MAY 2024
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM CLINE | CLINE GROUP

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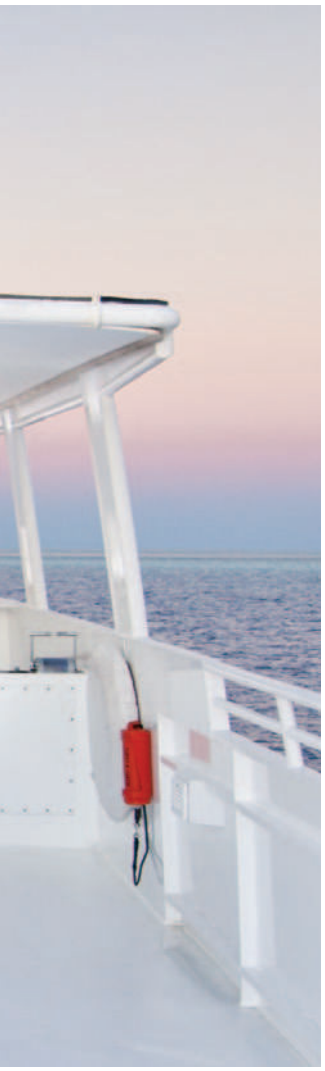


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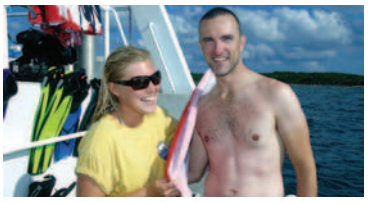
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Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Palmyra Atoll, central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
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SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY MAGAZINE™ • MAY 2024 • ISSUE 5

CONTENTS

PAGE 7
DIVE TRAVEL
Brooke Speedy: The Dreams that Feed the Diving Industry: Dive Travel

PAGE 10
ACROSS THE GLOBE
Ian Bongso-Seldrup: ADEX 30 Years of Commitment to Marine Conservation

PAGE 12
BUSINESS EDU
Cathryn Castle Garcia: How to Get Your Business Growing, Part Two

PAGE 15
RETAILING
Jeff Cinciripino: Tips on Managing Your Store's Inventory

PAGE 17
PHOTO PRO
Amos Nachoum: From Fear to Triumph – Diving with Polar Bears

PAGE 23
ACROSS THE GLOBE
Peter Symes: Diving into the Scandinavian Market: Opportunities and Insights

PAGE 25
RETAILING
Richard Thomas: Building a "Dive Tribe™" for Your Store

PAGE 28
TRAINING
Tec Clark: Experiential Learning: A Campus Trend Perfect for Diving

PAGE 29
INNOVATION
Dan Orr: Revolutionizing Diver Safety: A New Self-Rescue Solution?

PAGE 32
ECO PRO
Alex Brylske: What is a ECO PRO & How Do They Help Our Industry?

PAGE 34
DEMA UPDATE
Tom Ingram: Unlocking Retail Success – DEMA's 2024 Advertising Survey Results

PAGE 35
TRAVEL/TOURISM
Terry Cummins: A Perspective on the Global Coral Bleaching Event

ADVERTISERS INDEX

2 & 3 Aggressor Adventures

6 Clearly Cayman

9 Divers Alert Network (DAN)

13 Aggressor Adventures

14 ScubaRadio

16 X-Ray Magazine

18 Reef Smart Guides

18 Big Animals Global Expeditions

21 DIVO Emergency Rescue System

24 Blue Force Fleet Liveaboards

27 Bimini Scuba Center

31 Dive Newswire Headlines

37 Explorer Ventures Liveaboards

BACK COVER DEMA

view our article archive

FROM THE PUBLISHER



171 DAYS UNTIL THE DEMA SHOW – START PLANNING NOW

"DEMA is the only industry trade event we have in the world, and it's the only opportunity to get face time with all five of the stakeholder groups. I could spend 365 days a year traveling all over the world and not get the face time I can get in those four days at DEMA." – Neal Watson, Sr.

The DEMA Show is just 171 days away. With only four more issues until our special DEMA Show edition in October, now is the time to start planning. We're increasing our DEMA issue print run by 250% to ensure ample copies for distribution at the show, maximizing your exposure if you advertise with us.

Planning your advertising strategy now is crucial for success at the show. The Cline Group has been producing space at the DEMA Show for over 30 years, and our most successful clients start their pre-DEMA Show marketing early. Attracting booth traffic requires careful planning and preparation.

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Lastly, if you're an exhibitor, consider advertising with us. We reach the right audience, and our publication is an excellent way to let the industry know your company will be at the show and why they should visit your booth in Las Vegas. Traditional advertising suggests it takes at least three consecutive ads to be noticed by potential customers, so frequency is key. Review your advertising budgets and support our industry by advertising in the next issue of Scuba Diving Industry Magazine.

New - "Level Up" Podcast: We encourage our readers to tune into our new monthly "Level Up" podcast, where our writers delve deeper into their articles. "Level Up," hosted by Greg from Scuba Radio, myself, and Neal Watson, allows our writers to bring the pages to life.

Special thanks to our readers, writers, and advertisers for the overwhelming support of Scuba Diving Industry Magazine. In just our fifth month of publication and the first month of our "Level Up" podcast, the feedback has been incredible. Engaging in industry conversations is vital, and we are excited to be part of the future growth of our industry.



William Cline, Publisher

Click here for our May LEVEL UP podcast

SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY™ MAGAZINE
MAY 2024 VOL. 1, NO. 5

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Scuba Diving Industry Magazine™: (Print: ISSN 2996-1416, Digital: ISSN 2996-1424) Published monthly by Cline Group LLC, 1740 Airpark Lane, Plano, TX 75093. Printed copies are mailed within the USA to select dive retailers & advertisers. Subscriptions are free to dive professionals and distributed digitally to 165 countries. POSTMASTER send address changes to Scuba Diving Industry Magazine, 1740 Airpark Ln., Plano, TX 75093. Any part of this publication may be reproduced, as long as the source is quoted "Scuba Diving Industry Magazine." For editorial requests, email william@williamcline.com or phone: 972-267-6700. The views and opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Cline Group LLC or any of its affiliates.

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DIVE TRAVEL

The Dreams that Feed the Diving Industry: Dive Travel

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



Dive Travel…the dream product that encourages your customers to spend more money on classes and other products at your dive center and that basically sells itself. This dream product also attracts new customers that want to get certified at your dive center, and instead of taking up space on your shelves, it just takes up space in your bank account. This product almost sounds too good to be true, but it has been energizing the diving industry since the beginning.

Whether you started your business to support your family, the industry, or just your own personal addiction to scuba, offering some form of dive travel is the easiest and most cost-effective way to help the bottom line of your business. If you haven't offered dive travel before and the planning and organization seems daunting; do not let that keep you from offering it now. If you've got an "all in" type of personality it can be easy to get caught up in the details of planning a trip, so make sure that you are considering every option out there. Always remember; you choose how much time, energy, and money you want to put into each trip that you offer. Here are some tips worth trying:



1. Go where you want to go: This one's a no-brainer and is usually the foundation of dive center travel programs. If you don't know where to start when it comes to picking a trip destination, pick somewhere you've always wanted to go. Your passion and excitement will make it easy to sell the trip to others, and you will get to check a dream trip off your own list. On the flip side, if you have a favorite destination that you would love to go to again, use this as an opportunity to do just that. It's easy to sell what we love.

2. Let your customers choose the destination: Finding out where your current clients want to go can be done in a variety of ways. I like to start researching how to make the travel dreams of my customers come true from the moment that I meet them, whether they took a class with us and filled out an information sheet where one of the questions was, "What are your dream dive destinations?" or if they responded to a social media post from our last trip that asked, "Where do you want to dive next?" The easiest way is to start by just talking to them. Ask those that come into your store or call you on the phone where they have always wanted to dive and haven't gotten too yet, or if they have been somewhere that they want to go back to. Take notes and don't be afraid to go somewhere you haven't heard of before. Chances are if one of your customers is interested in it, more will be as well!

3. Let your leaders lead: Every single one of your Instructors, Assistant Instructors, Divemasters, and even your Sales Associates have a dream dive destination – it's just part of being a diver. Find out where your leaders are interested in going and let them organize, plan, and lead the trip! They are the best at selling your training and products. So let them create and sell your next trip. Your leadership team has proven that they are trustworthy professional and they possess the qualities needed to pull off the trip of a lifetime.

4. Demolish your "slow season": Do you have a slower time of year? Plan a trip during that time to boost sales and get clients in the door. Diving season is year-round when you go to the right destinations and attract the appropriate customers for the different seasons.

5. Plan your trips in a way that benefits your inventory management: Do you have an overstock of thick wetsuits? Plan a trip to a cooler destination. Need to sell some lights or reels? Plan a trip that includes some night dives or advanced diving. There are count-

less creative ways to tailor a dive trip to help you sell some gear and continued education courses.

6. Build relationships with a travel expert: There is a multitude of travel agencies in the diving industry that would love to have your business. They are the experts at planning and booking the flights and hotels needed to pull off the adventure of a lifetime. Sometimes it's better to let them do the heavy lifting and reap the benefits of a discounted or free trip. These businesses offer a variety of incentives including different levels of commission and perks that you cannot get when planning everything on your own. They also will help you out if something changes at the last minute – you cannot put a price on that kind of customer service.



7. Help a buddy out: I'm all about making new friends, and if those friends are in the diving industry even better! This last tip might be a little controversial for some business owners, but for me it's my go-to tip in times where I am too busy to plan my own trip or if a client wants to go to a destination that I cannot assist them with. Stay connected with your buddies in the industry and help each other out by advertising each other's trips to your customers. I know what you're all thinking, "why would you purposefully direct your customers to another business?" To me the answer is obvious, if you treat your customers well and put their needs first, you won't need to worry about them jumping ship to another dive center. You will likely be rewarded with the opportunity to sell some gear to them for their trip, even if the trip is with another dive center.



When planning your trip schedule for the new year, be sure you're including all of the different types of dive travel.

1. Destination Diving: Every diver has a dream destination that they want to check off their diving bucket list. Places like the Great Barrier Reef, The Blue Hole, the Galapagos Islands, and many many more!

2. Local Dive Trips: Think beyond where you just complete training dives locally. Anywhere within an hour to three hours drive from your dive center is a great place to plan a short trip to and complete some more advanced training. This is great for new divers eager to continue diving with you or attracting new divers from the area to your business.

3. Featured Experience Dives: These types of dives are usually in places like aquariums and even amusement parks. They are easy to plan and execute multiple times a year with both beginner and advanced divers.

4. Liveaboard or Resort Diving: These trips are often all-inclusive and require little to no planning on your part. A great place to start if you are beginning to develop your travel program or wanting to diversify your travel options.

Once you've got your trip planned the promoting must begin. Posting about your trip weekly on social media will help it get noticed by customers that don't come into the store often. Calling or emailing customers that have been on past trips with you to make sure they have the details for all upcoming trips is another great way to recruit past happy customers. As soon as we get back from our annual Bahamas trip each summer, we post pictures on our website, on social media, and inside our dive center. We also like to ask our customers to tag us in posts with the photos and videos they took. The further ahead you start advertising your trips the better. For our annual trips we start advertising a year ahead. For any trips outside of the country you should have your customers signed up a minimum of 6 months out. Local trips allow you to be much more flexible with the timing of your marketing.

When advertising your classes, be sure to mention the upcoming trip so that new divers have something to plan toward. If it's getting close to the date of your trip and not enough people have signed up, you can consider hav-

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DIVE TRAVEL continued

ing a sales promotion that's related to your trip or consider investing some money into paid advertisements. Well planned trips have a habit of selling themselves, so if you are running into issues try switching up your destination or expand your advertising efforts.

Each of these tips will have a profoundly positive effect on the bottom line of your business. Discover what works best for you and replicate it. But don't be afraid to mix it up a little to create diversity for your customers. Past customers will help you advertise the trip by sharing memories with their friends and by traveling with you again and again! Having a diverse travel menu will help you attract new divers and help turn your inactive customers into active divers. Track how much of your sales for gear and courses are correlated to the trips that you run and set goals for your next trip. If you find yourself in a low cash-flow situation or you are just wanting to finish out the quarter in a better position, don't forget about the benefits of changing up your dive travel plan for the year!

email brooke

ACROSS THE GLOBE

ADEX Ocean Festival: Celebrating 30 Years of Commitment to Marine Conservation

– by Ian Bongso-Seldrup, Managing Editor, DivePhotoGuide.com



Asia's premier trade and consumer dive show, Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) celebrated its 30th anniversary over three days in Singapore in April. As well as welcoming more than 150 exhibitors and some 46,000 attendees, approximately 40 percent of which travelled from overseas, ADEX Ocean Festival 2024 once again showcased its commitment to marine conservation, with fascinating talks and presentations around this year's theme, the "Sustainable Blue Economy."

The Pearl Jubilee Edition of ADEX Singapore commenced on April 12, with an impressive number of international speakers gracing three separate stages. The Underwater360 stage covered liveaboards, dive destinations, and technical diving topics. The main highlight on the Image/Film/Book Festival stage was a panel discussion on the importance of equipment in underwater imaging featuring renowned photographers and filmmakers associated with some of the top brands. Meanwhile, the TekTalk stage featured discussions on coral conservation, the blue economy, and sustainable diving, including the Sustainable Diving Think Tank, chaired by UNEP and The Reef-World Foundation.

TOTAL NUMBER OF EXHIBITORS	TOTAL NUMBER OF SPEAKERS/GUESTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS / CONSUMERS
157	90	45,954
Total number of booths 269	Featuring divers, conservationists, scientists, tourism board representatives, brand ambassadors, photographers, filmmakers and authors from around the world	Approximately 60% were local residents, with the remaining 40% from outside Singapore

At the show's opening ceremony, 13-year-old Hillary Yifei O'Sullivan performed a specially commissioned piece entitled "The Rhapsody for a Changing Antarctic," accompanied by a saxophonist. John Thet, CEO of ADEX, International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame inductee, and founder of Underwater360, addressed the gathering, introducing videos from Leslie Leaney, Drew Richardson and the late Ernie Brooks. Clement Lee, a Lifetime Achievement Award recipient at ADEX 2014, took to the stage, followed by Stephen Beng, Chairperson of Friends of the Marine Park Community. ADEX Legends awards were presented to David Strike and Michael Ozaki for their contributions. Guests of Honour David Doubilet and Jennifer Hayes were recognised with ADEX Lifetime Achievement and Ocean Hero of the Year awards, respectively. Although they were unable to make it to the show at the last minute due to a family tragedy, they shared a heartfelt video message.

The highlight of the opening ceremony was the cutting of the ribbon – underwater – executed simultaneously with ADEX CEO John Thet and partners popping champagne on stage. Stephen Beng, along with a mermaid Clara and merman Aza, performed this in the ADEX Dive Tank, using historical gear provided by KBA Training Centre. The footage was streamed to the main stage, courtesy of underwater drones by Frogmen Technologies International.

The second day saw a palpable surge in attendance. Booths buzzed with activity as visitors explored the latest equipment and innovations, while the ADEX Dive Tank hosted a steady stream of underwater performances and competition rehearsals. Across the three stages, a multitude of presentations and panel discussions took place.

The spacious booth of the Official Country Partner, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines, showcased a variety of service providers promoting the destination's beauty and diversity. Other booths highlighted destinations such as Sabah, Maldives, Thailand, Sarawak, and Indonesia. The DAN World booth, featuring an endless backdrop, drew a large crowd, offering free T-shirts and attracting a steady stream of interested inquiries. The team at Seacam, the show's Official Underwater Housing Partner, showed off an impressive selection of their signature silver housings, strobes, and underwater imaging accessories. Meanwhile, the SSI and Mares booth, serving as the Official Bag Sponsors for ADEX 2024, caught the eye with their prominently displayed branding in a spacious setting. Additionally, Sarawak Trade & Tourism Co., also an Official Bag Sponsor, welcomed visitors to explore their stunning corner of Malaysian Borneo.



Day 2 concluded with a lively networking party attended by exhibitors and speakers, featuring food, drinks, and music. Yanghe Distillery, the Official Liquid Partner, provided a steady supply of baijiu to attendees, ensuring a festive atmosphere to cap off another successful day.

On the final day, the annual ADEX Sustainable Diving Dialogue, chaired by the UN Environment Programme and The Reef-World Foundation, focused on transforming businesses for a blue economy, and the prestigious Green Fins Award was awarded to Evolution Beach & Dive Resort and Ceningan Divers, marine tourism operations that achieved the internationally recognised environmental standard for marine tourism.

The ADEX Dive Tank was buzzing as spectators gathered to witness the finals of the ADEX Underwater Performance Competition. Mermaid Aliyah emerged as the champion, with Clara and Song Mi securing the first and second runner-up positions, respectively. Underwater performer Jaydeep Gohil, aka Hydroman, who holds the Guinness World Record for the most underwater 360-degree steps, wowed the audience with his amazing performance. Ocean artist Eunice Yeo and her brand Peace of Art – OCEAN OF HOPE INITIATIVE engaged with children, creating art whose proceeds will support the Singapore Red Cross Young Hearts programme.

Towards the end of the day, a panel of prestigious judges gathered at the main stage for the live judging event for the ADEX Voice of the Ocean Photo+Video+Art Competition. The competition awards a range of incredible prizes sponsored by top international brands.

The big winner was Italian shooter Giacomo Marchione, whose breathtaking image "The Cloud" was named "Best of Show." The other winners were: Miguel Ramirez (Photo of the Year), PT Hirschfield (Compact Camera Photo of the Year), Guido Villani (Environmental Photo of the Year), PJ Aristorenas (Mobile Photo of the Year), Plamena Mileva (Underwater Fashion Photo of the Year and Artwork of the Year), and Matthias Edling (Video of the Year).

As ADEX Ocean Festival 2024 came to a close, there was a clear sense that the show had finally returned to its former glory, after the challenges imposed by the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath, and attendance figures were later confirmed to have been the highest in the show's history.

The event returns next year with the ADEX Bluewave Festival 2025, which takes place from April 4–6 at Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre and is dedicated to cephalopods, with a celebration of marine life behaviour. Check out these videos showing the action at ADEX below.

ADEX Day 1 Video

ADEX Day 2 Video

ADEX Day 3 Video

BUSINESS EDU

How to Get Your Business Growing, Part Two: Invite Employees to Help You GROW

– by Cathryn Castle Garcia, Owner C2G2 Productions, The Azores

Cathryn Castle Garcia is a veteran scuba industry member, writer and co-owner of C2G2 Productions, a multimedia company specializing in underwater and wildlife film production and book publishing. She and her husband, Capt. Gui Garcia, also work as superyacht crew and are renovating their oceanfront home on Faial Island in The Azores as a luxury retreat for divers.



In the first installment of this two-part article, we covered the SMART method of business planning (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Assignable, Relevant and Time-related). Now that you're adopting the SMART method to grow your business, it's important to involve your staff in the process. Here's another acronym for you, meant to help you create a structure for communicating proposed business plans with your team. It's called GROW, which stands for Goal, Reality, Obstacles and Options and Way Forward/What's Next. It goes like this:

Goal. Here's where you bring your team into the SMART planning method. Since you'll be relying on them to perform at their best, they need to understand they'll be expected to meet specific, measurable, attainable, relevant goals – on time.

Reality. This is where, together with your team, you call your SMART plan into question, asking can we really do this? During the reality check, invite candor. Let staffers know you welcome their honest feedback. Each employee will view the plan from their unique vantage point.



Obstacles and Options. Your reality check might reveal potential flaws in the plan. In fact, you want this to happen because it's how you get ahead of potential problems before they cost you time and money. Identify the possible hurdles and work with your staff to come up with options that will help you clear them. Don't be afraid to think way, way outside the box, and assure your staff that no wild idea is too far out. Some of the most brilliant solutions started with, "This might sound crazy, but …"

Way Forward/What's Next. This is a critically important component of team-building for success. It's when you foster leadership. During your meetings, asking, "How do we move forward?" and "What's the next step?" shows your team that you're counting on them to be wayfinders. These questions should be asked at several times during a particular project or goal, as it helps provide momentum. Having employees take turns as the "lead" on a project is a great way to instill a sense of ownership of it. As a side benefit, this is the stuff that reduces employee turnover and increases employee job satisfaction. It's a win/win/win.

Making Structure Stick

By now it's possible you might be thinking, "With all this planning and meeting, when will my staff and I have time to actually do stuff?" I understand. But believe me when I say that discipline is what dollars are made of. We all get precisely the same number of hours in a day. Successful people have simply figured out how to focus and plan the best use of those precious hours.

Meetings are an important part of keeping your business plans in play, but it's also necessary to plan your meetings so they don't suck up a lot of time. Simply put, plan your meetings and meet your plans. Sound familiar?

The Start-up Stand Up. This is a super-quick staff gathering some businesses use at the start of every day (or shift) that serves as a way of making sure everyone on your team knows the plan. Simply gather everyone for a brief standing meeting – maybe with a cup of coffee in hand – to say what's happening, why, when, who's responsible and to answer any questions. A friend holds this meeting in her office's break room every morning. It takes less than five minutes and gets everyone in gear for the day. At the end of each meeting, she always pauses to say, "Thanks in advance for making this a great day."

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BUSINESS EDU continued

The Hi/Low Wrap-Up. Another quickie, this meeting ends the day (or shift) and serves as a recap. Team members are asked to state the best thing/worst thing that happened during the workday. This is an effective format for both celebrating successes and solving problems. Ending it with "What did we miss?" is a great way to move any pending goals or action items onto tomorrow's to-do list.

Weekly/monthly Recaps. Plan to schedule a longer staff meeting (20-40 minutes) at least weekly. Experts offer varying opinions as to the best time of day in which to hold longer meetings, but most all agree that you should aim to limit your meeting to under 45 minutes because people start to lose focus. Do this by reviewing your planning calendar and creating an agenda – and sticking to it.

Strategy Sessions. Ideally, you'll want to schedule quarterly strategy sessions using the SMART and GROW methods to measure the success of your current goals and identify any obstacles that might be impeding your progress. Plan for a 90-minute meeting. Follow the format of your weekly/monthly meetings, using an agenda and a 45-minute timeframe for the general meeting. Then, take a break and change venues. For instance, "wrap" the formal meeting and head to a pizza parlor or brewpub for a more casual brainstorming session. This change of scene can spark new, creative ideas amongst the staff. Plus, it's fun to socialize while you strategize. Let your crew know you're picking up the tab while you invite their continued input into how to improve things at work.

> **An Army of One or Two**
>
> **Some dive centers are small outfits with an owner who runs the show along with a few part-time employees. If this is you, you might read this article series and think it's meant only for the bigshots with dozens of staffers. Not true. The SMART and GROW planning methods can be adapted for any size business. Even if you're flying solo.**

Advancing your goals in business is much like becoming a scuba instructor; you start with the basics and work toward your goal, succeeding in stairstep fashion. Except as a small business owner or manager, it seems you pretty much have to build the stairs before you can climb them. This DIY staircase job is one of the biggest challenges facing business owners and managers. And it's why planning, goal setting and getting your team working toward the goal are critical. Because if you don't build the staircase, your business could end up dangling, just trying to "hang in there" instead of gaining a solid foothold on success.

contact Cathryn



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RETAILING

Where Did All This Stuff Come From? Get Serious About Inventory Management

– by Jeff Cinciripino, Owner of Scuba Shack, Rocky Hill, CT



If you are like me, you probably have a routine you follow everyday as you make your way to the dive shop. Perhaps it is stopping for coffee, picking up the mail, disarming the alarm system and firing up the computer system. We turn on the light, open the shades and settle in. It is unlikely that we have taken the time to look around the showroom floor at the myriad of dive equipment on display. The slat walls are covered with masks, fins, boots and buoyancy compensators. There are other walls packed with dive accessories and then there are showcases filled with lights, cameras, regulators, and dive computers. It seems that every nook and cranny have something taking up the space. And if you take the time to really look around, you may be asking yourself - "Where did all this stuff come from?"

The answer is simple - you bought it. It is yours and you own it. This is your inventory and you need to get serious about inventory management. We often joke that in scuba diving there is always just one more thing to buy. As a dive shop owner or manager, we are not immune from that idea. There is so much really cool equipment on the market and manufacturers are always innovating and making improvements to their gear. As divers and dive shop owners we want it all! Additionally, there are always "deals" for various products and promotions being offered. The buzz word now is "Spaving". That is where you spend money to save. It is the two for one deal or the buy one - get one at 50% off. These offers may include free shipping and while that seems like a great deal, you have to consider that you may be buying items that you normally wouldn't procure. It is easy to get enticed into over-buying. You, however, must think about this from another perspective. Will you put this in your inventory and if so, will you be able to sell it?



When you look at your company's balance sheet you will see that your inventory is listed as an asset. Yes, it has value but that value is realized when you actually sell the product. You must also think of your inventory as a liability, representing money that you have spent and money that could be used for other valuable business opportunities. The balance between the right level of inventory and available money to operate and invest in your business is extremely important. In a very simplistic analysis, let's assume that you have $75,000 of products in your inventory. In today's investment environment, it is possible to perhaps get a guaranteed return of 4.0%. That money would earn about $3,000 per year. This example is simply to show the cost of holding your inventory and setting the stage for proper inventory management.

Like we all learn in our decompression training, our bodies have both fast and slow tissue compartments. Like these tissue compartments, inventory categories can also be looked at as fast categories and slow categories. Examples of these fast categories are the personal gear that all new divers purchase. Masks, snorkels, fins and boots are the items that flow through the shop quickly as training starts and people start to think about their snorkeling vacation. It is imperative that you have an adequate supply of the various sizes, colors, and styles to support this fast category. There are other categories that are slow. It takes a long time for products to move through the shop. Each dive shop may have different slow inventory categories based on their location. However, I do believe that by taking a look around the dive shop, you will be able to figure out what your slow categories are.

Knowing what to buy, when to buy it and what level of inventory is needed is based on both experience and projection. Experience tells you what products sell and the timing. Experience also tells you where you might have supply chain challenges with specific manufacturers and distributors. You may think you have all this experience locked in your brain. You most likely have a high-level idea of your inventory but you also must back this up with the hard data from your inventory management

system. Too often, my mind is telling me that something is a good selling product, but our systems don't back up that thinking. Conversely, sometimes I am surprised when looking at the details that there is a popular selling product that is not on my radar.

How good is your inventory management system? We all probably have some sort of electronic means for tracking our inventory but just having a system in place is not enough. You have to ensure that the information within your system is consistent and clean. We sometimes struggle with items that have been placed in the wrong category or have been mislabeled. In addition to doing physical inventories, it is worthwhile to do an electronic audit/inventory and correct these errors. If your inventory management system is integrated with your procurement system you can set up alerts and triggers to ensure that you are replenishing key items.

How often do you do a full physical inventory? It is a challenging task to say the least. For us, we are fairly comfortable with doing a full physical inventory once per year. Normally, this happens right before year-end and we are able to reconcile most discrepancies. That does not mean however that we do not do spot checks throughout the year. It may be on a category of items like fins or masks or maybe it is a subset of a category. These spot checks help us ensure that we have the right equipment for upcoming activities.

One way to address idle inventory is to seek out vendors who are very good with at-once procurement. This just-in-time ability to obtain product and deliver it quickly to your customers is incredibly valuable to a small local dive shop. It is improbable to have all the sizes, colors and styles across a product line. Customers are normally okay with waiting a few days to get exactly what they want and need. Suppliers who have strong supply chains, robust business-to-business systems and reliably quick shipping capabilities are incredibly important in your quest for good inventory management.

Inventory management is probably not in your top ten lists of things you like about being a small business owner. Inventory management however is a serious element of sustained and profitable operations. So just remember when you look around and wonder "where did all this stuff come from", it just may be time to get serious about inventory management.

email Jeff



PHOTO PRO

From Fear to Triumph: Diving with Polar Bears

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



"Over 6,500 people have summited the mighty Everest, twelve people have landed on the moon, and only five people have safely dived with polar bears."
– Amos Nachoum

The large male polar bear was only fifteen meters away and slowly swimming towards me. I whipped my head around to check in with my safety diver. He was outside his usual place behind me. The bear was getting closer. I looked towards my support vessel, and the crew was busy working furiously to pull the safety diver from the water. With the beast now only five meters away, I didn't have time to ask why – I had to decide. I knew the bear could smell me now, and I had to escape – either swim to the boat or dive – the vessel was far, and I was slow with 17kg around my waist, scuba tank on my back, and camera in my hands. I decided to dive down as far from him as quickly as possible. I deflated the air in my BCD and dry suit, tilted downward, and started kicking as hard as possible.



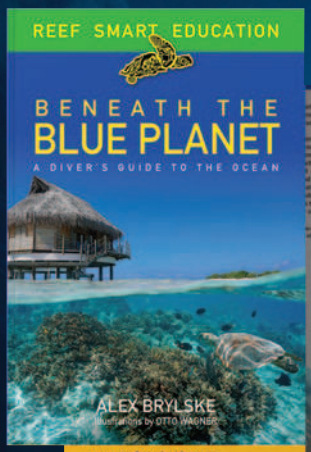
Polar bear family shot from beneath.

Needing to equalize, I slowed down at about ten meters. This was a mistake. The bear was diving towards me, he was only a meter or two above me and extending his paws toward my body. This time, I dove faster. My lungs were heaving, and my heart felt like it would explode as I pushed through two more equalization depths and finally stopped just shy of 25 meters. Only then did I dare to look up and see the bear in silhouette against the dark water. I descended a few more meters to catch my breath and control my fear.

The bear gave up its pursuit of me. There are no words to describe the relief that came over me once I realized the bear was swimming toward the surface. I remained for a few more minutes, steadying my breath, and assured myself that the bear was on the surface. I checked my pressure gauge and saw I was low on air and needed to surface. As I was ascending, it got harder and harder to breathe. At about 10 meters, I took the last breath of air. That was one more scary moment. I kicked hard and made a free ascent. I took a few deep breaths on the surface and looked around. No boat and no bear. I kept scanning the horizon for anything that looked like a bear, but all I saw was the beautiful blue Arctic sky. No one was around. I filled my emergency sausage with air and signaled for the vessel to find me. After a few minutes, the fear was back. Where was the bear? Where were the others? Where was my team? The boat? I started shivering. I needed to combat both my fear of the bear and the cold. I started swimming to increase my circulation and keep my mind off the bear. I dumped the heavy weights around my waist and swam towards a distant ice pack. This was the longest, coldest 15-minute swim of my life. Finally, the team found me. As we hugged and cried, laughing and congratulating each other, I realized I had been marked forever. I didn't take a single photo, but I survived.

Right then and there, huddled beneath my parka, hot soup between my frozen fingers and lips, I decided I would return. If the bear had wanted to hurt me, it could have done so. There was no way I was faster than him. It was a warning as I had invaded his comfort zone. But what was that comfort zone? I was determined to find out. My diving and photography life is about dispelling myths around "dangerous" wildlife. How could I give up on this creature? All I had to do was study polar bear behavior more intently and find a dedicated team.

For ten years, my mantra has been: "The enemy of all fear is knowledge and experience." So, I traveled to Canada, Svalbard, Norway, and Russia to observe and photograph polar bears hunting, nursing, and mating.



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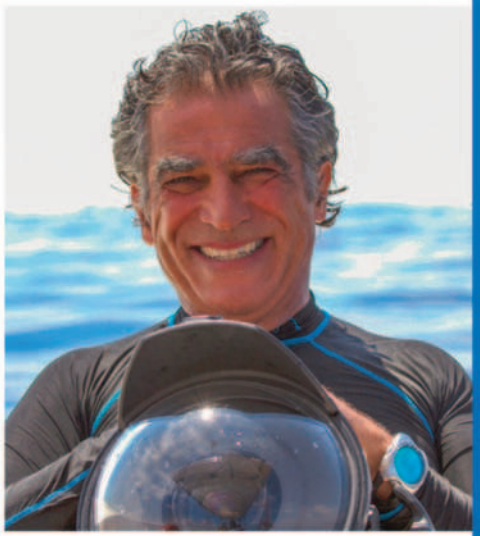
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- In 2015 I was driven to capture these powerful paws in a peaceful way. A reminder of the last view I had in 2002, during the first chasing encounter

On my 60th birthday, one of my students, Yonatan Nir, an Israeli photographer turned filmmaker, had the idea to make a movie about my life as a wildlife photographer. After all, he said, twelve people have landed on the moon, but only four have ever dived with a polar bear and brought back video and film to prove it. But no one had swum with the polar bear underwater and taken a still photograph.

After many years of meetings, Yonatan and his partner Dani Menkin, were able to find financing from French, German, and Israeli TV stations and raised enough funding for our adventure. During that time I was getting my team ready. As Yonatan believed in me, so I believed in Adam Ravetch, a man I had the chance to mentor in the early '80s. Adam had become a leading high Arctic filmmaker who had his own successful underwater encounters filming polar bears. We hired an Inuit family from a nearby village: Joe Kaludjack, his brother Patrick, and two of his sons, Bill and Junior.

Our goal was to find a remote location where bears had not encountered humans. Where polar bears roam freely and feed naturally. We knew there was a good chance we would see them in the water if we picked the right place. It was summer and the bears would have to swim from ice pack to ice pack. My hope was to encounter a mother with at least one cub to highlight animal behavior. So, on August 10th, 2015, Dani, Yoni and I arrived in a northernmost town in Canada and met Adam. We were set to fly again the next day on a Twin Otter small plane. It was cloudy and rainy, and for good safety reasons, the bush pilot told us that we couldn't leave until the weather was clear. The wait was tense. We were so close to the adventure after so long, but still a three hour flight away from where the Inuit party was waiting for us. When finally there was a break in the clouds, we speedily loaded up and set off to our location in the small ingle engine plane.

We were all quiet during the flight. Not only because it was so noisy, but because we were about to face the biggest challenge of our careers. The success of the mission would depend on each one of us fulfilling our roles. We were four very determined men, however we also carried with us other peoples' thoughts, fears, and judgements about our expedition.



Above group photo, from left to right - Billy, the Inuit guide, who sadly passed away a year later in a snowmobile accident - the movie was dedicated to him and his cousin, Patrick. Adam Ravetch - decorated award-winning filmmaker who I mentored in the '80s, filmed all of the underwater sequences in the movie. Yonatan Nir - an Israeli leading producer and filmmaker who I also mentored between 2004 - 2006. And Dani Menkin - a co-producer, Yonatan's dear friend.

Our camp was on a secluded beach. There was nothing around us except for moss-covered rocks, blowing winds, crashing waves, and endless horizon. After a dinner of scrambled eggs and strong coffee, we went to sleep, only

to wake to a stormy, grey sky. Rain was coming, so we spent the rest of the day in preparation and visiting with the Inuit family that accepted our quest to dive with and photograph the bears. Their tent was filled with seal and caribou skins, as well as dozens of National Geographic magazines. We spoke only of the bears. After asking each other about our motivations and experiences, I was confident that Joe and his family were the right people to lead us. They agreed that diving with a single bear was too dangerous, so our goal was to find a mother and her cub or two.

Day two had similar weather, but on the third day we were finally able to get out on the water. I was tense and sharply focused – all I could think about was getting my gear in order. My main concern was achieving perfect buoyancy. Due to a lack of lead weights, I had to borrow socket wrenches from the boat to use as extra weight. After jumping in six times to test my weights and buoyancy, I was finally ready to go. In the next hour, the Inuit spotted two large bears that were swimming alone. But these were not our bears as they would not hesitate to dive after us if they felt threatened. No, we wanted a mother who would hopefully stay by her cub.



Classic and tender behavior moment of motherhood, as the mother hugged her young one.

And three hours later, that's what we found.

It was my moment of reckoning, but I was at peace with my mission. I made sure the camera setting was right and then slipped into the water with Adam. Right in their path, we waited on the surface for the bears to approach us. As they got within 10 meters of us, two veered to the side only to avoid us on the surface of the water. We immediately submerged to about three meters and continued filming. When they passed over us, they were less than two meters away. And this time, instead of a large male reaching for me, I got to see a mother bear wrap her leg around her cub to protect it. It was a such a tender moment, and it was only something we could have seen from our vantage point under the water.

Either out of protection or to hold the curious cub from diving toward me, the mother maintained her course and swam alongside me, only two meters away, on the second day of filming.

Out of the water Adam and I embraced, our brotherhood forever cemented by the joy, happiness, and the huge challenge we had just faced. But we didn't get as much on film as we had liked, and with days four and five having the same rainy and cloudy weather as the first day, tensions were running high among the producers Yonatan and Dani. We only had two days left and we had to get more footage.

Day six was our last day and it was perfect. We were fast and efficient getting out onto the water. By noon, we had only seen the two adult bears climbing on rocks to eat birds' eggs. Right in the middle of our lunch break onboard, we got a call on the radio that Patrick had spotted some other bears – "Nanuk, nanuk," he called. Joe sped up the boat, and we dropped our lunch sandwiches and scrambled over our drinks in a rush to grab binoculars and search intensely. Finally, we saw her and her two cubs. Yes two cubs! They were probably 16-18 months old, standing on a small island. We all understood that because of the high mortality rates among bears, due to limited food supply, this was a rare and special sight.

Like the first day, I shut out the outside voices and refocused on my gear. The bear family was slowly making their way to the water, but we kept our distance as we observed their movement. We spoke little, cruising around only when we had to. I was going back in to face the bears, and once again realized the dream I had harbored for all of my adult life.

Once the bears were in the water, I saw that everyone was looking at me, their eyes wide. "Help me with my tank," I said to Adam, "I am ready." Joe started the engine, and we followed the three bears as they set off swimming toward a different island. We made a big turn to be closer to the landmass that the bear family was swimming towards. Adam and I slipped into the water

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The star family of mother and her two cubs closely bonded, closely swimming together - image captured after the epic film opportunity underwater.

and waved to Joe to move the boat away and leave us alone. We were in the water, waiting for the family 300 feet in front of us to hopefully swim to us. They kept swimming and we didn't move, silently treading water. We let the family decide where they wanted to go.

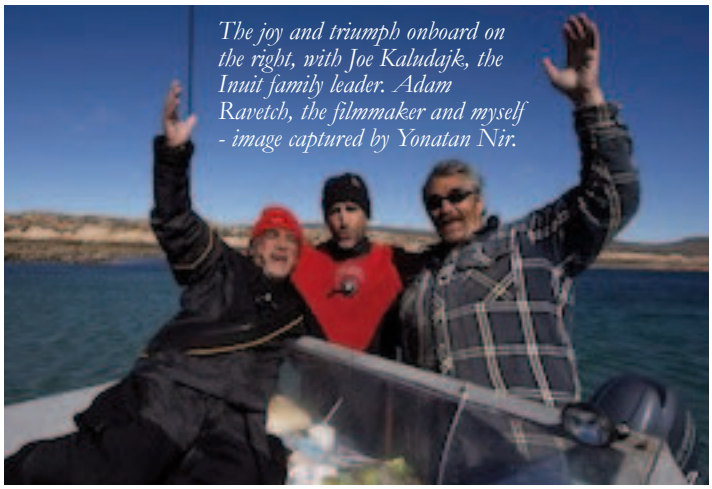
Everything was peaceful around us. The sun was out and our visibility in water was better than ten meters – I had the ideal conditions to photograph the apex predator in its domain. Twenty minutes later, the bear family was still swimming towards us, but by this time, my legs were starting to go numb in the 8°C water. One minute later, they were ten meters from us and I had my BCD deflator in one hand and my camera in the other. At this moment, I signaled Adam to submerge, and together in harmony, we submerged to seven meters. I raised the camera to adjust the sight through the viewfinder. I could clearly see the mother and her cubs through the Arctic water. I held my breath to avoid bubbles in the frame.

I locked my eyes to the eyes of all three polar bears.

But the adventure wasn't over yet. Once I had my camera repositioned, one of the youngsters dove towards where Adam and I were filming. It came within two meters of me and then it pulled back up to rejoin its family and swim away in formation. At the surface, Adam and I raised our fists and screamed with joy.



Author Amos Nachoum scuba diving with polar bears.



The joy and triumph onboard on the right, with Joe Kaludajk, the Inuit family leader. Adam Ravetch, the filmmaker and myself - image captured by Yonatan Nir.

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ACROSS THE GLOBE

Diving into the Scandinavian Market: Opportunities and Insights

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



In continuation of my previous column exploring the nuanced differences between the US and European dive communities, I now turn my attention to my home region, Scandinavia.

"Oh, so you've got socialism, then?" I have frequently been queried when in the US. Erhm … Well, not exactly. Scandinavia indeed thrives under capitalism, boasting international brands, high-tech corporations, and homegrown billionaires. But I see where it comes from. In an increasingly polarised environment, where political affiliations tend towards binary choices dominating news streams, one may not be aware that other regions offer a more diverse spectrum of ideologies and civil discourse.

How does this relate to diving, you may wonder? It's deeply rooted in history.



During the tumultuous 1870s and 1880s, while social upheaval and class struggle sparked or led to revolutions elsewhere, most notably the Russian Revolutions in 1905 and 1917, Scandinavia charted a different course. Rather than confrontation, a pact was forged between the working class and employers, advocating collaboration and a more equitable wealth distribution. As a result of this 'divide-and-conquer' approach, the region is now affluent. Thus, a plethora of cooperatives, clubs, and societies emerged, shaping our societal fabric, including our many dive clubs. Supported by public funding, sports clubs now play a crucial role in nurturing youth development, a testament to our commitment to collective well-being.

This equitable ethos extends to our workforce, now granting employees six weeks of paid vacation time, allowing many divers to go on extended dive trips or partake in summer camps arranged by dive clubs, which are often spent in the picturesque Scandinavian archipelago.

The white nights during the Scandinavian summer are special, and the diving is often excellent, particularly along Norway's extended rugged coastline. But every area has something special to offer. The Baltic around Sweden has some unique wooden wrecks, including well-preserved 17th-century Dutch flutes that you can dive. In Denmark, you can dive wrecks from the two world wars and why not a Stone Age settlement where you can find flint tools? There are just so many locations and options.

However, the region largely lacks the dive-centric infrastructure found elsewhere, such as the Caribbean or Southeast Asia where you can stay in an all-inclusive dive resort. Some nice dive resorts are peppered along the Norwegian coast with a mere handful around Sweden, but in Denmark, there are none.

That said, during summer one can, for example, fly directly from New York to Bergen on Norway's West coast and get a direct transfer to the excellent Gulen Dive Resort which offers some of the best diving around.

Elsewhere, like in Denmark, there are plenty of dive centres and local dive clubs to be found, that can recommend or even facilitate accommodation for visitors through discounted referrals to local hotels, and surely take you diving. In either case, visitors are warmly welcomed, often resulting in enduring friendships being forged.

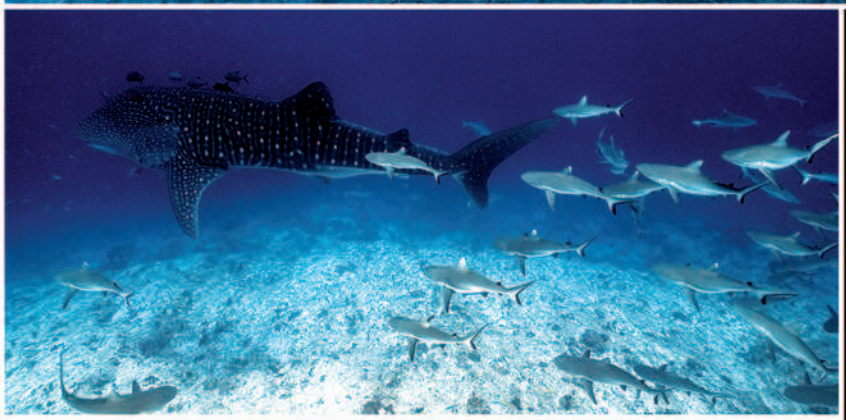
Local dive centres can be located by looking up PADI or SSI-affiliated dive facilities on the agencies' portals, and clubs are listed on the dive federations' websites. Just Google them.

For some impressions of what Denmark has to offer, I refer to X-Ray Mag issue #105 which can be freely downloaded from the link/qr code below.

English is widely spoken as a second language throughout the region, and surely by the hospitality industry. Visitors would have to book their flights, accommodation, and any needed car rental themselves and then reach out to a local dive centre or club to set up some diving. It is a bit more bother than buying a package travel but not all that complicated either.

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RETAILING

Building a "Dive Tribe™"

– by Richard Thomas, Owner of International Scuba, Dallas, TX

Rich is a PADI Course Director and owner of two dive retail facilities, one in Frisco and the other in Dallas TX. Rich also serves on the DEMA Board of Directors.



Often, I hear dive shops blame slow business on nearby dive shops or online sales. This gives a face and a target to their woes, but the problem with this mindset is that it focuses on external factors that will never make your business healthier or bring you joy in scuba. I've seen firsthand when local a shop's closing hurts the sport of scuba without sending any significant windfall of business our way.

One of the best business lessons I ever received was from Bas Noij, founder of VIP Divers in Bonaire. One morning on vacation, we shared a cup of coffee and compared our experiences. Bonaire has plenty of stiff competition in the dive business, and I was complaining about a nearby shop that ran Open Water classes as a loss leader. We discussed how best to deal with this issue. I suggested explaining to customers our class costs and asking what I should remove from the class to match the others' price. It seemed clever and effective to keep these students.



Bas almost fell out of his chair, and I am sure it took all of his amazing diplomacy to ask what on earth I was thinking. That approach would be detrimental to scuba. It would give customers reason to think that a shop might not run a safe course. Even though it was a nearby shop, I immediately understood that was a horrible idea and didn't achieve my desire. We workshopped using several ways to utilize a positive approach to this problem. What we came up with was easy to implement and encouraged our staff to highlight why our more expensive courses were worth it. We found that our classes are capped at a better ratio - 6 students max - we had 3 hours more pool time, and we had a Dive Tribe™! We discussed that every shop has a certain vibe and we really only want people who enjoy what we do. Now we confidently tell prospective students about our strengths and encourage them to visit all the shops and see which best fits them. A dive shop is your home base, your tribe, and you can feel where you belong very quickly.

Identifying True Competition: Who is our competition? Who is fighting for our scuba dollars? I have a list: bike stores, surf shops, gun clubs, and more. What better way to improve ourselves than to look at our TRUE competition? I noticed many of my divers were taking up motorcycles. I was sensitive to the dollars I was losing to some of my best customers. Little by little, several affluent regular travelers started slipping off the books. They mentioned being tied up with events and not having the money to spread everywhere.

With these events, I decided to laser-focus on my competition: Harley Davidson. I'm not an enthusiast, so I had no idea what they offered that was so appealing. I started asking my biker friends what they loved about motorcycles. Quickly, a trend developed: brotherhood with others, something their spouse enjoyed doing with them, a feeling of belonging, a chance to travel cheaply and enjoy the beauty of our own country. Wow! Pretty compelling reasons to join in, right?

I decided to take a closer look and visited some Harley dealerships. What I learned is that we could all take a lesson from what Harley Davidson does so well. They create a Tribe, a Club, a community that is powerful and enticing. Bikers are great at exhibiting their lifestyle. It starts with roaring up to a bar or restaurant dressed to represent their affiliation and proudly displaying their bike of choice.

Learning from Harley Davidson: I visited a shop in Topeka and found the Evel Knievel Museum. As we ogled the famed daredevil's gear, cycles, and x-rays of broken bones, a friendly employee introduced himself. I quickly said, "No thank you, just looking." He never lost his smile and said, "Awesome! Stop by tomorrow; we're

having a bikini bike wash and BBQ!" I had to see if I could get some inside intel on what they were doing. I was really impressed with their offers.

It turns out this was the manager, and I shared my view of how they were taking our business and why it was infiltrating every culture. We had a great 20-minute discussion, and he was not shy to say everything is by design. They want to attract new riders, keep them riding, and keep them coming back with nonstop events—free events, paid events, and lots of time together. They have broken away from the outlaw persona. Now, they have family-friendly events and rides. Wives and girlfriends that enjoy riding quickly transition into riders themselves. Not content to be in the back, they buy their own bikes. They love to show their lifestyle and wear clothing that proudly screams, "I ride!" A few years ago, I was on a tropical island, and one of our guests insisted on finding the Harley shop to buy a shirt for her and her friends. We spent a good part of the day trying to find it. It turned out to be just a clothing store, but she was ecstatic to bring home t-shirts at $55 a pop.

I want that loyalty. I want that dedication to our lifestyle. I want to own a business that is that financially successful. I want my divers to lead the charge in promoting my business! What will it take?



William Cline, Richard Thomas and his Mom, Sondra Von Gyllenband

Creating a Dive Tribe™ – Here was my checklist:

1. Create a Sense of Belonging: People want to belong somewhere. These days, people go to church less, see family less, overwork, and are limited to online communications. I needed to create a compelling experience that gives people a place to belong.

2. Establish a Recognizable Brand: I wanted a brand that quickly lets the world know, "I am a SCUBA DIVER, and I love it!" The word TRIBE kept coming to mind. It's a word used by people claiming to belong. For the logo, I wanted something tribal and almost tattoo-like, with sea creatures and a diver. We concluded with DIVE TRIBE™ and a fitting logo.

3. Promote the Brand Everywhere: We placed logos everywhere—on anything, even temporary tattoos. We had a rebranding party where people left with stickers, cups, t-shirts, and other swag. We took pictures in front of a branded wall, and everyone was tagged on social media.

4. Create a Virtual Community: We created a virtual place to meet and promote our Dive Tribe. We picked a few key customers to help keep things in line with our brand. We promoted it heavily, and it grew quickly.

5. Empower Customers: We empowered our customers to own the brand and concept. Our divers quickly realized this was their place. People used the term "safe space" to negative effect, but we had people who had nowhere else to belong find us. Once they took stewardship, things escalated quickly. Everyone wanted THEIR Tribe to grow and flourish. The fact that it is a dive shop-centered universe didn't matter.

6. Differentiate from Dive Clubs: It's not a dive club; it's more of a mission statement. We support dive clubs—they do amazing things—but it's not the same. We are responsible for a group of people that have become like family.

7. Ensure Sustainability: It has to be sustainable, and I have to be as committed to the Tribe as they are to me.

I can honestly say this approach has changed my day-to-day life. I didn't think I could love my job more, but I really do look forward to nurturing this concept. I don't just see the company as a cold, figures-based business. It's a responsibility to a growing group of people. Sure, there are days I find myself dealing with issues that are not dive shop-related, but it comes with growing beyond the four walls of my store.

As dive professionals, we can offer every single experience that Harley can: exhilaration from nature, bonding with others who share our passion, regularly scheduled get-togethers, and even an identity as proud divers.

I'm sure there are other businesses that are true competition, and if we take a close look at what they are doing, we can match every one of them with our magnificent scuba lifestyle!

email Rich


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Experiential Learning: A Campus Trend Perfect for Diving

– by Tec Clark, Associate Director for Scuba Diving & Outdoor Recreation at Nova Southeastern University
Tec is a diving professional with over 30 years' experience teaching at the university level. Tec consults with dive professionals on topics related to risk management and college/university programs and host of the popular Dive Locker Podcast and League of Extraordinary Divers Podcast: tec@scubaguru.com or (954) 495-7810.



One of the greatest benefits of being a diving instructor is to bring people underwater, breathing air, and seeing a foreign world. We see the wide eyes and big smiles. It's all about the experience of being underwater – and we love teaching others how to do it.

It turns out, as diving instructors we are engaging in a philosophy of education called experiential learning. Educators date this as far back as 350 BC where Aristotle wrote, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." And the educational construct is just that – the process of learning through experience.



Now, you might be thinking, "What's the big deal? That's what we've always done." For over six decades our diving industry has applied teaching diving theory along with skill development to award individuals diving certifications. That is, in fact, how the educational side of our industry operates. It's experiential learning (aka experiential education) and we view it as quite standard. However, in the world of post-secondary education (colleges and universities), experiential learning is all the rage.

In my last article, *How Dive Retailers can Embrace the College and University Market* in Scuba Diving Industry Magazine's March 2024 issue, I mentioned how important it is to show administrators as much value as possible when proposing to teach diving at a college or university. No – telling them that their students will get a scuba certification or go on a cool trip isn't good enough. But when you can tie in experiential learning – now you have hit gold! In fact, many colleges and universities are including experiential learning units of credit as part of graduation requirements.

These ExL or ELR credits come from a variety of campus-sanctioned activities. Kent State University sums it up nicely stating, "Experiential learning opportunities exist in a variety of course- and non-course-based forms and may include community service, service-learning, undergraduate research, study abroad/away, and culminating experiences such as internships, student teaching, and capstone projects, to name a few."

Research has shown that experiential learning can lead students to have a better understanding of course material, gain insight into their own skills and passions, and gain more self-confidence. Does that sound familiar? Of course it does, as we see this all the time in our very own students. So now, let's use the experiential learning model to propose diving courses at our local colleges and universities – and yes, this works for high schools as well.

Here are some areas in which scuba diving, or even in some cases snorkeling, can have experiential learning attached to it:

- Mathematics – Archimedes Principle, SAC Rates
- Physics – Boyle's Law, Dalton's Law, Henry's Law, Guy-Lusaac's/Charles Law, General Gas Law
- Physiology – Gas law's effects on the body, Diving First Aid
- Biology – Fishes and Corals, Marine Mammals
- Environmental Science – Oceans, Waves, Water Cycle, Caverns/Caves, Lakes, Rivers, Pollution, Coral Bleaching and other threats to the underwater world
- Archaeology – Fossils, Shipwrecks

If one or more of these areas strike a fancy with you, and you think that high school or college students could

TRAINING continued

gain experiential learning from the activities you have in mind, then reach out to the proper individuals to share your proposal. These do not have to be the final decision-makers. Rather, get these individuals excited and passionate so that they can collaborate with you to make the decision-makers take action. Here are some people to consider reaching out to:

- Connect with STEM teachers (High School)
- Connect with Marine Biology professors
- Connect with Environmental Science professors
- Connect with Student Organization/Clubs Faculty Advisors
- Connect with Exercise Science/Physical Education professors
- Connect with Recreation/Wellness staff

Again, experiential learning is a tried-and-true education model that is gaining popularity in colleges and universities around the world. Use it to your advantage when proposing to teach scuba diving to high school, college and university students. Us dive pro's know it has merit, now let others know it has merit, and grow your diving business accordingly.

email Tec

INNOVATION

Revolutionizing Diver Safety: A New Self-Rescue Solution?

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



Last month, in my article *The Normalization of Deviance*, I highlighted that the leading cause of accidents was "Out of Breathing Gas," accounting for 41% of cases (see page 18 of the April issue). So, when I learned about a new device coming to market designed to assist an unconscious diver just before they run out of air, I had to reach out to the inventors.

The story behind this technology is deeply emotional and has been 15 years in the making. I interviewed the inventors to understand how the technology came to be, how it works, and its potential safety implications.

This interview is an excerpt from a longer conversation, which you can access via the QR code at the end of this article. The inventors, Janne Stööd, Ola Telby, and Ulf Helles from Sweden, share the journey behind DIVO Emergency Rescue System.

This is the story of an idea that could fundamentally change scuba diving.

Hi Janne, Ola & Ulf, how did you come to invent a new diver self-rescue device?

(Janne) I started my audio rental company in the mid-80s, which led to a successful career as a sound engineer in the music industry. During that period, I met Ola. He became my assistant manager, which turned out to be a successful combination, not least a lifelong friendship. In addition to the tour business, we developed several technical solutions and products, which are still in use today by rental companies in the industry. While we were busy with tours and music festivals, Ola began scuba diving and quickly became an instructor.

My life took an unexpected turn the morning of June 22, 1999, when my son Oscar was hit by a car. Instead of enjoying the summer holidays and playing golf, he was rushed to the hospital in our hometown for an initial examination. He was in bad shape on arrival, therefore, it was decided to transport him by helicopter to the country's leading neurosurgery clinic. We didn't realize how bad his condition was until the pilots told us due to Oscar's severe brain injuries, they had to fly just above the treetops.

Oscar underwent emergency surgery, during which a large part of his left frontal lobe was removed. Oscar survived the operation against all odds and the situation was so unique that it attracted international attention in the medical research community. He moved back after a month to the children's hospital in our hometown for follow-up care. This experience gave our family a new perspective, and my dedication to the music and life on tour no longer had the same meaning as before the accident.

During Oscar's recovery, my daughter Olivia ex-

pressed an interest in becoming a scuba diver. Even though I trusted Ola as a friend and instructor, I knew we couldn't handle another trauma. At that moment, I realized that I did not want any parent, family member, or friend to endure the grief of losing someone they cared about. So, I started researching safety-related information about diving. Using all the resources I could find, I built up my knowledge base on the subject of safety.

Looking at all of the conceivable issues in diver safety, it was clear that we had to invent and design an automatic device that monitors the breathing activity and the amount of gas in the air tank, acting only when the diver has lost control of the situation. The same method and function as the airbag system in cars. Shortly after, we identified what is today known as DIVO, but our journey was just beginning.



Can you tell me something about the skills and expertise your team has that led to the development of DIVO?

(Janne) DIVO started like most innovations with a dream and limited knowledge, at the time, about scuba diving. My thinking was the surface must be the only place a diver can go for help. So how about we create a device that works without the diver's assistance should they become incapacitated underwater?

(Ola) We initially sold the concept to Bosch in Germany, the large auto parts company and they tried for several years to get a workable product. At the end of the day, it was outside their expertise, and they sold the DIVO patents back to us. Ulf, our business partner, was a pneumatics manager with Bosch and he came on board when we reacquired the patents several years ago.

So the three of you decided to try again on developing the DIVO?

(Janne) So Ola is a genius and an out-of-the-box thinker in engineering, along with Ulf's background at Bosch, plus my design concepts, our team created a device that does not use batteries or even valves, creating a host of patents along the way, as it uses a Neodynamic Valve Technology system (NVT) with few moving parts and no conventional seals, which provides maximum operational reliability.

(Ulf) DIVO represents the beginning of a paradigm shift in diving. It's brilliant as it's new to the diving industry, with the use of rare-earth magnets and precisely milled diaphragms, the device will function at all recreational depths.

This can change a lot of things in diving, how do you see this affecting diver safety?

(Janne) Diving accidents are devastating, impacting families profoundly, much like my family was affected by my son's car accident. Preventing even one loss means a son, daughter, mother, or father returns to their family. Even if the odds are small, the best chance an incapacitated diver has is reaching the surface – at least until we find a way to breathe underwater.

(Ola) While emergency ascents are often considered dangerous - and they can be, for conscious divers - our device is designed for those who are incapacitated and cannot care for themselves.

It seems that DIVO could significantly reduce the number of fatal accidents caused by conditions such as heart attacks, strokes, epileptic seizures, and other related incidents where the diver becomes incapacitated and cannot reach the surface. Do you agree?

(Janne) Thank you, Dan – you just summarized our vision and technology in one sentence. Thanks for taking the time to chat. And one last thing, my son Oscar is almost fully recovered, the rehabilitation was a long journey; he had to learn everything again. While he could not resume his career as a professional golfer, he has been working as a golf pro and greenskeeper since then.

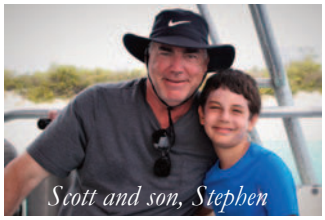
In closing, we would like to thank you and the DIVO team for sharing your story. I wish you all the best in the future.

full interview

DiveNewsWire
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Top Press Releases From May 2024

– by Scott Jones, President, Dive Newswire Press Service


Scott and son, Stephen

DiveNewswire is the dive industry's WEEKLY dedicated news release and feature distribution service. Founded by Scott D. Jones in 2001, DiveNewswire continues to serve the dive industry with news releases, announcements and timely industry-specific features each week targeted specifically for dive industry professionals. For more information, send an email to EDITOR@DiveNewswire.com or call 714-931-4895. Scan or click on any of the QR codes to see the full releases.

Sea of Change Foundation recognizes Dan Orr with Lifetime Explorer Award 2024

Each year the Foundation's Board of Directors honors an individual for a lifetime of excellence in environmental awareness and exploration. Mr. Orr joins the esteemed ranks of past Lifetime Explorer awardees such as Captain Wayne Hasson, Doug McNeese, Jean-Michel Cousteau, and others.



SPARE AIR Model For Industrial Applications Highlights Partnership Opportunities

Submersible Systems Spare Air model for Industrial applications offers companies a solution for short term out of air emergencies in the workplace.

Unveiling the Ultimate Brac Adventure: Wall-to-Wall Dive & Climb Package

Adventure seekers and outdoor enthusiasts, get ready for an exhilarating experience like no other! Cayman Brac Beach Resort is thrilled to announce the new Wall-to-Wall Dive & Climb package!

Explorer Ventures Fleet Adds the PADI Eco Center designation to their Green Fins Certifications for Galapagos Vessels

Explorer Ventures Fleet, renowned for its commitment to sustainable liveaboard diving, is delighted to announce a significant milestone in partnership with its Ecuadorian counterparts.

JetBlue Announces New Flights: JFK to Bonaire

Tourism Corporation Bonaire, Bonaire Hotel and Tourism Association (BONHATA), and Bonaire International Airport (BIA), announced JetBlue non-stop service from New York (JFK) to Bonaire (BON).

ECO PRO

What is a ECO PRO & How Do They Help Our Industry?

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



In recent columns, I have asserted that our industry continues to fester in the doldrums partly because most dive professionals enter the industry without understanding what I term the "Big Picture." Within this context, I emphasized that this problem comes in part from inadequacies in the industry's professional development process, particularly our outdated model for training scuba instructors. But complaining without offering solutions accomplishes nothing. Positive action occurs only when problems are viewed as opportunities. So, in keeping with that, let's look at what a new model for professional development might look like.

For over five years, I have been putting my philosophy of "solutions, not complaints" into action by teaching ECO PRO, a comprehensive six-day course in sustainable dive tourism. In this sixth year of refinement, I believe the course now effectively addresses some of the issues I've highlighted previously in this column. I make this point not as a matter of self-congratulation but as a model for consideration by those who are also in the business of training dive professionals.

> **"Consistent five-star ratings occur when:**
> - **Divers felt their experience was safe.**
> - **Divers enjoyed themselves.**
> - **Divers came away from their experience feeling truly connected with whatever environment they visited.**
>
> **Geographers, tourism researchers, and social scientists call this a "sense of place."**

In analyzing internet customer feedback from dive operations worldwide, I have found that consistent five-star ratings occur when three criteria are fulfilled: First, unsurprisingly, divers felt their experience was safe. Second—another almost too obvious to mention—is that they enjoyed themselves. But it's the third where many come up short; the customer came away from their experience feeling truly connected with whatever environment they visited. Geographers, tourism researchers, and social scientists call this a "sense of place."

To its credit, the dive industry does an admirable job training professionals how to teach and keep divers safe. And professionals normally figure out, on their own, how to ensure their customers have fun. But it's the third criterion—connecting customers to the environment —where dive professionals often stumble. This "failure to connect" is perfectly understandable, given that dive professionals receive little training to help their customers make a real connection with the environment. This is also an unfortunate missed opportunity to promote marine conservation. Addressing these concerns is exactly what I attempt to do in my ECO PRO course. Yet, what I'm doing is not rocket science, nor am I endowed with some special capability to create and offer such a program. Any experienced, competent instructor trainer can emulate my success if they understand where deficiencies lie in their training program; the task is merely a matter of filling those holes.

I believe the current instructor training model should address six issues, detailed below, so that our graduates are armed with the tools they need to navigate successfully into the future. Therefore, I encourage all those in the instructor training business to reexamine how your programming might be revised to reflect these issues (and I welcome your feedback if you decide to give it a try).

Issue #1: Business Perspective:

A major flaw in the current instructor training process is that it starts off without an adequate foundation. We must recognize our goal is not merely to "train instructors" but to create dive professionals. To accomplish this, students must begin their training by understanding the nature of the scuba industry and the challenges it faces. Furthermore, this business perspective must be broadened beyond the dive industry, exploring how changes in global travel and tourism, as well as how consumer attitudes and behavior, will affect their career success. This information is an important perspective, demonstrating that teaching people how to dive is only part of what's required to be a dive professional. Fortunately, there are now tools, many online, to assist in this process, which I will discuss in a future column.

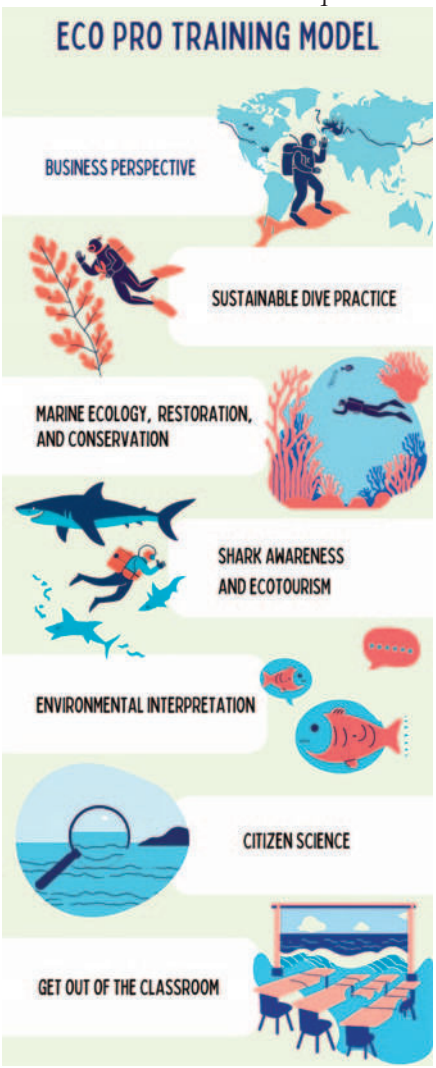
Issue #2: Sustainable Dive Practice:

While business insights and perspectives are important, dive professionals must have the knowledge and

skills to train, manage, and supervise divers with consideration to environmental best practices. (An excellent training resource for this is the Green Fins Dive Guide E-Course.) Furthermore, dive professionals should have some basic understanding of the scientific research supporting practices to reduce, if not eliminate, negative environmental impact. This training should also provide innovative ideas and techniques to improve entry-level diver training, emphasizing the improvement of buoyancy control.

Issue #3: Marine Ecology, Restoration and Conservation:

Coral reefs are the lifeblood of the scuba travel industry, so dive professionals must understand their global importance, how they function, and the problems they face. This includes ecological principles such as competition, symbiosis, reproduction, recruitment, bleaching, disease, and pollution. Likewise, training should examine current policies and programs to promote effective coral reef conservation and management. Training should also explore the emerging science and technology of coral reef restoration, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs.



Issue #4: Shark Awareness and Ecotourism:

Like coral reefs, many shark populations are in precipitous decline. Yet, over the next few decades, shark ecotourism is projected to become a half-billion-dollar annual enterprise that, if properly directed, can contribute to shark conservation efforts worldwide. So, training should focus on sharks' unique and fascinating anatomy, physiology, and behavior. But equally important is examining their conservation status and the issues surrounding ethical shark diving practices.

Issue #5: Environmental Interpretation:

As emphasized in last month's column, *It's the Play Not the Actors*, dive professionals need to be more than just educators; they need to become interpreters. This means learning how to convey the diving experience in ways that don't just inform but engage and inspire their students and customers. This is how you foster the necessary attitudes and behavior for more responsible diving practice and garner support for marine conservation efforts.

Issue #6: Citizen Science:

Citizen science is one of the fastest-growing trends in both dive tourism and tourism, in general. It recognizes that today, many divers want to do more than simply have fun or "do no harm," they want to give back and make the aquatic world a better place than what they found. Citizen science projects are among the most effective ways to build environmental stewardship and provide significant marketing opportunities. Every professional development program should include a module exploring this timely issue and the growing trend toward "voluntourism."

Get Out of the Classroom:

Another flaw in the professional development process is we spend insufficient time enabling our students to apply theory to practice. So, get out of the classroom and into the water. For example, in my six-day ECO PRO course, we make 10 dives. The first six involve underwater surveys, each exploring different aspects of coral reef health. The dive objectives cover topics including coral ecology and health, the invertebrate community, and a technique known as a point-intercept transect to characterize the sea bottom. At the end of the surveys, student data is entered into a spreadsheet from which charts and graphs are generated, illustrating the results of their efforts and giving them a quantitative insight into the health of the surveyed reefs. Once reef surveys are completed, the next two dives focus on learning about coral reef fishes. Here, students learn how to conduct the "roving diver" survey created and used by the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) and contribute their data to the world's largest scientific marine fish database. The final two dives are an opportunity to

ECO PRO continued

dive with sharks and put into observe and practice what students have learned in the classroom.

I'm certain many who read this will be concerned because what I advocate cannot be accomplished, in addition to conducting an agency-sanctioned instructor training course, in only a week. But this mindset is another artifact from the past that must be changed. The devotion to a one-week experience is a holdover from the amateurish days of the early dive industry, where students could take off no more than seven days from their "real job." But what I'm describing is a real job, not a hobby, and learning how to do it takes as long as it takes. Indeed, you probably can train someone to teach scuba diving in one week, but you cannot train a dive professional in such a short period. However, if we remain married to the past, nothing will change, and our industry will continue to stagnate.

green fins

DEMA UPDATE

Unlocking Retail Success: DEMA's 2024 Advertising Survey Unveils Key Insights and Benchmarks – *by Tom Ingram, MBA, CAE, President & CEO, DEMA*



Throughout each year, DEMA conducts valuable industry research on recreational diver behaviors, consumer buying habits, manufacturing practices, business operations, and more. In February 2024, DEMA initiated the Retailer Advertising Research Survey, which garnered responses from over 280 retail dive centers worldwide, 81% of which were based in the United States and the rest from various countries globally. Last month, DEMA released the findings of this survey in a comprehensive report that is available for download.

In the 2024 Blueprint for Growth Retailer Advertising Survey, retail store operators were asked insightful advertising and marketing questions covering a gamut of retail dive store advertising practices to obtain invaluable benchmarking information that would, in turn, help dive retail operators decide on best practices for their operations.

"The objective of conducting this research is to be able to provide retail dive centers with data that will help them guide and evaluate their own advertising activities," commented Tom Ingram, President & CEO of DEMA. "This is a benchmarking study on a topic not explored by DEMA for many years. DEMA last surveyed the industry on this subject in 2015, and much has changed in the advertising and marketing landscape since then. With new technological advancements, social media platforms, and opportunities to engage with customers, it is critical to understand how professional retailers are reaching out to new consumers and current customers. The resulting data will make it possible to increase advertising effectiveness for every retailer and help other stakeholders understand how to serve the retailer more efficiently. This will also help guide DEMA on providing member benefits that make a difference to retailers and the industry."

The survey results encompass a wide spectrum of dive retail advertising and marketing topics and practices, ranging from budget allocation to time spent on organic marketing strategies. This extensive report is available through the online DEMA store. Current DEMA Members have complimentary access to this new report, whereas it is available to non-members for a nominal fee.

The 2024 Retailer Advertising Survey is a follow-up to DEMA's 2023 Blueprint for Growth Retail Operations Survey. More than 260 retail dive centers responded, with 79% based in the United States and the remainder from countries across the globe. This survey, aimed at eliciting operational insights from dive retail establishments, facilitated the establishment of benchmarks crucial for industry-wide evaluation. The 2023 Blueprint for Growth Retail Operation Survey was DEMA's first comprehensive retailer survey since the 1990s.

DEMA wishes to extend a special thank you to Research Committee members William Cline (Chair), Ben Collins, JoAnn Haack, Shelli Hendricks, Lily Mak, Charles Maricle, Jeff Mondle, David Prichard, and Lee Rand. DEMA also extends its gratitude to all survey participants, emphasizing the collaborative spirit driving the success of these research endeavors.

DEMA Store

'23 retailer study

be a volunteer

TRAVEL

A Perspective on the Global Coral Bleaching Event

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



There has been much talk over the last 12 months regarding coral bleaching events across the globe. That is, NOAA and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) reports agree the recent global pattern of extreme heat, driven by climate change, has adversely affected many coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). Similarly, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) confirmed that 2023 was one of the hottest years on record. Therefore, as the southern hemisphere moves into Autum it is appropriate that my contribution to Scuba Diving Industry Magazine this month is to give a summary of how the GBR has been impacted. Some of the content is from material made available to me as part of my role on the GBRMPA's Local Marine Advisory Committee, Tourism Reef Advisory Committee and the from the Authority's website. So please forgive some of the plagiarising.



Great Barrier Reef by Cathie Cummins

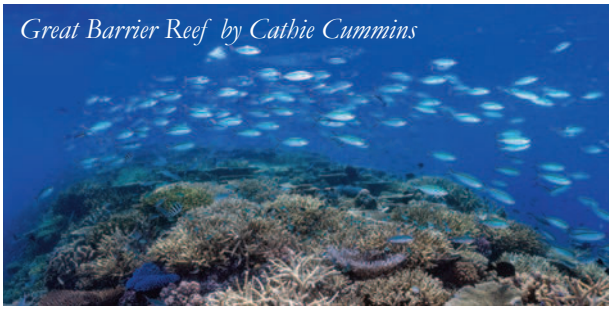
At the beginning of the 2023-24 austral summer, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) and others were operational, and it is important amongst the scheme of things for you to know the intensity and how these programs are carried out? Monitoring the health of the GBR is a joint effort with several monitoring partners. The AIMS LTMP monitors coral reef condition focusing on long-term trends in decline and recovery at between 80 and 130 representative reefs annually. A further 32 inshore reefs are monitored as part of the GBRMPA's Monitoring Program (MMP). Additionally, observations are gathered by the multiple organisations and people contributing to the GBRMPA's 'Eye on the Reef' program, including through the Reef Joint Field Management Program, Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Control Program and by traditional owners and the reef-based tourism industry, especially those who utilise as staff 'Master Reef Guides' trained by the GBRMPA. You can learn more about how these assessments of coral bleaching events is undertaken and explore the science used in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) through the Reef Knowledge System, the portal for the Reef Integrated Monitoring and Reporting Program (RIMRep).

As part of the summer reef health response, marine managers, and scientists from the GBRMPA, Australian Institute of Marine Science, and James Cook University also developed a framework to describe and categorise coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef. This framework describes bleaching events in a clear and consistent way — and enables comparisons to be made between years, over time, and across the GBR. An Event Impact Category will be assigned once the full extent of this summer's impacts is fully known.

The current monitoring has shown regional coral cover levels remained high overall despite the relatively high water temperatures. Interestingly, increases in coral cover in recent years has been dominated by fast-growing species but these are highly vulnerable to disturbances. However, that has not been the major concern right now. What is a concern is that prolonged exposure to higher-than-average water temperatures this past southern hemisphere summer has caused widespread coral bleaching throughout the GBR and subsequently some mortality. The full extent is still under assessment. It is important to note that heat stress varies in intensity across different regions, and bleaching is largely consistent with heat exposure. For example, around my hometown – Cairns in far north Queensland - the bleaching has not been as severe as in the shallow reefs around Lizard Island to our north, while neighbouring deeper reefs to Lizard Island and in the Northern Ribbon Reefs, are in very good shape. Our southern reefs off Rockhampton and Gladstone (e.g. around Heron Island) seem to have experienced the largest extremes of water temperature.

While bleached corals are still alive, they are under considerable stress. Their chances of survival depend on the intensity and duration of that heat stress. As mentioned earlier, the full extent, prevalence, and potential impacts on bleached corals is currently under further evaluation. So for the most current and comprehensive information, please consult the GBRMPA's 'Reef Health' page (Reef health | gbrmpa). From December to April they issue weekly reef health updates, and then monthly updates from May to November.

Cyclones (hurricanes) also impact coral reefs from the large waves generated. Two cyclones crossed the GBR this past southern hemisphere summer. Damage to reefs due to cyclones depends on the length of time they have been exposed to these destructive waves and on the structural vulnerability of the type of corals present. In December, Cyclone Jasper crossed the coast north of Port Douglas as a category 2. Soon after, Cyclone Kirrily crossed the coast near Townsville as a category 3 in January. Based on data collected after the events, both cyclones caused coral damage in their respective crossing. For those that have experienced the wonderful diving to be had on the wreck of the Yongala in relatively shallow water (depth16m / 53ft plus), it is good to know that even though some of the coral growth was stripped by large waves, most of the wreck held up well and is still a great dive. Above average rainfall in the northern and central regions of the GBR this summer led to multiple rivers reaching minor, moderate or major flood levels. These flows have been sustained throughout the summer, lowering salinity levels, and delivering fine sediments in nearshore waters. Low salinity and sedimentation can also lead to coral bleaching and coral mortality, particularly for inshore reefs where exposure to flood plumes is greater. Incidents of freshwater bleaching and mortality have been received, although full assessment of coral mortality from flood plumes cannot be assessed until water clarity returns.



Great Barrier Reef by Cathie Cummins

A Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (COTs) outbreak persists in the southern region of the GBR, with localised outbreaks appearing on some reefs in the northern and central regions. The COTS Control Program targets outbreaking reefs, supressing starfish numbers to sustainable levels, and protecting coral across thousands of hectares of reef habitat. While COTS are a native coral predator when populations reach outbreak status (approximately 15 starfish per hectare), they eat coral tissue faster than corals can grow. The program involves several response vessels sent to those areas where infestations are reported and trained divers are used to inject the starfish with sodium bisulphate to induce mortality and reduce the threat.

It is important to note that just like any natural system, the GBR goes through cycles of disturbance and recovery. Given the GBR is very large (i.e. 2,300 kilometres / 1430 miles long), disturbances affect it at a range of local and regional scales. This means conditions on the GBR can be variable significantly across different locations and for us, dive destinations. So if you intend to visit the GBR you should check with your local dive operator regarding what to expect, if any, they have been impacted. In doing so it is important to note that most dive operators are reporting minimal damage to their dive sites and no impact on the ever-present abundance of marine life.

Climate change remains the greatest threat to the world's coral reefs. It influences weather patterns and the ocean's temperature, pH level and currents, as well as intensifying the effects of other threats. Again, WMO confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record, and NOAA has confirmed a global coral bleaching event is underway and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed this summer as the second hottest for the GBR on record. The issue is that compared to previous summers, cumulative impacts have been much higher this summer and a widespread bleaching event is still unfolding as I write. More importantly, the GBR has demonstrated its capacity to recover from previous coral bleaching events, severe tropical cyclones, and COTS outbreaks if given enough time. Most scientists would agree the GBRMP is the most intensive and well managed reef on the planet and the Authority is in a constant state of assessing best practice for its protection.

In the meantime, there is the usual global media hysteria on 'the reef is dead' but from these reports while it would appear there is general need for concern, the GBR is very much alive and offers some of the best scuba diving on the planet. So what are you waiting for? Come visit us soon.

email Terry

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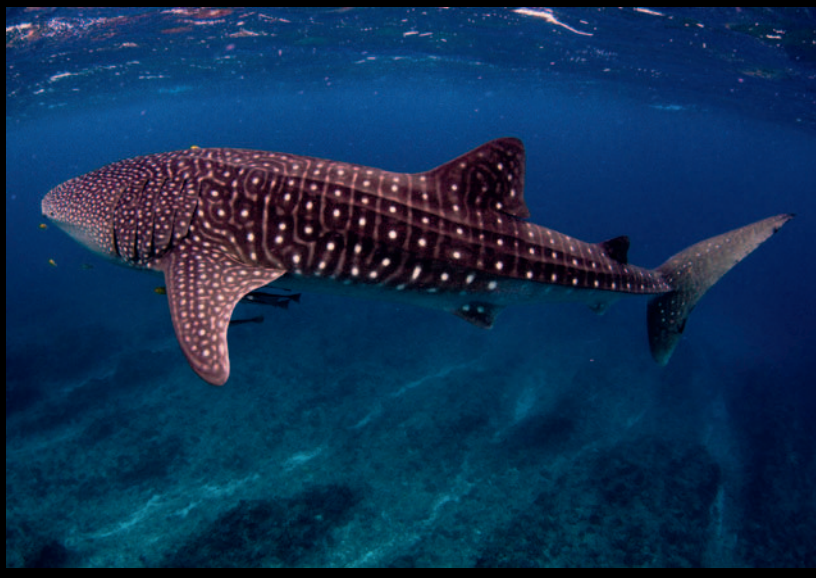
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