There is an adage that says, "Strike while the iron is hot." When better to get a group of divers excited about an upcoming planned trip than when they are currently experiencing the euphoria of a current trip? To accomplish this, you need to already have the high-level details of the next trip to promote to the current group. As part of the "7 Ps" (proper prior planning prevents pitiful poor performance), a prepared Trip Leader has the selling points ready to help guide this group onto their next great adventure.



Use trip briefings or group dinners to promote future trips.



The "next trip" is dependent upon both your business's planned dive trip schedule and your group's demographics. While some people may have the time and funds to go on multiple trips a year, most have to plan out long-distance dive trips at least a year in advance to save up funds and schedule work vacation days (PTO). This is why it is important for the Trip Leader to get to know the participants in the group and figure out what category they fit in when discussing future dive journeys.

Successful dive trip planning often takes at least two years in advance of gauging your customers' interest in destinations (and affordability) and securing a dive package at the best rates for that trip. A dive business should bring in their Trip Leaders early in the process to help plan extra activities and to familiarize themselves with the details. Once the dive trip calendar is set, then the business and Trip Leaders can target and reach out to potential clients for the trips.

Divers typically bond together during a dive trip, so the Trip Leader should promote the idea of "the gang" continuing their dive travel adventures as a group on a future scheduled dive quest, though that is dependent on the group's demographics and shared interest. Group dinners on a current trip are often a good time to catch the group's attention on that future trip you want for them all to participate in. You then play it up on the return journey as well, so the group feels that their adventure together is not over yet as you tell them to "save the date!"

Once back home, plan a post-trip party (or online session, depending on the group's home locations) where group participants can share photos, videos, memories, but also as a reminder of how well they traveled together. Now you can give details about how to secure that next trip with deposits as the group encourages each other to sign up.

When promoting the next trip during the current trip or at the post-trip party, it is important to ask your group, "Who else do you know that you would like to share an adventure like this?" Ask your group to share their recent trip experiences with their diver friends in person and on social media to get them to promote your next trip. This will help expand your dive travel base of customers for larger groups (more profit and better package rates) and the ability to schedule more trips on your calendar.

And those pictures and videos everyone shared at the end of the trip? Get permission from your group to post them on your own social media and print the "fun" pictures to place on your trip calendar display to show your other customers what great dive trips you run. Run the videos on monitors in your business in a loop to create excitement about your dive travel offerings. Like a magnet, people are just naturally attracted to events where everyone is having a good time.

email David

PHOTO PRO

Behind The Lens: The Narwhal – Unicorns of the Arctic

– Photos and text by Amos Nachoum, Big Animals Global Expeditions



For two weeks, we had been exploring the ice around Admiralty Inlet, Baffin Island, Canada, chasing the elusive dream of photographing narwhals.

The Inuit guides led us across the frozen expanse with the quiet confidence of those who have lived here for generations. They carried metal poles, each about five feet long, and tested the ice with every few steps. The cracks and echoes of their probes spoke volumes to them in ways I could only imagine. The ice here is deceptive; its stability can only be understood by those who have inherited the knowledge of survival in this unforgiving environment. For them, this is home. For us, it was a stark reminder of our own fragile nature.

The cold was unrelenting, a dry chill that cut through even the thickest layers of clothing, made sharper by the wind that never stopped. Yet, we returned to the ice every day, waiting. Always waiting. It became a mantra among us: Today is the day. Beneath our feet, the Arctic Ocean stretched into unfathomable depths. Somewhere below the frozen surface, the narwhals swam, following ancient migratory paths that had guided their species for millennia.



Narwhal – Unicorns of the Arctic

The Inuit had their own way of predicting when the whales would come. They took the wooden oar of a kayak, placed one end in the water, and pressed the other to their ear. Through clicks, knocks, and whistles, the narwhals announced their presence long before we could see them. The guides, listening with a patience honed over lifetimes, couldn't tell us exactly where the whales were, but they knew when they were closer. "Soon," they said. And so we waited.

Finally, after two weeks of anticipation, their method proved true. The faint calls of narwhals grew louder, carried to us through the wooden oar. The whales were coming. We scrambled into position, cameras mounted on tripods, scanning the horizon for any sign of movement. The hours passed, the anticipation made time feel electric, charged with possibility. And then, they arrived.

A pod of narwhals broke the surface, their sleek bodies gliding across the sparkling, still water. Among them, a male stood out, his long, spiraled tusk rising like a spear from the waves. This was the moment I had envisioned, the one I had waited for through sleepless nights and bone-deep cold. The narwhal swam with purpose, aiming for a crack in the ice where the pod would dive deep into the inlet, hunting for Arctic cod and Greenland halibut.

The male's tusk – the fabled "unicorn horn" – was a marvel. Up to nine feet long and weighing as much as 16 pounds, it is not just a tool but a symbol. Some say the tusk helps males assert dominance; others believe it acts as a sensory organ. Whatever its purpose, it adds to the narwhal's mystique, making it one of nature's most extraordinary creations.

Framing the shot, I adjusted my Nikon F4, fitted with a 300mm lens. The narwhal surfaced again, its tusk catching the low sunlight, and I pressed the shutter. The image captured a moment of connection between the ancient rhythms of the Arctic and the fleeting presence of a human observer. As I stood there, the Inuit guides watched silently, their expressions calm but knowing. For them, the narwhal is more than a subject for photography. It's life. Its tusks, once used in traditional carvings and tools, have also been a source of tension between tradition and conservation. Strict regulations now govern their hunting, a necessary step to protect a species whose survival depends on the delicate balance of the Arctic ecosystem.

After a period of time that inevitably felt too brief, the narwhals disappeared into the inlet's depths, their whistles and clicks fading into the underwater vastness. The wind picked up again, and the cold pressed harder against my face. I packed up my gear, grateful for the moment I'd been given and humbled by these animals and their world.

The Arctic teaches you patience. It teaches you respect. And sometimes, if you're lucky, it gives you a glimpse of its secrets. For those few moments with the narwhal, I wasn't just a photographer. I was a witness to a story older than memory – a story of survival, beauty, and the quiet hum of life beneath the ice.

Nikon F4, 300mm lens, 1/500 sec, f-5.6, ISO 200. Provia film pushed one stop.

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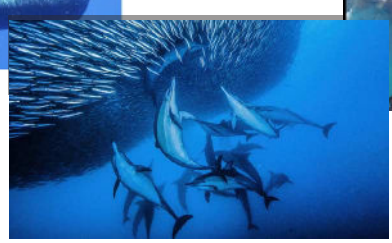
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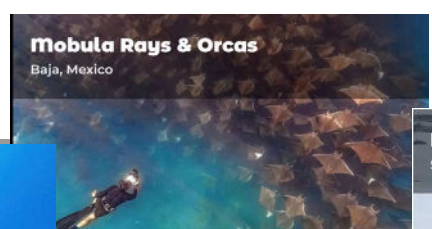
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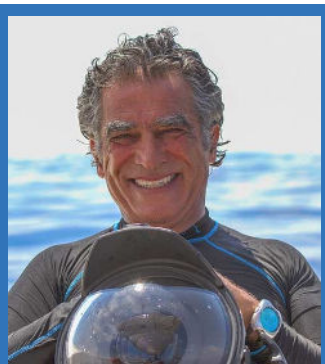
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SAFETY

Skin Cancer: Preventing The World's Most Prevalent Diving Injury

– by Gil Zeimer, ScubaStoryteller.com and Zeimer.com, San Rafael, CA
As a PADI Open-Water Diver for nearly 40 years, Gil has published more than 110 articles in over 25 magazines and websites, plus another 170 newsletters about his experiences. He's also a two-time skin cancer survivor.



As divers, our biggest threat isn't sharks, stingrays, lionfish, or other denizens of the deep. It's skin cancer, the world's most prevalent skin condition, but also the most preventable.

That's why it's no understatement that this article can save countless lives of divers, instructors, liveaboard and resort employees, plus just about anyone else in the scuba industry.

The more you know about skin cancer, the better prepared you'll be to help your customers and employees prevent it, especially because most of us have lived in, on, or under the water for decades to enjoy a sport where sun damage is an everyday occurrence.

Here are a few facts that should make you take notice…

- **Fact:** In 2023, there were only 14 confirmed shark-related fatalities worldwide, but more than 9,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every day in the U.S., and more than two people die of skin cancer every hour.
- **Fact:** Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the U.S. and worldwide.
- **Fact:** Having five or more sunburns in your lifetime doubles your risk for melanoma.
- **Fact:** At least 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer by age 70.
- **Fact:** Nearly 8,300 people were estimated to pass away from melanoma and other skin cancers in 2024.
- **Fact:** When detected early, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is 99%. (Source for all of these facts: www.SkinCancer.org.)

My Life as a Sun Worshipper: Being extremely active as a scuba diver, snorkeler, swimmer, jogger, baseball player, golfer, hiker, and skier has led to frequently barbecued ribs, braised shoulders, baked legs, blistered foreheads, and roasted noses — with me as the sun's entrée.

My skin cancer history is not pretty, either. I burned my nose so many times in my youth that I wore a plastic nose guard clipped to my sunglasses in my teens. (Yeah, I was a real babe magnet.)

Even worse, my twin brother and I held annual "tan" contests to see who could get the darkest to win the "Golden Skin" medal. This snapshot was taken when we were 19 after we'd spent the whole summer lying by a swimming pool, then three weeks in Hawaii. Please note our tan lines — we were not wearing white shorts under our swim trunks!



Gil & David Zeimer: Twin tan lines

My Two Bouts With Skin Cancer: I've survived a Basal cell carcinoma skin cancer scare on my back a few years ago. I even had Mohs surgery for a skin cancer lesion on my cheek where the doctor had to remove thin layers of skin, one at a time, to determine if any cancer remained.

Today, I've learned my lessons of sun damage by having my dermatologist on speed dial. I also proactively schedule twice-a-year wellness check-ups during which I endure countless sprays of liquid nitrogen to freeze off pre-cancerous growths on my face and chest.



Rashguard and mineral sunscreen

Now, to protect myself, I never leave the house without proper sun protection.

It's Easy to Prevent The World's Most Preventable Cancer: You can easily reduce your risk if you practice "sun safety" because 90% of skin cancers can be cured if detected and treated in time.

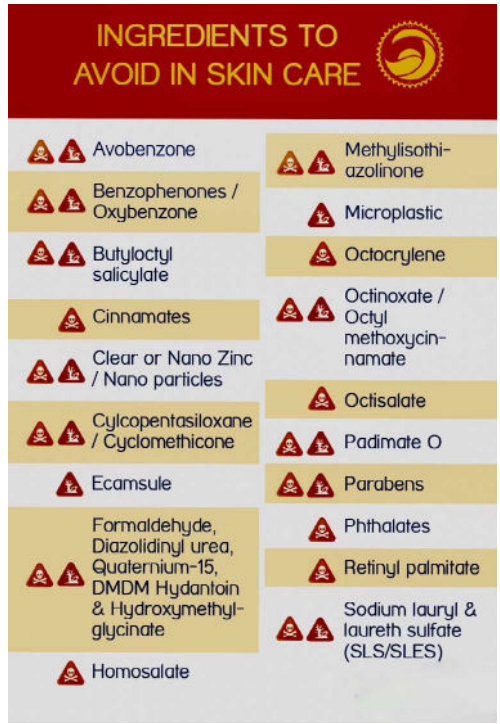
In fact, a clever mnemonic is "Slip, Slop, Slap", a slogan coined by the SunSmart program from Cancer Council Australia, which helps people remember to: Slip on a shirt or rash guard to cover their skin, slop on sunscreen to protect their skin, and slap on a hat to protect their head.

These sun safety tips include:

- Wearing Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) clothing as your first line of defense. Experts recommend wearing a broad-brimmed hat and long-sleeved shirts (my Tilley hat and rash guard are both rated UPF 50+), tightly woven long pants, and sunglasses.
- Using a sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or more before sun exposure, even when you're simply running errands. But if you're going to a pool, a beach, or on a boat to dive, a higher SPF will protect you better and longer — especially if you choose one that's sweatproof and water-resistant.



- Switching to reef-safe, water-resistant sunscreens like those by Stream2Sea.com to protect marine sanctuaries and coral from harmful chemicals. This US-based, woman-owned company recommends applying mineral sunscreens in dots, then blending or rubbing in, as that makes it much easier to apply. You can also wear mineral sunscreens without fogging up your mask.
- Applying an almond-sized dollop for sufficient coverage of your face and neck. Whatever SPF rating you choose, though, you still need to reapply that sunscreen with the same frequency, especially after swimming, snorkeling, or diving.
- Considering that the lighter your skin, the higher your SPF number should be. Ask your dermatologist or doctor what he or she recommends. (I recommend 45 SPF sunscreen or 100 SPF sunblock if you have fair skin.)



- Being aware that a very light-skinned person can get a sunburn in less than 15 minutes of mid-day exposure. Many people don't think to apply sunscreen until they're starting to feel or notice a sunburn, but by then, it's too late. Be proactive: apply it early and reapply it often for the best skin protection.
- Stopping any elective photosensitizing medications while you're on vacation, such as Tetracycline and Retin-A for acne. These can cause your skin to be ultra-sensitive to sunburn.
- Realizing that you can still get a sunburn on a cloudy day. In addition, reflective surfaces like water, sand, and concrete around a pool at your beach resort, or the ocean glimmering in the sun while you're on a dive boat, can heighten your exposure.
- Avoiding the most harmful, intense ultraviolet rays between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. It's best to avoid prolonged exposures during these times, if possible.

A Detailed Explanation of SPF by a Cosmetic Chemist: Autumn Blum, Founder and CEO of Stream2Sea.com adds this advice about SPFs. "High SPFs can be misleading, giving people a false sense of security in the sun. Many believe that SPF represents a level of protection, but in reality, it measures how long it takes for UVB rays to redden the skin compared to unprotected exposure.

"So, if you apply an SPF 30, you can spend 300 minutes in the sun without burning. But if you have to reapply it every 80 minutes, what difference does 300 minutes make? The fact is, most dermatologists agree that an SPF 30, when applied and reapplied correctly, is more than sufficient for sun protection, as well as wearing clothing like pants, long-sleeve shirts, and a hat."

The Bottom Line: Start a proactive routine in your dive shop, resort, liveaboard, or company to educate your customers and employees about the dangers of sunburn — and how preventing it can lower your risks of being diagnosed with skin cancer. This simple advice may save your life — or someone else.

If you have a personal sunburn or skin cancer story, I'd like to see it. Please contact me c/o gil@zeimer.com or scan this QR Code.

email Gil

BUSINESS EDU

What's the Best Way to Achieve Success? Plan for It.

– by Cathryn Castle Garcia, Owner, ClearStoryCoach.com, The Azores
Cathryn Castle Garcia is a writer, business strategist, & co-owner of C2G2Productions.com, a multimedia production company.



Well, "Happy New Year" is already a month old. January went by in a flash. And for many, so did their resolutions. If your New Year's resolution to be more organized this year hasn't happened yet, don't give up. Keep reading for tips to help you get started.

Author Annie Dillard says, "A schedule defends from chaos… It is a net for catching days." I agree. Without planning and scheduling, days, weeks, and months can go by like one giant Netflix binge. I don't want this to happen to you or to your business goals. You've still got a lot of 2025 remaining. Now is the perfect time to plan and schedule your future success.

> **"Without planning and scheduling, days and weeks and months can go by like one giant Netflix binge. I don't want this to happen to you, or to your business goals. You've still got a lot of 2025 remaining. Now is the perfect time to plan and schedule your future success."**

Planning Resources: I'm passionate about planning. Being a good planner takes a bit of planning (sorry, bad pun). Set yourself up for success by sourcing a few supplies. I use a hardbound planner/calendar notebook and a year-at-a-glance wall calendar. Research has proven that writing notes by hand improves memory and recall. In fact, MRI scans show that memory areas of the brain activate more robustly when notes are written by hand rather than typed into a digital device.

My favorite calendar notebook is found at Inamio.com. The calendar is designed with days of the week starting on Monday instead of Sunday-a game changer-meaning Saturday and Sunday sit next to each other, as they should. And it's got room for notes and appointments. My favorite wall calendar is from Litacimi.com. It shows all 12 months of the year displayed horizontally, perfect for easy reference. Both products are inexpensive and available on Amazon. You can find blank printable monthly calendar templates available for free download online, too. CalendarLabs.com has many options. These are especially useful when brainstorming social media campaign strategies with your staff and when creating detailed dive trip itineraries. Print out a stack for your next team meeting.

You'll also want both a pencil and a pen. Treat yourself to a grown-up-style mechanical pencil with eraser and a good, quality fine-line permanent ink pen for writing notes in smallish calendar boxes. You're worth it. I'm not a huge fan of color-coding, but if it appeals to you, go ahead and splurge on a dedicated set of fine-line colored pens, too. And while you're at it, invest in a pocket- or purse-sized notebook for jotting ideas and "don't forget" notes.

I copy my written planner notes into a couple digital devices, namely my Apple laptop's iCal calendar, which syncs with my cell phone, smartwatch, and tablet. Other good options include Google Calendar, Microsoft OneNote, and apps such as Todoist and Notion, which are available from your online app supplier.

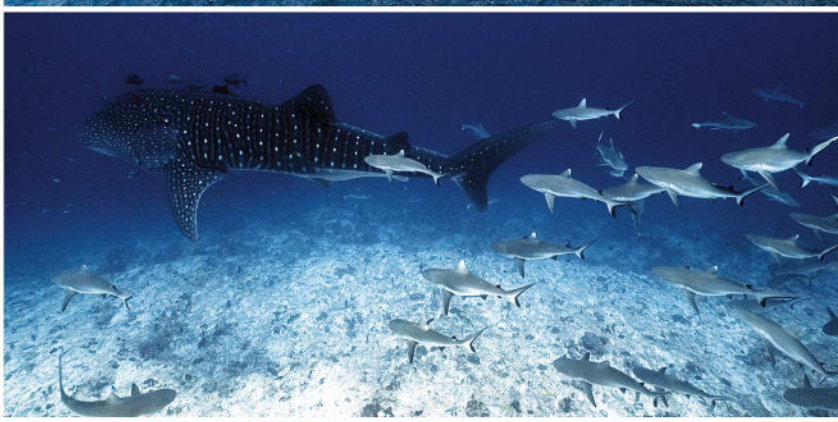
Save the Dates: It's best to do initial planning in pencil-except for important events you know are set, such as scuba shows, classes, and dive trips already on the books. These go in ink right away. Include on your business calendar important personal dates like birthdays and anniversaries, weddings, or graduations you don't want to miss because you accidentally booked a work thing.

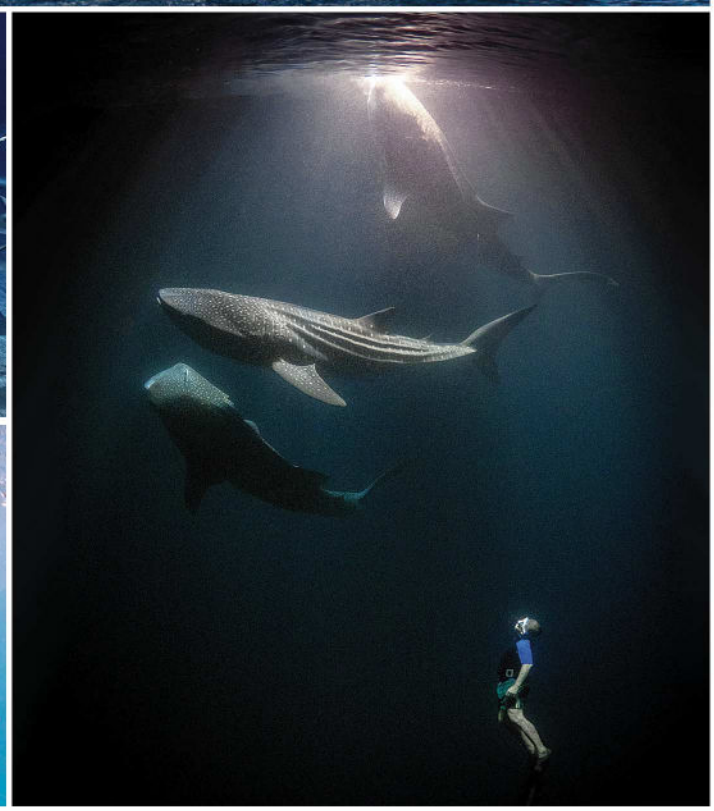
While you're at it, put employee birthdays and work milestones on the calendar in ink, too. Because, cake. Plus, it's important to celebrate our people often.

Here are some important scuba industry event dates:

- March 1-2: GO Diving Show (UK)
- March 15-16 Boston Sea Rovers (MA, USA)
- March 15-16 ADEX Ocean Festival/OZTek Australia
- March 28-30 Mediterranean Diving Show (Barcelona, Spain)
- March 28-30 Beneath the Sea (NJ, USA)
- April 4-6 Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) (Singapore)
- May 22-25 Thailand Dive Expo (Bangkok)
- May 31-June 1 Scuba Show (CA, USA)
- June 13-15 Malaysia International Dive Expo (Kuala Lumpur)
- September 6-7 GO Diving ANZ (Sydney, Australia)
- October 17-19 Diving Talks (Lisbon, Portugal)
- November 11-14 DEMA (FL, USA)









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BUSINESS EDU continued

Even if you don't plan to attend in person, it's a good idea to follow and like these events on your social channels. It's a great way to connect with the global diving community, and you'll likely find a lot of material that's perfect for re-posting.

Next, pencil in any notable local/regional annual events, such as county/state fairs or festivals. Your local Chamber of Commerce's website is often a great resource for this information. Including this information helps in two ways: 1) it gives you time to start marketing your own events that tie in with established local celebrations, and 2) you can avoid planning your own events or trips on dates when your loyal customers might be unavailable. There's no use going up against the county fair. A business coach friend of mine calls this the, "go with the flow/don't swim upstream against the current" approach.



A Slightly Wacky Celebration Plan: Once you've done local, it's time to go global-and maybe a little crazy. There's a long list of "World [fill in the blank] Day" events. The website, timeanddate.com lists an official "Day" for every day of the year. Of course, your dive center will want to hit up mainstream, ocean-themed events like World Earth Day (April 22) and World Ocean Day (June 8). But if you spend a little time searching unusual holidays, you'll learn you've already missed celebrating Squirrel Appreciation Day (Jan. 21). But it's not too late to plan for Food On a Stick Day (March 28). Mmm, corndogs. Lost Sock Memorial Day (May 9) would be a great time to promote dive socks and booties.

You and your staff can enjoy creating social media posts or in-store events that link your dive center with some lighthearted celebration days. My personal favorites include Ice Cream Day (July 20), Book Lovers Day (Aug 9), and Talk Like a Pirate Day (Sept. 19). Argh, matey.

Practical Planning: Your employee work schedule will obviously be on a different planner, but go ahead and include legal/bank holidays and employee vacation requests in your master planner and on your year-at-a-glance wall calendar.

Next up: safety and general maintenance planning and scheduling. Regular tasks like vacuuming floors and cleaning restrooms, along with occasional tasks like changing smoke detector batteries and getting your company vehicles serviced, are less likely to be overlooked if they're in ink on your master calendar and then get transferred to a weekly to-do list. This, my friends, is how you master the mundane.

Once you get the hang of it, your calendars and planners will likely become your best friends. And you'll probably find your productivity skyrockets, too. Hopefully, missed appointments and buggered schedules become a thing of the past.

I'd love to know your tips for planning and scheduling, especially if you're using any social media schedulers like Buffer or Hootsuite, which I'll cover in a future issue. Please reach out via email (click or scan the QR code). And remember, to plan your work and work your plan is to pave your way to success.

email Cathryn




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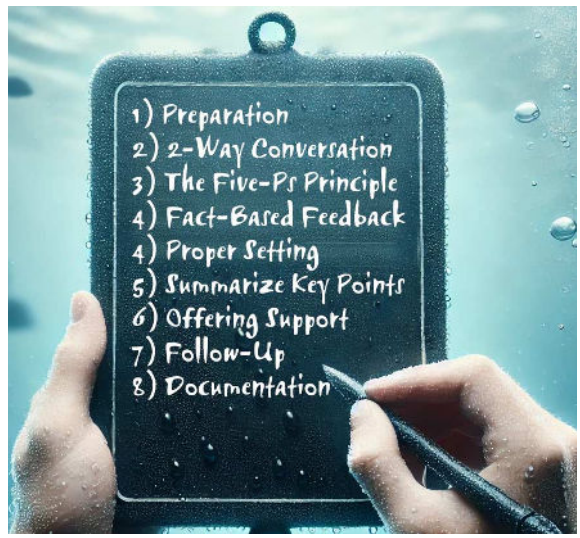
Conducting Effective Team Member Appraisal Interviews

– by Terry Cummins, OAM, Ph.D., CEO, Terrence Cummins International Business Coaching & Consultancy
Terrence (Terry) is a diver, photographer, writer, and educator. Terry has a long list of prestigious awards and accomplishments, including an Order of Australia Medal for his contribution to scuba diving.



In the January edition of *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine*, I discussed six characteristics of successful companies, including leadership, securing the right talent, and performance monitoring. One of the most challenging tasks for any manager is guiding talent through the 'staff appraisal process,' which usually takes place in an interview. While necessary for business success, this process carries risks that can harm employee relations and impact retention if not handled well. Here are some key strategies for conducting effective team appraisal interviews – insights that are also useful for employees undergoing their own reviews.

Scheduling and Preparation: The worst situation for a manager is realizing on the morning of the interview that an appraisal is due. These meetings are as important as any other major business engagement and should be scheduled in advance. A manager's planner should provide reminders to allow sufficient preparation. Similarly, employees should be notified well in advance, reinforcing that appraisals are more than just a formality.



Companies set different appraisal intervals, but six-month reviews with shorter follow-up sessions tend to work well. Avoid scheduling back-to-back appraisals for an entire week, as this creates a tense and unproductive environment.

Making Appraisals a Two-Way Conversation: A common but ineffective practice is managers preparing performance assessments unilaterally and asking employees to sign them. This eliminates meaningful feedback and reduces engagement. Instead, appraisals should be a two-way conversation.

The Five-Ps Principle: Planning and Preparation: Preparation is key. The Five-Ps principle – Planning and preparation prevents poor performance – applies here. Employees take feedback seriously, and a poorly executed appraisal can damage job satisfaction. Research should include input from other team members and customers. Prepare structured discussion points that highlight strengths and areas for improvement.

Fact-Based Feedback and Constructive Criticism: Keep discussion points fact-based and manageable. Vague criticisms lead to defensive responses. Instead of saying, "You are late to work a lot," say, "Last month, you were late to work on twelve occasions." Clearly outline what needs improvement, set a realistic timeframe, and frame the conversation constructively. For example: "Our early morning customers rely on quick service. Let's work together over the next month to improve punctuality and ensure we meet their needs."

Choosing the Right Setting and Timing: Consider the setting and timing of the interview. Limit discussions to about an hour. If issues remain unresolved, schedule a follow-up meeting with defined objectives. While most interviews should be private, in some cases, it may be useful to have a third party, such as a direct supervisor or HR manager. However, avoid having more than one additional person to prevent overwhelming the employee.

Creating a Positive Atmosphere: Start the interview by emphasizing that the appraisal benefits both the employee and the company. Performance issues might stem from workplace factors outside the employee's control, so ask if they have the necessary resources to meet expectations.

A calm, constructive atmosphere is crucial. Employees should feel comfortable sharing concerns. Sensitivity is important, but so is assertiveness when necessary. Employees should leave knowing that feedback is serious but intended to be constructive. Asking the employee to summarize key takeaways at the end ensures mutual understanding and aids documentation.

Supporting Employee Development: Managers should ask employees what support they need to address any issues. Expecting immediate improvements on all points is unrealistic, as some require time. An employee might need additional training, which could require financial support from the company. Likewise, managers may need time to address concerns raised by employees, such as resource limitations.

Avoiding Empty Promises: Avoid making empty promises, particularly regarding salary increases. If compensation discussions are included, be well-prepared. Many companies link reviews with salary adjustments, so employees may have expectations. Effective negotiation is key, as these discussions reinforce the two-way nature of the appraisal process.

> "A well-executed appraisal is not just an evaluation – it's an investment in your team's success."

The Role of Follow-Up: Follow-up is crucial. If either party fails to follow through, the appraisal loses credibility. Schedule formal follow-ups to track progress, using prior interview notes to evaluate improvements. Between sessions, provide informal encouragement, such as a quick acknowledgment of progress.

Performance appraisals can be stressful, and employees often need time to process feedback. Newer employees might be experiencing their first appraisal. How employees respond to constructive feedback reflects their professionalism and commitment to the company. Likewise, managers should self-reflect, as their performance is also evaluated during these discussions.

> "Great leaders don't just give feedback; they listen, support, and inspire improvement."

Recognizing and Rewarding High Performers: Not all appraisals are difficult. With top performers, the process can be enjoyable and affirming. Even these appraisals should be conducted, as they provide opportunities for learning and growth. Additionally, these meetings allow managers to recognize and reward high performers. Low-stress appraisals might even take place over a company-sponsored meal as a token of appreciation.

Proper Documentation: All appraisal interviews should be properly documented, especially when performance issues require disciplinary action. Immediate updates to personnel records should align with company policies. In some cases, appraisals serve as formal warnings requiring significant improvement to avoid consequences such as termination. If serious concerns arise, schedule a follow-up meeting promptly rather than letting problems escalate.

Employee Retention and the Cost of Turnover: Replacing employees is costly and disruptive, affecting team morale and performance. Managers should make every effort to help struggling employees improve before considering termination. Clear guidance on professional development ensures all employees understand how they can contribute to company goals.

The appraisal process is essential to a company's success. It drives improvement, motivation, and high performance. When conducted effectively, appraisals foster employee loyalty and respect, positioning managers as mentors who contribute to long-term business success.

The Bigger Picture: A Culture of Continuous Feedback: Successful companies recognize that performance appraisals are not just procedural but powerful tools for growth. Companies prioritizing employee development tend to have higher engagement and retention rates. An effective appraisal process reflects a company's culture and values, demonstrating a commitment to employee well-being and professional advancement.

Emotional Intelligence in Appraisals: One key element often overlooked is the role of emotional intelligence in performance appraisals. Managers who cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and active listening skills build stronger relationships with employees. Emotional intelligence allows managers to approach difficult conversations with tact and diplomacy, ensuring that feedback is received positively rather than defensively.

Customizing Appraisals for Different Roles: Another consideration is customizing appraisals based on employee roles and career goals. A one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. For example, appraisals for customer-facing staff should include feedback on interpersonal skills, while appraisals for technical staff should focus on problem-solving and innovation. Personalized feedback ensures relevance and demonstrates investment in individual success.

The integration of technology into appraisal processes can streamline feedback collection and analysis. Digital per-

BUSINESS EDU continued

formance tracking tools provide real-time insights into employee performance, reducing reliance on subjective assessments. These tools also facilitate goal-setting and progress monitoring, making appraisals more data-driven and objective.

Companies should foster a culture where continuous feedback is the norm. When feedback is provided regularly, employees are less likely to be surprised by appraisal outcomes. Frequent, informal check-ins help identify and address issues early, preventing small problems from escalating into major concerns.

Conclusion: Effective performance appraisals are an invaluable component of business success. They reinforce company standards, enhance employee development, and improve workplace dynamics. By prioritizing preparation, fostering open communication, and embracing a growth-oriented mindset, managers can ensure that appraisals contribute positively to both individual and organizational success.

email Terry





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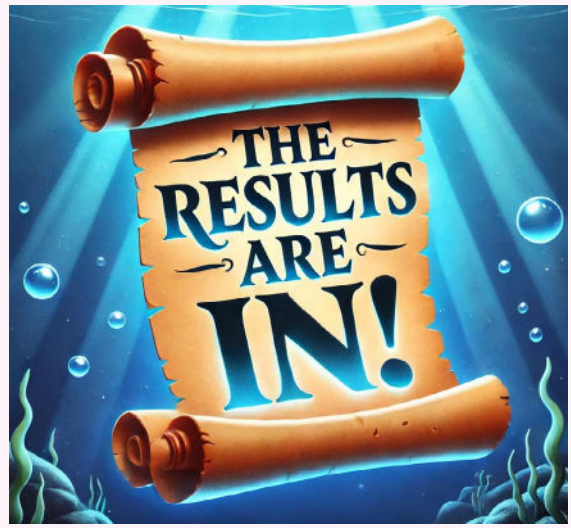
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Coral Reef Bleaching: Causes, Trends, and Solutions

– by Alex Brylske, Ph.D., President, Ocean Education International, LLC



Coral reef bleaching is one of the most significant environmental crises facing marine ecosystems today. This phenomenon occurs when corals experience stress – most commonly due to elevated sea temperatures of only 1–2°C above the usual summer maximum – leading them to expel the symbiotic algae, known as zooxanthellae, that reside within their tissues. These algae provide corals with essential nutrients and contribute to their vibrant colors. Without them, corals turn white or pale – sometimes even fluoresce – indicating their weakened state. If stressful conditions persist, the corals may ultimately die. However, contrary to popular belief, bleaching is not necessarily a death sentence. Corals can recover if conditions improve, but repeated exposure to stress increases their vulnerability and decreases their chances of survival.



Although temperature rise is the primary trigger, other factors, such as ocean acidification, pollution, and sunlight overexposure, also contribute to bleaching. The increasing frequency and severity of bleaching events over the past few decades have raised concerns about the future of coral reefs. However, with proper mitigation strategies, corals can recover and continue to thrive.

Since the 1980s, coral reef bleaching events have become increasingly frequent, widespread, and severe due to climate change. Rising global sea surface temperatures, associated with greenhouse gas emissions, have placed unprecedented stress on coral ecosystems, resulting in more frequent and intense bleaching events. Below is an overview of significant bleaching events over the decades and how they have shaped our current understanding of coral reef health.

Fifty years ago, coral bleaching was considered rare. However, in the early 1980s, localized events emerged, signaling a shift in oceanic conditions. The first large-scale bleaching event was reported in 1983, affecting reefs in the Caribbean and Pacific, though more so in the Caribbean region. These incidents correlated with El Niño-induced warming, highlighting corals' vulnerability to temperature anomalies. Scientists began documenting the phenomenon more closely, warning that prolonged ocean warming could have devastating consequences.

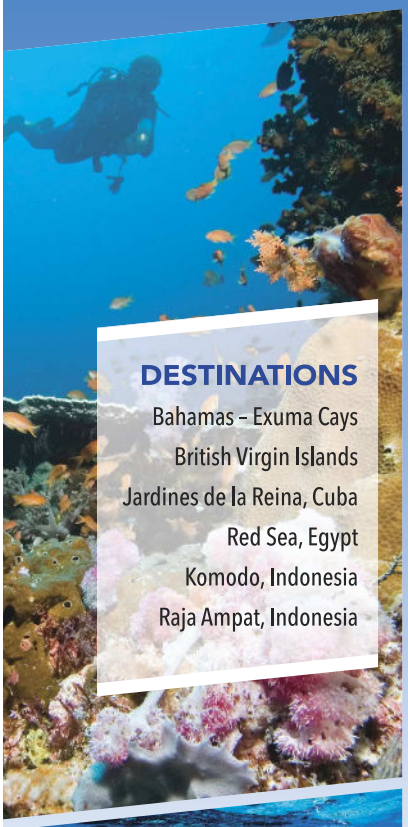
The 1997-1998 El Niño event triggered one of the most devastating global bleaching episodes. During this time, widespread coral loss was documented, particularly in the Great Barrier Reef, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific. The combination of prolonged high temperatures and reduced cloud cover intensified the bleaching effects, with some areas experiencing up to 90% coral mortality. This period marked a turning point in scientific research, as experts recognized bleaching as a serious and recurring threat to coral reef survival.

Throughout the 2000s, coral bleaching events continued to occur with alarming regularity. The 2005 Caribbean bleaching event was the worst in recorded history for the region, impacting nearly 80% of reefs. This period also saw repeated bleaching episodes in the Indo-Pacific and the Great Barrier Reef, reinforcing concerns about corals' increasing vulnerability to thermal stress. Studies also began to focus on coral adaptability and potential resilience mechanisms, though recovery efforts remained limited.

The 2010s saw an alarming increase in the frequency and severity of bleaching events. The most significant years were 2014 to 2017, during which corals globally endured consecutive annual bleaching due to a prolonged El Niño event. The Great Barrier Reef, one of the most biologically diverse marine ecosystems, encountered back-to-back bleaching in 2016 and 2017, impacting two-thirds of its reefs. The severity of these events was unprecedented, resulting in widespread coral mortality and fundamental changes in reef ecosystems. Scientists observed that some species were more resilient than others, but the

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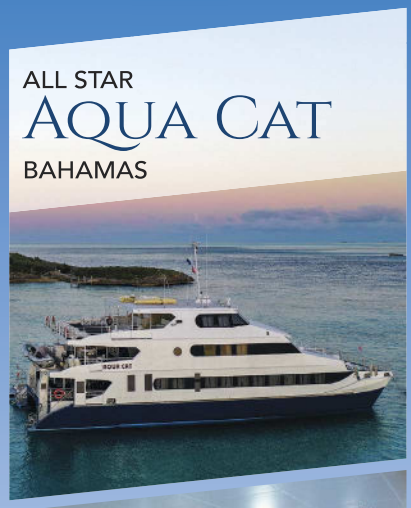
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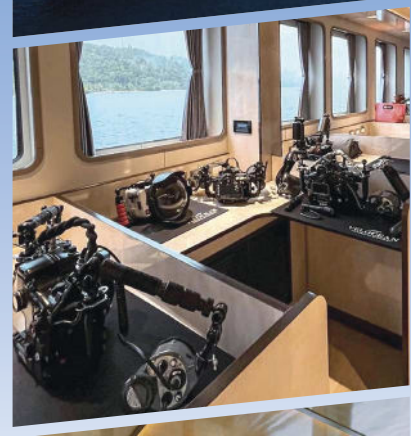






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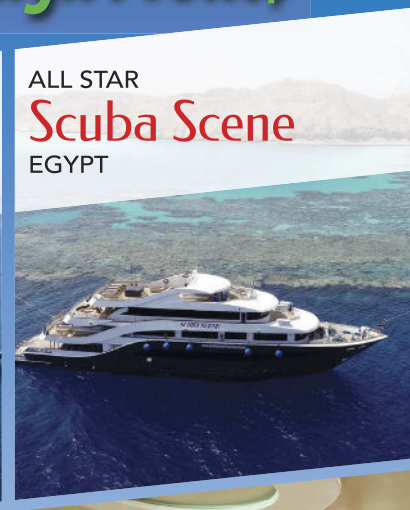




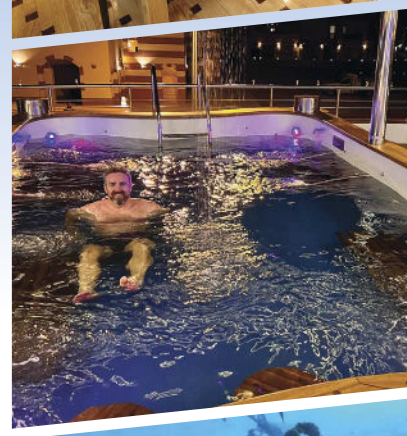




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overall loss of biodiversity remained a growing concern.

Despite the increasing threat of coral bleaching, several strategies detailed below can help mitigate its impact and promote coral resilience:

1. Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Rising sea temperatures are a major cause of coral bleaching, making it essential to address climate change. Reducing global carbon emissions through the adoption of renewable energy, improvements in energy efficiency, and international climate agreements like the Paris Agreement can help stabilize ocean temperatures and slow coral degradation. Large-scale efforts for carbon sequestration, such as reforestation and ocean-based carbon removal technologies, could further mitigate the trend of rising sea temperatures.

2. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) can alleviate localized stressors like overfishing and habitat destruction. Well-managed MPAs also restrict human activities and create a sanctuary for marine biodiversity, enabling coral reefs to recover from bleaching events. Effective enforcement of MPAs, coupled with community engagement and sustainable tourism, can significantly improve their efficacy.

3. Restoration and Coral Gardening

Coral restoration efforts, such as coral gardening and assisted evolution, involve cultivating resilient coral species in nurseries and transplanting them into damaged reefs. These efforts enhance coral cover and promote genetic diversity, increasing the chances of survival in warming oceans. Scientists are also experimenting with selective breeding of more heat-resistant corals, offering hope for future reef recovery.

4. Reducing Pollution and Coastal Development Impacts

Runoff from agriculture, sewage, and coastal development introduces harmful pollutants and sediments into the ocean, worsening coral stress. Enforcing stricter regulations on wastewater management, decreasing plastic pollution, and encouraging sustainable coastal development can enhance water quality and coral health. Natural buffers such as mangroves and seagrass beds can also help filter pollutants before they reach reef ecosystems.

5. Encouraging Sustainable Tourism and Fishing Practices

Tourism and fishing industries play a crucial role in coral reef conservation. Responsible tourism initiatives, such as eco-friendly diving and snorkeling practices such as the Green Fins Programme, can minimize physical damage to corals. Furthermore, sustainable fishing techniques that prevent overfishing and habitat destruction can help support healthy reef ecosystems. Community-led conservation efforts have shown promising results in improving reef resilience by integrating traditional knowledge with modern conservation strategies.



Healthy & Bleached Corals

Hope for the Future: Bleaching Is Not Always a Death Sentence

While coral bleaching poses a significant environmental threat, it doesn't necessarily signal the end for coral reefs. Some corals have demonstrated resilience by recovering from previous bleaching events, and with proper conservation efforts, reefs can continue to support marine biodiversity. By addressing climate change, protecting reef habitats, and implementing restoration initiatives, we can reduce the impact of bleaching and ensure the long-term survival of these essential ecosystems.

Ultimately, coral reefs' fate relies on both global and local actions. Governments, scientists, conservation organizations, and individuals must collaborate to protect these natural wonders. Through proactive measures and ongoing commitment, we can help corals endure environmental challenges and preserve them for future generations. While the challenge is immense, the potential for recovery remains strong – so long as action is taken before it is too late.

email Alex

RETAILING

Getting Your Store Ready for the New Dive Season

– by Jeff Cinciripino, JeffCinciripino.com, Former Owner of Scuba Shack, Rocky Hill, CT.



For some dive shops, the dive season is year-round. For those fortunate to be in warmer climates and close to great diving, there is a constant flow of individuals looking to learn to dive and heading out to the reefs and wrecks. For quite a few local dive shops, there is a definitive dive season tied to the seasons. While training in the pool and classroom does happen throughout the winter, it isn't until the spring that their dive season kicks off into high gear. As we put the end-of-year activities like DEMA, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and the Christmas Season behind us, there is a window of opportunity to get ready for the hectic days of the new dive season. Like most endeavors, you should have a plan to execute your preparations. Let's take a look at several areas of preparation, including:

- **Your staff**
- **Your equipment**
- **Your facility and**
- **Yourself**

Staff Preparation: Most small businesses enter a new year with their strategy set and their goals and objectives established. There are sales goals, training objectives, and travel plans. Having reviewed the previous year, there may also be changes to processes as well as new staff being integrated into the operation. The start of the new dive season is an opportune time to meet with the staff to review the year ahead. Ensuring that the team knows the schedule is critical in allowing them to plan and make commitments, especially those who are independent instructors. They need to ensure that your schedule meshes with their ability to support the operation.

One or more staff meetings are needed to review any changes that are being put into place for the new dive season. There may be changes to equipment, logistics, and schedules. The team must understand the reason for these changes, as well as why certain aspects of the operation are not changing. Additionally, a review of the sales and training goals is critical. The frontline staff and instructors are instrumental in achieving these goals and therefore must know what is needed to make the business successful.

Finally, the start of the dive season is an opportune time for training. For example, many of the staff also are fill station operators and therefore hazardous material handling and fill station operator training should be completed and documented. You may also want to have refresher training in first aid and oxygen administration.

Equipment Preparation: As a gear-intensive sport, your training equipment and rental fleet should be readied for the new season. Preparing equipment for the new dive season takes time and effort. It is, however, critical that enough time and resources are budgeted toward service and maintenance of the fleet. Ask yourself this question: How would I feel if one of my students or customers was injured as a result of a piece of my dive gear that failed and I had not completed the required service or maintenance on that item? The answer to that is pretty obvious. None of us want to see an injury.

Depending on how you operate, you may decide that all of your regulator service and maintenance is done prior to the start of your specific dive season, or you may spread this out over the course of the year. In either scenario, the start of the dive season is a good time to check the service records of each regulator to determine what type of service (inspection or full-service) is needed and develop the plan to stay in compliance. The same holds true for scuba cylinders. One option is to have all cylinders visually inspected and hydrostatically tested if needed during the slow months to avoid having to take tanks out of service in the middle of a hectic time. Some gear may not require routine maintenance, such as wetsuits or dive computers, but this gear should be inspected. Giving a customer a wetsuit with a tear in the neoprene or a dive computer with a low battery can be a bit embarrassing.

Dive Shop Preparation: The physical dive shop also needs to be ready for the dive season. First and foremost are the customer-facing areas of the facility, namely the classroom and retail space. If the classroom hasn't been used for training recently, you will want to ensure that it is cleaned, organized, and ready to present a favorable environment for students. Sometimes the classroom has been used for other activities that may leave it somewhat messy. Take a look at the area with a critical eye and look at the room from a student's perspective.

The retail area is your front door and needs to be welcoming and set that positive first impression. With the wind-down of year-end activities, you may find that you need to declutter and organize to make for an efficient and optimal customer experience.

Don't Forget about Yourself: One final area to consider is preparing yourself for the dive season. The dive season is a marathon and not a sprint. Take some time to prepare yourself mentally and physically for the upcoming year. The new dive season should be a time to be optimistic and reflect on what lies ahead. Visualizing the weather and the water turning warmer, full classes of students wanting to explore the underwater world, and the exotic travel on the schedule is a great way to help establish and maintain a positive outlook. Additionally, make sure that you don't overcommit yourself to too many activities. You want to ensure that you get the proper downtime to maintain your stamina as the year grinds along.

As we make our way from the cold, dark days of winter, spring is on the horizon. And with spring, for many, a new dive season is also on the horizon. The dive shop needs to be ready for the season, and with proper planning and preparation, you are poised to execute your strategic plan and work towards your goals and objectives.

email Jeff

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Top Press Releases From This Month – *by Scott Jones, President, Dive Newswire Press Service*


Scott and son, Stephen

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How to Keep Your Dive Staff Happy By John Flanders

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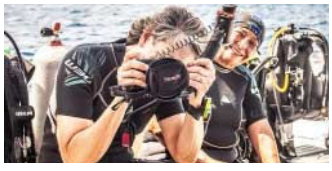
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TRAVEL

New Year, New Dive Destination: Jordan's Red Sea

– by Tara Artner, Aqaba, Jordan

Tara is an instructor and underwater photographer for over 20 years, traveling the world planning and leading private dive expeditions, capturing the ocean's wonders for documentaries, while still diving on her days off.



"It's Unique and Unforgettable!"

If you are looking for a dive destination for the new year, Jordan should be at the top of your list. Aqaba is a tiny gem in the Red Sea, with its compact 17 miles of coastline offering crystal-clear waters, vibrant coral reefs, and incredible wreck dives. It boasts year-round warm temperatures, sunshine, and minimal crowds.

Despite the limited coastline, there is fantastic diving, including the famous *Cedar Pride Wreck,* intentionally sunk in 1985, the Japanese Garden, a shallow, energetic, and colorful reef; The Tank, at just 6M, perfect for beginners; and, of course, the one-of-a-kind Military Museum Underwater Park. Jordan's dive sites cater to all levels.



Jordan's Famed Underwater Military Museum

Beyond diving, Jordan offers rich history and adventure for everyone – explore the ancient city of Petra, hike on some of the 650 km of the Jordan Trail, experience the surreal landscapes and incredible stars in Wadi Rum, or relax in the therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea. With an easy access visa on arrival, top-tier dive resorts, warm hospitality, and delicious food, Jordan is the perfect destination to kick off a new year of diving in style.



Topside Adventures in Jordan, The Author & her Mother

A diving highlight in Aqaba is the Military Museum wrecks, which were deliberately sunk with great care in July 2019 by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) to create an underwater museum and artificial reef. The project involved submerging several decommissioned military vehicles, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, an anti-aircraft gun, and two helicopters, at depths ranging from 15 to 28 meters. To ensure precise placement, cranes and barges were used to transport and lower the vehicles into the sea, while some were carefully positioned on the seabed with the help of divers.

This wonderful goal aims to enhance Aqaba's diving tourism, provide a unique historical attraction, and promote marine–life growth by creating new habitats for coral and fish. The wrecks were arranged in a combat formation, ensuring a safe and engaging experience for divers while preserving the natural marine environment.

Swimming among the vehicles, there is an undeniable sense of beauty and serenity. Fish flitted in and out of the open hatches, moray eels peeked out of the cracks of the rusting tanks, while soft coral and sponges gave a pop of color on the metal structures, reminding us of the resilience of nature and the creative ways humanity can repurpose its past. At the deepest section of the dive, 28M, a breathtaking sight awaited us: two fully intact helicopters resting proudly on the seabed. The Military Museum is truly a one-of-a-kind dive site, perfect for those seeking something out of the ordinary. Its depth makes it ideal for divers with advanced certifications, and it's a fantastic addition to a longer dive trip in Aqaba.

Booking a Group Dive Trip to Jordan. Visa and Entrance: Most visitors arrive through Queen Alia International Airport in Amman. Many nationalities can obtain a visa on arrival in Jordan for about 40 JOD (~$56 USD), valid for 30 days. If your group is flying into Amman and heading directly to Aqaba, consider getting a Jordan Pass, starting at 70 JOD (~$100 USD), which waives the visa fee if you stay at least 3 nights and includes entry to Petra and other attractions.

Transportation to Aqaba. Flying: The fastest option is to fly into Aqaba's Airport (AQJ), which has connections from Amman, Dubai, and Istanbul.

Jordan is a perfect blend of adventure, culture and relaxation. It's not your normal dive destination, and will leave you with incredible memories. *"It's Unique and Unforgettable!"*

email Tara

TRAVEL

Los Roques, an Exotic Caribbean Paradise

– by Carlos Lander, Caracas, Venezuela

Carlos is a self-taught amateur archaeologist, author, programmer, and statistician with over 25 years diving experience.



Exotic destinations always attract travelers. While Fiji and Palau may come to mind, Los Roques Atoll in the Caribbean is equally unique. This remote destination requires an adventurous spirit and a love for the untamed.

A Geological Wonder: Unlike most atolls, Los Roques formed on a large submerged platform of sedimentary rock instead of a subsiding volcano. Around 40 million years ago, igneous and metamorphic rocks created its foundation, with layers of marine sediment building up over time. After the last ice age, rising sea levels fostered coral reef growth, forming protective barrier reefs, inland lagoons, and ever-changing keys.

Located 135 km off the Venezuelan coast, this archipelago of over 350 islands is in constant transformation. Some keys vanish while others appear, influenced by tides, currents, and wind. The atoll is surrounded by a barrier reef to the east and south, plunging into deep waters abundant with sharks, tuna, mantas, and dolphins.

A Challenging Yet Rewarding Destination: Historically, Amerindian seafarers and Spanish explorers passed through these islands, but much remains unknown. If you seek an untouched diving experience, Los Roques delivers. However, logistics require renting a yacht or sailboat and bringing diving equipment. Private vessels frequently visit, spending weeks exploring this paradise.

For those seeking more structured travel, flights from Caracas reach El Gran Roque, the main island. Airlines like Conviasa and AereoCaribe operate these 45-minute flights. Accommodation options include Macanao Lodge, Posada Lagunita, and Posada Caracol. Travel agencies help coordinate bookings and dive arrangements.

Diving in Los Roques: Dives exceed 18 meters (60 feet), requiring at least an advanced certification. Local guides charge up to US$200 per day, ensuring safety and environmental responsibility. Two dives range from US$180 to US$220, while snorkeling trips cost around US$30. Services are pricier than in other Caribbean destinations due to its isolation. US dollars and Euros are widely accepted, and some inns take Bolívares and international credit cards.

The Ultimate Adventure: Despite its challenges, Los Roques offers unparalleled beauty, biodiversity, and adventure. Careful planning ensures an unforgettable experience in this pristine marine paradise. Whether diving, snorkeling, or simply exploring, Los Roques is a once-in-a-lifetime destination.

email Carlos



RETAILING

Memory Marketing and How It Can Help the Scuba Diving Industry

– by Peter Letts, owner of Abyss Scuba Diving, Sydney, Australia



Think back to when you became a certified open water diver. Can you remember the joy, the pride, and the excitement written all over your face? Now, imagine receiving a photo that perfectly captures that memory. The next day, you'd eagerly show it to your coworkers, reliving the experience as you share it. Over time, you receive emails or text messages that encourage you to revisit those memories, bringing back the feelings of that incredible moment. That's the essence of memory marketing – a powerful way to keep experiences alive and meaningful.

In the scuba industry, where every customer experience is unique, memory marketing is a powerful way to build long-term customer relationships and grow your business. To really unlock its potential, memory marketing needs to be implemented by both dive destinations and local dive shops.

What Is Memory Marketing? Memory marketing is about creating, capturing, and leveraging memorable customer experiences. By triggering strong emotions, dive businesses can build stronger, longer relationships with divers. Those emotional connections get divers to come back, share their positive experiences, and be ambassadors for the dive business long after they've learned to dive.

The principles of memory marketing are simple but powerful.

Memory Marketing Principles and Techniques:

1. Emotionally Connected: Learning to scuba dive is full of unforgettable moments – your first breath underwater, the thrill of seeing marine life up close, the calmness of floating weightlessly. Those experiences create emotions like awe, joy, and pride, leaving a lasting impression that connects you deeply to the underwater world.
2. Storytelling: Every dive is a story to be told. From your first training session to your first open water dive, those moments create a narrative you'll want to share. The dive industry needs to tap into those personal adventures, make divers feel part of a bigger community, and deepen the emotional connection.
3. Nostalgia: Scuba diving is about exploration and discovery – whether it's a childhood dream of swimming with sea creatures or the thrill of trying something new for the first time. Connecting those past aspirations to future dives creates a strong emotional bond.
4. Experiential Marketing: The hands-on nature of scuba diving training itself is an experience that sticks. From putting on your gear to practicing underwater skills those tangible, immersive moments reinforce positive associations with learning to dive and the brands that support you on the journey.

These are especially powerful in the scuba industry, where every dive is a memory that divers will cherish forever.

Memory Marketing for the Scuba Diving Industry: Scuba diving is undoubtedly one of the most unforgettable experiences. Most of us can recall the magic of our first breath underwater as if it happened yesterday. By tapping into the emotional impact of those powerful memories, dive shops can connect with new divers – turning first-time visitors into passionate advocates who not only love diving but also develop a lifelong loyalty to the shop.

Here's how scuba diving and memory marketing go hand in hand:

Unforgettable Underwater Memories: Photos and videos are the heart and soul of memory marketing for scuba businesses. Think about it – divers love reliving their first giant stride into the water, the rush of seeing marine life up close, or even the fun of their certification group photo. When dive operators provide free, high-quality photos and videos of these moments, they're creating more than just keepsakes – they're linking their brand to happiness, achievement, and adventure.

Take Abyss Scuba Diving as an example. They started posting photos of newly certified divers on Facebook in 2009, and it worked great for engagement. But when Facebook's algorithms changed and visibility dropped, they needed a new approach. That's when they turned to Fotaflo, a platform that makes sharing photos easy while driving divers and their friends back to their website.

With Fotaflo, Abyss gave divers a way to access their photos and reconnect with them by sharing these images during moments of significance like certification anniversaries or holidays. This didn't just help divers relive their achievements – it made them share their stories with friends. The result? A 40% increase in open water certification bookings.

Add to the Experience: Photos aren't the only memory makers. Dive operators can take it one step further by creating moments before and after each dive.

For example, high-demand trips could feature fun group underwater photos that will become future social media posts. Or dive shops could offer personalized extras like curated photo albums or small post-dive celebrations. These little extras make a significant difference, so divers leave with memories they'll treasure long after they're out of the water.

Story of Transformation: Scuba diving is more than an activity – it's often a journey of transformation. And that's the kind of story that sticks.

Think about Nike's famous "Just Do It" campaign, which shows athletes overcoming obstacles. Dive shops can do the same by sharing stories of their customers – like a diver who started as a beginner and worked their way up to advanced certifications, or someone who overcame their fears to dive to new depths. Those stories connect with people and inspire them to start their own scuba journey.

Nostalgia Building: For experienced divers, thinking about their early diving experiences makes them smile. Nostalgia is a powerful way to build connections, and dive shops can tap into that sense of nostalgia to strengthen their relationships with customers.

A fitting example outside of scuba is Disney Parks' nostalgia-focused campaigns. They ask families to relive the magic by sharing old vacation photos and memories of childhood trips. Dive shops can do the same by asking divers to revisit their favorite underwater moments, bringing them back to where it all began and re-igniting their passion for the sport.

When dive shops do memory marketing, they're not just offering a service. They're connecting, building loyalty, and getting divers to come back again and again. Every dive should be an experience not just good for business – it's what keeps the love of diving alive.

Benefits of Memory Marketing in the Scuba Industry: Memory marketing in scuba diving is more than customer satisfaction-it's making scuba a standout activity that leaves a lasting impression.

1. Customer Retention: When divers associate specific, unforgettable memories with an operator, they're more likely to come back and choose scuba over skydiving or bungee jumping. A diver who gets an amazing underwater video will choose another dive over trying something new.
2. Brand Loyalty: This not only builds loyalty to a dive center but also to the sport. Scuba diving becomes a personal journey they'll want to relive again and again.
3. Word-of-Mouth Advocacy: Customer dive photos and stories promote the dive shop and scuba as an activity to try. Shared memories will inspire others to choose scuba over other activities by showing its uniqueness and emotional impact.
4. Customer Experience: Scuba diving is the only adventure activity that gives you an experience of the underwater world. Memory marketing links this experience to emotional storytelling, so scuba becomes more than a momentary thrill like bungee jumping.
5. Competitive Advantage: Other activities are about adrenaline only; scuba is about adrenaline, discovery, and connection. By capturing and marketing these moments, dive businesses make scuba a more meaningful and better adventure than other activities.

Real-World Case Studies:

Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" Campaign: Coca-Cola's personalized bottles created emotionally meaningful customer interactions. Scuba brands could do the same by printing diver-specific names or quotes on branded gear, making it personal.

GoPro's Adventure Videos: GoPro capitalizes on adventure sports by creating promotional videos using footage of their users' real-life adventures. Scuba operators can do the same by creating professionally curated content from customer experiences to get online traction.

Abyss Scuba Diving's Photography Strategy: By integrating photography into their open water training, initially via Facebook and then onto Fotaflo, Abyss turned memory marketing into a business model that drives traffic, engagement, and bookings by 40%.

Conclusion: Memory marketing isn't just for local dive shops – it's for destinations, liveaboards, and anywhere scuba diving memories are made. It's about the emotional and awe-inspiring experiences that come with exploring the underwater world, turning heart-pounding moments into lifelong memories and ultimately lifelong customers. By telling stories, personalizing, and being creative, operators across the scuba industry can build deeper connections, get more brand visibility, and stand out in a crowded market.

If we all did memory marketing, scuba diving would be a much bigger sport, more people would be exploring the magic beneath the surface. By making the customer the hero of their own memory-filled adventures, we don't just promote scuba diving, we make it unforgettable.

email Peter

TRAINING

When is it Time to Stop Teaching?

– by Patrick Hammer, PADI CD-4325, Chicago, IL & Phoenix, AZ



I find this interesting as I meet older instructors that ask about the correct time to hang up their fins. We can all look at a pro athlete that went beyond their time and, once at the top, retired way down the ladder. As a pro you made it to the top – you may have had years of training and still love teaching. But you might find it hard to walk back up a steep hill, a boat ladder, or even dive in cold water. Okay, that's hint one: time to slow down, but not stop. I like to think of the saying, "What I used to do all night, now takes all night to do." As we age, we should not expect our bodies to do as much as we did when we were 20. So, when do I need to stop? I hurt my shoulder a few years ago, and the doctor gave me a prescription. When I asked him about taking it and diving, he was not sure but stated If I am ok on land, I should be fine underwater. He has no idea. So, I did not take the meds and was ok. I am sure as we all get older, most of us will start some meds. I might suggest asking DAN about the effects, not a non – diving doctor.



Know When It's Time to Ascend For The Last Time

Adjusting Dive Plans for Longevity: Personally, I love diving and teaching, but I understand a day may come when I can no longer teach. That day will be hard to accept. My thought is: you know your body best, and if you do not think you could help someone in need, especially a student, it's time to stop. I have friends that do not handle cold well and have stopped training in cold water or even backed off from deep dives in inland lakes, where it can be very cold. When a diver enrolls in a program, they expect the instructor to be there for anything and everything. We can't expect them to help their instructor.

Recognizing When to Slow Down: It is also important to encourage older divers to slow down. I see those that are 65 or older saying, "I have done these dives for years, and I will be fine at 120 feet." They feel they need to prove something to their buddies, or maybe even to themselves. This is not a sport to take chances. If you are aging well, be grateful, and if not, be proud of what you have done and slow down. Do dives and teach classes you know you have control of. I personally try not to go past 100 feet after I turned 60.

Twenty years ago, I never cared about how many ascents I did in a day. Today I watch it and spread out those skills, or have another instructor help. I have nothing to prove to others, and you should not either. Your safety needs to come first.

A few years ago, a good friend of mine taught me a valuable lesson. He dives Enriched air all the time, however he plans all his dives with air tables. This creates a nice safety margin. If older divers and instructors slow down, back off the deep dives, and stop worrying about proving themselves, they just may stay diving longer. When the time comes, you will know when to drop the twins or 100s and dive an 80. I had a dear friend who, near the end, dived with a 50CF tank. He did that for years.

Give Back When You Hang Up Your Fins: A day may come when we all need to stop hitting the water, but there are all kinds of other things you can do. Public speaking is a good one – you've surely built up a lot of knowledge over the years. Offer a class to keep active at the local store. If you are getting up in years, I suggest training staff to help you to keep your training program going. They work for you today, but tomorrow you may be working for them – yet still diving. That is important for you and the industry, we hate to see an experienced instructor hang up their fins.

Happy diving and I hope you age well and dive long.

email Pat

TRENDS IN TRAVEL SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY MAGAZINE TRAINING & RETAILING

2.4 million
consumer divers influenced by retailers in the USA

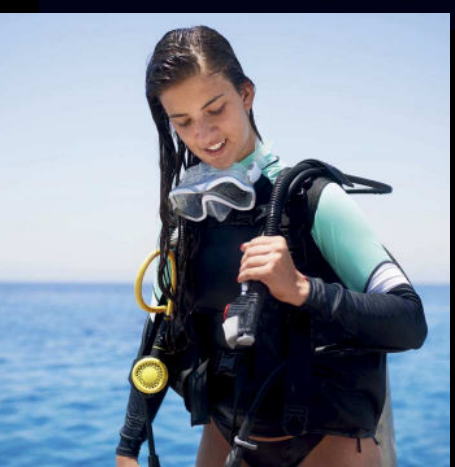


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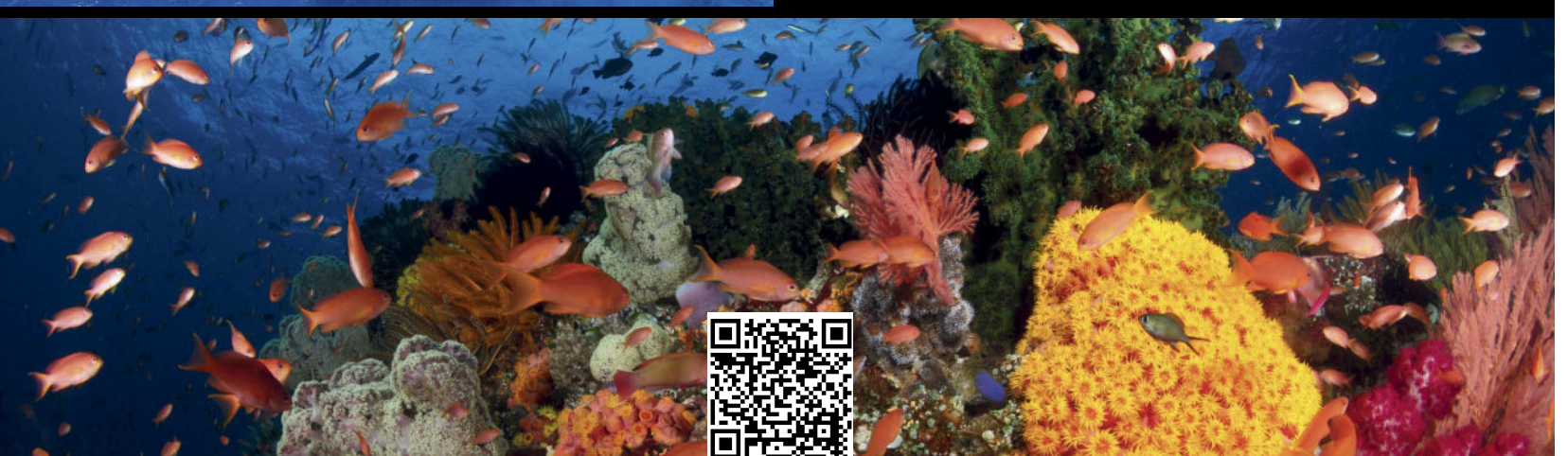


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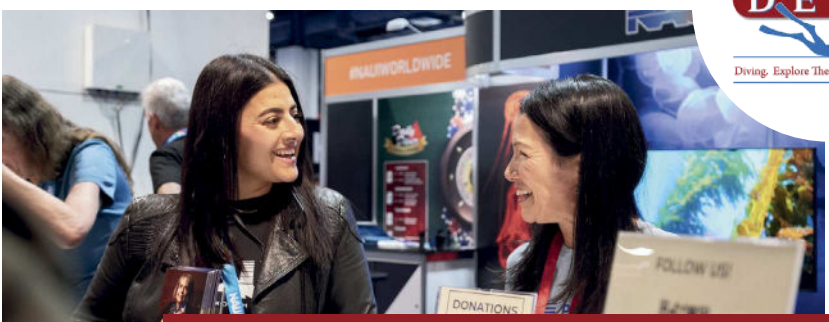
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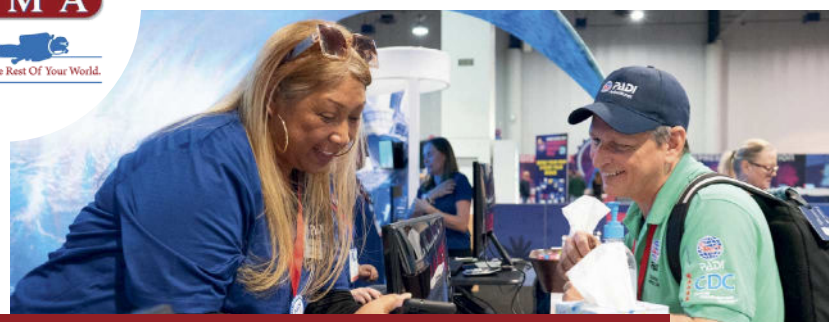


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