SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY

MAY 2025 PUBLISHED BY CLINE GROUP

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Photo by Neal Watson, Jr.
Shot at Bimini Scuba Center's
Great Hammerhead Shark
Dive Site, Bimini, Bahamas

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

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

JUST KEEP SWIMMING: BUSINESS LESSONS FROM HAMMERHEAD SHARKS

A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to dive with great hammerheads in Bimini - and wow! These sharks are massive. Watching them glide past, calm and confident, was unforgettable. One of the most powerful moments was seeing a shark feeder hand-feed a full-grown hammerhead right in front of us. The shot was so striking, we're featuring it on this month's cover of *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine*.

But what really stuck with me wasn't just their size - it was how they move.

Hammerheads have nearly **360-degree vision** thanks to their wide-set eyes, but here's the interesting part: they actually see better when they're in motion. When they stay still, their vision narrows. **It's movement that gives them full awareness.**

That got me thinking - what if dive professionals took a cue from hammerheads?

See the Whole Picture: Running a dive business isn't all reef dives and certification cards. It's gear repairs, group travel logistics, instructor scheduling, customer follow-ups, pool nights, and insurance paperwork. You wear every hat - and *you have to see it all.*

Like the hammerhead scanning the reef, dive pros need *wide awareness.* That means spotting staff burnout before it affects guests, noticing shifting travel trends, or identifying the anxious diver who didn't speak up during the briefing.

Keep Moving to Stay Sharp: The hammerhead's superpower isn't just wide vision - it's that it stays in motion. As dive professionals, we see more clearly when we stay active. That doesn't mean being frantic - it means always moving forward. Try a new specialty. Update your website. Reach out to past guests. Test a group trip. The pros who stay sharp are the ones who keep swimming.

When I'm working on the magazine or planning a podcast or ad campaign, I apply that same mindset. Keep learning. Keep trying new things. Don't wait for change - move toward it.

Want to Connect in Person? We'll be at the **Scuba Show in Long Beach,** May 31–June 1 at booth #155 - stop by and say hello! And yes, DEMA planning is already underway (can you believe it's less than six months away?). Like a hammerhead, I'm working on my 360-degree vision now - scanning what's ahead, connecting with industry pros, and building momentum for what's next.

Whether you're underwater leading a dive or back at the shop managing chaos, take a lesson from nature: scan wide, stay in motion, and grow your vision.

Your business - and your divers - will thank you for it.

William Cline, Publisher

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SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY™ MAGAZINE
MAY 2025 VOL. 2, NO. 5

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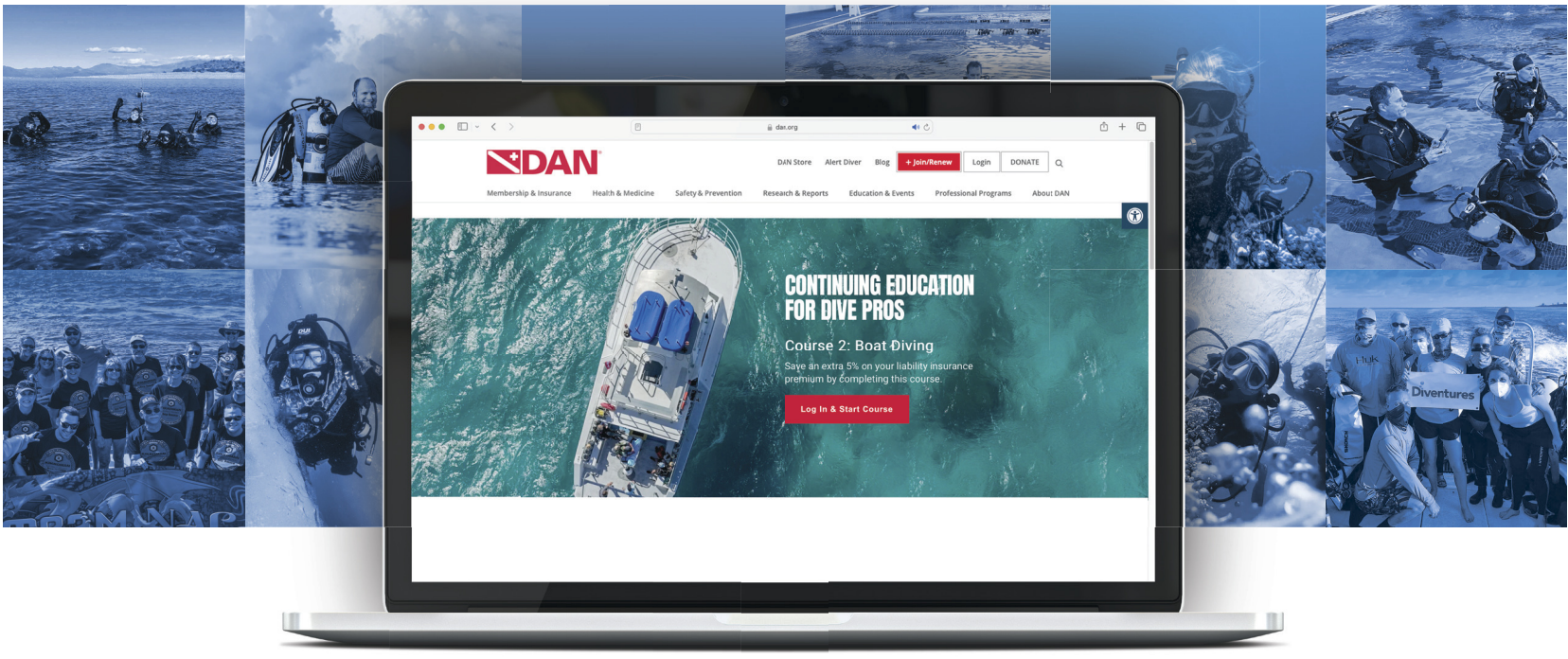
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Scuba Diving Industry™ Magazine: (Print: ISSN 2996-1416, Digital: ISSN 2996-1424) Published monthly by Cline Group LLC, 1740 Airpark Lane, Plano, TX 75093. Printed copies are mailed within the USA to select dive retailers & advertisers. Subscriptions are free to dive professionals & distributed digitally to 165 countries. POSTMASTER send address changes to Scuba Diving Industry Magazine, 1740 Airpark Ln., Plano, TX 75093.

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SAFETY

See Clearly. Dive Safely. Vision Correction & Diving

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



Age, I'm afraid, is a fact of life. Even though we see countless commercials and advertisements on television touting various "anti-aging" treatments, that, I'm afraid, is a physical impossibility. We cannot turn back the proverbial hands of time. As we age, we become more prone to various eye conditions due to natural aging and associated health issues. Environmental factors may also contribute to the development of eye issues, including long-term exposure to UV radiation (sunlight), air pollution, and certain chemicals. Common eye problems in older adults may include cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration (AMD), and diabetic retinopathy.

> **"As the water envelopes you, the eyes open to a world of unimaginable wonder! – Dan Orr"**

Captain Frank K. Butler, Jr., in his seminal article *Diving and Hyperbaric Ophthalmology,* stated, "Some eye disorders and postoperative states may be adversely affected by the underwater environment or other hyperbaric exposures. The prevalence of recreational, military, and commercial diving, as well as the medical use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy, requires that ophthalmologists be familiar with the effects of the hyperbaric environment on the normal and diseased eye."

I think many of us can remember when we reached that magic age where our arms were no longer long enough for us to read clearly. I remember that time all too well. I was working at the Florida State University (FSU) Academic Diving Program as Associate Diving Safety Officer and Instructional Coordinator in the late 1980's. We were doing a dive in a northern Florida cave system collecting data for the science departments at FSU. When we paused our return to the surface for our safety stop, I looked at my dive computer (the EDGE at the time) and had some difficulty making out the numbers. No matter how I stretched my arms, I still could not read the number on the computer screen. So, I removed the computer from my arm and laid it on the cave wall in front of me and moved back to the point where I could read the numbers on the screen. After a few minutes, I noticed that everyone in the dive team had done the same thing, thinking it was some sort of safety technique I was using!

Having good vision is critically important for us to truly enjoy a scuba dive. Good vision is also critically important to diving safety, helping us identify potential dangers and understand the data presented to us by the advanced technology that we rely so heavily on in maintaining safety in diving.

As we age, our eyes undergo several natural changes that may affect our vision. The lens of the eye changes, becoming less flexible, making it difficult to focus on close objects. The lens may yellow, changing the way colors are perceived, and the number of nerve cells in the eyes decrease, impairing depth perception.

These and other changes typically start in the mid-40s and may lead to the need for reading glasses or bifocals. This condition is known as presbyopia. At the same time, proteins in the lens of the eye clump together, forming cloudy areas that can cause blurred vision, glare, and sensitivity to light. These are cataracts. The central part of the retina (called the macula), responsible for sharp central vision, may deteriorate over time and can lead to blurred or distorted vision in the center of the visual field. This condition is known as macular degeneration. There may also be an increase in the pressure within the eye that can damage the optic nerve, leading to gradual loss of peripheral vision. This condition is known as glaucoma. Our pupils may become smaller as we age, making it more difficult to see in dim light. We may also notice what are known as 'floaters'- small spots or specks that float in the field of vision. They are caused by protein clumping in the vitreous gel, a jelly-like substance in the eye. Many people will, as they age, experience dry eyes as tear production decreases with age, leading to dryness, irritation, and blurred vision.

As I continue to dive, take photographs, and help lead diving and non-diving expeditions for Blue Green Expeditions (www.bluegreenexpeditions.com), issues with my eyes have become critically important for me. During my last regular eye examination, my optometrist told me that I had cataracts in both eyes. I was referred to the Idaho Eye and Laser Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho, for further evaluation. I met with the ophthalmologist and corneal specialist, who thoroughly evaluated both of my eyes and suggested cataract surgery. The surgery involved the surgical removal of the affected (clouded) lens and a clear, artificial intraocular lens (IOL) implanted. The medical staff at the clinic discussed with me the various IOLs. These lens options each have their various pros and cons, each designed to adjust focus like the natural eye, potentially reducing the need for prescription glasses following surgery.

The fact that I may no longer need to use prescription glasses OR need to have prescription lenses in my masks was really appealing, but brought with it the need to purchase a new primary and backup mask.

My cataract surgery was scheduled for a Monday morning for my left eye, and the surgery for the right eye was scheduled for the following Monday. For the three days prior to the first surgery, I had to self-administer (with my wife Betty's help) combination eye drops three times per day. These eye drops included antibiotics and anti-inflammatories, helping to prepare the eye for surgery by minimizing the risk of infection and reducing inflammation.


Pre-Surgery Vision Test

On the day of surgery, we arrived at the clinic and were ushered into the surgical waiting room. After the requisite paperwork and insurance forms, I was taken into the surgical suite where I met the surgical nurses who took my vital signs and set up an IV to administer the anesthetic. I met the anesthesiologist who explained that I would be made comfortable during the surgical procedure, but I would still be conscious in order to follow instructions from the surgeon. I then met the surgeon. Not only was the surgeon a board-certified ophthalmologist and corneal specialist but, as luck would have it, a scuba diver! He explained the procedure he was going to perform, and then we talked about diving!! As that conversation went on, I began to feel the effects of the anesthesia and, before I knew it, I was listening to instructions as my clouded lens was being removed and the new lens put in its place.

The entire procedure lasted only about 15 minutes, and I soon found myself back in the recovery area with a patch over my left eye and listening to instructions from the nursing staff. I was led out to the surgical waiting room, given a pair of very dark glasses to wear because my eye was still very sensitive to light. Betty met me and took me to the car. Since I'd had nothing to eat for the previous 24 hours, our first stop was at McDonald's! During the 90-minute drive home, I napped while Betty drove.

That evening, as suggested by the surgeon, Betty removed the patch covering my left eye and taped a plastic shield over the eye to keep me from accidentally touching or rubbing that eye during the night. The next morning, we had a follow-up appointment with the doctor. Since my pupil in the left eye was still dilated, I had to continue wearing the dark glasses. Even though it was less than 24 hours since the surgery, I could already tell that my vision had improved.

The doctor fully evaluated my left eye and pronounced that he was very satisfied with the results and that over the next few days, my vision in that eye would continue to improve.

As the week progressed following my left eye surgery, my vision in that eye significantly improved - so much so that I could no longer comfortably wear my old glasses. I also continued to use the prescribed eye drops, but now for both eyes in preparation for the right eye surgery the next week.

The right eye surgical process was exactly the same as with the left eye, with the scheduled follow-up the following day. During the follow-up, the surgeon evaluated his work and pronounced that the surgery went well. During all of this, one thing was constantly on my mind, and that was how this surgery, and any eye surgery, would affect my ability to continue to enjoy scuba diving.

During a scheduled-follow up evaluation with my optometrist, he evaluated my overall vision and said my vision had improved from a pre-operation uncorrected 20/80+ to a post-operation 20/20+. The "+" has to do with my left eye that, due to scar tissue in that eye from many years ago, the vision is not quite as good as the right eye but has certainly improved from pre-operation vision.

My surgical experience was an absolute success and was, therefore, the genesis of this article.

After any kind of eye surgery, it's crucial to talk with your surgeon about your desire to continue to scuba dive following any kind of eye surgery or treatment. In my case, the surgeon suggested that I wait a minimum of one month before considering a return to the water to allow for proper healing and minimize the risk of complications.

Since there are no controlled studies specifically addressing the suggested length of convalescence before a return to diving from any type of eye surgery, recommendations on a return to diving are generally based on clinical experience and recommendations from diving medical organizations such as Divers Alert Network (DAN) and the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society (UHMS).

Here's a more detailed explanation with some general recommendations: A general recommendation is to consult with your ophthalmologist and wait a specified and recommended period of time after surgery before returning to diving. If your ophthalmologist is unfamiliar with diving, it would be advised that they contact the Medical Department at DAN or the UHMS for consultation.

The most common types of eye surgery and recommenda-

tions for returning to diving are:

- **Cataract surgery:** a procedure to remove a clouded lens and replace it with an artificial one, is generally safe and effective, with most people noticing vision improvement within a few days and full recovery taking about four weeks. The UHMS recommends not returning to diving for a minimum of one month after small-incision cataract surgery (the most common type of cataract surgery). This allows for any surgical incisions to fully heal and for any postoperative complications to resolve (*Ocular Considerations in Diving,* Dr. Frank Butler).
- **LASIK:** a common surgical procedure that reshapes the cornea to correct vision problems like nearsightedness (myopia), farsightedness (hyperopia), and astigmatism, aiming for improved vision and reduced dependence on glasses or contact lenses. While LASIK is generally considered safe for diving, it's still important to wait for the eyes to heal completely, which typically takes a few weeks. DAN and the UHMS recommend consultation with your ophthalmologist and waiting a minimum of two weeks before returning to scuba diving following LASIK surgery.
- **Retinal surgery:** a surgical procedure performed on the retina, the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye. Avoid flying, going to high altitudes, and scuba diving after retinal surgery as advised by your doctor. DAN recommends consultation with your ophthalmologist and waiting a minimum of two months before returning to scuba diving following retinal surgery.


Post-Right Eye Surgery

- **Glaucoma filtering surgery:** a procedure to treat glaucoma, involves creating a new pathway for fluid to drain from the eye, reducing intraocular pressure, and typically takes 1 to 2 hours in a hospital setting. Scuba diving may be risky if you have had glaucoma filtering surgery, as changes in pressure inside your diving mask as you descend can cause bleeding and severe damage in an eye with a glaucoma filter. The UHMS recommends consultation with your ophthalmologist and waiting a minimum of two months before returning to scuba diving following glaucoma surgery. Diving in the presence of a functioning glaucoma filter entails a slightly elevated risk of complications that might impair the functioning of the filter.

A point of special emphasis about diving after eye surgery is that any gas bubbles (air or other gases that might be placed in the eye for therapeutic purposes) must be completely resolved before any diving, hyperbaric exposures, or ascent to altitude. Gas may be placed in the eye after some types of both retinal and corneal surgical procedures.

Some individuals who have had an eye removed might have a hollow orbital implant placed after surgery. Hollow orbital implants may collapse when exposed to increases in pressure, and eye patients with this type of implant should avoid diving.

Other types of orbital implants do not have a hollow space and do not cause problems when diving.

Understanding and addressing any eye-related problems is essential to protecting our eye health and enhancing our future diving experiences. By implementing any and all preventive measures, we can effectively mitigate risks and promote the overall well-being of our eyes while continuing to enjoy the wonders of the underwater world for years to come.

When considering eye health for scuba diving, several factors are important. Divers should ensure their masks fit properly to prevent water from entering and contaminating eyes, and they should be aware of potential pressure changes that can affect the eyes and sinuses. Additionally, as mentioned above, individuals with certain eye conditions or recent eye surgeries should consult with their healthcare professional or contact DAN for advice before diving.

As scuba divers, our eyes are portals to a world underwater so wondrous that it's hard for non-divers to imagine. Vision is vital for both our physical and emotional well-being. It enables us to navigate the world safely, connect with our surroundings, and find meaning in life. It is paramount to our safety and our quality of life to preserve our vision and protect our eyes.

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TRAVEL

Why All These Forms? The Operational Logistics of a Dive Resort

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



You have set up a dream dive vacation to a tropical resort with warm, clear water and exotic marine life to enjoy. But a few months ahead of your departure, the resort is sending you and your group a lot of forms to fill out and requests for copies of your main passport page and certification card(s).

Some divers may remember the old Three Dog Night hit "Mama told me (not to come)," and the third line of the lyrics says: "What's all these crazy questions they're askin' me?" That is probably what many divers are thinking when getting these requests from the resort, and while your inclination might be to put down "none of your business," this information is actually a key process to ensure you have an enjoyable time during your stay.

Major resorts often host multiple dive groups at the same time, with groups arriving on different days, so management has to figure out the logistics of having the right amount of staff (resort, dive, and restaurant), dive boats, rooms, transportation, and the right food available to match the stay of each group.

> **"We have all our staff study the photos so they can identify and greet you by your name," said Kris Mears of Scandi Divers in Puerto Galero, Philippines**

"Generally, we try to have each group's stay planned out a month in advance," said Joseph Asguerra of Atlantis Resorts in Dumaguete, Philippines. Such intense planning can't be left up to the last minute to ensure there is no shortage (or excess) of people, accommodations, gear, or food to keep everyone happy.

Junnar Kitane, the manager for all the dive staff at the Dumaguete Atlantis resort, said he has to plan in advance the right amount of divemasters and boats (including captains) to match each group size, plus ensure that the requested dive gear rentals are available and in working order, as well as gear storage lockers for all the guests. When the resort is full, he often has to arrange for trusted non-resort boats and crew to be brought in to accommodate the number of guests. Many dive guests request private dive guides, so his staff must be assigned accordingly.

Part of the common questions asked by resorts are about dietary restrictions or special occasions. The restaurant staff has to order food items in advance to match the dietary restrictions of the guests, and that usually means planning a meal menu that covers the needs of the guests on any given day. Have a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion to celebrate? Resorts normally would love to bake that cake, set up decorations and entertainment, but they need to know in advance to pull it off correctly.

We were part of a dive group that visited Anse Chastanet Resort in St. Lucia and requested weeks in advance a birthday cake for one of the guests on the Fourth of July, but she was a vegan. The chef at the resort brought out two cakes, one being a white cake for the main group decorated for the 4th celebration, and also a vegan chocolate cake that turned out to be the favorite for everyone. A last-minute request for this would probably not have been possible.

"Why do you need a copy of my passport page?"

Besides collecting required information to meet local laws, guest security, and administrative purposes, resorts often use the passport photos for staff training purposes. "We have all our staff study the photos so they can identify and greet you by your name," said Kris Mears of Scandi Divers in Puerto Galera, Philippines. This training also aids in security if an unfamiliar face is sighted on the resort property.

Questions concerning divers' certification level and experience are also needed to match up groups with dive staff and appropriate dive sites. A relatively inexperienced group of divers would require dive staff that is more focused on divers' safety (and perhaps calmer dive sites), while more experienced divers could handle more challenging sites and only really need a good dive guide to point out interesting marine life.

While resort questionnaires may seem burdensome to incoming divers, they prevent logistical nightmares that can ruin a dive trip.

email David

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ECO PRO

The Great Disconnect: A Plea for Better Environmental Education

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



Since its inception, instructor certification has been the entry ticket for most professionals into the diving industry. While this training provides a foundation for teaching and supervising divers, I believe it is entirely lacking in one vital area of content – the environment. This oversight is problematic because most people pursue scuba diving precisely because of the unique opportunity to explore and learn about the underwater environment. This disconnect between why people are motivated to become scuba divers and the void in the knowledge base of the professionals who train them is what I term the "Great Disconnect" – a mismatch with profound consequences on the health of our industry.

This situation has significant consequences due to its potential long-term impact. For example, an instructor with minimal understanding of the environment trains divers who likewise will know equally little or even less. Lacking any fundamental knowledge of the incredible underwater world they witness, the diver's experience is limited to "looking at all the pretty fish." In contrast, an instructor with a solid grasp of the environment can provide insights that make one's diving experience far more than a passive sightseeing tour. They can create a diver who both understands and connects with the world they explore. The distinction between the capabilities of these two types of instructors explains why some may view becoming a diver as merely an item to check off their bucket list, while others see it as a dedicated lifelong passion. Some have described this as the "occasional" diver versus the "core" diver phenomenon, and this dichotomy is important because while the former may be customers, the latter are the industry's lifeblood.

There is no better evidence of the Great Disconnect than the results of a 2022 survey sponsored by *In-Depth* magazine, DAN Europe, and the Business of Diving Institute of divers from both the US and Europe. It reported that only 23% of respondents said they had been "well or very well prepared to understand the environment in which they were to dive." In other words, 77% did not feel prepared. However, the reason for this shockingly low percentage becomes clear when viewed in the context of another question from the survey involving professionals. Here, the study found that a mere 11 percent of instructors said their training "prepared them well or very well regarding aquatic environments." The conclusion seems clear: Divers are not getting what they want from their underwater experience because most of those who train them lack the knowledge and skill to provide it.

The consequences of the Great Disconnect are evident in yet another survey also conducted in 2022 by the Reef-World Foundation, *Sustainability in a Recovering Travel World*. The results from over 2,400 global responses (both divers and dive professionals) across various demographics identified key narratives that will drive the market in the future. These insights could help businesses capitalize on trends for the future sustainability of their operations and the environment they rely on, but only if we heed the advice. Overall, the survey highlighted a strong demand for environmental and sustainability education that is clearly not being met by the industry's current diver training model.

Delving even deeper into the attitudes of professionals, the study found that the most common challenge they face in their day-to-day work is the lack of environ-

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"This is not some 'over-the-counter' accreditation. Their trained staff assessed our dive shop and dive masters on actual dives and made suggestions on how we can improve."

— Kalle Epp, Green Fins Member manager

mental education. Specifically, dive professionals cited the need for: 1) better education and awareness for dive customers; 2) proper environmental training for dive staff; and 3) improved education within local communities.

The study's summary concluded, "Businesses are currently missing a huge opportunity to provide educational resources about sustainability and conservation to staff and guests. Eighty-three percent of dive tourists said they are looking for further sustainability education on their holiday, and this is matched by the 76% of dive professionals who said their customers are requesting further sustainability education from them."

But while it may be helpful to define a problem, that's a useless exercise unless the problem is solved.

On the surface, a solution to the Great Disconnect is simple, though implementing it is not necessarily easy: The curricula by which dive professionals are trained must be radically updated and expanded. Emphasis on the environment must receive equal importance and attention during instructor training as do topics such as physics, physiology, and skill development. It cannot be a secondary priority, as it is currently. However, this will take time and may be resisted by those in the industry who see expanding instructor training as making it more expensive or less profitable.

Regardless, I believe a better solution is not to wait for the "industry" to solve the problem, but to act now as individuals and commit to filling the knowledge gap ourselves. Fortunately, many professionals have already taken on this challenge using existing resources and programs to upgrade the content and quality of their courses. Indeed, most training agencies provide materials and courses on a range of environmental topics. However, the idea that knowledge about the environment is somehow "continuing education" or a "specialty" course is spurious because entry-level training is where most divers stop. Thus, the Great Disconnect will continue until ALL certified divers have a firm grounding and appreciation for the environment in which they operate. In the end, although we may not succeed in all cases, we must strive to turn all "occasional" divers into "core" divers by connecting them more deeply with the environment that drove their interest in the first place.

To help instructors improve their approach to environmental education, conservation, and sustainability, particularly in entry-level courses, I'll devote this column in the coming months to providing insights from my long experience as a marine educator and program developer. Each article will provide an overall "take-home message" about some topic of environmental interest relevant to divers, along with links to in-depth resources, such as books, videos, free online training, and other materials. I'd also like to solicit your ideas so we can pass them on to your colleagues in future articles.

In conclusion, I don't want to leave the impression that all entry-level scuba courses are lacking regarding environmental content. Quite the contrary, many instructors go to great lengths to provide an exceptional environmental education to their students, motivating them to become dedicated conservation advocates. However, this is the exception rather than the rule. Dive professionals can have a profound impact on dive industry growth and the health of aquatic ecosystems, but only if we do a better job. Over the decades, diving educators have done an exceptional job of communicating the knowledge and skills required to create safe divers. The time has come for us to do the same in conveying the majesty of the underwater world and the ethos to make it a better place.

Alex's links



BUSINESS EDU

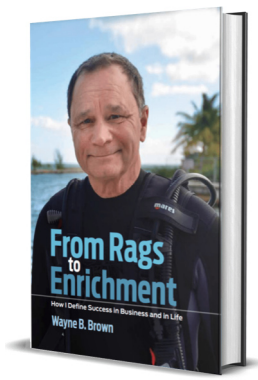
My Use of 'Focus' to Navigate Aggressor Adventures

– by Wayne B. Brown, author "From Rags to Enrichment" & CEO, Aggressor Adventures



As the owner and CEO of Aggressor Adventures, I continually strive to build on our reputation as the leader in adventure travel industry. Since acquiring Aggressor in 2007, I expanded it to offer global experiences in many more destinations like the Maldives, Red Sea, and Sri Lanka. However, steering a business of this magnitude through turbulent waters – both literal and metaphorical – has not been without its struggles. As a former Air Force medic and Taco Bell franchise owner, I often lean on a single word to guide me during challenging times: "Focus."

For me, "Focus" is more than a buzzword; it's a strategic anchor. In my recently published book, *From Rags to Enrichment: How I Define Success in Business and in Life* (October 2024), I reflect on how this principle has been instrumental in overcoming obstacles. Aggressor Adventures, which began in 1984 as a modest liveaboard diving operation, has faced significant hurdles under my ownership, including economic downturns, a pandemic, and the complexities of global expansion. One notable challenge we all faced and can relate to was the compete shutdown of the world in 2020. In the aftermath, I immediately initiated a focused approach to our future reopening. Rather than going on a all out cost-cutting spree and waiting out the return of international travel, I focused our priorities on our worldwide operations with a thorough review of our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), supporting affected guests, and enhancing safety protocols across the company.



Wayne's New Book

My use of "Focus" also manifests in my hands-on management style. As an avid diver and photographer, I personally engage with guests during "CEO Adventures," gaining direct insights into their experiences. This focus on customer feedback has driven many innovations ensuring Aggressor remains a leader in luxury adventure travel.

My focus also extends to sustainability and community impact. In 2012, I founded the *Sea of Change Foundation,* directing 100% of its funds to conservation and scholarships. Our recent 2025 *Make A Difference* challenge further exemplifies this, encouraging guests to support a person or family in need, earning them entry into our exclusive *Challenge Coin Club.* This initiative reflects focus on long-term societal benefits while navigating business challenges. Focus does not need to be on just your companies immediate needs.

Through economic uncertainties and global expansion, my reliance on "Focus" has been a cornerstone of Aggressor Adventures' resilience. By zeroing in on safety, customer experience, and sustainability, I am not only able to move the business forward but also redefined success in the adventure travel industry, proving that a clear focus can turn struggles into opportunities for your own company's growth and your own enrichment.

email Wayne

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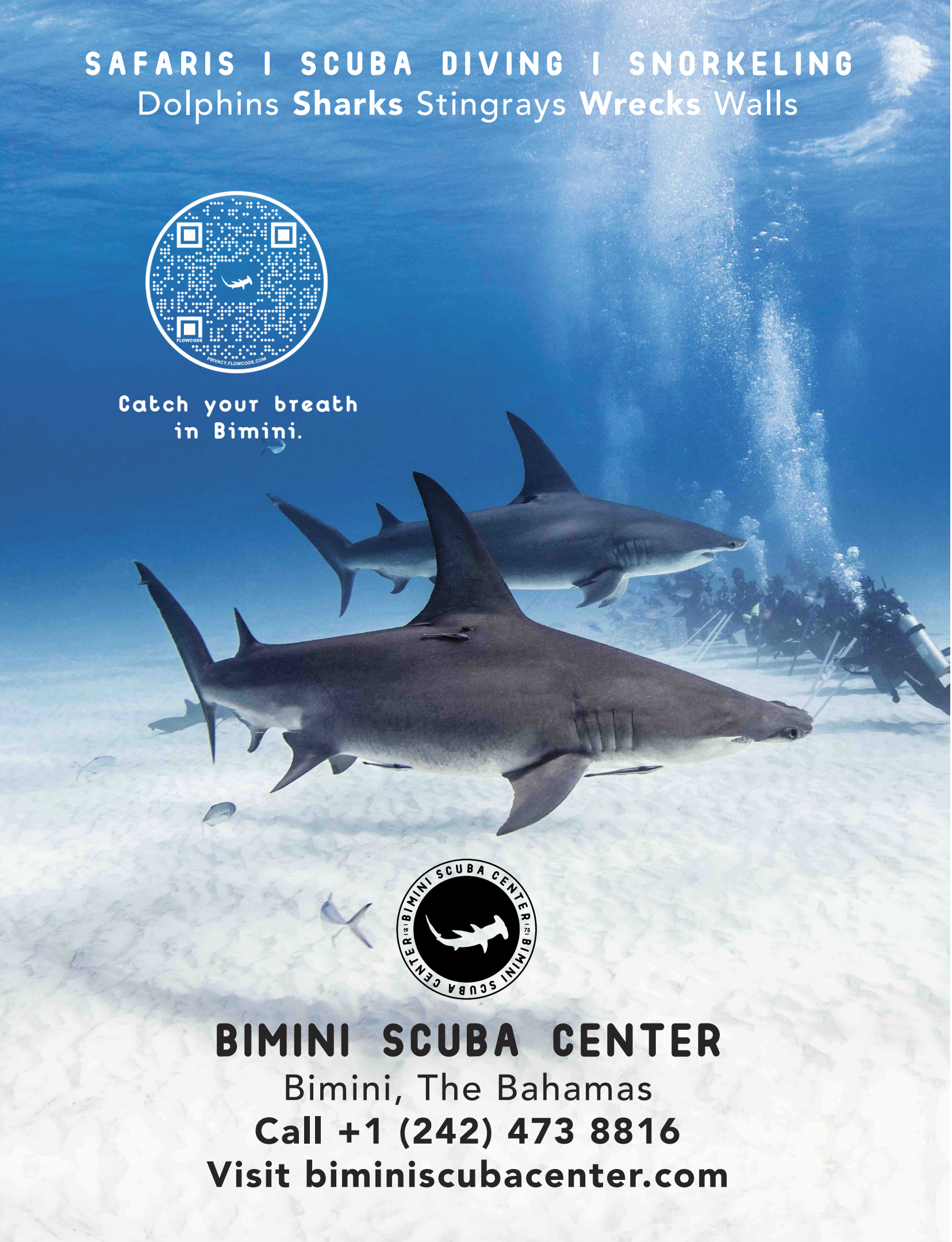
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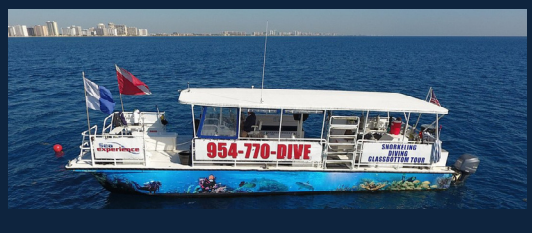
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PHOTO PRO

Behind The Lens: The Hunter and The Hunted

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



In the shallow waters of the Pleneau lagoon on the Antarctic Peninsula, the scene is picturesque during low tide. Young penguins frolic, unaware of the dangers lurking nearby. Here, the stealthy leopard seal finds a prime hunting ground. The seals enter the lagoon before low tide, hiding in the shadows and, putting their heads down in the water, they hold their breath. Their heads fully covered by the water, they blend in seamlessly with the many rocks around them. In this position, they lie in wait to ambush the young penguins who are oblivious to the mortal danger that awaits them.



Learning from the leopard seals, I entered the water as they did, stationing myself on the edge of the lagoon two hours before low tide. Seated on a rock, I surveyed the action from above. Equipped with a snorkel for stealth and a drysuit to stay warm, I waited for the action to commence. Once the penguins arrived, the drama unfolded rapidly. One of the penguins approached a hiding seal near where I was stationed, and by the time it noticed the danger, it was too late. A leopard seal, the epitome of predatory grace, surged forward and seized the hapless penguin, dragging it swiftly toward the open sea. A stunning display of nature's raw ferocity and elegance.

I followed closely, camera in hand, as the seal headed towards the deeper waters of the open sea. It dived about 15 feet, gripping the penguin gently by the tail – its intent was to drown its prey, not to wound it. Despite the grim circumstances, the penguin exhibited incredible resilience. It thrashed fiercely, fighting for its life, and miraculously, it managed to break free, propelling itself back towards the safety of the shore.

The leopard seal, however, was relentless. It quickly recaptured the penguin in a subsequent chase. This time, the penguin's efforts to escape were in vain, and the leopard seal was victorious in capturing a meal for itself.

Witnessing this life-and-death struggle was a profound reminder of the brutal survival challenges faced daily in the wild. Through my lens, I captured the poignant moments of this encounter, hoping to convey both the harsh reality of nature and the incredible survival instincts of its creatures.

Captured March 11, 2009: Canon EOS0 1DS Mark III, Seacam underwater housing,15mm lens, 1/200 sec, f - 5,6, ISO - 800

Special Thanks to the *Journal of Wildlife Photography* for recognizing my work in May, 2024. Congratulations to the other winners, all the winners can be viewed at the *Journal of Wildlife Photography,* May, 2024.

contact Amos

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TRAVEL

From the Deck to the Deep: An Unforgettable Dive Adventure in Bimini

– by Amber Wagenknecht, Executive Editor and Reporter on the Boat, Bimini, Bahamas



We recently wrapped up our First Annual *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine* Cruise aboard Virgin Voyages - and what a ride it was! From Michelin-quality meals to Broadway-level entertainment, life on board was a total blast. But the real highlight? Diving with hammerheads in Bimini, of course.

I was lucky enough to travel with quite the dream team: Publisher William Cline (check out his From the Publisher on page 5), Associate Publisher Patty Cline, Level Up podcast host Greg "The Divemaster" Holt of Scuba Radio fame, and diving legend Walt DiMartini. Add in the unforgettable hospitality of Neal Watson's Bimini Scuba Center (ad on page 15), and it was a dive trip for the record books.

After a quick stop in Key West, we headed to Bimini, where Neal Watson Jr. assured us he had kindly asked the hammerheads to stick around a bit longer since the season was nearly over - and once again, his connections paid off.

We want to extend a huge thank you to Neal Watson Jr. and his incredible crew: Georgiana, Jay, Captain Robin, photographer Janelle, and shark feeders Nathan, Bella, and K'Lyn. Their professionalism, passion, and attention to safety made our experience unforgettable. From the moment we arrived, we were treated like VIPs and made to feel not only welcome, but safe. Alesia and GG (Georgiana) checked us in while Bella helped outfit our group with top-quality gear.

After a mere 10 minute boat ride aboard the *Coral Princess,* we arrived at the famous shark dive site. K'Lyn delivered a rivetting pre-dive briefing, then we suited up to begin the adventure.

As we descended into the impossibly clear waters to a depth of 29 feet, sunlight shimmered in ribbons across the sand. Our group gathered on the ocean floor as the bait box was gently lowered. Around us, nearly 20 nurse sharks hovered, setting the stage. Then came the stars of the show - the unmistakable silhouettes of two great hammerhead sharks emerging from the blue.



Shark Feeder K'Lyn

While one feeder managed the bait, the other two acted as safety divers, keeping a protective perimeter around our group. Though the environment was wild and the animals powerful, we all felt incredibly well cared for. There was a calm professionalism that made it easy to focus on the awe of the moment rather than any fear.



Tiger Sharks of Bimini

For 30 magical minutes, we watched the hammerheads glide past us with serene authority. But we had been warned: if tiger sharks show up, the dive will change. And they were right.

As soon as the tigers arrived - sleek, striped, and commanding - the hammerheads wasted no time. They gave a few slow passes and then vanished into the blue. The next hour belonged to the tigers, who circled with power and grace, snacking and inspecting the scene as we remained transfixed. It was thrilling, surreal, and unlike any other dive I've experienced.

My friends keep asking, "You chose to do that?" Absolutely. I came to Bimini for the thrill - but what I discovered went far deeper than any single dive.

Beyond the Dive: What Sharks Mean to Bimini

Bimini, a narrow chain of islands in the Bahamas, is world-renowned for its vibrant marine life and seasonal shark aggregations. But to the people of Bimini, these sharks are more than just a tourist draw. They're woven into the island's culture, economy, and identity in profound ways.

1. Ecological and Traditional Importance

- Local Lore and Identity: Sharks - especially hammerheads and tigers - are deeply embedded in Bimini's folklore. They symbolize strength, endurance, and the untamed spirit of the surrounding sea.
- Traditional Fishing Practices: Historically, local fishers have respected sharks as vital parts of the marine ecosystem. While they were sometimes caught, there has long been an understanding of their role in sustaining reef health and fish populations.


William Cline & Amber Wagenknecht

2. Economic and Tourism Value

- Shark Tourism: Bimini has earned its place as a global hotspot for shark ecotourism. Today, live sharks are worth far more than those caught for meat or fins. Diving with hammerheads and tigers supports local hotels, restaurants, and dive centers year-round - not just in the summer.
- Great Hammerheads: Bimini is one of the only places on earth where divers can reliably encounter these majestic animals, especially between December and April.


Hammerhead Sharks of Bimini by Steve Grover

- Tiger Sharks: Though more unpredictable, they remain a key draw for thrill-seeking divers, adding to Bimini's reputation as a premier shark diving destination.
- The Bahamas Diving Association estimates shark diving tourism represents $78 million dollars a year to the Bahamian economy.


Myself, William & Patty Cline, Greg Holt, Walt DiMartini.

3. Conservation and Science

- Bimini Shark Lab: The world-famous Bimini Biological Field Station has made the island a hub for shark science. Its work on hammerheads and tigers has earned international attention and helped locals embrace a culture of marine stewardship.

Education: Programs from the Shark Lab and other groups have inspired pride in Bimini's marine biodiversity, especially among young residents.

4. Modern Identity:

- Cultural Symbolism: The hammerhead is now a beloved icon across Bimini - featured in murals, business logos, and tourist campaigns.
- Ambassadors for Conservation: Bimini's sharks are helping position the Bahamas as a leader in marine protection across the Caribbean.

In the end, diving with hammerheads and tigers in Bimini was far more than an adrenaline rush - it was a rare chance to experience a destination where culture, conservation, and the underwater world all collide. We came for the sharks, but left with a deeper appreciation for everything that makes Bimini so unforgettable.

We're Doing It Again! If you missed this year's cruise, don't worry - we're doing it again in 2026. Every dive professional is invited. Let's make it a party in Bimini and enjoy the thrill together. With even more dive pros, unforgettable underwater encounters, and a whole new wave of fun planned, you won't want to miss it. Stay tuned for more details coming soon in *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine.*

email Amber

RESEARCH

The Results for Cline's 1st Quarter Global Dive Survey

– by William Cline, Publisher, & President for 35 years of Cline Group, a marketing, research and advertising consultancy specializing the scuba diving industry.



The results of our latest Global Diving Industry Business Survey are now available. Based on data collected from dive businesses worldwide and extrapolated using industry benchmarks, including 966 U.S. dive retailers, this report reveals key trends from the first quarter of 2025 and projections for the quarter ahead.

Key Highlights:

- 38.3% of businesses reported lower gross revenues in Q1 2025 vs. Q1 2024.
- 41.8% expect flat gross sales in Q2 2025 compared to Q2 2024.

New diver certifications, travel bookings, and equipment sales are all projected to remain steady.

Projected Gross Sales for 2nd Q 2025	
	Gross Sales
Decrease	21.6%
Increase	36.6%
Stay the same	41.8%
Grand Total	**100.0%**

U.S. Dive Certification Snapshot – Q1 2025:

- U.S. dive retailers are estimated to have issued 11,040 new certifications in Q1 2025, compared to 19,072 in Q4 2024.

Tropical Operators – Q1 2025:

- Average certifications among tropical dive shops, liveaboards, and resorts fell to 12.7 per location, down from 37.7 in Q4 2024.

Projected Outlook: Unlike last quarter's projections, 41.8% predict their gross sales for the 2nd quarter of 2025 will be the same as in 2024, this is compared to 39.2% saying they projected positive growth in the 1st quarter of 2025. Scan/Click to see all the results.

read the results

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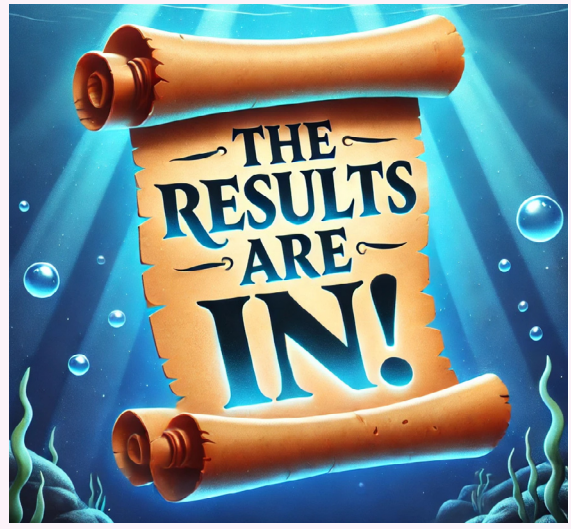
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The Honest Truth: A Different Kind of Show-and-Tell for Business Success

– 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.



I recently had the pleasure of hearing marketing expert Marcus Sheridan give a talk about how to increase revenue by crafting marketing messages that position a business as trustworthy. This is especially important in our industry because the sport of scuba diving is not without risk. Our customers rely on us to provide training, equipment, and travel opportunities that mitigate the inherent risks associated with scuba diving and being in or on the water.

Sheridan knows what he's talking about. And what he's talking about is the truth. As in, telling the truth – in marketing messaging and in customer relations. His bestselling book, *They Ask, You Answer,* explains how his bold truth-telling style saved his business after the financial collapse of 2008, and how it propelled him to success, not just as a business owner and serial entrepreneur, but as an author and keynote speaker. His book outlines how businesses can achieve success by adopting a culture of transparency and authenticity with customers.

> **"We're in the business of building relationships. And what are the best, most rewarding, and lasting relationships built on? Honesty. Because if we're honest, we earn trust. We become known and valued as trustworthy. And others' trust is a badge of honor pinned on us and our business that reads, "Integrity."**

Ain't it the Truth?

Listening to Sheridan speak reinforced my own personal belief that we're not in the business of doing business. We're in the business of building relationships. And what are the best, most rewarding, and lasting relationships built on? Honesty. Because if we're honest, we earn trust. We become known and valued as trustworthy. And others' trust is a badge of honor pinned on us and our business that reads, "Integrity."

So how do we focus on being in the relationship business? Here's what Sheridan suggests:

1. **SAY** what others won't.
2. **SHOW** what others don't.
3. **SELL** in ways others don't or won't.

Say what others won't.

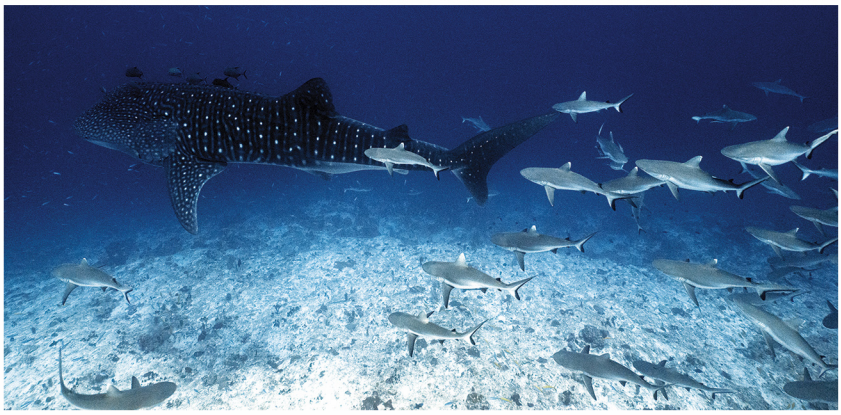
If we're honest, learning to scuba dive isn't all sunshine and baby rainbows. What if we tell potential customers that breathing and moving underwater on scuba has its challenges, and that it doesn't always come easily at first? It's the truth, right? But most dive centers promote learning to scuba dive by flooding their Instagram feeds with smiling young influencers swirling around underwater like Ariel, all easy-peasy. What if, instead of insisting it's "simple and easy," we say, "there's a bit of a learning curve, and some skills are more challenging than others," and "not every student 'gets it' right away, so we make sure you'll have plenty of time to practice and we'll go at a pace you feel comfortable with."

Bestselling business author Jon Acuff is credited with saying, "Be brave enough to be bad at something new." This is exactly the kind of truth we can use with new clients. Just think what it would be like to say what others won't– that the gear is kinda heavy and looks intimidating, and breathing through a regulator feels weird at first. And clearing water from the mask might seem like sorcery, but your dive center's instructors specialize in breaking the skills down into small, achievable goals. By inviting our customers to be brave, to try, and to rely on us to guide them, we don't just close the sale. We open the relationship. We foster trust.

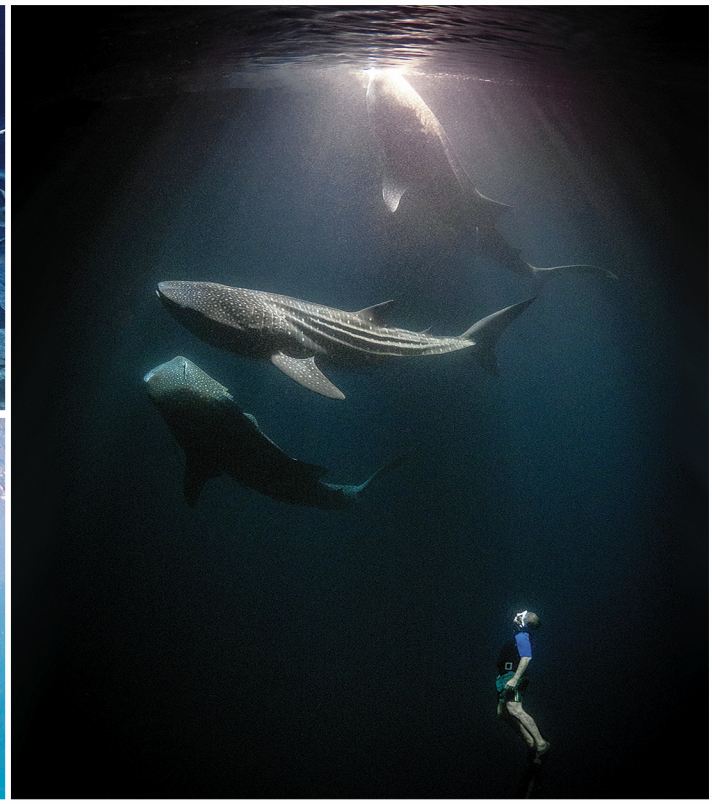
Show what others don't.

In Sheridan's newest book, *The Visual Sale,* he identifies video as the most effective way for businesses to explain complex ideas and build trust with customers. Think about it. Imagine posting a video of a new scuba student struggling with mask clearing. They add water to the mask, then exhale through their mouth. Nothing happens. Not know-









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ing how to do a thing we've never done before is normal. Let's show it. Then, cut to a demonstration of mask clearing being performed properly, then back to the struggling student, only this time, they succeed! Triumph! Your video includes audio encouraging beginning divers to feel comfortable being bad at it at first, insisting it's all part of learning. Let them know you don't expect perfection and that the training you provide allows plenty of time for practicing until they get it.

> **"The shortest distance between two people is a story. – Patti Digh"**

Instead of insisting it's easy, which can be intimidating and might not acknowledge that beginners' apprehension is normal, assure them you'll be with them for every breath they take underwater, until the moment it goes from strange and scary to, "Wait! I've got this! And it's super cool." Showing the struggle is real, and honest, and it will captivate potential customers. Showing the student's story arc move from new and unsure to newly confident is marketing gold, my friends. It illustrates, "They did it. And you can, too. Trust us. We've got you."

Sell in ways others don't or won't.

This means tell the truth and sell the truth. Maybe you know of a dive center that runs the "$99 Scuba Certification Special" that comes with a page of fine print that lists what's included (not much) and what costs extra (a lot). They'll end up paying far more than $99 when it's all said and done. While some dive centers go this route, it might not be the cleanest way to build a relationship. This approach can backfire, leaving the customer feeling nickeled and dimed instead of fully informed of all the costs associated with learning to dive.

Instead, consider sitting down with the prospective new diver and learning about their goals, their timeline, their budget, etc. Together, map out a plan, and fully explain the value they'll receive for their investment in diving. Too often, dive centers treat the Open Water Diver course as a one-off, with the end goal of getting customers through the certification. Mapping out a plan invites the customer to look at diving – and doing business with us – as an ongoing, and growing, relationship.

As an addition to Sheridan's "Say/Show/Sell" advice, I'd like to offer a few how-to suggestions for you and your staff. One of my favorite authors, Patti Digh, says, "The shortest distance between two people is a story." She's right. Sharing our stories brings people together. But I'm editing her quote to say when someone walks into our dive center, "the shortest distance between two people is a smile." They walk in, you look right at them and smile. Nothing in the world is more important than the person who just walked in the door. It's our job to make them feel it. I mean really feel it. It's our job to make them feel welcome. It's not about selling. It's about honesty. And the fastest way to build customers' trust is to show them we care and tell them the truth.

I'd like to know how you and your crew apply Sheridan's "Say/Show/Sell" advice. Email me at hello@clearstorycoach. I look forward to hearing from you.

email Cathryn

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RETAILING

Mentorship...the Ship that Will Keep the Industry from Sinking

– by Tom Leaird & Brooke Speedy, Manager, Tom Leaird's Underwater Service, Muncie, IN





We must recreate ourselves. If you think you are going to live forever, think again. I am age 85, and am beginning to look at, perhaps, the 10 years I have left. I have sold off several holdings and am now looking at our staff at Underwater Service in Muncie, Indiana. I am not giving up by any means. I intend to keep diving and contributing to our industry.

> **"As an example, Brooke Speedy was an intern perhaps 14 years ago, she went on to manage a dive center in another state, came back to us as an employee, went to an aquatic facility for a few years teaching kids to swim, and returned to Leaird's Underwater Service as Store Manager."**

For more than 15 years we have had a relationship with our local college, Ball State University. During those years we have had interns from the school spend from 80 to 100 hours during a semester at our store learning everything it takes to make the ship float. We have from two to six each semester, currently two. During the time at our store, these students do not receive pay but receive many benefits including free gear rental and discounts for purchases. If they have interest in any of our classes, a discount is earned. Our Equipment Service class is given free. If the student is a sophomore, in the coming years they can take and complete Divemaster training if it fits into their grand plan after graduation. Each semester we start off by asking them what they want to learn during their time with us. We make sure to cover those items and expand on them as much as we can during our time together.

We have many of these past interns involved in many of the possible professional careers that involves scuba and aquatics. As an example, Brooke Speedy was an intern perhaps 14 years ago, she went on to manage a dive center in another state, came back to us as an employee, went to an aquatic facility for a few years teaching kids to swim, and returned to Leaird's Underwater Service as Store Manager. We are lucky not only to have her return, but more importantly, she comes back with a wealth of knowledge. Brooke is now becoming involved in DEMA, contributing to our industry. She is an assistant instructor and is beginning to work on full instructor. All of this from her beginnings as an intern. Another past intern that is currently working as a Dive Safety Officer for a local zoo will be joining Brooke in the instructor institute.

Keeping fresh blood in our business is absolutely critical. These interns constantly have questions and comments that make us think about the many changes we must consider to keep our dive center strong. We even receive feedback from our customers making us think about our offerings. In an ever-changing world and industry, adaptability and growth are not optional for survival, it is critical.

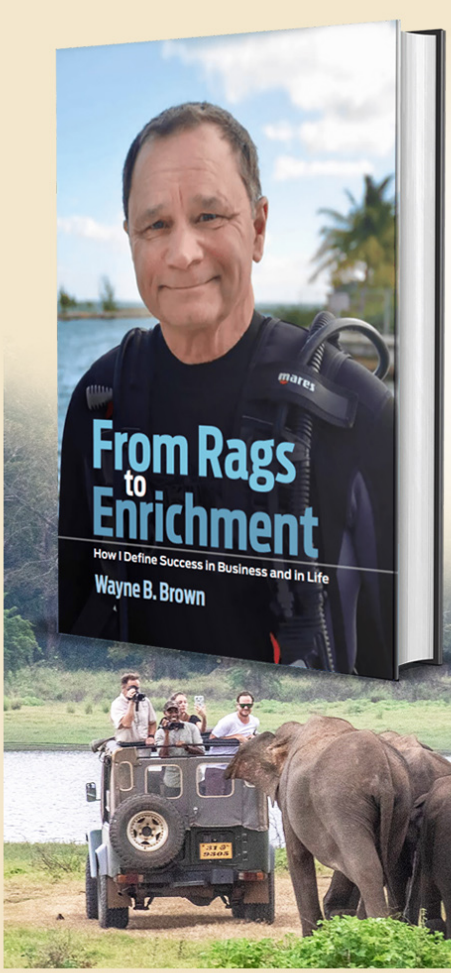


Doing things the same way over time just because, "this is the way we have always done it" is not a recipe for success. We must continue to educate and innovate while maintaining a high standard of safety. Internships are not the only jumping off point for mentoring future dive industry leaders. We have all experienced teaching those open water students that have an immediate interest in going down the divemaster, assistant instructor, and instructor pathway. Identifying these students and nurturing their passion and desire for dive leadership is an important part of building the future of our industry. Having well trained instructors and support staff is the foundation of our entire industry.

A perhaps often overlooked source of future dive leaders can be found in your local community. Thinking outside of your traditional aquatics micro-community and tapping into less traditional micro-communities will lead to creating a larger and a more diverse team of leaders. Remove the initial barrier for that person and open up their life to a future they never imagined. Here in the midwest, it is uncommon to grow up dreaming of becoming a scuba instructor. It is even less common to grow up dreaming of owning your own dive center, working for a scuba manufacturing company, or even working at a dive travel resort. By doing something as simple as setting up a booth at a job fair, by talking to a local boy scout or girl scout troop, or even posting a flyer in the office of a public safety building or a local business, you are creating an accessible pipeline to the dive industry for those that wouldn't have necessarily discovered the world of scuba on their own.

And as I mentioned before, we must recreate ourselves. What got you interested in scuba? What inspired you to turn it into a career? For me it was watching *Sea Hunt* with all the cute girls and the thought of being able to evolve my passion for photography to include underwater photography. For Brooke it was her love of the underwater world and its creatures and her past as a swimmer and swim coach. We both pursued leadership roles because of the urge to share our passion with others. Seek out those that remind you of yourself and show them what they can create by sharing your experiences. If mentorship is not something that you think comes to you naturally, give us a call. We'd love to help you unlock your wealth of knowledge and share it with your community. William Cline would also love to have you write an article on any topic that you are passionate about. Let's do more than keep this ship afloat…let's build it up to be unsinkable.

email Brooke email Tom



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TRAVEL

Part IV: How to "Blue" Your Business in 2025 & Make More Green – PADI Eco Centers

– by Gil Zeimer, ScubaStoryteller.com and Zeimer.com, San Rafael, CA
As a PADI-Certified Open-Water and Nitrox Diver since 1985, Gil has authored more than 130 scuba articles in over 25 magazines and websites, plus another 170 newsletters about his experiences.



This series has presented "blue" initiatives that can make your business more sustainable and help increase your bottom line. Part IV focuses on how PADI is leading the pivot with eco-friendly diving centers to attract and train a new generation of divers.

Leading the Shift Toward Regenerative Dive Tourism: Over the years, a growing percentage of divers – including your author – have wanted to preserve the marine worlds we explore. Today's divers care deeply about preserving the underwater world – and they expect diver operators to do the same. The demand for sustainable dive experiences is stronger than ever. A 2022 Reef-World Survey of 2,400 divers revealed:

- **83% of dive tourists** are looking for further sustainability education on their holidays.
- **76% of dive tourists** are willing to pay more for sustainable dive options that give back to the ocean.
- **76% of dive professionals** reported that their customers are requesting further sustainability education from them.
- **95% of dive tourists** think that dive operators should do more to protect the environment.



How PADI Eco Centers Are Championing This Cause. To find out more, I interviewed Katie Thompson, Senior Director, Environment & Sustainability, PADI Worldwide. "The PADI Eco Center designation is reserved for PADI Dive Centers, Resorts, and Liveaboards that demonstrate an ongoing, verifiable commitment to conservation and sustainability," she explains.

"More than a badge of honor, the PADI Eco Center designation signals to customers that your business is part of the solution. It helps attract eco-conscious travelers, increases customer loyalty, and positions your dive shop as a conservation leader in a competitive market."

PADI Eco Centers are held to rigorous environmental standards and must meet three core sustainability requirements:

1) **Participating in PADI's "Adopt the Blue™"** initiative, the world's largest and growing network of underwater sites for conservation action. PADI Eco Centers lead conservation at these sites through marine debris removal, species monitoring, community engagement, and more giving divers meaningful ways to take action beneath the surface.
2) **Becoming an active member in The Reef-World Foundation's Green Fins Initiative.** By adopting GFI's Code of Conduct, each PADI Eco Center embeds sustainability as a core value of its business by receiving training to help reduce and improve its environmental footprint.
3) **Demonstrating exemplary environmental performance.** PADI Eco Centers also offer a trustworthy choice for all ocean enthusiasts who want to ensure that the cost of their marine adventure goes hand-in-hand with the protection and restoration of natural resources and the well-being of local communities.

"PADI Eco Centers represent the future of regenerative dive tourism. These leaders in sustainability have gone above and beyond – not only meeting rigorous environmental standards but embedding ocean protection into the core of their business," says Thompson.

"Out of 6,600 PADI Dive Centers and Resorts globally, only 110 have achieved this prestigious designation, a reflection of their unwavering commitment to creating a healthy ocean balance and protecting the very ecosystems that are their office. At PADI, we're proud to champion these trailblazers – and equally proud of the many dive operators who are taking their first steps through programs like Adopt the Blue™ and Green Fins.

"Our mission is to support every member on their journey, at a pace that works for them, with the goal of moving forward together. Because every step toward sustainability is a step in the right direction – and ultimately – benefits all of us."

Today, PADI Eco Centers Are Global and Doing Great Things. There are now over 110 PADI Eco Centers across the globe, each offering training, providing a variety of eco-friendly activities, and adhering to PADI's strict quality standards. Some of their sustainability initiatives include:

Asia Pacific:

- Sau Bay Resort in Fiji is currently undertaking an incredible Crown of Thorns starfish removal project.
- Divers Den in Australia is conducting coral site surveys, working with Master Reef Guides, and collaborating with the Australian government to assess reef health in real-time.
- Big Blue Dive and White Grass Resort in Vanuatu are engaged in dugong conservation, conducting a sea slug census, and supporting Ni-Vanuatu female professionals.

EMEA:

- Six Senses Laamu and Kanuhura in the Maldives is leading the Maldives Underwater Initiative, which focuses on education and manta ray conservation with hotel guests.
- Red Sea Diving Safari in Egypt is actively participating in the Dive Against Debris program.
- Sea World Scuba Diving Centers and Dive2Gether in Greece are involved in dolphin and seagrass conservation efforts.

Pan-America:

- Rainbow Reef Dive Center in Florida is dedicated to coral conservation and lionfish eradication.
- Kohala Divers in Hawaii is involved in the Dive Against Debris program.
- Sun Divers Roatan in Honduras is promoting marine conservation, sustainable diving practices, and strong community partnerships.



Crown of Thorns Removal Project, Sau Bay Resort, Fiji. Photo Credit: Jay Clue.

A Dispatch from Roatan's First-Ever PADI Eco Center. Natalie and Shannon Shuman, the American owners of Sun Divers Roatan, are incredibly proud of their dive shop's recent accomplishment.

They said, "It's a huge honor, but more than that, it's a reflection of the heart and hustle our team pours into making eco-action a daily part of our dive experience. We wanted to create a dive center that was as much about making waves of impact as it was about creating epic adventures on Roatan's reef.

"That's why this PADI Eco Center achievement marks both a dream realized and a deep commitment to the reef we love. It also inspires us to look back with gratitude on the journey that brought us here and to share that story with you because we knew from the beginning that we would build our dream dive shop around a core value: being always eco-active. To us, that means going beyond simply caring about ocean protection. It means that we take meaningful action, and we create opportunities for others to get involved and become part of the movement.

How Did Your Dive Shop Qualify? "At Sun Divers Roatan, we began by looking inward, identifying ways to reduce our carbon footprint as a business. That meant moving to online waivers to cut paper waste and offering reef-safe sunscreen, defog, and shampoo at our facilities. From there, we partnered with the Roatan Marine Park and the Bay Islands Conservation Association – two local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) that co-manage the Bay Islands National Marine Park. Our commitment continued to grow when we joined conservation advocacy groups and even launched our own scuba scholarship program with local partners Roatan Peer Health Exchange. This scuba scholarship program is designed to empower local girls to become conservation-minded divers.

"Within just four years, we've watched our vision grow from a small hope into a big reality. Consequently, being named Roatan's first-ever PADI Eco Center is a reminder that when you lead with heart, purpose, and unwavering belief, you can turn doubt into impact and dreams into something that matters."

The Bottom Line: To best cater to the majority of your clients willing to pay more for sustainable dive options, you can take the necessary steps to join the exclusive group of PADI Eco Centers by contacting Katie Thompson, katie.thompson@padi.com. To discuss how I can help with your "blue" initiatives, please email me c/o gil@zeimer.com or scan or click this QR Code.

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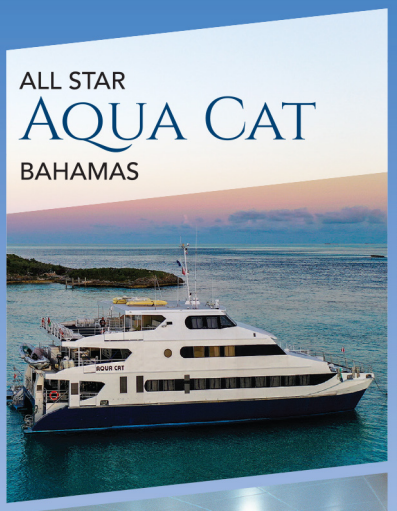
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British Virgin Islands
Jardines de la Reina, Cuba
Red Sea, Egypt
Komodo, Indonesia
Raja Ampat, Indonesia





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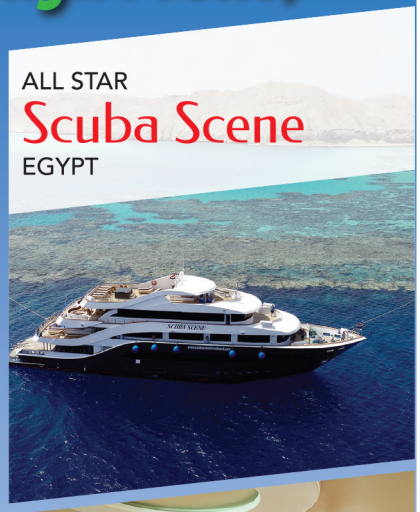








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BUSINESS EDU

2025 Dive Travel Trends – What Dive Retailers Need to Know to Stay Ahead

– by William Cline, Publisher, & President for 35 years of Cline Group, a marketing, research and advertising consultancy specializing the scuba diving industry.



As we move into the heart of 2025, it's clear the dive industry is navigating a unique travel climate - one shaped by economic pressure, shifting consumer priorities, and global perceptions around international travel. While our Q1 2025 Global Diving Industry Survey at Cline Group showed a dip in certifications and revenues, it also revealed something deeper: a call to adapt.

But here's the good news - we've been here before. The dive industry has survived hurricanes, recessions, pandemics, and political turbulence. We're a resilient, innovative bunch. And in today's changing landscape, that resilience is our greatest asset.

Let's explore what's happening in the broader travel market, what the numbers say, and what you can do to not just survive - but thrive - through the months ahead.

Travel Trends That Are Reshaping the Dive Market

The broader U.S. travel industry is evolving in ways that directly affect local dive shops, tropical resorts, and training centers.

- **More People Staying Close to Home:** According to the U.S. Travel Association, domestic leisure travel spending is projected to rise 3.9% in 2025, surpassing $1 trillion. Americans are staying closer to home - and spending more when they do (US Travel Association, 2025).
- **Shorter Trips, Tighter Schedules:** A recent Wall Street Journal report noted that 41% of U.S. travelers now prefer trips lasting three nights or fewer, up from 37% the year prior (WSJ, 2025). For dive retailers, this reinforces the need for flexible, fast-turnaround programs.
- **International Spend is Slipping:** The World Travel & Tourism Council expects a $12.5 billion drop in international visitor spending in the U.S. this year - a 7% decline from 2024 levels (WTTC, 2025).
- **Economic Sentiment is Soft:** Tariffs, inflation, and political tensions are influencing how - and where - Americans travel. Deloitte research shows many consumers are opting out of big-ticket vacations in favor of local, experience-rich alternatives.

How the Dive Industry is Feeling It

Our Cline Group Q1 2025 Diving Industry Survey confirmed these headwinds (see page 20):

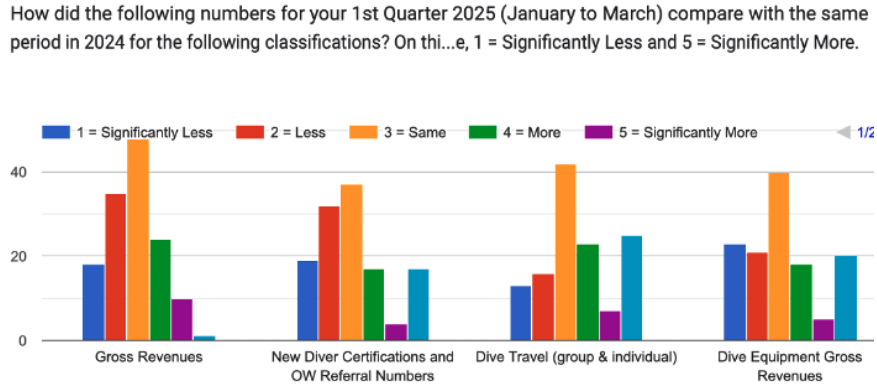
- U.S. dive retailers issued an estimated 11,040 new certifications in Q1 2025 - up slightly from the 10,290 estimated in Q1 2024
- However, tropical operators saw certification averages fall from 26.5 per location in Q1 2024 to just 12.7 in Q1 2025

While quarter-to-quarter comparisons often show short-term volatility, year-over-year numbers paint a more reliable picture. These modest certification gains among U.S. retailers suggest localized strength, even as tropical destinations lag - likely a reflection of increased domestic travel and shorter trip durations.

According to Grand View Research, the U.S. dive tourism market is expected to nearly double by 2030, growing at a 9.9% CAGR (compound annual growth rate).

Dive Travel, According to the Experts

In a recent interview on our *Marketing Minutes* podcast, Cheryl Patterson shared critical insights into how dive shops can pivot their approach to selling travel in uncertain times.



"We're not in the business of selling training, equipment, or even trips. We're selling adventure, lifestyle, and dreams," said Patterson. "Think back to why you became a diver - it wasn't for a regulator. It was to live that Nat Geo moment or Blue Planet scene."

BUSINESS EDU continued

She advised dive shops to shift the in-store experience away from just product sales and into immersive storytelling. "Your customers should walk in and be hit with adventure - through images, video, brochures - not price tags and cash registers," she said.

She also noted that most divers travel 3 to 5 times a year. Dive shops that don't provide local or international travel opportunities risk losing customers. "Some shops say it's too complicated. But if you're not offering travel, your customers are going to find it somewhere else - and when they do, you've lost out on thousands in potential revenue."



In tough times, Patterson recommends focusing on lower-risk trips: "Pick packages with refundable deposits and low comp requirements. Divers are resilient - they won't stop traveling. They might choose the Caribbean over a long-haul trip this year, but they're still going to dive."

How Dive Retailers Can Adapt - Practically and Positively

So how do you take all of this - the shifting travel market, the uncertain economy, and the evolving diver mindset - and translate it into something that actually helps your business?

Start by thinking local. When travelers stay closer to home, that's your moment to shine. Promote nearby lakes, quarries, or coastal dive sites as accessible escapes. Frame them as mini-adventures. Bundling training courses with a local trip gives new divers an immediate goal to aim for and opens the door for full family involvement. Offer discover scuba experiences for younger family members or non-diving spouses, and encourage certified divers to continue learning with specialty courses. These programs help foster community and deepen customer relationships.

Richard Thomas of International Scuba in Dallas takes this even further. He created a "Dive Tribe™" to offer a sense of belonging and pride among divers, inspired by the community engagement models seen in industries like motorcycling and fitness. It's a reminder that your shop can be more than a store - it can be a hub where divers connect and grow together.

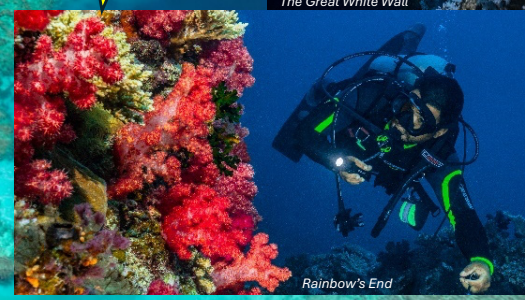
From there, think about your travel messaging. Instead of promoting long-haul destinations that may feel out of reach, highlight quick escapes that are easy to book and close to home. Consider destinations like Florida, Cozumel, Hawaii

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- or the always-popular Bahamas. Neal Watson of Bimini Scuba Center shared on our *Marketing Minutes* podcast that you can leave Fort Lauderdale in the morning and be diving in Bimini by noon. With new airlift and fast ferry service, Bimini makes a three-night trip feel like five nights of diving. "You land in this exotic Caribbean island with world-class visibility thanks to the Gulf Stream - and in 20 feet of water, you've got hammerheads swimming five feet from your mask. It's a miracle dive," Watson said (see page 18).

And while new divers are essential, your existing customers - your core dive community - are the backbone of your business. These are the people who already believe in your brand, your mission, and your passion. Engage them as active participants in your community. Reward their loyalty with gear incentives, offer referral bonuses to grow your reach, and recognize them publicly in newsletters or on social. The more you empower your Tribe, the more they'll amplify your shop's voice in the broader dive community.

Lastly, be the voice of calm and confidence. People are hungry for adventure - but they're also hungry for someone to trust. Send a monthly newsletter. Host free travel Q&As. Share photos from group trips. Remind them that your shop isn't just a place to buy gear - it's a gateway to the lifestyle they love.

Closing Thoughts: We've Been Here Before

Economic cycles rise and fall. Travel trends evolve. But the spirit of adventure - the reason people fall in love with diving - remains unchanged.

The dive industry isn't new to challenge. We've come through recessions, global crises, and plenty of unpredictable shifts. And each time, we came out stronger. The same can happen now. By staying nimble, focused, and optimistic - and by refocusing on what we really sell: the adventure - you can help your shop ride this wave and come out ahead of the curve.

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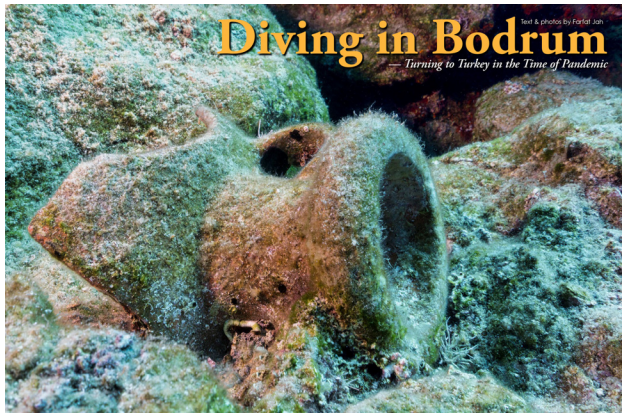
TRAVEL

Dive Into Europe: Dive Into Medieval History – Turkey

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



While most of Turkey is technically not considered part of Europe, certain regions, particularly along its Mediterranean coastline, unquestionably align with European dive travel. That said, with its Islamic heritage and cultural ties to Central Asia, Turkey differs from much of Europe, offering an intriguing and unique blend of cultures. Istanbul, the gateway for most international travellers, is a fascinating, historic metropolis. Founded in the 7th century BC by the Greeks as Byzantium, it later became Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, until it fell to siege in 1453. To skip a multi-day stopover in this captivating city – visiting its many historic sites, bustling bazaars, and magnificent mosques – would be a missed opportunity. There is so much to explore and experience here.



For those seeking diving adventures, I have two distinct recommendations. The first is to visit one of the many resort towns along the Mediterranean coast, such as Bodrum or Kas, where excellent diving and accommodations are readily available. This region is especially popular with Northern Europeans, much as Americans flock to the Caribbean, offering great value for high-quality experiences. Divers can arrange transfers from Istanbul, accommodation, and diving through our British-Turkish partner and content provider, Farhat "Raf" Jah, who runs the travel agency, African Oriental Travel. Based in the UK with his wife, Francesca, Raf is a regular exhibitor at DEMA, so if you're attending the next DEMA show, do drop by their booth for a chat. For more about Bodrum, see this article: *Diving Bodrum, Turkey and for Kas, see Kas, Turkey.*

The second recommendation takes you to the Gallipoli Historical Underwater Park, located in the Strait of the Dardanelles – a true haven for wreck divers. History enthusiasts will recognise the significance of this site from the infamous WWI battle fought for control of these strategically vital straits, linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The Entente powers – Britain, France, and Russia – sought to seize the Turkish straits but were repelled following a devastating and costly campaign, which resulted in nearly 188,000 casualties. The significance of the Gallipoli campaign is felt strongly in both Australia and New Zealand, despite their being only a portion of the Entente forces; The landing on 25 April is commemorated every year in both countries as "Anzac Day." In Turkey, the battle is thought of as a significant event in the state's emergence, although it is primarily remembered for the fighting that took place around the port of Çanakkale, where the Royal Navy was repulsed in March 1915. A total of 18 allied naval vessels were sunk during the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, including battleships, submarines, and smaller support vessels, predominantly from the British and French navies. The wrecks are located at varying depths, suitable for both recreational and technical divers. To arrange a visit and dive, visit Diving Gelibolu or contact Murathan Yildiz at Murathan@gallipoliwrecks.com. He and his colleague Riza Birkan run Gallipoli Wrecks Dive Center and they can also arrange transfers from Istanbul, which just takes a few hours by van.

email Peter

diving Turkey



BUSINESS EDU

Viewing Coral Reefs as an Economic Asset

– by Carlos Lander, Caracas, Venezuela

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



Introduction: Value is a human construct that shapes our approach to coral reef conservation, often expressed in monetary terms. Assigning an economic value to coral reefs involves considering ecological, protective, cultural-heritage, and intrinsic dimensions. GDP calculations typically account only for direct economic activities linked to reefs. In some Caribbean nations, reefs significantly contribute around 10%–15% of GDP.

Types of Assigned Values:

Ecological Value: Coral reefs support roughly 25% of marine species while covering less than 1% of the ocean floor. This remarkable biodiversity provides numerous resources including food, medicine, and materials. Pharmaceutical industries harness reef organisms to create treatments for cancer, antiviral and antibacterial agents, painkillers, and anti-inflammatory drugs. Many chemical compounds derived from reefs are still under investigation. The ecosystem's health also critically influences local food supplies, particularly in island nations, where reef fish serve as a primary protein source for rural communities. Determining the value of biodiversity for future generations involves contingent valuation, a method measuring how much people are willing to pay for conservation efforts, despite inherent cultural biases.

Natural Carbon Sequestration: Coral reefs, along with algae, plants, and soil, naturally absorb CO_2 through photosynthesis – a process leveraged economically through carbon credits. Companies earn these credits by funding environmental conservation or carbon capture projects, later selling them on open markets. Unfortunately, carbon credits frequently create more harm than benefit, as companies favor inexpensive offsets instead of genuine emission reductions. This approach delays essential green initiatives, creating distrust in the market and often perpetuating environmental injustices due to insufficient verification and oversight.

Coastal Protection: Coral reefs function as vital natural barriers against storm surges, potentially saving billions of dollars annually by preventing property damage and economic disruption. Calculations of these savings combine economic data such as property values and infrastructure costs with flood-risk assessments derived from historical events and hydrodynamic modeling, which simulate coastal water movement.

Methods and Metrics: Economists commonly evaluate coral reef values by calculating revenue generated from fisheries, tourism, pharmaceuticals, and other reef-linked activities. Another key metric is the estimated cost of coastal protection infrastructure needed if reefs did not exist. Opportunity cost measures the value of utilizing versus preserving the resource for future use.

Social or cultural values are more challenging to quantify, incorporating aspects such as cultural tourism linked to lifestyle, mental health, recreation, and intrinsic non-use values. Intrinsic values represent the willingness of the public to financially support reef conservation even without direct interaction, closely tied to ethical considerations and societal values influencing



opportunity costs. Economists decide on the components to include in their frameworks, collect corresponding data, and apply valuation models that can integrate economic and intrinsic factors or comprehensively list services linked geographically to coral reefs. Evaluating remote reefs poses particular challenges; developing countries often undervalue these ecosystems due to immediate social priorities, missing broader ecological and economic opportunities reefs offer.

USGS's Value of U.S. Coral Reefs:

Annually, U.S. coral reefs provide flood protection benefits to more than 18,100 people and $1.8 billion in averted damages to property and economic activity. With a 1-m loss in reef height, the 100-year floodplain would increase across the U.S. by 65 miles/104 km, imperiling 51,000 more people and $5 billion in property & economic activity.



Gaming with Policy-Making: To manage uncertainty in decision-making, mathematicians apply game theory, treating policy decisions as zero-sum games where gains and losses among participants balance out. Game theory enables objective quantification of the decision-making process, distinguishing clearly between "use" values – like direct activities such as mining or scuba diving – and indirect uses such as storm surge protection or providing nursery habitats for fish.

Direct use values, easier to quantify within GDP frameworks, encompass revenue from tourism and resource extraction adjusted for any associated damage or degradation. While economic analysis cannot wholly quantify biodiversity – a task primarily for biological sciences – it can greatly support funding acquisition and policy formulation efforts by governments.

Economic Players and Decision Dynamics: Analysis highlights that poorer nations often mismanage reefs despite significant dependence on them for livelihoods – a classic example of human irrationality as described by game theory. Policymakers must comprehensively consider all reef-related economic activities to prevent adverse impacts on stakeholders. A common scenario involves implementing policies against destructive fishing without providing viable alternatives for fishermen who depend on reef resources. Ignoring such socioeconomic realities leads to non-compliance and diminished perceived value of reefs.

Conversely, certain practices like Napoleon Wrasse exports to niche markets, such as China, significantly benefit only a small group. Understanding stakeholder numbers and economic circumstances is crucial for equitable policymaking, identifying who benefits and who is disadvantaged by specific actions.

Deferred-use value emphasizes the reef's future potential, enhanced by public awareness campaigns. Organizations like the Cousteau Society strategically use iconic symbols, such as dolphins, to boost public engagement, creating stronger perceived value and willingness to fund conservation.

Detached Monetary Valuation: Monetary valuations can sometimes misrepresent ecological reality. Reefs with high visitation rates appear economically more valuable than remote reefs, despite the latter's significant ecological role globally. Ensuring policymakers and the public understand such nuances necessitates targeted public awareness efforts and scientifically informed political leadership.

The largely unexplored biodiversity and biomass within reefs have substantial future potential in medical and industrial applications. Current knowledge is limited, only recently illuminating reefs' broader roles in global climate regulation and food security.

Conclusion: Effective coral reef conservation policy should thoroughly evaluate economic interactions among stakeholders benefiting from reefs. Optimal policy outcomes must strive for collective benefits, recognizing that some groups will inevitably gain more than others. Sustainable reef management demands continuous cooperation among stakeholders, established trust, effective legal frameworks, and enforcement measures. Policymaking should be a dynamic, adaptive process, continually revisited to ensure equitable long-term benefits and ecological sustainability.

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Reset function

- The inflation process can always be reset, by pressing the deflate button to return to normal operation mode.

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RETAILING

Winning with a Balanced Scorecard - Part 1

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



There's a quote often attributed to Warren Buffett that goes something like this: "If you can't read the scoreboard, you don't know the score. If you don't know the score, you can't tell the winners from the losers."

For businesses, the scoreboard is typically found in financial reports like the profit and loss statement and the balance sheet. While these reports tally up the final score, there are many other measures we can look at to help drive results.

> **"If you can't read the scoreboard, you don't know the score. If you don't know the score, you can't tell the winners from the losers."**
> **– Warren Buffett**

In baseball, we keep a scorecard that tells us exactly what has happened during the course of the game. By examining the details of the scorecard, managers and coaches can develop strategies and make decisions that affect their results down the line. Dive shops can do the same - by using a scorecard that balances their efforts and helps guide them toward success.

In this two-part series, we'll first look at the concept of a balanced scorecard: where it came from and how to go about constructing one. In part two, we'll look more specifically at creating a balanced scorecard for a fictional small local dive shop.

Balanced Scorecard for XYZ Dive Shop					
Mission Statement:					
Financial Perspective					
KPI		Target		Initiatives	
Customer Perspective					
KPI		Target		Initiatives	
Internal Perspective					
KPI		Target		Initiatives	
Growth & Education Perspective					
KPI		Target		Initiatives	

The concept of a balanced scorecard was formalized in the 1990s through studies examining how organizations use both financial and non-financial measures to track performance. Harvard professor Robert S. Kaplan and management consultant David P. Norton are often credited as the originators of the concept. Their research led to a number of articles and, ultimately, to the 1996 publication of *The Balanced Scorecard.*

The importance of measurement cannot be overstated. Mathematician and computer scientist Richard Hamming is credited with saying, "You get what you measure." Management guru Peter Drucker is often quoted as saying, "What gets measured, gets managed." And Lord Kelvin once said, "If you can't measure it, you cannot improve it."

But what exactly should a business be measuring? The balanced scorecard uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress toward achieving a winning score on the scoreboard.

So why is it called a "balanced" scorecard? The balance comes from the idea that your KPIs should span across four key categories:

- **Financial**
- **Customer**
- **Internal Processes**
- **Employee Growth and Satisfaction**

Starting with employee growth and satisfaction, you build out KPIs in each area that support your mission statement and ultimately drive the strategies you'll employ. By setting achievable targets and initiatives for each KPI, you create a roadmap to success.

The chart on the previous page provides a simple format for creating a balanced scorecard.

One factor to consider when building your scorecard is how many KPIs to include. More is not always better. Some suggest that the "magic number" is seven, plus or minus two (so between five and nine). However, when organizing KPIs across the four key categories - Financial, Customer, Internal Processes, and Employee Growth and Satisfaction - a total of 10 to 20 KPIs is generally considered optimal. Keep in mind: just because you *can* measure something doesn't mean it's *relevant*. A KPI is only valuable if it supports your mission statement and aligns with one of these four strategic areas.

> **Your KPIs should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.**

Mission statements themselves are sometimes overlooked or not given enough attention. A mission statement should be a clear, concise description of why your business exists. Many resources can help you create one that resonates with your customers and inspires your employees. It shouldn't be overly long or complicated, and it shouldn't include elements that you're not truly committed to pursuing. Once your mission statement is well-defined, you can begin developing KPIs that support the specific goals and values behind your business.

As you develop your KPIs, it's important to follow the SMART framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. For some indicators, you may have historical data that helps you establish the right targets. Setting the bar at the right level is critical. By leveraging your existing information and systems, you can set targets that will truly move the needle - and put points on your scoreboard.

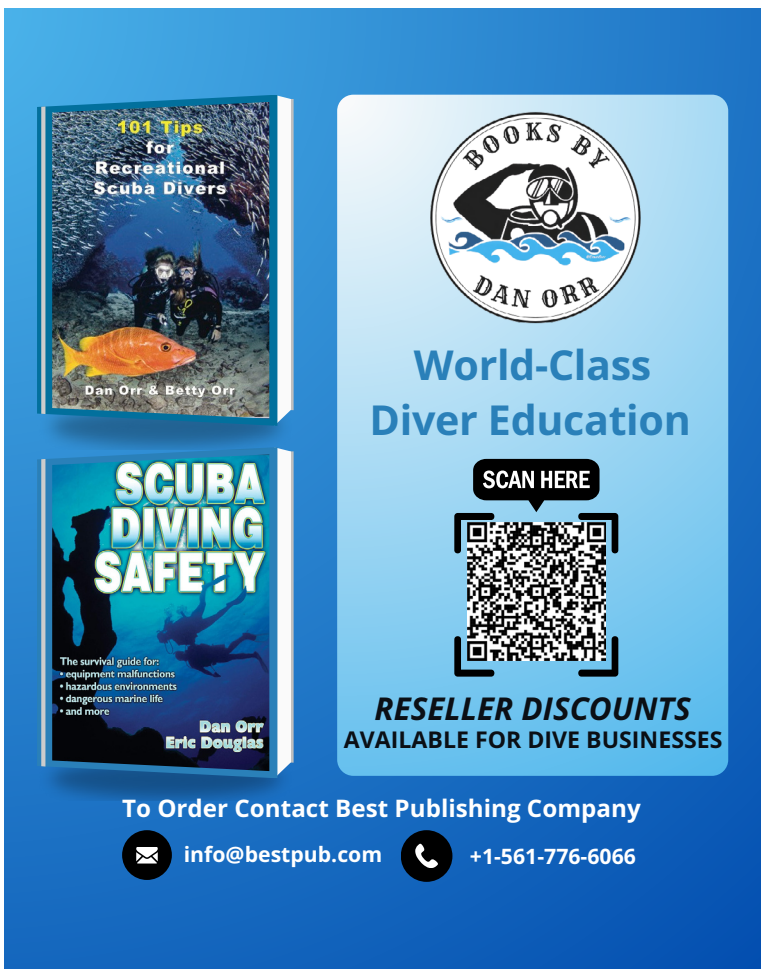
The final piece of the balanced scorecard is identifying the initiatives you'll pursue for each KPI. Developing these initiatives should be a collaborative effort with your team. Seeking input and ideas on how to best meet your objectives not only gives you insight from the front lines - it also fosters buy-in from your team when it's time to execute. Before brainstorming, be sure to educate everyone involved on how the balanced scorecard is being used to drive results.

Dive shops, like all businesses, need strong top-line and bottom-line results. And like all businesses, success requires hard work. But hard work alone isn't enough. You need a plan and a strategy for moving forward. Hope is not a strategy. A balanced scorecard can provide the foundation for a clear, effective plan to build a thriving, successful business.

In part two of this series, we'll walk through an example of a balanced scorecard for a fictional local dive shop. Stay tuned.

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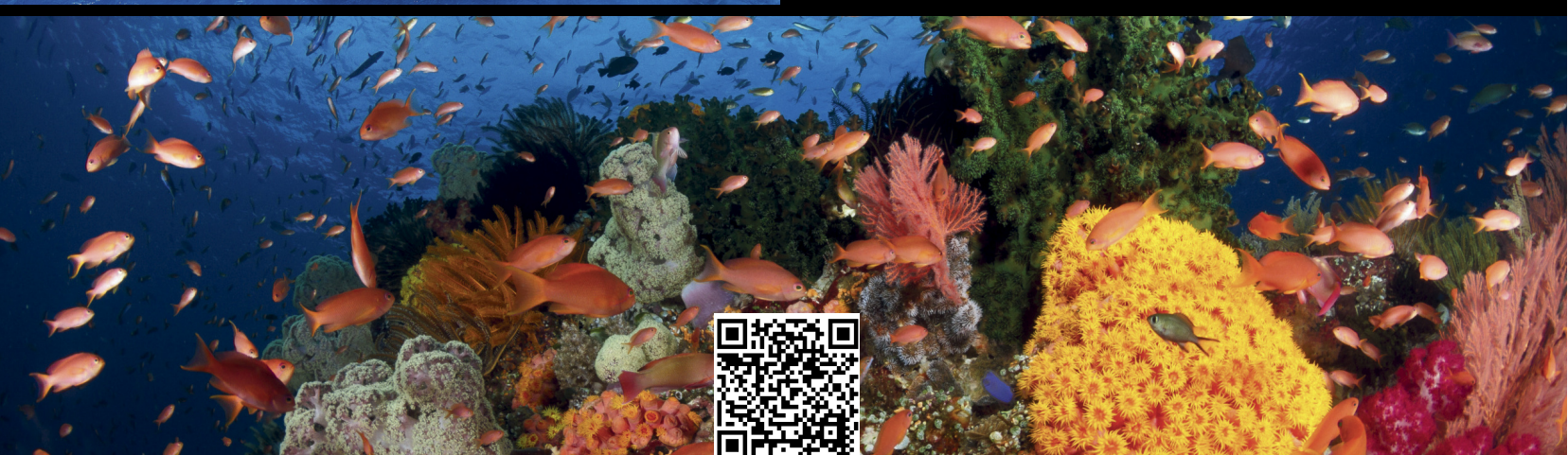


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