SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY

JUNE 2025 PUBLISHED BY CLINE GROUP



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Photo by Dr. Alexander Mustard of diver Kathryn Arant touching both sides of the Silfra fissure, a crack in the Earth's crust between the North American and Eurasian continental plates, which is filled with glacial melt water. In this photo the American plate is on the left. Thingvellir National Park, Iceland.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

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

TURNING ONLINE CLICKS INTO IN–STORE SALES

Today's dive gear buyers aren't making decisions in isolation. According to the latest Quad/Graphics consumer behavior research, 71% of shoppers **still visit brick–and–mortar stores**, but almost all of them – 89% – have started their journey online. They're searching for products, comparing pricing, reading reviews, and checking availability long before setting foot in a shop. For dive retailers, this means that **aligning digital and in–store marketing is no longer optional**; it's a competitive necessity.

Customers across all age groups now expect seamless connections between online and in–store touchpoints. Younger shoppers (18–34) are especially thorough, with roughly half conducting in–depth online research, relying heavily on online reviews and stock availability. Meanwhile, those aged 35–54 balance digital searches with priorities like checking opening hours and verifying in–store promotions. Even the over – 54 group increasingly use digital platforms first, focusing on pricing, special deals, and product information before making the trip to a physical location.



What can dive retailers do? First, optimize online platforms for product searches and availability. Maintain accurate, updated inventory online and highlight promotions clearly. An intuitive website that mirrors the experience of visiting your shop can make or break a sale long before a customer arrives.

Once customers walk through the door, **environment is critical**. According to the research, shoppers stay longer and spend more when stores have a wide range of products, a pleasing atmosphere, and opportunities to browse. Interesting displays and staff that can answer questions instantly deepen engagement. Meanwhile, special in–store events or promotions can appeal across age groups, **converting online interest into in–store purchases.**

Ultimately, dive retailers must recognize that shoppers no longer separate "online" and "in–store" – and their **marketing tactics must evolve** accordingly. By aligning website experience, pricing transparency, and review availability with an inviting, well–stocked shop environment, retailers can build trust, deepen connections, and drive long–term sales in a competitive market.

William Cline, Publisher

email William | email Britain | email Gavin | email Carlos

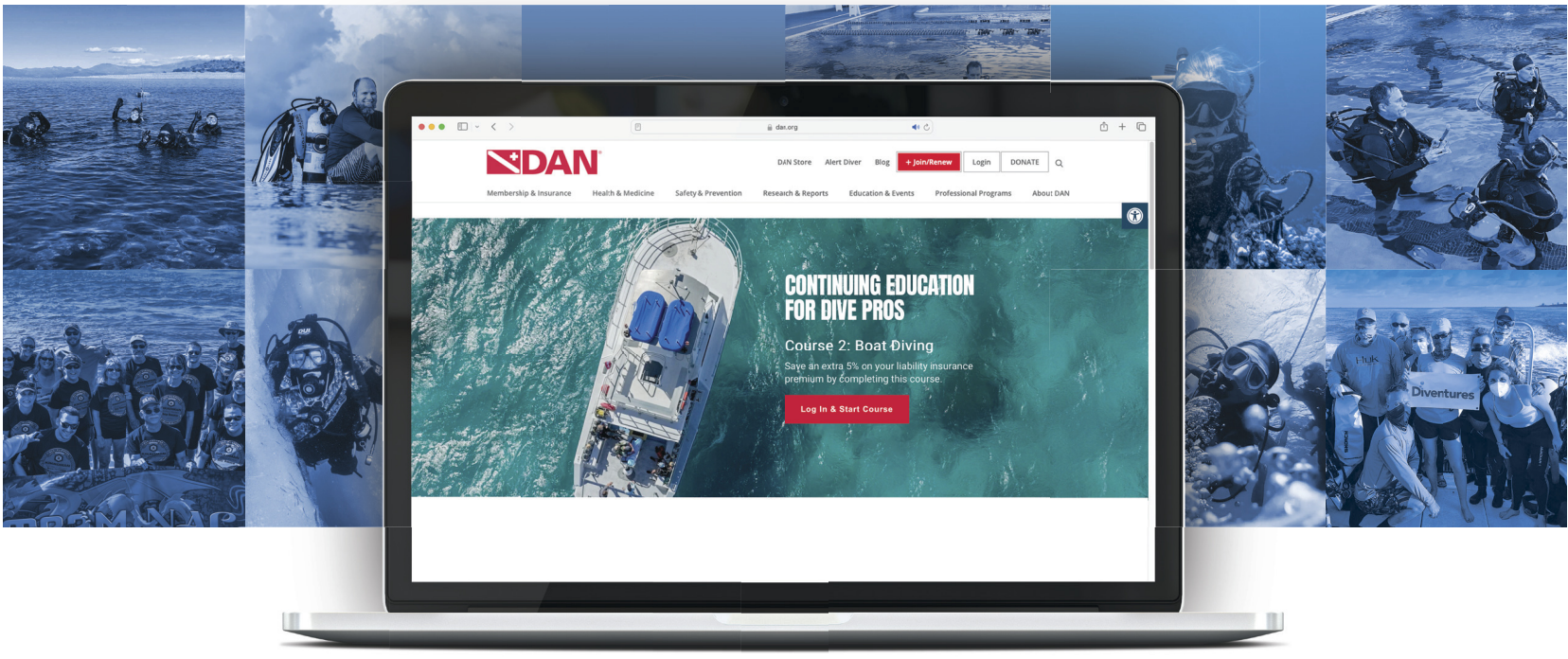
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SAFETY

Checklists and a Consistent Pre-Dive Ritual

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



Preparation for any dive actually begins before you leave home. Besides making sure that your skills, recent experiences, and equipment are equal to the demands of the upcoming dive, you need to make sure that you bring everything that you will need for the dive. When I was actively teaching, I spent time talking about the value of a Save-A-Dive Kit, making sure that you have everything you need, including some spare parts in case of part failure. I asked the class, "If you spent thousands of dollars on the dive trip of a lifetime and traveled thousands of miles to get there, how much would you pay to replace a broken fin strap if you didn't have one? How much would you pay if you traveled to one of the best dive spots in the world only to find out you forgot your prescription mask?" That is kind of a sobering thought. I am sure something like that has happened to many divers, possibly even you.

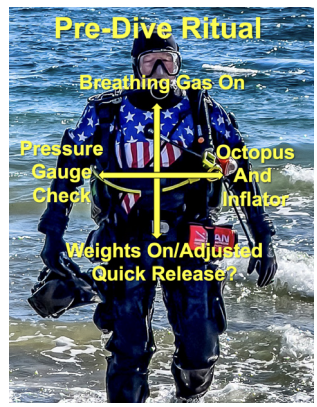
The best way to keep from forgetting anything is to have a detailed checklist. Actually, divers may have many checklists. I have one to make sure I bring everything I will need for the upcoming dive. To make that packing checklist, I refer to notes from previous dive trips, visualize the dives I'm going to make, and take note of things I will need, plus any back up equipment in case of equipment failure. On a trip to Antarctica in 2024, we were told to leave our equipment in the Zodiacs, as it would be hauled aboard the research vessel where we could retrieve it more easily. Well, when I went to retrieve my gear, a large hook used to raise the Zodiacs had gone right through the middle of my prescription mask. Luckily, I had brought a backup prescription mask, or that would have been the end of any in-water activities for me.

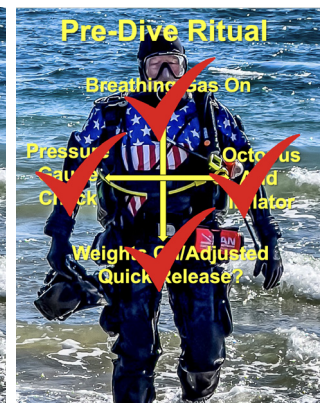
A detailed packing checklist will not only make sure you bring everything you need but will also help make sure that you bring everything back with you. Once at the dive site, you may also want to consider another checklist to make sure that you have everything you will need while making the dive. When I was actively teaching, we would make sure that we had everything we needed for the dive by laying out our equipment in the form of a diver on a ground sheet. The exposure suit, the hood, the boots, and the gloves were laid down first, followed by the mask, snorkel, and fins where they would go, followed by the weight belt, BCD, and any other accessory equipment for the dive. The dive buddies would then take a few minutes looking over each other's equipment to make sure nothing was missing. You could also do the same with a checklist.

In 2012, Divers Alert Network (DAN), the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI), and the American Academy of Underwater Sciences (AAUS) joined forces to hold Rebreather Forum 3.0. Part of the outcome of the Rebreather Forum 3.0 was a number of consensus positions. One involved the importance of checklists, primarily for the use of rebreathers, but the implications are far ranging: "The Forum acknowledged the overwhelming evidence demonstrating the efficacy of checklists in preventing errors."

Checklists are important but only go so far. I suggest combining a checklist with what I call a consistent pre-dive ritual. The consistent pre-dive ritual begins before you and your diving companion get into the water. As I have mentioned many times in previous articles and my diving safety webinars, the recent practice of critical emergency skills such as the exchange of breathing gas in an emergency is critical. Skill practice comes in different forms, including "static rehearsal," that involves review of training manuals, checklists, photographs, and videos only. Static rehearsal can refresh your memory but cannot reinforce the all-important muscle memory necessary to be effective if the need arises. Dynamic rehearsal, on the other hand, involves actual practice using the diving equipment divers would be using during a dive. Dynamic rehearsal can be either in a safe, confined water setting, on the surface, or even standing on the boat deck or shore, where divers go through the mechanics of skills such as the exchange of breathing gas. Dynamic rehearsal appears most effective for









the retention of manual or mechanical skills. Therefore, it could be in the best interest of diving safety to adopt a "dynamic rehearsal" practice regimen. This pre-dive practice regimen may include reviewing the mechanics of critical skills such as providing breathing gas to a companion in an out-of-breathing-gas emergency, the jettison of weights, and even a review of hand signals prior to initiating each dive.

This is something that I go through before my diving companion and I actually get in the water. I call it my "Safety Cross." If you see me crossing myself before a dive, I'm not praying (after all, if I have to pray, I probably should not be making that dive!). I'm checking to make sure that everything is ready for the dive I'm going to make.

> **"When preparation is as potentially complex as scuba diving, checklists are essential for a successful outcome."**
> **– Dan Orr**

Starting from the top; regulator in my mouth, breathing gas is on, and I'm satisfied that the regulator is breathing properly and there is no significant breathing resistance. I move down to check my weights, making sure the weights are on and adjusted properly and I know where the quick release mechanisms are. I then move to my right (where I position my submersible pressure gauge-SPG). I look at my SPG and take a breath at the same time. If the needle fluctuates, that means my cylinder valve is not open all the way. Moving to my left to complete the cross, I check my BCD power inflator, pushing the button, and making sure that gas is coming from my scuba cylinder into my BCD. If I'm wearing a dry suit, I will check the suit inflator at the same time. Since I secure my octopus 2nd stage on my left, I make sure it is functioning properly by taking a couple of breaths just in case I am called on to share breathing gas. The final part of my check is to ask my diving companion if they are ready to dive. If you are carrying other things such as a surface marker buoy (SMB) or safety sausage, knife, or cutting tool, they can also be added to this process.

This process may not completely eliminate the possibility of something going wrong, but it will, at least, reduce the possibility that you have forgotten something vital.

A checklist combined with a consistent pre-dive ritual may reduce the likelihood of something vital being missing and will, hopefully, enhance the diving experience. *A good checklist and consistent pre-dive ritual can be the best start of a good dive!*

email Dan Orr

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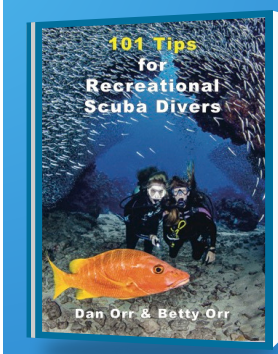
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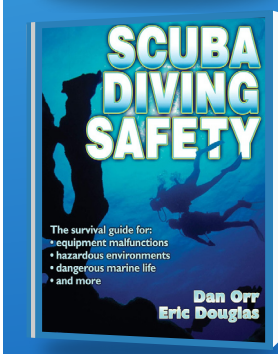


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It's not unusual in the dive industry to hear questions about our common habit of rule-making. And, to some extent, we are perhaps somewhat more developed in this than many other sports, even sports that also carry elements of risk. However, the issue is often related to the old question, "Well, what's the worst that could happen?" While lots of sports and recreational activities have risks that could lead to injuries, most of them don't typically have such small lines between just fine; potential injury; and potential fatality.

The general response to this reality has been the development of excellent guidelines and training. However, we do often hear complaints that we may be overly involved in such rule-making ("standards") and related enforcement. That said, if we look at diving and the rule-making it includes, I don't believe we typically view ourselves as control freaks, but more likely responsible folks who are adequately cognizant of the sometimes narrow spaces between safe practices and the potential for something going very wrong.

I'd also suggest that a great many (most?) of our standardized safety practices and techniques came about in direct response to things that actually happened or things that had/have the potential for increased risks or dangers to ourselves, our students, or to our customers, day-to-day.

In diving, we collectively do a good job of investigating accidents and recognizing when a rule (a "standard") could likely reduce the risks of the event happening again. Most of these standards are thus actually fairly simple logic and direct responses to actual occurrences, or likelihoods. Let's look at an example – the common, standard practice that introductory scuba participants remove all their gear at the end of a dive.

While it may sound like mere common sense, the reality is that this particular 'rule' (standard) operates at several levels, the obvious first ones being for participants' comfort and safety – once the dive is done, we don't want them waddling around (perhaps still in their fins) with weights and a cylinder still strapped on, with the danger of them losing their balance, falling, etc. There is also the inherent upside of their developing a bit more knowledge and practice in handling their gear in a safe manner. And, when this is occurring on a boat, the ante goes up – they could also easily fall on someone else, as well.

> **"The young lady still had her weight belt on after the intro dive – the boat hit a small wave and she fell backwards into the water, quickly sinking out of sight. Never to be found or seen again."**
> **- Al Hornsby**

When such standards development occurs in diving, however, there is also sometimes that element of "what's the worst that could happen?" that adds to the importance.

Well, the worst that has happened can answer this rather directly. At the end of an introductory scuba dive off a small boat, one of the participants, a young lady, was allowed (or maybe it was not noticed by the instructor?) to keep her weight belt on as she began to cross the channel and head back toward the resort. The group, happy and thrilled at their first dive and sitting on the rails, was talking about how cool it all was… then, the boat hit a small wave, the lady fell backwards into the water, quickly sinking out of sight - never to be found or seen again.

So, what's the worst that could happen, even when involving such a simple, common standard regarding removing all equipment at the end of an introductory dive? The reality was pretty horrible, and so, so unnecessary.

email Al

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TRAVEL

Schedule Time to Smell the Roses: Building in Time for Disruptions

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



After a week of diving Papua New Guinea (PNG), we departed the liveaboard boat and boarded the van that would take us to the airport for our return flights to the US. We noticed very little activity while approaching the terminal and saw only one person at a desk when our dive group dragged our luggage inside to get checked in for our flight. When asked about our scheduled flight that day, the person responded: *"No plane today, maybe tomorrow."*

That is not something you want to hear when you have crucial multiple connections (that you will now not make) to get you home. While the rest of the divers went into frantic mode trying to make new flight arrangements, we just needed to send an email to our B&B host in Cairns, Australia (our connection hub), that we wouldn't be there today, but probably tomorrow (hopefully). "No problem," she responded.

We had built into our trip itinerary a few "buffer" days in Cairns both going to PNG and coming back so that we could enjoy exploring the area as part of our experience on this journey. It also proved to be useful to allow any "hiccups" in our travels to be remedied. This was fortunate for us also at the beginning of the trip because when we arrived in Cairns, en route to PNG, two of our checked bags went on to Japan instead of staying with us in Australia. The night before we were to depart for our liveaboard in PNG, the bags showed up and were delivered to our B&B so that we could fly and board our boat with all our gear.

The more complicated your flight itinerary on a dive adventure, the more time you need to build in some "buffer time" to resolve any unforeseen changes you might encounter on your journey. While it may be more efficient to create a tight flight schedule to maximize your vacation days, you need to consider the risks involved if that schedule is disrupted in any way.

There is a vast number of logistics involved in getting planes and crews in the right place so that your flights can take off at the right time. Various reports in 2024 indicated that somewhere between a quarter to one third of all flights were delayed (and many cancelled) due to dangerous weather, security concerns, aircraft or crews not in position to meet the schedule, technical or mechanical problems, or multiple other issues.



Groups can use multi-day layovers in connection hub cities to go sightseeing like this group in Singapore (before heading to Indonesia).

Most often, the cause of delays or cancellations of flights is not at your location, but instead at the location where your plane is coming from, or even its route before that location. A delay or cancellation in one location can create a "domino effect" for the plane's remaining schedule. The problem intensifies when you are scheduled on smaller airlines that don't have an extra plane to put into service when a problem occurs.

Another consideration where it might be advisable to build in some buffer time at a connection hub is when the final destination is a location that has few flights into it, so any deviation can be detrimental to your flight connection schedule. Instead of multiple flights per day, many airlines might only fly in once a day or even just a few days per week. If you (or your bags) miss that flight, then your days of diving and tropical vacation experiences get shortened, sometimes drastically.

If you spend extra "buffer" time at a major flight connection hub, then you have many more flight options if you are "off schedule" than you do at a remote location, or to allow missing bags to catch up to you.

This extra time can even be part of your planned adventure if you are running a group trip. Last year, we had a group trip to North Sulawesi in Indonesia. Since we had to fly into Singapore to connect to the final location, we decided to lay over a couple of days there to explore the sights (as well as let people and bags catch up). Everyone enjoyed the extra excursion except that we discovered you can't experience everything in Singapore in just a few days, so a return trip is needed.Sometimes it is best to plan some time in your connection hub to "just go smell the roses."

email David

ECO PRO

Beyond Blowing Bubbles: How Instructors Can Be The Missing Link

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



In my column last month, I discussed an issue I term the "Great Disconnect." It describes the gap between why people are motivated to become scuba divers - to explore a unique environment - and the lack of knowledge among instructors regarding that environment. This leads most instructors to give short shrift to the very reason people are drawn to diving. The result is that most entry-level training focuses heavily on how to dive, with relatively little attention given to why.

So, how do we shift the emphasis from 'how' to 'why'?

The first and most crucial step is understanding that before you can change behavior, you must change attitude. And this starts with one vital premise: Scuba instructors are more than just guides to the underwater realm - they are stewards of the ocean and influencers of diver behavior. As pressures continue to mount on marine ecosystems, the role of the instructor must evolve to meet the current challenges. One of the most impactful ways to do that is by expanding environmental education within diver training.

> **"Diver training agencies have stepped up in recent years by embedding some environmental content into their eLearning modules for entry-level training. The question remains: Is it sufficient? I believe it is not."**
> **- Alex Brylske**

Fortunately, you don't have to overhaul your entire course or start from scratch. Certification agencies already include some ecological and conservation content in their curricula. The problem is that it's too little or too general and doesn't emphasize the topic of most interest to divers - coral reefs.

The vast majority of instructors today utilize their agency's eLearning platform to some extent or entirely. However, they don't always use it in the most effective way. Maximum effect comes not from abandoning face-to-face academic instruction entirely but by embracing a hybrid learning or "flipped classroom" model. Here, instructors can enhance student engagement with environmental topics while also creating more effective and flexible training environments. When combined with various online tools - most of which are free - this approach empowers instructors to shape a generation of divers who not only dive well, but dive responsibly.

Environmental awareness is no longer an optional bonus in dive training - it has become essential. Coral reefs are dying at alarming rates, the ocean is acidifying and heating at an unprecedented rate, and marine biodiversity is under serious threat. Divers, simply by being in the water, witness these changes firsthand. And when properly trained, they can become frontline sentinels and advocates for ocean health.

Furthermore, divers who understand the fragility of marine ecosystems are more likely to engage in responsible behaviors, such as maintaining proper buoyancy control to avoid damaging contact with or harassment of marine life. These behaviors not only enhance diver safety, they also transform them into allies for conservation.

Today, the reality is that students are increasingly demanding more environmental education. Many new divers, especially Gen Zers and Millennials, are motivated to enter the sport due to their concern for the environment. When instructors treat marine ecology as a core subject, not just an afterthought, it resonates. It shows that dive training is about more than just learning how to blow bubbles; it's about shaping values.

Diver training agencies have stepped up in recent years by embedding some environmental content into their eLearning modules for entry-level training. The question remains: Is it sufficient? I believe it is not.

Still, if you're already using these platforms, then you're halfway there - but only if you're employing the right strategy. The challenge now is to bring that content to life in a way that deepens understanding and encourages action.

Implementing a New Model of Learning

The old model of diver training - lecture-heavy classroom sessions followed by practical skills - is no longer the norm. Hybrid learning, which combines online and in-person instruction, enables students to absorb theoretical knowledge at their own pace before engaging in hands-on experiences. A flipped classroom takes this further by making knowledge acquisition the student's responsibility before class, reserving in-person time for deeper discussion, problem-solving, and applied learning. Here's how this might work from an environmental perspective:

1. Before class, assign online modules covering topics such as coral reef ecosystems, marine food webs, and the impacts of climate change. However, as these topics are

only addressed marginally - or not at all - on various training agency eLearning platforms, you'll need additional content to supplement your lessons. (More on this later.)

2. During class, instead of reviewing what they've just read, use the time together to discuss real-world scenarios. Pose ethical questions: "What would you do if you saw another diver touching coral or harassing marine life?" Share your own experiences and ethos. Include topics such as fish identification or coral bleaching. This shifts your role from lecturer to facilitator, guiding students in applying what they've learned.
3. During the dive, make the environment your classroom. Transform the standard "Open Water Training Dive X" into an ecological exploration. Encourage students to identify species, observe symbiotic relationships, and note signs of environmental stress. This hands-on learning reinforces concepts and alters how students perceive the underwater world.
4. After the dive, encourage reflection. Don't just have students "log their dives," but begin treating their logbook as a journal to document their entire underwater experience. Encourage group discussions on what they observed and how their behavior impacted the environment. Tie this back to the conservation themes covered previously.

This strategy not only reinforces knowledge; it also creates emotionally resonant experiences. When students see the concepts come alive underwater, they remember them. More importantly, they internalize them.

Some instructors worry that adding environmental topics could overload students or exceed course time limits. However, as I mentioned earlier, some elements of ecology and conservation are already incorporated into the curriculum. Your job is to add a few supplements to enhance student understanding.

Too often, environmental content is treated as filler or relegated to the end of the course, often viewed as a sidenote. Instead, elevate this discussion by addressing it early and often. And connect the discussion to practical diving skills. For example:

- Teaching buoyancy? Discuss its role in avoiding damage to coral and other fragile marine life.
- Are you practicing navigation? Use it as an opportunity to identify environmental health indicators (such as the prevalence of macroalgae and percentage of hard coral coverage) as students swim a course bearing.
- Introducing dive planning? Factor in currents and tidal changes that affect the distribution and behavior of marine life, as well as environmental factors that may impact visibility.

Remember, you don't need to be a marine biologist; you just need to be curious, committed, and willing to try new approaches to learning.

Expanding Your Hybrid Learning Toolkit

The good news is that the quality and content of environmental education in your entry-level course does not require reinventing the wheel. There is a wealth of outstanding resources online to support your marine education efforts. These can be easily incorporated into any hybrid course. Use these resources for assignments on pre-course reading, to facilitate flipped classroom discussions, or simply to keep yourself sharp. They add depth and lend credibility to your instruction. I've listed some of my favorites below. The links are available in the resource list, which can be downloaded



from the QR code at the end of the article. Best of all, every one of these resources is available for **free**.

- *Cities Under the Sea: An Introduction to Coral Reef Ecology* is a comprehensive 17-lesson course that explores how coral reefs function, emphasizing the roles both invertebrates and fish play, the problems reefs face in the modern world, and what can be done to conserve reefs for future generations. (In the interest of full disclosure, this is a course that I created based on Section Two of my book, *Beneath the Blue Planet: A Diver's Guide to the Ocean*.)
- The Khaled bin Sultan Living Ocean Foundation Education Portal offers fourteen award-winning, custom-designed modules that can be easily integrated into any hybrid course.
- Ocean First Institute offers thirteen short courses designed to provide an overview of a wide variety of marine species and ecosystems.
- REEF (Reef Environmental Education Foundation) offers fish identification training, citizen science programs, and webinars.
- NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program provides detailed, accessible information about coral reefs, threats, and restoration efforts.
- The Ocean Agency offers immersive visuals and stories about coral reefs through virtual dives. Great for visual learners.
- The MarineBio Conservation Society offers comprehensive coverage of marine species and ecosystems, complete with photos and videos.



Exceptional Training and Recognition

In addition to the free resources listed above, there is another program available at a modest cost that may be the best option: the *Green Fin Diver e-Course*. More than just providing information, the course emphasizes diver attitudes and behaviors. It consists of three modules with easy-to-follow content on a user-friendly platform. Each module is followed by a short quiz that divers must pass to complete each module. Integrating this into your Open Water course as a required component could be an excellent way to differentiate your program from the norm and justify a much higher price. The modules include:

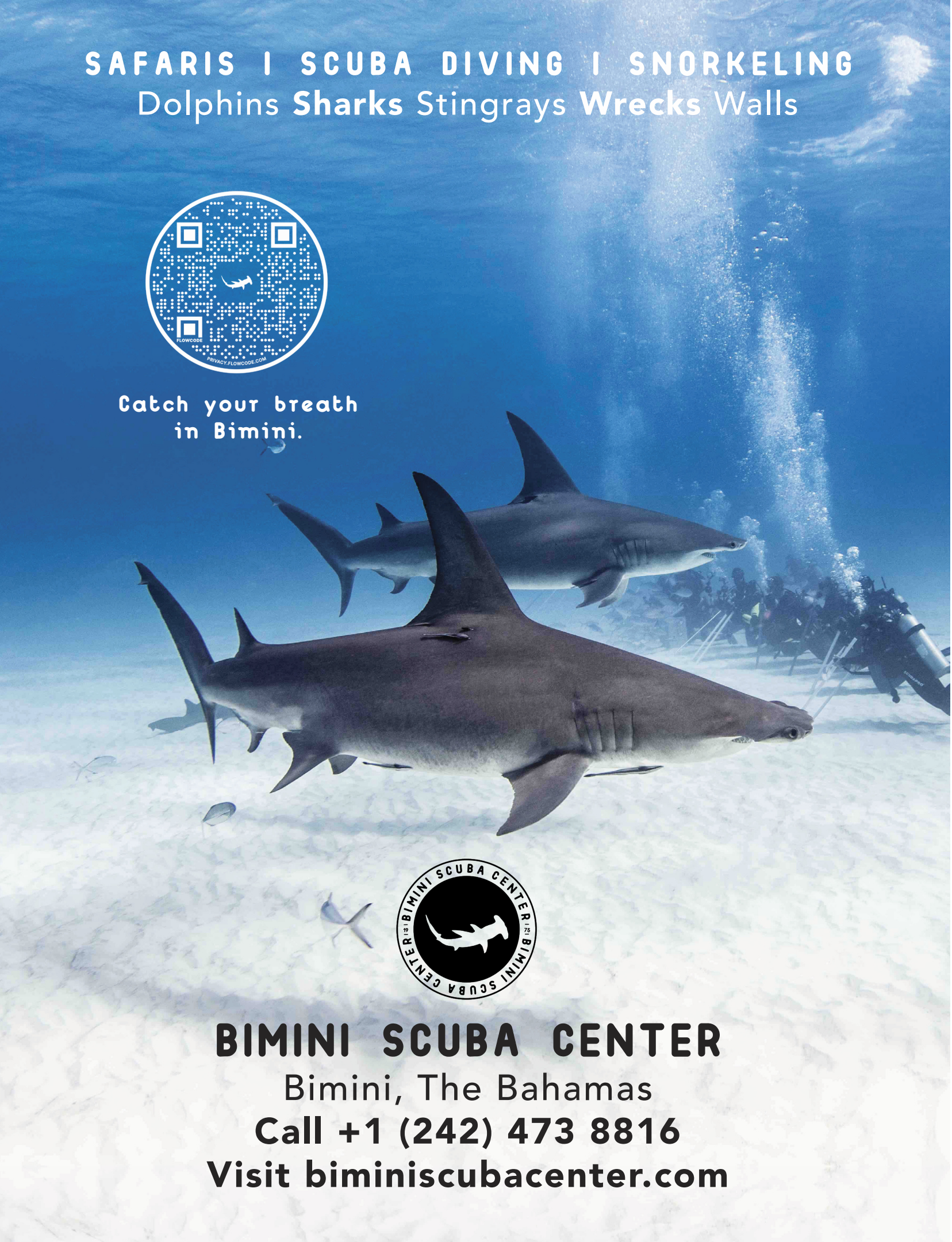
- **Module 1:** An introduction to coral reef biology, global and local threats to the marine environment, and the Green Fins approach.
- **Module 2:** Management techniques for environmentally friendly dive trips, including how to prepare and plan your trip from booking at home to best practices on the boat and caring for your equipment after the dive.
- **Module 3:** Applying best diving practices underwater during every dive, learning tips for minimizing environmental impact while diving, and enhancing marine life interactions. It also covers how to be an environmentally responsible underwater photographer. Finally, it suggests ways divers can apply the best practices they have learned and contribute to citizen science projects.

To support development and administrative costs, the course fee is $25. The proceeds help fund the non-profit Reef-World Foundation's efforts to implement the Green Fins program worldwide. Upon completion, students receive a personalized electronic certificate, valid for two years, which is a nice bonus in addition to their C-card. The course content is regularly updated with the latest industry knowledge on environmental best practices, so students are encouraged to retake the course after two years to refresh and update their knowledge.

Scuba instructors have a unique opportunity to shape how new divers perceive and engage with the ocean. By using hybrid and flipped learning methods, you can integrate the ecological content already included in agency curricula - supplemented with resources discussed herein - to enhance your impact without completely overhauling your course structure.

Your students come to you to learn how to dive, so give them more than just skills. Provide them with insight, responsibility, and a reason to care. When you teach divers to love the ocean and understand its fragility, you don't just create better divers - you create ocean advocates. Don't just teach diving; inspire stewardship. This is how we can preserve the blue planet - one student at a time.

Alex's links


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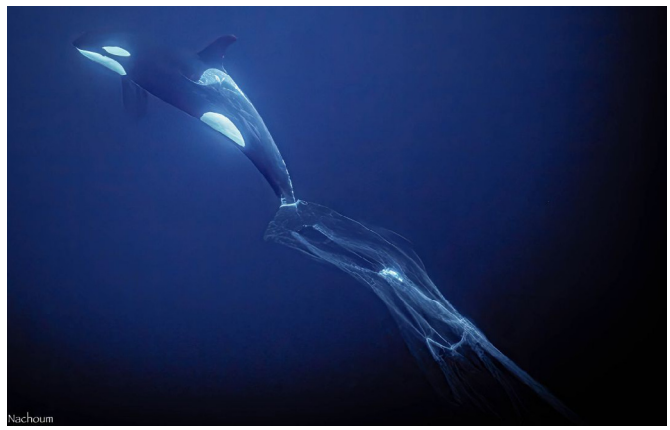
Behind The Lens: Entangled Orca — A Fight for Survival

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



The fjord lay still under the early winter sky, its waters reflecting the muted light of a sun too low to offer warmth. I slipped into the icy deep, the weight of my drysuit pressing me into silence. Ahead, a pod of orcas glided through the water – eight of them in tight formation, their sleek, black-and-white bodies cutting through the depths like living shadows. I only took a second to realize something was wrong. There was no curiosity, no playful interaction as I had experienced countless times before. Instead, they kept their distance, moving with a deliberate, almost solemn rhythm.

For 45 minutes, I swam after them, each kick of my fins slower than the last as the cold crept deeper into my body. My breath, loud in the quiet of the water, seemed to amplify the barrier between us. The orcas never came closer, their formation unbroken, their movements purposeful. Finally, exhausted and shivering, I surfaced and climbed back into the skiff.



Back on board, I reviewed the images I had captured. Pierre Robert de Latour, our dive master and a renowned expert on orca behavior, studied them with me. At first, nothing seemed unusual - just fleeting glimpses of the pod moving as one. But then, on one frame, I noticed a faint line trailing from the orca at the center. The others appeared to surround it, as if guarding an injured companion. It was blurry and indistinct, but I had never seen anything like it. "We need to follow them," I said, and Olav, our skipper, turned the skiff back toward the pod.

The chase lasted over an hour, the icy wind biting through my wet drysuit and chilling me to the bone. When we found the pod again, I slipped into the water, the cold shocking me into focus. Twice, I spotted the group in the dim blue light, but each time they evaded me, disappearing into the shadows.

On the third dive, with daylight fading fast, I caught sight of a lone orca moving slowly, separated from the rest. Its movements were labored, its tail dragging slightly behind. I adjusted my camera settings for the low light and swam closer, wary not to startle it. Then, I saw it clearly: a fishing net tangled tightly around its tail, its rough fibers cutting deep. The net trailed like a dead weight, a man-made anchor tethering it to struggle. The orca's strength was unmistakable, but even in its slow, deliberate strokes, I could sense the toll the net had taken.

I sank to about 20 feet, leveling myself with the orca. As I raised my camera, my hands shook - not from the cold, but from the gravity of the moment. I framed the shot, capturing the stark contrast between the sleek, vital body and the crude, tangled net that dragged behind it. The image was one of strength and suffering, of survival against the odds. Sadly, all I could do was capture the moment with my camera - I had no tools to cut the net free.

That evening, back on the mothership, Pierre, Olav, and I reviewed the images. To us, the net was a symbol of human carelessness, its presence in the fjord a violation of the natural world's harmony. "We have to try to help," Pierre said, and we agreed to spend the next day trying to free the orca from its entanglement.

The next morning, we searched for hours, finally found the pod, the injured orca was still there, moving more slowly than the day before. Pierre and I slipped into the water, this time without cameras, but with knives in hand.

We dove repeatedly, pushing ourselves into the freezing depths to reach the animal. Each time, it stayed just beyond our grasp, swimming deeper into the fjord. The net, at least 30 feet long, was wrapped tight around its tail, impossible to remove. As the hours passed, the orca weakened, and our attempts to free it proved futile. We surfaced, exhausted and heartbroken.

A Call to Responsibility: The image I captured that day has stayed with me, not as a triumph, but as a reminder of the silent costs of human activity. That net didn't belong in the fjord, yet there it was, dragging down one of the ocean's most intelligent and graceful creatures. This isn't just the story of a single orca in distress - it's a reflection of the imbalance we've introduced into the natural world, a symptom of a larger problem that demands our attention and action.

contact Amos

TRAVEL

Florida Keys Coral Restoration Success

– by John Christopher Fine, J.D.,, J.D., Boynton Beach, FL



John Christopher Fine is a Master Scuba Instructor and Instructor Trainer. His research as a Marine Biologist has brought worldwide attention to ocean environment issues. He is the author of 28 published books and contributes regularly to magazines and newspapers about maritime affairs.

"Four billion dollars a year. That's the valuation of reefs including the Keys, Miami, Broward County and the Dry Tortugas," Kathryn Lesneski averred as a scientist and NOAA's Research and Monitoring Coordinator for Mission Iconic Reefs. "That's a pretty staggering number. Money talks across all sectors, including political," Lesneski added.

The valuation in terms of dollars spent by divers and tourists that come to the Keys to dive and snorkel includes their hotel stays, restaurants, shopping, and spending in every venue. Diving is money, and money talks. Divers come to the Keys to see coral reefs and enjoy healthy marine ecosystems. This is the driving incentive for Island Coral And Restoration Education (I.CARE) and Key Dives to not only work on clean-up dives but on coral and sponge restoration projects.

"NOAA is the lead. We are partner-driven with private sector participation. We are working on seven reefs throughout the sanctuary. We've taken a holistic approach long-term that includes restoration of coral and ongoing monitoring. We have been restoring Caribbean king crabs and sea urchins that eat algae," Lesneski said.

Funding comes from the federal and state governments, as well as from grants and private donations. Lesneski tries to dive with Key Dives, working with I.CARE as a volunteer as often as her work allows.



Mote Marine Coral Lab

Emphasizing the importance of reefs, NOAA has instituted wave sensing on the Eastern Dry Rocks off Key West. Wave sensors are deployed to measure wave frequency and height as well as wave energy. "We've collected data that reveals that 90% of wave energy is reduced over coral reefs. Reefs are natural barriers to wave energy. This results in savings from storm and flood damage from hurricanes in the hundreds of billions of dollars a year," the NOAA scientist added.

It is clear that coral reefs are rainforests of the sea. Globally, 25% of all marine species depend on reefs. "This is what divers want to see, what commercial and sport fishing depend on. Loss of reefs means loss of biodiversity," Lesneski concluded.

With this imperative, the continuation of I.CARE and its partner Key Dives throughout their relocation emphasizes the importance of work that has been undertaken by dedicated people.

A landmark dive operation for twenty years at Tea Table Key, Mike Goldberg, founder and owner of Key Dives, has recently relocated to Strahl Plaza, bayside at Mile Marker 86 on Plantation Key. Their 42-foot Newton dive vessel is docked right behind the shop on a canal that gives immediate access to Snake Creek and some of the best ocean diving in the world. Mike Goldberg and Mike Ryan, Key Dives' longtime Operations Manager, continue their commitment to ocean conservation, working closely with scientists attached to I.CARE a non-profit created by Dr. Kylie Smith and Mike Goldberg. I.CARE's new, spacious education center adjoins Key Dives.

To gauge the success of I.CARE's work in coral restoration, Mike Goldberg says, "Look at the coral we put down. Of about 300 grooved brain coral outplants at Captain Arno's reef, one of I.CARE's restoration sites, we have close to 100% survival. We put those down about two years ago. These corals are only about the size of a half-dollar now. They grow slowly - in ten years they'll be the size of a flapjack. That's incredibly encouraging." It is more than encouraging, it is progress made by the caring

dedication and teamwork of volunteers, staff, interns, donors, sponsors, and scientists. It is proof positive that people can make a vast difference for ocean conservation.

Stony corals were in great decline, prompting researchers to state that live coral coverage in the Keys is only 5%. That compares to live coral coverage of 90% a scant seventy years ago. "Our overall survival rate since we began five years ago, inclusive of the 2023 mass bleaching event, is 43%," Mike Goldberg added.


Keys Dive & i.Care Partnership

That the owner of a dive operation joined with scientific experts like Dr. Kylie Smith and Dr. Bobbie Renfro, a sponge researcher, to restore offshore reefs with living coral and sponges is testimony to what private enterprise can accomplish when members of the community and generous private donors support the cause of ocean conservation. While government grants have helped, I.CARE's base for education and logistical support for interns, fuel, logistics, and educational programs has come from the private sector. Key Dives donates 2% of profits back to I.CARE and has organized other dive operations to do the same.

Dives are guided by Key Dives instructors and divemasters. For those wishing to participate, I.CARE offers seminars about coral and sponge restoration in their conference room with hands-on demonstrations and explanations. Divers then board their 42' Newton 'Giant Stride' and head out to reefs designated under permit for restoration. Under close supervision of scientists, volunteer divers not only enjoy hands-on experience, they come away with the satisfaction of helping to restore once pristine reefs.

Coral and sponges are grown by I.CARE on 'trees' off a reef called The Maze. This ocean-grown coral includes staghorn and brain corals as well as three species of sponges. Dr. Renfro calls sponges the 'glue of the reef,' integral to healthy reef ecology interspersed with outplanted coral.

"Corals we are outplanting now survived 2023. They are the most resistant and resilient corals we know of today. Sponges, once decimated by past hurricanes, are integral to the reef. We're learning more and more as we observe sponges living with reef corals in the same location, one benefits the other. Dr. Bobbie Renfro alludes to the fact that a single tennis ball-sized sponge filters 1.5 gallons of water a minute. This filtering creates cleaner water. The more sponges on the reefs, the more healthy our corals will be," Mike Goldberg said.

For those wanting more information or to participate in Key Dives operations and I.CARE projects visit www.keydives.com or call 305-664-2211 and I.CARE at icareaboutcoral.org.

email John

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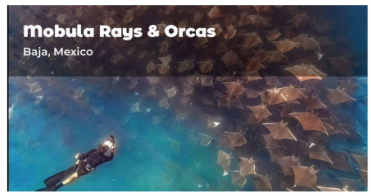


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DEMA UPDATE

DEMA Association Mid-Year 2025 Update

– by Tom Ingram, MBA, CAE, President & CEO, DEMA



The 2025 Mid-Year Report by the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) emphasizes its role as the central catalyst for collaboration within the diving industry. Amid evolving market dynamics and economic shifts, DEMA delivers value to its diverse membership - including retailers, dive operators, manufacturers, training agencies, media, and service providers. Its structure, spanning six membership classes, allows the organization to respond effectively to stakeholders across the diving ecosystem.

Strengthening Membership Engagement: DEMA has introduced and expanded its DEMA Rewards Program, an initiative that encourages active member participation by granting points for attending meetings, exhibiting at DEMA Show, sponsoring events, serving on committees, and making early membership renewals. These points can be redeemed for discounts, sponsorship opportunities, and more, making membership both rewarding and cost effective.

The Importance of DEMA Show: The DEMA Show returns to Orlando in November 2025, reaffirming its role as the premier global gathering for the diving industry. In its role as one of the largest trade shows in North America, the event will host hundreds of exhibitors and attendees from across the globe. New elements like the New Product Showcase, First Time Exhibitors Center, and interactive education spaces are planned to foster connections and stimulate business growth. Committee priorities also focus on survey-informed improvements, including making the show more interactive and accessible to both exhibitors and attendees.

Advocating for the Diving Industry: Through its Public Policy Committee, DEMA provides a voice for diving businesses in legislative and regulatory arenas. In 2025, its efforts focus on:

- Advocating for the DIVE BOAT Act to reduce rising insurance costs that have impacted dive operators across the U.S.
- Monitoring the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Rules, especially proposed restrictions that would limit provisioning ecotourism (shark feeding), highlighting the economic and educational benefits of such activities.
- Supporting the FISHES Act, which streamlines disaster relief for fisheries and benefits dive businesses reliant on healthy marine ecosystems.
- Engaging with legislative measures like Lulu's Law, addressing proposed alerts for shark attacks. DEMA has advocated for balanced policies that do not foster undue alarm or hamper dive tourism.
- Evaluating policies such as the Corporate Transparency Act and its impacts, ensuring that the needs of diving businesses are represented.

Sustainable Practices and Environmental Stewardship: With the *SS United States* being prepared as the world's largest artificial reef, DEMA has reiterated its long standing support for artificial reef projects that benefit both the marine environment and diving tourism. Similarly, it has advocated for rules that recognize the value of sustainable marine tourism, especially as a tool for conservation and economic growth.

Growing the Diving Market: Through its retail, manufacturing, and research committees, DEMA promotes:

- Stronger connections across the supply chain.
- New marketing and engagement opportunities within the industry.
- Education, collaboration, and resource sharing that benefit retailers, instructors, travel sellers, and resort operators.
- Research and relevant data to retailers about their local demographic markets.

Conclusion: The 2025 DEMA Mid-Year Report showcases an organization deeply committed to nurturing the diving industry. From facilitating connections at the DEMA Show to shaping legislative policies that affect businesses across the sector, DEMA aims to foster growth, collaboration, and sustainability. Its ongoing efforts support retailers, travel professionals, manufacturers, and dive operators in a marketplace that demands resilience, adaptability, and a focus on long term success.

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BUSINESS EDU

Show and Sell: Tips for Using Video as a Sales Tool

– 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.



In last month's article on truth-telling as a sales tool, I mentioned marketing expert and author Marcus Sheridan's book, *The Visual Sale*, in which he and co-author Tylar Lessard identify video as a highly effective way for businesses to explain complex ideas and build trust with customers. If you're not already using videos to promote your business, this article can help you get started. If you're already posting videos, you might pick up a few tips that will improve and streamline your video production process.

Why Video?

We'll answer this question in four parts:

1. Speaking directly to your potential clients via video lets them see your face and hear your voice. It helps quickly establish a personal connection that builds trust. I'll bet you have a favorite video podcaster or celebrity you watch regularly. Over time, it's likely you'd say, "I almost feel like I know them," even though you've only seen their videos and haven't met them in person. You get to know their personality and you develop a level of familiarity. Case in point: I've watched interviews of Sir David Attenborough and heard his nature documentary narrations so often that if I ever got to meet him in person, I'd probably rush in for a hug. He feels like family to me. (I just hope his security detail would be understanding.)
2. It's what potential customers expect and want. Our smartphones make it easy. According to video production company Wyzowl.com, a whopping 96 percent of customers polled in 2024 indicate they've watched an "explainer" video to learn more about a product or service prior to engaging with sales staffers. Clearly, "no contact" consumer searches are a thing. Your potential clients are likely to check you out online before they walk through your door.
3. It improves conversions. Studies are showing video content holds a prospective buyer's attention longer than just looking at a still image or reading a block of text. If we want customers to pay attention, video is proving to be the winner. Let's say you have a new client interested in learning to dive. They've stopped in. Of course, you chat them up about scuba lessons and capture their contact information. Now, you can text them a message with a video link, saying, "Thanks for stopping by earlier. It was great to meet you. Here's a video of our 'Try Scuba' session we talked about. We've got one scheduled next Saturday. Space is limited. Call me and I'll reserve your spot."
4. It saves time and adds value to a conversation. If you create short videos that illustrate various frequently asked questions (FAQs), the next time someone calls, in addition to answering their questions in real time, you can get their cell number and text them the appropriate FAQ video, with the message, "Take a look. And then let's talk some more."

> **"When it comes to creating marketing videos, never mind if you don't like the way you look on camera or you can't stand the sound of your voice. Just start, because done is better than good. You will get better at it when you keep at it."**
> **- Cathryn Castle Garcia**

Tips for Getting Started

If you're thinking you'll need a substantial investment in tech equipment, rest easy. All you need is your smartphone, a tripod or sturdy surface on which to rest your phone/camera, and some good lighting. For best results, make a small investment in a lavalier microphone and a ring light, both of which are easy finds online and at a tech store. You'll also need an editing tool. Popular free editing tools include CapCut, YouTube Create, and InShot. For Apple users, iMovie is also popular.

The next tip comes from one of my favorite YouTube stars, Ali Abdaal, a former doctor who's now a fulltime YouTuber with over six million subscribers. In his "How to Start a YouTube Channel" video he says, "Get going. Get good. Get smart." He advises you to get over yourself and just record and post your video content. Never mind if you don't like the way you look on camera or can't stand the sound of your voice. Just start, because done is better than good. You will get better at it when you keep at it. Abdaal's video tutorials on how to get good at making videos are straightforward and packed with useful advice. I suggest you look him up.


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Creating Content

Now it's time to come up with video topics. Let's say your goal is three-fold: to promote the business, attract customers, and increase sales. When you sit down to brainstorm with your staffers, run all your ideas through this filter. Here are five top categories of video topics to help you get started:

1. The welcome video. Record a series of short "hello" videos for upload to your website's landing page.
2. The FAQs. Make a list of all the common questions you get asked about your company's products and services and then record videos that address each question.
3. Videos that provide a brief but detailed answer to the question, "Have you ever wondered how…?". The pros call these explainer videos.
4. Bio videos. Have each staff member record an introduction video that tells a little about them and what job they perform. Include fun tidbits like their favorite sea creature or why they think burritos are the best food ever invented.
5. Customer testimonials. Invite loyal customers to guest star on a short video about your business that describes why they do business with you and what they like about your product or service. This type of video can be especially useful for promoting classes and trips. (Before it goes live, be sure to have your customer approve the video and sign a consent form allowing you to post it.)

Once you've got a list of topics, it's time to outline your content. Each video should include these three key elements: a hook, a message, and a strong call to action. A marketing hook is a compelling element within your marketing message, usually the title or main text, that captures attention. It must generate interest, and make potential customers pause and engage with your brand. The most effective posts communicate their core message or hook at first glance. (For more on marketing hooks, see my column in the April 2025 issue titled, "*To Stop the Scroll, Use a Strong Hook: How to Create Marketing Messages that "Click."*")

Both Sheridan and Abdaal suggest you not write out a script like a movie screenplay. Instead, use bullet points. Reading from a script might trip you up, but glancing at speaking prompts listed as bullet points will probably enable you to speak more conversationally – which will make you more relatable to your potential customer. While you're at it, don't freak out over the "ums and ahs" or awkward pauses; you can edit them out later if needed. Pro tip for using your cell phone as a teleprompter so you can easily read bullet points while still looking into the camera: try the apps Teleprompter for Video (Google Play) and BigVu (iOS).

When it comes to your messaging, keep it short and simple. Try delivering no more than three key points. For instance: What is it? How does it work? How will it make my life better? A friend uses a three-step "Short. Simple. Sweet." formula for her videos and e-newsletters: Short = she briefly describes the item or service featured in the video; Simple = she gives a quick look at how it works; Sweet = she lets you know how happy you'll feel using the product or service she offers. No matter how you do it, remember to add a strong call to action at the end of the video. This is your video's "buy now" button. Invite the viewer to call you, schedule a class, book a trip, visit your website, whatever. Just make sure you ask them to do business with you. I'd like to know how you are doing with using video as a sales tool. Email me at hello@clearstorycoach.

email Cathryn

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If your marketing message isn't CLEAR, all you're making is NOISE.

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RETAILING

5 Keys to Success in a Startup Dive Business

– by Shelli Hendricks, Ph.D., President, Blue Horizon Solutions



Starting a dive business is a huge undertaking. It's important to have a great idea, but you also need to execute that idea and turn it into a successful business. It takes a lot of hard work, dedication, and resilience to make a startup succeed in any industry, including scuba.

Here are five key factors that will contribute to your success in a startup business:

1. Passion:

Be passionate about your business and believe in what you're doing. This passion will help drive you forward when things get tough and motivate you to continue working towards your goals.



- Any startup founder will tell you that having conviction in your idea is key to success. When you believe in your vision, you're more likely to be passionate about it and willing to work hard to make it a reality.
- Some might say, "find your why?" Why does the world need another dive business? Why does the world need YOUR dive business? How will yours be different? What is your unique value proposition that sets you apart? Why is this important to you?
- What does it mean to be passionate about your idea? Being passionate about your business means being willing to put in long hours and make tough decisions. It also means being open to feedback and constantly growing your product or service to meet your customers' needs.
- It means never giving up when confident that your idea won't fail. You also need to prepare to pivot if necessary. Pivoting doesn't mean giving up. It means you will change your plans to achieve success.

2. Resilience:

Startups are never effortless. There will be difficulties. Building resilience as a startup founder is critical to your success. Resilience is not the same as endurance or stamina, rather it is the ability to bounce back when you encounter a barrier, challenge or obstacle to success. The journey of a startup founder is full of trials, and if you're not resilient, it's easy to give up when things get tough. Here are three tips to help you build resilience as a startup founder:

- Believe in yourself. The first step to being resilient is believing in yourself. No matter how many setbacks you encounter, if you believe in your vision and your ability to execute it, you'll never give up
- Stay focused on your goals. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day grind of running a startup and lose sight of your long-term goals. When things get tough, take a step back and remember your vision.
- Build a support network. Running a startup can be a lonely journey, so building a supportive network of family, friends, and fellow entrepreneurs is essential. These people can provide crucial emotional support when things get tough.

3. Flexibility:

Things change quickly in a startup environment, so it's essential to be flexible and adapt to new situations. If you're rigid, you'll likely find it difficult to survive in this type of environment.

- Being a business owner is often about being flexible. Be open to new ideas and be willing to change course when necessary. Flexibility is challenging for startup founders, especially if you're married to your original vision. However, the ability to pivot is essential for any successful startup.

- After all, no one knows what the future holds, and the only way to survive is to be ready to adapt.
- But it means that you need to be open to new possibilities and willing to make changes when your original vision isn't working out. Being flexible will increase your chances of success and ensure that your startup can weather whatever storms come.

4. Futurist Mindset:

It is essential to have a futurist mindset. Futurists think about the long-term implications of decisions and actions and will embrace change.

- Startups are constantly developing, and what may work today may not be effective tomorrow. Always look for better ways to do things.
- A futurist mindset helps to foster creativity and innovation. Futurists look toward the future and think about new ways to solve problems.
- This type of thinking is essential in a startup environment, where the ability to pivot and innovate can mean the difference between success and failure.

5. Ambition Plus Action:

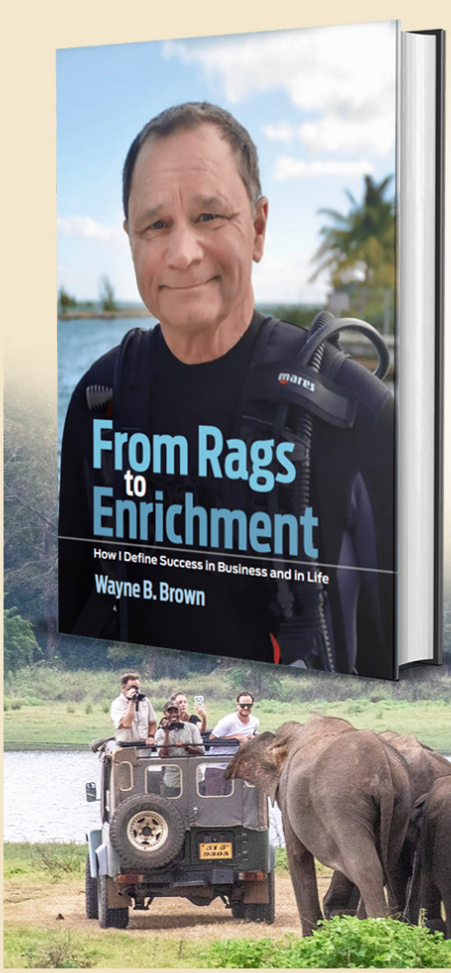
Starting a new business is an exciting and challenging endeavor. From developing a product or service to building a team and marketing the business, there are many factors to consider.

- These factors require a certain amount of ambition and drive. It will be challenging to get the business off the ground without them.
- It is essential to be active in a startup environment and always look for ways to improve. You must try new things, even if they fail. It also means constantly challenging yourself and your team to do better.
- By maintaining a high activity level, you can ensure that your startup has the best chance of succeeding.

If you want to succeed in a startup environment, you must believe in your vision, be flexible and adaptable, have a futurist mindset, and be ambitious and active. These qualities will help you weather the challenges that all new businesses face and give you the best chance of success.

Are you interested in joining a community of likeminded dive entrepreneurs to develop business acumen and professional leadership skills? Check out our Business Builder program at DivePro-Coach.com.

email Shelli



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How I Define Success in Business and in Life

By Wayne B. Brown

Owner & CEO of Aggressor Adventures

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INNOVATION

Hydrophilic Film: A Breakthrough in Anti-Fogging Technology

– by Gil Zeimer, ScubaStoryteller.com and Zeimer.com, San Rafael, CA
As a PADI diver since 1985, Gil has authored more than 300 scuba articles and newsletters that have appeared in over 25 magazines and websites. He looks forward to presenting two seminars at DEMA 2025.



I recently had the opportunity to interview Dr. Karl Hamouche, an Iowa-based radiologist, swimmer, coach, and inventor with multiple patents.

He and his partner, Brent Kiomall, are the co-founders of Fog-X Solutions, as well as a variety of other products. Based in Ames, Iowa, and Peachtree City, Georgia, they invented Fog-X in 2019 and it's been clearing the air on the mask-fogging problem affecting most divers, snorkelers, and swimmers ever since. It was very popular during its DEMA 2024 debut, and the company is now poised for rapid expansion.

Hi Karl. First, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I was born in Lebanon, moved to Iowa when I was 12 years old, and joined the local swim team. Though I was 8,000 miles from my first home, I instantly became part of a new family. I was a pretty good athlete, so I swam competitively for 15 years through college and medical school. Years later, I coached my original swim team, helping it win its first club state title, which gave me great satisfaction.



Hydrophilic Film – on Right Side

Do you still find time to swim?

Definitely. I still swim almost daily and compete multiple times a year in my age bracket. My daily interactions give me new ideas and insights into how we can help to improve my swimming as well as my students.

Where did you earn your undergrad and medical degrees?

I studied biology and exercise science at Iowa State University in my adopted town of Ames, then earned my medical degree at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. I did my residency in radiology with the University of Kansas in Wichita and another year of training at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Between my coaching and swimming background, I've found myself at the intersection of theory and practice, the book and the real world. I've been practicing radiology here in Ames since summer of 2024.

Can you tell me about your partner and Fog-X co-founder?

Brent Kiomall is my partner in Fog-X. As an avid cave diver, he has a big following @brentdives on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. I reached out to him, and he was one of the few who responded to try Fog-X. He slapped them on once before diving, didn't even follow instructions, and said it was both amazing and so much better than what he was using. Because he'd had other businesses, he mentored me about how to launch this product last year at DEMA, where we met for the first time. We're now partners.

So, What is Fog-X?

It's a hydrophilic film that can be applied to goggles and diving masks to prevent fogging. We introduced it at DEMA last fall, and retailers were lined up outside our booth every day throughout the event.

What are the advantages of Fog-X Solutions vs. all the anti-fogging sprays and gels that almost everyone now uses?

First, it keeps your mask clear for hours, lasting months or even years, vs. reapplying anti-fogging gels before each dive, and being the last one in the water on your boat.

Second, it applies in seconds. You clean your mask, cut the Fog-X inserts to size if needed, peel off the protective layers, and stick the anti-fog inserts into your swim goggles or dive masks. Then you press out the bubbles, hydrate the film by wetting and rubbing it before use, and enjoy fog-free swimming or diving.

Third, Fog-X inserts are very durable and virtually last forever (well, at least a year), so they don't need to be reapplied every dive like anti-fogging sprays and gels.

Fourth, they work well in all types of water — swimming pools, freshwater lakes, and the ocean.

INNOVATION continued

Fifth, we make a variety of Fog-X Solutions products: for swim goggles, for snorkel and diving masks with single and double eye compartments, and for oval masks.

Sixth, you can choose the size that fits your mask. Or worst case scenario, you may need to cut the film to size. A small ring of fog may develop around the inserts, but this is usually unnoticeable.

Seventh, you can still clean your mask with soap, vinegar, and baking soda, but make sure you rinse these out well with fresh water so the residue doesn't cover up the Fog-X magic.

Eighth, unlike some competitors, you can use these with up to +2 and -2 prescription lens dioptors, as well as bifocals.

And ninth, we have a chart on our website to help find the best fit for your mask.

Do you have any other possible uses for Fog-X in the future?

We do! We're testing larger format versions for the face shields we wear in hospitals, and we have a handful of patents that we've started towards that goal. Someday, we'd love to produce Fog-X Solutions for motorcycle helmets, ski goggles, cycling goggles, and anything else that is currently fogging up your vision.

What's your slogan?

"The world is worth seeing clearly" is short, smart, and seems to resonate with both retailers and consumers.

Will we see you at DEMA this November in Orlando?

I'd love to go and I'm in the process of earning my open water diver certification, but my wife and I are expecting our first child that week, so Brent Kiomall will ably represent me there this year.

Any last thoughts?

I know your publisher, William Cline, has used this in a couple of dives and says it works great – so I guess that's a pretty good endorsement!.

email Gil

FOGX

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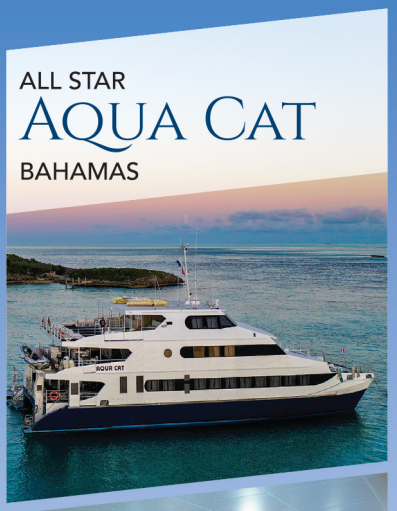
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British Virgin Islands
Jardines de la Reina, Cuba
Red Sea, Egypt
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AQUA CAT
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ALL STAR
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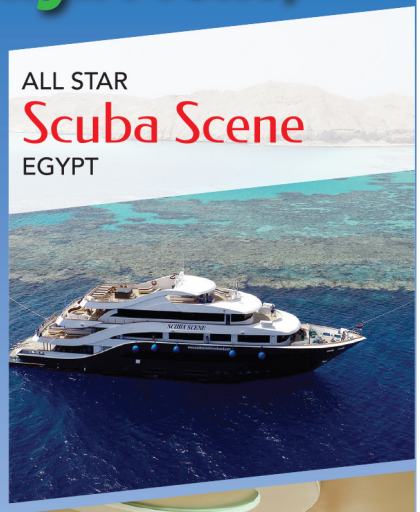








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RESEARCH

The Return of In-Person Shopping & Print Magazines

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



The 2025 Harris Poll & Quad *Return of Touch* report reveals a powerful cultural and commercial shift that is especially relevant to dive retailers, travel sellers, and advertisers in *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine*. At its core, the report identifies an accelerating consumer demand for tactile, immersive, and authentic brand experiences - especially among younger, digitally fatigued audiences. For the scuba industry, where hands-on equipment use, personal instruction, and destination experiences are central, this tactile renaissance is not just affirming – it's a call to action

Print's Powerful Rebound: A Strategic Opportunity for Scuba Brands

The report confirms a significant resurgence of print media. According to the survey:

- 71% of all consumers and 73% of Gen Z & Millennials say that catalogs and magazines feel more authentic than digital campaigns.
- 65% of all respondents look forward to receiving print catalogs.
- 69% of all consumers and 78% of Gen Z & Millennials have been influenced by print media to choose one brand over another.



For scuba diving brands - from training agencies and gear manufacturers to dive resorts and tourism boards – these stats validate investment in high-quality print placements. *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine* provides exactly the format audiences now value: a physical, curated, niche publication that dive professionals share with staff and refer to repeatedly. With 82% of subscribers saying they pass it on to others, the magazine offers print permanence and peer-to-peer influence unmatched by fleeting digital ads.

Tactile Engagement Builds Trust and Sales

Retailers are seeing that when consumers touch, they trust. In the dive industry, this principle is foundational: gear must be handled, wetsuits tried on, and masks tested. But the report takes it further, proving that:

- 88% of consumers say they easily remember in-person brand experiences that go out of their way to engage.
- 71% say that physical store interactions deepen their connection and loyalty.
- 76% say these experiences help them connect with people and brands on a deeper level.

For dive shops, this underscores the importance of immersive in-store events, try-before-you-buy programs, and even simple tactile experiences like opening new gear packaging or engaging with educational materials in-person.

Scuba Diving Industry Magazine supports this trend by offering advertising that feels tangible, informative, and trustworthy – unlike the impersonal clutter of online ads. Manufacturers who advertise in the magazine reach not just shop owners, but front-line staff who influence customer purchases and are eager for knowledge they can touch, keep, and share.

Digital Fatigue Makes Physical More Desirable

Digital burnout is real:

- 81% of Gen Z say they wish they could disconnect from devices more easily.
- 79% of consumers feel online shopping lacks the "magic" of in-person discovery.
- 66% say touching products is the most enjoyable part of shopping.

In a world of "doom scrolling," dive stores offer a refreshing contrast. Whether it's trying on fins, flipping through dive destination brochures, or chatting with experienced instructors, the tactile nature of diving already gives shops an edge.

And the magazine amplifies that edge. It acts as a slow media experience – one that contrasts with noisy inboxes or social feeds. For gear brands, training agencies, or travel destinations, advertising in print becomes a welcomed reprieve for dive professionals constantly bombarded by digital overload.

RESEARCH continued

Print as a Personal Invitation to Dive Deeper

Personalization and surprise are key drivers of ROI. According to the report:

- 72% of Gen Z & Millennials wish brands focused more on surprising them through mail.
- 76% enjoy personalized physical mail from brands.
- 74% are more likely to buy from brands that create unique unboxing experiences.



Scuba Diving Industry Magazine supports this psychology. Each monthly delivery acts as a tactile invitation to explore – just like unboxing a new dive computer or flipping through a dive travel guide. Advertisers who use high-impact ad designs or creative placements (e.g., pullouts, gatefolds, QR integrations) gain mindshare through surprise, relevance, and aesthetic appeal.

Physical Retail and Print Build Community

Retail in 2025 isn't just about transactions - it's about belonging:

- 83% of Gen Z and Millennials say that in-person retail experiences help them connect more deeply with others and brands.
- 76% say retail spaces should inspire, not just sell.
- 73% say shopping at hyped pop-ups or retailers feels like a cultural moment.
- 77% of young consumers have planned trips around visiting retail locations.

Scuba diving thrives on community: buddy teams, group travel, certification classes, and post-dive socials. The report's findings affirm what dive pros already know – that in-person experiences drive long-term loyalty.

Our magazine complements this dynamic by acting as a centralized resource for the community. Dive shop owners and instructors look to it not just for products, but for ideas and inspiration. It's a cultural touchstone, elevating brands that advertise alongside editorial that dives into business tips, ecological leadership, training strategies, and travel trends.

A Call to Brands: Blend Digital and Tactile for Maximum Impact

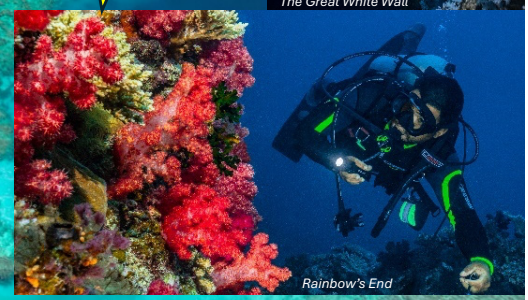
The report is clear: the most successful brands are those that integrate physical and digital touchpoints.

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info@divesaubay.com

- 84% of Gen Z & Millennials value brands that blend tech and physical experience.
- 78% appreciate digital touchpoints that enhance, not replace, physical shopping.
- 68% want to see more brands experiment with AR (Augmented Reality) and packaging.

For scuba brands, this could mean combining a print ad in the magazine with QR codes leading to a video demo, a digital catalog, or a podcast episode from Marketing Minutes. It could also mean embedding dynamic CTAs (Call to Action) into magazine features, such as links to dealer locators, 3D gear views, or booking engines.

Retailers can use these hybrid tactics in-store too, linking physical displays to online review portals, loyalty apps, or digital travel itineraries. And because our magazine already offers both digital and print distribution, it's the perfect vehicle for advertisers who want an omnichannel presence.

Final Thoughts: Trust Print, Elevate Dive Retail, Leverage the "Return of Touch"

The 2025 "Return of Touch" report makes a strong case for the future of retail and advertising – one that aligns beautifully with what *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine* and its readers already embrace: trust, hands-on experience, and real-world connection.

For advertisers, the message is clear: if your brand wants to be remembered, trusted, and shared by the gatekeepers of scuba commerce – dive shop owners, instructors, and travel resellers – then be where they spend time offline. Be in the magazine they look forward to, flip through, and hand to their staff.

And for dive retailers, this report affirms that your physical space, tactile experiences, and personal service aren't just relevant – they're in demand. Use them to differentiate. Use them to engage. And use them to grow. Let our magazine help you tell that story.

email William

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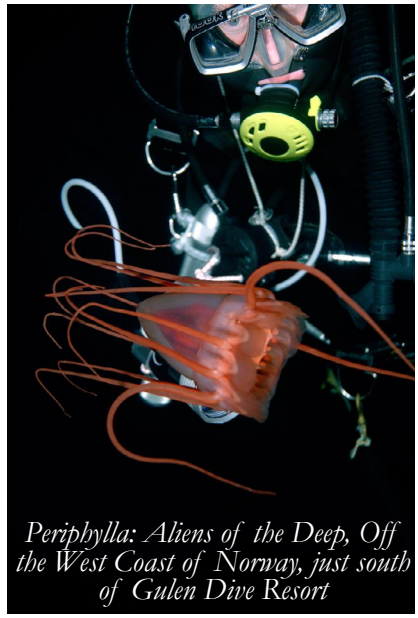
Dive into Europe: Summer in Scandinavia: A Diving Paradise

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



It is now summer in the Northern Hemisphere, and this is when my native Scandinavia truly shines. The long, warm summer days around midsummer, when we enjoy endless evenings and the white nights along the coastline, are something I never want to miss. We savour fresh produce, such as the most succulent strawberries, and the temperatures are pleasant - typically around 25°C (77°F). The water, while not tropically warm, sits at a comfortable 20-24°C (68-70°F) on the surface, which is perfect for diving in a wetsuit.

Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are quite different in topography, but each is beautiful in its own right. They all boast extensive archipelagos offering countless opportunities for great diving. Denmark is relatively flat, mostly farmland, with no point of the country more than 50 km (~30 miles) from the coastline. The Danish straits, connecting the Baltic Sea to the North Sea and Atlantic, are busy shipping routes, and the seas are littered with wrecks from many centuries, most of them within recreational diving range. Sweden's ragged eastern coastline, with its many coves, islets, and inlets, offers great shore diving, easily accessible. Norway's deep fjords, facing the Atlantic, feature underwater scenery with lush kelp forests, resembling British Columbia, albeit with different species.



Periphylla: Aliens of the Deep, Off the West Coast of Norway, just south of Gulen Dive Resort

One location I highly recommend is Gulen Dive Resort, located just an hour's drive north of Bergen, Norway, in a picturesque cove in an arm of the Sognefjord, the longest and deepest fjord in Norway. During the summer months, there is a direct flight from New York to Bergen, or it's a one-stop flight with the same airline. What sets Gulen Dive Resort apart, aside from the stunning scenery, is its house reef, where divers can find a variety of nudibranch species. Each year, the resort hosts a Nudibranch Week, where marine ecologists give presentations and teach about these fascinating creatures. Many photo workshops are also held there, and for a good reason.

The location also ensures that one never blows out as there is always a lee side around. In addition to the house reef, the area is home to spectacular wrecks, such as the legendary *Frankenwald*. During WW2, the German Navy and merchant fleet navigated the inner archipelago to avoid attacks from the British Royal Air Force (RAF), but in many cases, they were unsuccessful. Among the most notable wrecks are the twin wrecks of *SS Fernedale* and *SS Parat*. The *Fernedale*, a steamer, ran aground in December 1944 in a narrow passage between two islands, and the *Parat*, a tugboat, was sent to rescue it. Both vessels were spotted by the RAF and sunk. Now, the two wrecks lie just four feet apart, providing an incredible dive site, with depths ranging from 7 to 60 metres, suitable for most divers.

Norway is known for its fresh seafood, but one downside is the high cost of alcohol. However, stunning starry nights and the frequent northern lights (aurora borealis) are completely free of charge. For more information, visit Gulen Dive Resort.

Gulen Resort

email Peter



TRAINING

The Value of the Rescue Diver Course for Retailers

– by Patrick Hammer, PADI CD-4325



Some dive centers don't sell the Rescue Diver program because they don't see its value – for the diver or the shop. I'd like to address both points.

I've conducted Rescue Diver training since the early 1970s and have always considered it one of the best courses available – for both divers and dive centers. From a diver's perspective, it's more than just a confidence-building program. It allows students to gain more experience under a professional's supervision. A new diver completing the rescue program doesn't just become better equipped to help others; they also become more focused on equipment, site setup, and dive planning. All of these abilities are strengthened in the Rescue Diver class.



Then, of course, there are the in-water skills. The diver learns self-rescue techniques and how to aid a buddy. This is a huge benefit for the dive center. When you have a group of divers in the water, it's like gaining more eyes watching for potential issues. It makes the whole industry safer.

The Rescue Diver program teaches land, surface, and underwater rescue techniques. We'd all like to believe that a diver who completes this course will never run into trouble, but that's simply not reality. No one can predict when a massive air loss or medical issue might arise underwater. Training more divers to respond effectively is an enormous benefit.

I once heard an instructor tell a student, "If you take this class, you'll never run out of air" – as if an O-ring could never blow. These statements do more harm than good. It's far better to be honest: problems can arise, but being prepared to handle them is infinitely better than swimming away for help. In all my years teaching this class, I've never met a diver who felt it was a waste of time or money. Most find it enjoyable and rewarding, especially when the skills are taught realistically.

For example, when I teach the out-of-air skill, I'll remove my regulator and see how quickly students respond, keeping my alternate in hand just in case. When students practice bringing an unconscious diver to the surface, I play 'dead' as realistically as possible. You'd be surprised how many times I've been dropped when a student tried to establish buoyancy! These exercises, along with shore or boat exits, are critical for producing strong rescue divers.

From a dive center's point of view, offering the Rescue Diver program has multiple benefits. It creates better-prepared divers, develops eager learners who often continue their education, and encourages equipment sales. Most rescue divers already own or soon buy their equipment, which benefits the shop. The Rescue Diver program also allows centers to introduce other courses, like First Aid, CPR, and O2 Provider, making it a win-win for both the shop and the students.

Better still, many Rescue Diver candidates continue training and move on to Master Scuba Diver or Divemaster courses, creating yet another revenue stream.

Even for instructors, teaching the Rescue Diver course sharpens our own skills. In the unlikely event we have to perform a rescue ourselves, this training becomes second nature. So when teaching in a busy area, make sure the public knows it's a class in progress. I used to post a sign on the beach stating, "Rescue Class in Session – Do Not Call for Help."

At the end of the day, we can all make the diving industry safer by teaching the Rescue Diver program. It's a rewarding class that benefits students, instructors, dive centers – and the sport itself. Enjoy your career, have fun teaching the Rescue Diver class, and remember: you might just be teaching a skill that saves a life one day.

email Pat

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DEEP BLUE ADVENTURES: The Time to Optimize Your Trip Calendar Is Here

– by Cheryl Patterson, CEO & Founder, Deep Blue Adventures, Swanton, OH



With local dive season in full swing, the DEMA Show may seem far off. But if you haven't started planning, now is the time to draft your trip calendar for the next two years.



Each year, resorts and liveaboards use DEMA to launch their best specials, available exclusively to groups or retailers. These offers can mean thousands in added profits while still giving your customers competitive pricing or unique exclusives. Win-win!

Pre-DEMA specials often appear as early as June or July, and many are even more aggressive than what you'll see on the show floor. Meanwhile, floor only specials and attendee exclusives, once a thing of the past, are making a strong comeback. Some discounts can more than cover your trip to the show. Exhibitors invest heavily in DEMA and want a return, rewarding those who make the effort to be there. True "show specials" remain an excellent reason to attend, in addition to gaining valuable seminars and face-to-face connections. (On that note, we'll host our exclusive seminar room for the third year in a row!)

Having a rough trip plan now allows you to secure the best pre show and floor specials as soon as they're announced and fine tune your calendar later. Even if you're busy, use your phone's Notes app to quickly jot down ideas - destinations, date ranges, or special requests - when you have a moment.

At Deep Blue Adventures, we review all pre-show and floor specials in advance and complement them with our own exclusives. We have years of experience identifying the best deals and working with clients to maximize their returns. Our team can help, starting from just a quick list or a "napkin note," alerting you when the right opportunity appears. We can also help price packages for your customers and create marketing materials to sell your trips effectively.

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Whether you're part of the Deep Blue family or work with other suppliers, the takeaway is the same. Plan now to capture every dollar DEMA specials can offer. And if you'd like help making it happen, we're here to be your guide every step of the way.

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Out-of-air guard

- Divo monitors how much breathing gas is in the scuba cylinder. When the gas level drops below 72 psi (5 bar), the Buoyancy Control Device (BCD) automatically inflates the diver's BCD and lifts the diver to the surface.

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 2

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



Vince Lombardi once said, "If winning isn't everything, then why do we keep score?" We want to win. In part one of this series, I introduced the concept of a balanced scorecard to guide us as we develop strategies to put more points on the scoreboard. Let's take this basic understanding and apply it to see how you might use a balanced scorecard to move you forward.

As a brief refresher, the balanced scorecard is developed around a company's mission and establishes key performance indicators (KPIs) across four perspectives of the business. These perspectives are:

- Financial
- Customer
- Internal
- Growth and Education

Each KPI then has a target and one or more initiatives outlined to achieve that target.

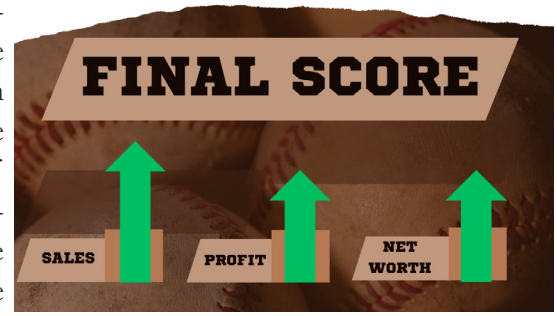
We will use a fictional case study to illustrate how a local dive shop can develop a balanced scorecard. XYZ Dive Shop is a typical dive shop located just outside a major city in the suburbs, an hour from a local inland open water dive site. We won't tie it to a specific part of the country, but for the purposes of this illustration, the dive shop does have four distinct seasons, with the most active time running from mid-April through October.

As stated, the balanced scorecard leverages the organization's mission statement. This is a simple and brief summary that states the purpose and/or goals of your company. XYZ Dive Shop's mission is "To empower individuals to explore the underwater world by providing safe

Balanced Scorecard for XYZ Dive Shop		
Mission Statement: **To empower individuals to explore the underwater world by providing safe and superior training, unique diving experiences, first-class service and top-tier equipment for life-long scuba adventure.**		
Financial Perspective		
KPI	**Target**	**Initiatives**
OW Upsell	50%	1. OW upsell initiatives; 2. Staff incentives; 3. Training Bundle options
Gross Profit Margin Per OW Course	40%	1. Optimal scheduling; 2. Marketing plan per course; 3. Accurate cost model
#Customers purchasing BIG 3	25	1. Create packages; 2. Develop incentives; 3. Marketing/timing
Customer		
KPI	**Target**	**Initiatives**
#New travelers	20	1. Target marketing; 2. Travel nights; 3. Post OW spec sessions
%Returning after OW Cert	50%	1. Follow up program; 2. Special incentives;
#New Subscribers to Newsletter	100	1. Social media plan; 2. Signage and handouts; Incentive program
Internal		
KPI	**Target**	**Initiatives**
Average days to close work order	10	1. Tracking system; 2. Escalation protocols;
%Of returned service items	5%	1. Quality control program; 2. Customer followup
Training internal quality	95%	1. Independent quality reviews 2. Student reviews 3. Lessons-learned sessions
Growth & Education		
KPI	**Target**	**Initiatives**
%Staff Attending Training	90%	1. Develop schedule early; 2. Record specific training; 3. Incentives
%Staff @Quarterly Staff Mtg	95%	1. Offer virtual as well as in person; 2. Develop agenda in advance; 3. Incentives
#New Professional Designations	15	1. Staff training plan; 2. Seminar investments; 3. Tie into pay structure

and superior training, unique diving experiences, first-class service, and top-tier equipment for life-long scuba adventure." Your mission statement should not only tell everyone what you are going to do, it should also exclude what you do not intend to do. Don't underestimate the power of a well-constructed mission statement, especially when implementing a balanced scorecard.

Let's now move into the development of key performance indicators, their targets, and initiatives. The graphic on the previous page provides an example of a scorecard supporting the mission of the dive shop. As you can see, we've established three unique KPIs for each of the four areas of the scorecard. Again, the total number of indicators optimally should be in the 10 to 20 range. Given the complexity of the dive shop business model, you may want to be on the upper end to cover all areas of the business. When you are establishing a measure, you will also need to make sure that you have the ability to measure it. However, as we discussed in last month's issue, part 1 of this series, just because you can measure something, it only matters if it is relevant to your mission.



When we look at the mission statement related to safe and superior training, there are several KPIs that support this element. Starting with our growth and education area, we've established key indicators around new professional designations by the staff as well as targets for staff attending training and meetings. In our internal category, there is a KPI for training quality that incorporates independent reviews, student input, and lessons-learned sessions. Safe and superior training starts with your team being properly trained but also having some level of evaluation process if we are to deliver on this area of our mission.

First class service can be a little nebulous and is really in the mind of the individual getting the service. We can, however, set the expectation with service levels. In our example, the development of the average days to close a work order key performance indicator is also our service level to the customer. You must be realistic in setting this target given your staffing levels. Also, if you strive for first class service on work being performed, then the quality of the work is critical. Tracking the percentage of returned service items for rework through a quality control program and with customer follow up supports your values of first-class customer service.

There are several KPIs that can be used to target the top-tier equipment for life-long scuba adventures element of the mission. Assuming that XYZ Dive Shop has dealer agreements in place with major equipment providers, then selling that equipment to both new and existing customers is imperative to keep them diving, engaged, and traveling. There are three KPIs specifically developed for this part of the mission. Tracking the percentage of open water customers who purchase additional gear beyond their personal mask, snorkel, fins, and boots during training, and the percentage of those open water students who return to the dive shop after their certifications allows us to zero in on the growth of our business.

Another measure that can give us an indication regarding our commitment to life-long scuba adventures is tracking the number of customers who purchase the big three; a dive computer, a buoyancy compensator, and a regulator. Customers who have made the significant investment in this gear are more likely to want to get out there diving and more likely to sign up for an upcoming dive trip. The initiatives specifically targeting this KPI include creating packages, incentives, and a comprehensive marketing plan.

The dive shop business model is complex. Most dive businesses include retail sales, training, service, and travel. Consideration might be given toward developing a balanced scorecard for each of the segments.

In business, we use our profit and loss statement and our balance sheet as our scoreboard. They tell us if we are winning. Winning requires us to do more than just show up. We need a game plan, and we need to prepare. By using a balanced scorecard, we can establish the plan for moving forward and measure our progress, make adjustments, and stay on track. As Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you are going, you might end up someplace else."

Be where you want to be; winning with a balanced scorecard.

email Jeff

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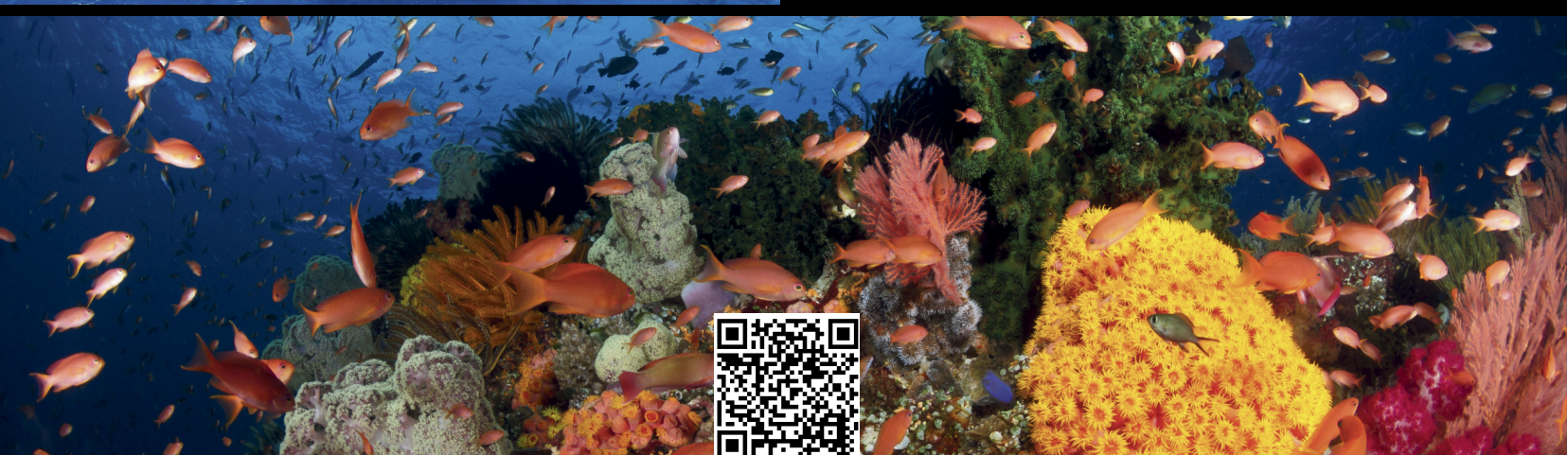


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- Building inclusive communities through diving programs
- Organizing impactful local fundraisers
- And many, many more!

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