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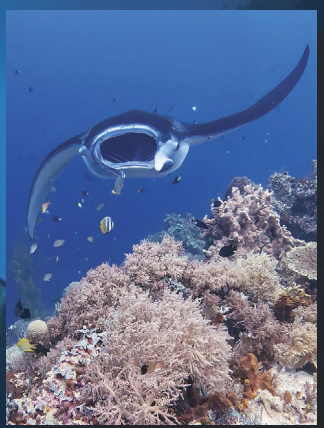
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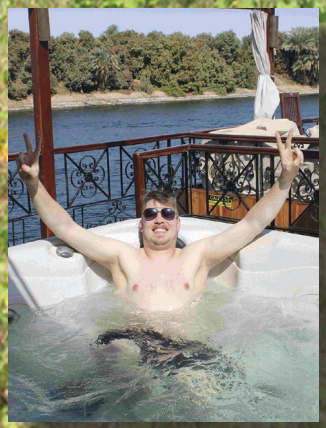
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

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

HOW BIG ARE WE AS A GLOBAL INDUSTRY IN TERMS OF SALES?

How big is our industry, really? That question comes up often – and for good reason. While there are a few studies and even a book or two floating around, most estimates of the global dive market vary widely. Why? Because the dive industry is largely private. With very few publicly traded companies, there's little obligation to report earnings, making reliable data hard to come by.

Most industry estimates rely on data from a small handful of known companies, then attempt to extrapolate the rest. But given the highly fragmented and global nature of our industry, that method is flawed at best. It's like trying to estimate the size of the ocean by looking at a single reef.

So how did Scuba Diving Industry Magazine arrive at our numbers?

We started with what's concrete: revenue data from DEMA's surveys of U.S. dive retailers. With a known total of approximately 966 brick-and-mortar dive retailers in the U.S., we were able to calculate reliable sales figures. We then expanded that base to include approximately 2,000 independent instructors and hybrid operators, based on our internal research. Lastly using DEMA's consumer studies, we can derive what percentage of sales come from retailers using reverse extrapolation.

The results? We estimate the total U.S. dive industry generates just under $1 billion annually, broken down as follows:

Gross	Training	Travel	Equipment
$961,595,238	$113,500,000	$445,666,667	$402,428,571

Multiple studies suggest the U.S. makes up 30% of global sales, so extrapolating globally, then accounting for the estimated percentage of retailer vs. consumer direct sales, we estimate the entire worldwide dive industry is worth $8.2 billion, as shown:

Gross	Training	Travel	Equipment
$8,236,677,249	$744,055,556	$5,100,407,407	$2,392,214,286

What does this mean for you – as a dive retailer, resort, instructor, or manufacturer? It means the industry you're part of isn't niche – it's a thriving, multibillion-dollar global economy. And with strategic thinking, collaboration, and data-driven decisions, your slice of that pie can grow.

Look for more of this analysis in upcoming articles, but for now, these are probably the most reliable global numbers ever created to accurately reflect where the recreational scuba industry is, sales-wise, as of 2024. Feel free to email me with questions.

William Cline, Publisher

email William | email Britain | email Gavin | email Carlos

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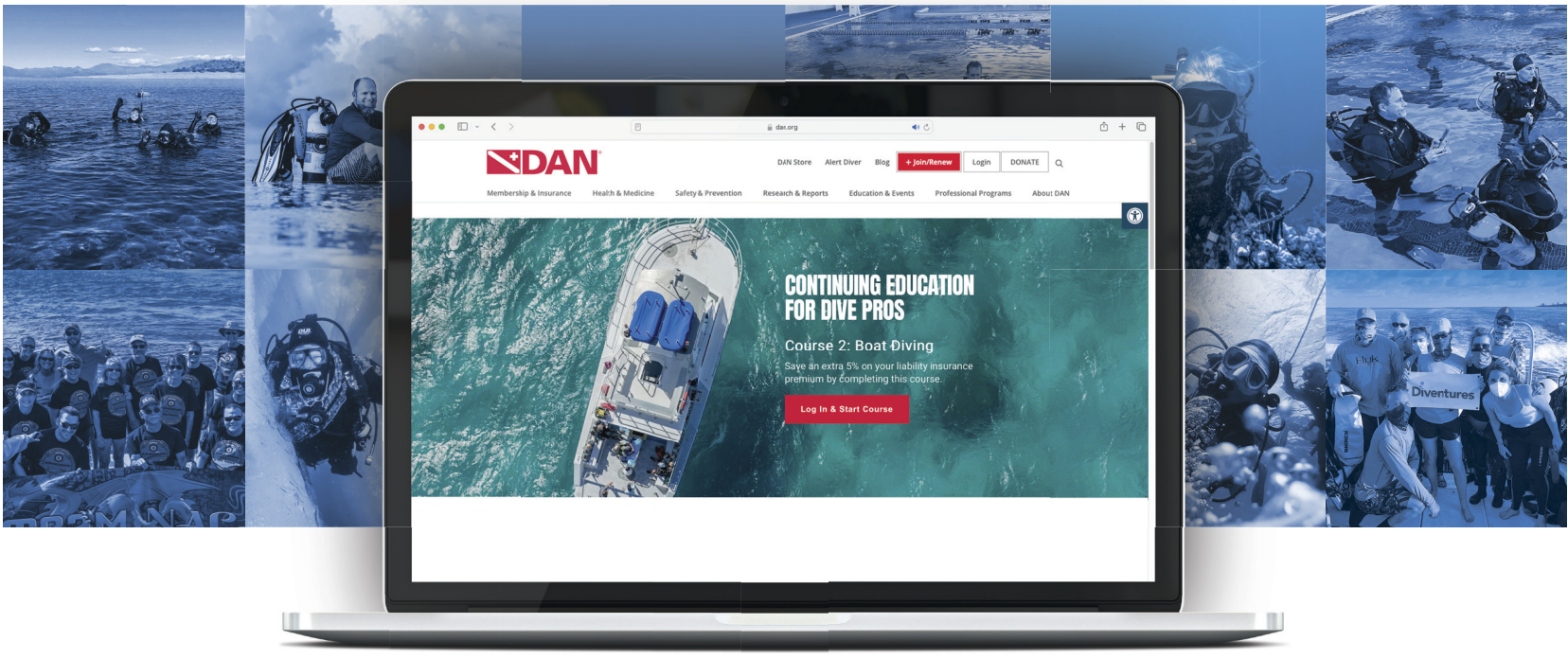
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SAFETY

What Does Age Have To Do With It?

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



Since 2022, I have offered nearly 100 free webinars on a number of diving safety-related topics to any interested group. One my most popular webinar topics is "Safety Issues for the Older Diver." And just about every time I do this webinar or conduct a seminar on that subject at a diving consumer show, I get questions about real or perceived limitations due to a diver's age.

I also help lead expeditions for a company called Blue Green Expeditions to places around the world including the Antarctic and Arctic. On an upcoming expedition, we are planning to offer diving and snorkeling at Silfra (www.dive.is) in Iceland. Silfra is a unique dive location where the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates are very close together as they slowly move apart. It is one of the world's most unique diving locations where you can actually put your hands on both tectonic plates simultaneously. It has been designated as some of the clearest water in the world with visibility measured at nearly 1,000 feet (305 meters).

> **"It's critical to check with the provider of your diving accident insurance to make sure that your coverage is intact and does not have any restrictions due to age."**
> **– Dan Orr**

During one of the webinars on "Safety Issues for the Older Diver," someone said they had "heard" (probably on the internet) that divers 60 years old and older were not permitted to dive or snorkel at Silfra. My response was that I had not heard of any such a restriction, but I would certainly find out. I called the dive center at Silfra and was told that there was no such restriction BUT every diver and snorkeler must fill out the Diving Silfra Medical Statement AND divers 60 and older must have that form signed by a physician. The Diving Silfra Medical Statement is available from the diving/snorkeling tour operator in Iceland.

The upcoming expedition that I am helping to lead for Blue Green Expeditions to the Arctic includes a few days of diving at Silfra. As required, I filled out the Diving Silfra Medical Statement, had my physician evaluate my health status and sign the form allowing me to snorkel at Silfra.

The itinerary of this expedition to the Arctic, also includes a few days of diving and snorkeling in Greenland. The country of Greenland has had a requirement on the books for years that expedition participants aged 66 or over or those with a disability or medical condition(s) wishing to enter Greenland territory (diving, snorkeling or just touring) must submit a medical certificate signed by a physician. Most expedition visitors to Greenland have been totally unaware of this requirement but it has just recently become an enforced requirement. The expedition ship company we travel with now includes the Greenland Medical Certificate as part of their required paperwork for those passengers 66 years old and older.

Over the years there have been numerous reports of tour operators, some associated with cruise lines and some not, either denying guests the opportunity to dive if they are beyond a certain age or requiring them to submit a medical history questionnaire, possibly requiring a physician's signature, to be able to scuba dive or snorkel. I have heard reports that the age of concern can be as low as 60 but most frequently the age of concern seems to be 70 or beyond. As you may know, some diving accident insurance companies decided that the cut off age for diving accident insurance coverage would be 70. To Divers Alert Network's credit, even though they at one time, told their membership that diving accident insurance could not be sold to those 70 and over, have since publicly stated that they would not deny coverage for any insured member regardless of age. In my opinion, DAN did the right thing for their membership, especially the older diver. Unfortunately, other diving accident insurance carriers may not be so understanding. It's critical to check with the provider of your diving accident insurance to make sure that your coverage is intact and does not have any restrictions due to age.

Some travel or trip insurance policies may have age limits or exclusions for pre-existing conditions for those over a certain age, usually 70 or 75 according to some travel insurance websites. It's crucial to review all policy details carefully and potentially seek specialized travel insurance for older travelers.

Why, you may ask, are divers seemingly being discriminated against simply based on their age? This is partly due to the actuarial data insurance companies use to decide upon coverage limitations. However, when you look at the actual diving accident data when it comes to decompression illness (decompression sickness and arterial gas embolism), the older diver is not over-represented in those accident statistics.

There may, however, be some travel benefits that come with age. Passengers 75 and older may be eligible for expedited

screening by the TSA, which could involve leaving shoes and light jackets on during screening and, in some countries, senior travelers have priority boarding privileges.

There is one other area where the diver's age is important. That is when it comes to health maintenance. It is strongly recommended that beginning at age 45, divers have an annual physical examination preferably from a healthcare professional familiar with diving medicine and your life priorities. It is pretty obvious that the person evaluating your fitness to dive should have some familiarity with diving medicine so that they can make the correct decisions. If, however, they are not schooled in diving and hyperbaric medicine, the DAN Medical Department can be a valuable resource for your healthcare professional when it comes to evaluating your medical fitness to dive. If you are looking for a healthcare professional that has some training in diving medicine, the Medical Department at DAN has a Physician Referral Network with a list of hundreds of physicians of many specialties. The DAN Medical Department can give you or your physician contact information for someone who has training in diving medicine.


Jean-Michel Cousteau @ 87 years young.
© Carrie Vonderhaar, Ocean Futures Society

The other thing I recommend is that your physician understand how important scuba diving or snorkeling is to your lifestyle. As we know, scuba diving and snorkeling can be very beneficial to your health both physical and mental (March issue of *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine* –"The Mental Health Benefits of Scuba Diving.") If your healthcare professional knows that time in the water scuba diving or snorkeling is important to you, they are less likely to simply exercise a cautious approach when evaluating your fitness to dive by simply saying you should hang up your fins. However, and this is extremely important, diving or snorkeling should NEVER be so important that engaging in it puts you or others at risk.

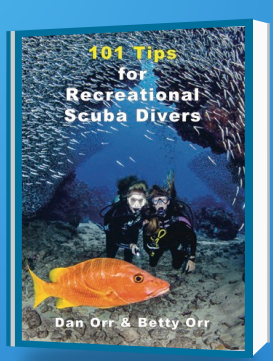
There may be organizations, including tour operators and dive charters who may try to implement some barrier to engaging in scuba diving, snorkeling or other watersports purely based upon your age. And there may be little you can do about it because it is, after all, their company and they may only be following the advice of their attorneys, liability insurance providers, insurance actuaries or it could even be as ridiculous as something they read on the internet. Therefore, it is wise to know as much as you can before you plan on and pay for a diving excursion, especially in another country. It is better to go directly to the source (the dive operation or the tour/excursion operator) rather than any middleman for your information. It's also not a bad idea, when you do talk with them, to ask why such an age restriction is in place. They may not give you a satisfying answer because, after all, it is ultimately their decision.

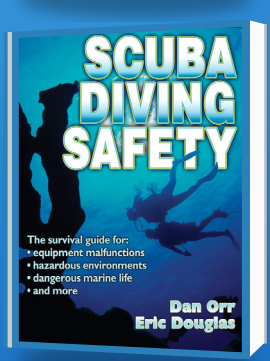
One thing that I choose to do is carry a letter signed by my physician stating that, in his opinion, I am in good health and have no contraindications to diving. I get this letter each time I have my annual physical. I have not had to use it, but it may help if any operator has concerns about health.

Good luck and safe diving!

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TRAINING

Accidents in the Blue Too-Often Aren't Accidents 'Out of the Blue'

– by Al Hornsby, owner, Al Hornsby Productions, Singapore
Al is regarded as one of the industry's most experienced risk management litigation executives.



The old expression about something having occurred 'out of the blue' means, basically, that something that happened was a random, unpredictable event. When it comes to dive accidents, while they typically occur 'in the blue' (if you'll excuse the play-on-words), history shows clearly that, despite diving being an activity with inherent risks, the most serious, most traumatic accidents in our sport typically were not random at all, but occurred because the known risks – and the safety procedures and practices our industry has so carefully developed to protect divers from those risks - were too often ignored.

> **"History shows that the most serious, most traumatic accidents in our sport typically were not random at all, but occurred because safety procedures and practices were ignored."**
> **- Al Hornsby**

In fact, even a cursory review of past, serious dive accidents shows clearly the strong relationship between procedures and practices that were outside established standards and norms, and resultant accidents. And, if litigation occurred (and it was certainly more likely once it became apparent that the accident occurred while standards or best practices were not being followed), the chances for damaging judgements or expensive settlements went up as well.

A sad but simple example, which actually kicked off decades of costly dive litigation – especially because it led directly to one of diving's most well-known, experienced defense attorneys becoming one of the most active litigators against the industry – shows how simple, obvious violations of standards and good practice can so easily open the door to completely unnecessary accidents and costly litigation.

The dive was a straightforward introductory scuba experience, in about 35 feet of water on a reef in Hawaii. Conditions were calm, the water was clear, and the small group of participants was having the time of their lives. At one point, the instructor showed them a lava tube that meandered across the bottom, well-lit, with lots of fish to see. Wanting to give his group a 'special' experience, he began leading them into the tube's overhead environment (clearly a violation of all introductory scuba standards). One of the first-time intro divers, however, indicated that he wasn't comfortable going in. Rather than taking them all to continue exploring the reef, the instructor had the reluctant diver wait alone outside the tube while he took the others in. Frightened and now alone, the diver (who, of course, had only rudimentary buoyancy skills) began gradually floating up, only to be struck by the prop of a passing boat, whose crew had no idea he was there, just beneath the surface.

The results of this simple, completely unnecessary, indefensible accident and the litigation that followed - especially considering the gross standards violation involved (leaving an introductory diver unattended underwater) - were profound… The diver, whose work skills needed his hand and arm, lost most of their use…and his profession – and the settlement was considerable. Sadly, for the dive industry, it also led the attorney involved – realizing that plaintiffs' work (especially when standards violations were involved) was far easier and more lucrative than defense – to switch sides and to begin a new, long career suing the dive industry when dive accidents occurred.

To help prevent such unnecessary accidents – and to remind your staff, as well as to give your customers (many of whom, especially introductory divers, will be nervous) some security and comfort – include in the briefings reassurance concerning the standards you'll be following, such as those of your professional dive organization, ISO, WRSTC and others. It won't take long, and it can also serve as a reminder to staff that there is no room for latitude – especially when it involves introductory scuba participants.

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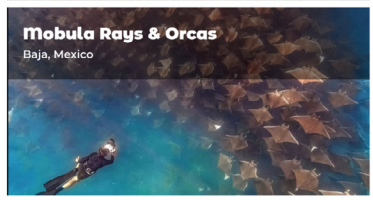
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BUSINESS EDU

Shark Forward: Stay Sharp in Mid-Summer

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



Welcome to my new series using real world business instincts inspired by marine life. I hope you enjoy this new column!

Mid-summer. For dive pros, this is when things really ramp up. Staff schedules are packed, boats are full, phones are still ringing, and your shop feels like Grand Central Station. The long days, long nights, equipment demands, group trips, and last minute changes can be overwhelming. But this is also when the best opportunities surface, and when a strong team and sharp focus matter more than ever.

That's When I Think About the Shark: Sharks have a reputation for being relentless, always moving, always focused. They have to be. Most species must keep swimming just to breathe. It's that forward momentum that allows them to survive and thrive, no matter how turbulent the ocean becomes. As dive pros, that lesson is worth holding onto when summer's whirlwind is in full swing.



Sand Tiger Shark

Channel the Shark's Focus: In mid-summer, it's easy to get pulled in a million directions – staff scheduling, equipment needs, new students, group trips, last minute changes. The best way to stay sharp is to focus like a shark. Ask yourself: What needs my attention right now? What can wait? Making quick, confident decisions can save precious time, energy, and sanity. It doesn't mean ignoring everything else, but it does mean knowing when to zero in and when to glide past a distraction.

Stay Calm Amid the Current: Sharks don't flail in turbulent waters. They adjust, stay calm, and glide with precision. You can do the same. Even when things feel overwhelming, slow down long enough to assess, adjust, and move forward intentionally. Sometimes that means delegating more, trusting your staff, or setting boundaries for yourself and your team. Those moments of clarity can make all the difference when the summer rush threatens to sweep you away.

Lead Your Team with Purpose: The busiest days are when your team needs you the most. Be the example. Stay calm, stay focused, stay engaged. Encourage staff to support one another and help them understand how every role connects to making the summer season a success. Sharks move with precision, and a strong dive team can do the same when it operates like a coordinated, well led unit. Stay present, listen to their concerns, and recognize their efforts. Helping your team feel valued and motivated is the best way to keep the whole operation on track.

Make the Most of Mid-Summer: Remember, summer doesn't last forever. The long days, packed boats, and bustling shop aren't just moments of hard work. They're moments when new divers fall in love with the sport and long time customers deepen their connections. Stay sharp, stay engaged, and make the most of it. Push through the challenging moments with that unmistakable "shark forward" mentality, knowing you're creating an experience that can build loyalty for years to come.

The "Busy" Tests Your Systems and Procedures: There is no better test of your SOP, systems and staff training than the busy summer season. As you go along, keep a journal of what worked well, and what did not, especially during peak days or weeks. That journal will become invaluable in the fall when you review your summer, and plan to fix what needs fixing.

So as you move through the heart of summer, take a lesson from the shark. Keep moving, stay focused, and don't lose sight of where you're going. Stay alert, stay confident, and stay sharp. The currents may be strong, but with a clear sense of direction and that "shark forward" mindset, you can glide through the busiest season and come out stronger, better, and more prepared for whatever the ocean and the dive industry brings next.

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ECO PRO

Training a Complete Diver: Attitude is Everything

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



In our April 2024 issue, dive industry veteran Tom Leaird penned a thought-provoking article, "Our Take on Training New Divers: A Seven-Week Course." In it, he explained the benefits of swimming against the current industry practice by increasing, not decreasing, the training required for entry-level divers. He noted the clear advantage of longer courses, which provide the additional time needed to clarify concepts and establish a stronger connection with students through enhanced personal interactions. One feature of this approach is the emphasis on conducting "academic" training in a classroom setting rather than relying entirely on eLearning. Here, I'd like to expand on Tom's thesis and discuss the benefits of increased face time with students that may not be immediately apparent. I also want to elaborate on some of the concepts I addressed last month.

The basis of my argument is that many instructors mistakenly assume their job has one essential goal: to create a knowledgeable and skillful diver who can perform safely and competently in conditions similar to those in which they were trained. But if this is your only goal as an instructor, then in my view, you have only done two-thirds of your job.

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

So, what is the final third of your job, and how can a longer course – including time in the classroom – achieve a better-trained student?

Without getting bogged down in educational theory, experienced educators recognize that all forms of learning are not the same. Learning comes in at least three flavors, most often referred to as domains. In diving, what we typically call "academic" training, whether acquired in a classroom or online, is known as cognitive learning. I refer to it as the "head" part of learning. It addresses what the diver needs to know to dive safely. The second domain is skill, which is obviously what a diver must be able to do to become competent. I call this the "hand" part of learning. The problem arises from the common assumption that addressing these two domains alone is sufficient, without recognizing that there is one more domain to consider – the affective. As this is a more emotional than logical realm, I refer to this as the "heart" part of learning. This is the realm of attitudes that influence the choices divers make. So, for a learning experience to be considered complete, the instructor must address all three domains – **what a diver knows, can do, and chooses to do.**

Attitudes, Choices, and Behavior

We've all met divers who possess textbook knowledge, flawless buoyancy, and every specialty patch stitched to their sleeve – and yet, something's missing. They dive like tourists rather than stewards. Their decisions are technically sound but lack intention. They may not break the rules, but they also don't seem inspired by the ocean. And that's the disconnect: a diver can be trained correctly and still not care. The reason is that these are divers who have only two-thirds of an education.

Attitudes lead to choices, which lead to behavior. As instructors, we must recognize that we're not just in the business of building divers; we're shaping underwater citizens. The ultimate goal isn't just safe diving – it's responsible diving. This can be a challenging goal to achieve because that responsibility isn't something we can check off on a skills slate; it lives in the diver's attitude: the choices they make when no one is watching, the way they talk about the ocean, and the reverence or indifference they display when entering the water. That's why, at the heart of a complete training experience is the premise that **attitude is everything.** It's what determines what a diver chooses to do: their values, their motivation, and their willingness to protect what they've learned to love. And yet, in most diver training programs, this domain of learning is barely touched upon.

How Do We Teach Attitudes?

In teaching attitudes, you must embrace the idea that your job is not only to teach a competent diver but also a responsible one. For example, an ethic of conservation is a vital attitude for a responsible diver. Imagine attempting to teach conservation values, focusing solely on the cognitive domain. You might address coral bleaching, marine debris, and shark finning, along with the relevant stats. It's technically inform-

ative. However, it won't change anyone's behavior because it's unlikely to have a significant impact on their attitude. Now envision sharing the story of spending a dive cutting free a ghost net strangling a reef, and a dead sea turtle, only to surface to a boatload of indifferent tourists. Which one is more likely to stick?

The affective domain doesn't thrive on facts – it thrives on meaning. And meaning is best conveyed through an evocative narrative. That's why we remember novels more vividly than textbooks and why one compelling story can plant the seed of a lifelong ethic in a student more deeply than any eLearning module. This is where we, as instructors, have considerable untapped influence – not just as skill coaches but as storytellers and, even more importantly, as role models.

Decades ago, long before educational researchers became involved, Madison Avenue discovered that what sold products wasn't facts but rather attitudes and how the "right people" could influence the decision to make a purchase. This is why, on the front of a Wheaties® cereal box, you won't find a treatise on the nutritional value of wheat (cognitive); you'll see a featured athlete-du-jour (affective). Similarly, in the context of this discussion, the most crucial tool for teaching and instilling attitudes in divers is their instructor. In a very real sense, you are – or should be – a living lesson.

Every instructor knows this intuitively. Consider your own training; chances are, you remember more about your instructor's attitude than the briefing they gave during your third open water training dive. Were they meticulous? Were they kind? Did they rant about "stupid tourists" who litter the reef, or quietly remove trash on every dive without making a fuss? Did they cut corners when no one was looking, or did they stick to the standards and gladly engage with you even after a long, exhausting day? In the affective domain, **the instructor is the curriculum.** This alone strongly argues for spending more, not less, time with your students.

No eLearning module or PowerPoint presentation can override what your students observe you doing. If you want them to develop a conservation ethic, you have to model it, visibly and consistently. You're not just teaching them what they should know about the underwater world – you're showing them how to feel about it. That's why attitude isn't an "extra." It's the foundation. And we need to be more intentional about cultivating it in our training.

Strategies for Teaching the Heart

So, how do we teach effectively and affectively? We can't grade attitude. We can't standardize compassion. But we can invite it. Here are a few practical ways to engage the affective domain without turning your course into a philosophy seminar.

1. Start With Reflection, Not Just Instruction: Use personal journaling prompts in your post-dive debriefs. Pose questions that don't have "right" answers, but create space for students to examine their own values – and that's the beginning of identity formation. For example:
   - "What was one moment today that made you feel connected to the ocean?"
   - "What choice did you make that reflected your respect for marine life?"
2. Tell Your Own Stories – Not Just Safety Protocols: The most powerful thing you can bring to a dive briefing isn't a checklist; it's your personal experience. Authenticity matters. When you share the truth about your emotional journey as a diver, students will begin to reflect on their own.



- Tell students about the first time you saw coral spawning, and how it reframed your understanding of ocean life.
- Share a mistake you made early in your career and what you learned from it about humility and respect.
- Describe the moment you realized your diving wasn't just about recreation but responsibility.

3. Elevate Peer Role Models: Not every message needs to come from you. Invite former students, divemasters, or eco-volunteers to participate in a post-class discussion. (A good excuse for a social event.) Let students hear from others who have developed a conservation ethic over time. As in any community, social proof shapes values. When students see that passion for the ocean is normal, desirable, and cool, they are more likely to emulate it.

We need to think beyond the "successful course" as one where everyone earned their C-card. That's the floor, not the ceiling. We must strive for better learning outcomes through a new curriculum that is based not only on knowledge and skills, but also on character. Here are some new metrics to consider when assessing the affective outcomes of your class.

- Did the student express awe at something they saw underwater?
- Did they ask how they could help protect a reef or its species?
- Did they reconsider something they once took for granted?

These metrics may be challenging to track, but over time, they shape a diver's identity much more significantly than their proficiency in buoyancy control. And isn't that what we're truly after? We will always need to teach the head and the hand. But if we neglect the heart, we'll train divers who know how to stay safe, but do not understand why the ocean is worth protecting. Let's cultivate divers who not only perform well but also care deeply. And that must start with us.

So, the next time you step onto the boat or click "start" on an eLearning module, remember: you're not just instructing; you're imprinting. Your attitude toward safety, stewardship, and the sea itself is your most powerful teaching tool. Let's use it intentionally, because attitude isn't an extra – **it's everything.**

Alex's links

FLIPPING THE CLASSROOM

While this article advocates for extending training for entry-level divers to include classroom time, it shouldn't be interpreted as adding boring lectures and pointless war stories to your course. Instead, consider reorganizing academic sessions using the strategy of the "flipped classroom" that I discussed in my column last month. (A short explanation appears below.) The resource list available through the QR code at the end of the article offers ideas on structuring flipped classroom sessions to maximize affective (attitude) learning outcomes.

The flipped classroom is an instructional model that reverses the traditional approach to teaching. In a conventional classroom, students first encounter new material during in-person lectures and then apply that knowledge through homework. In a flipped classroom, this sequence is inverted: students are introduced to new concepts before class – usually through eLearning, readings, or interactive modules – and class time is reserved for active learning, such as problem-solving, discussions, or hands-on activities.

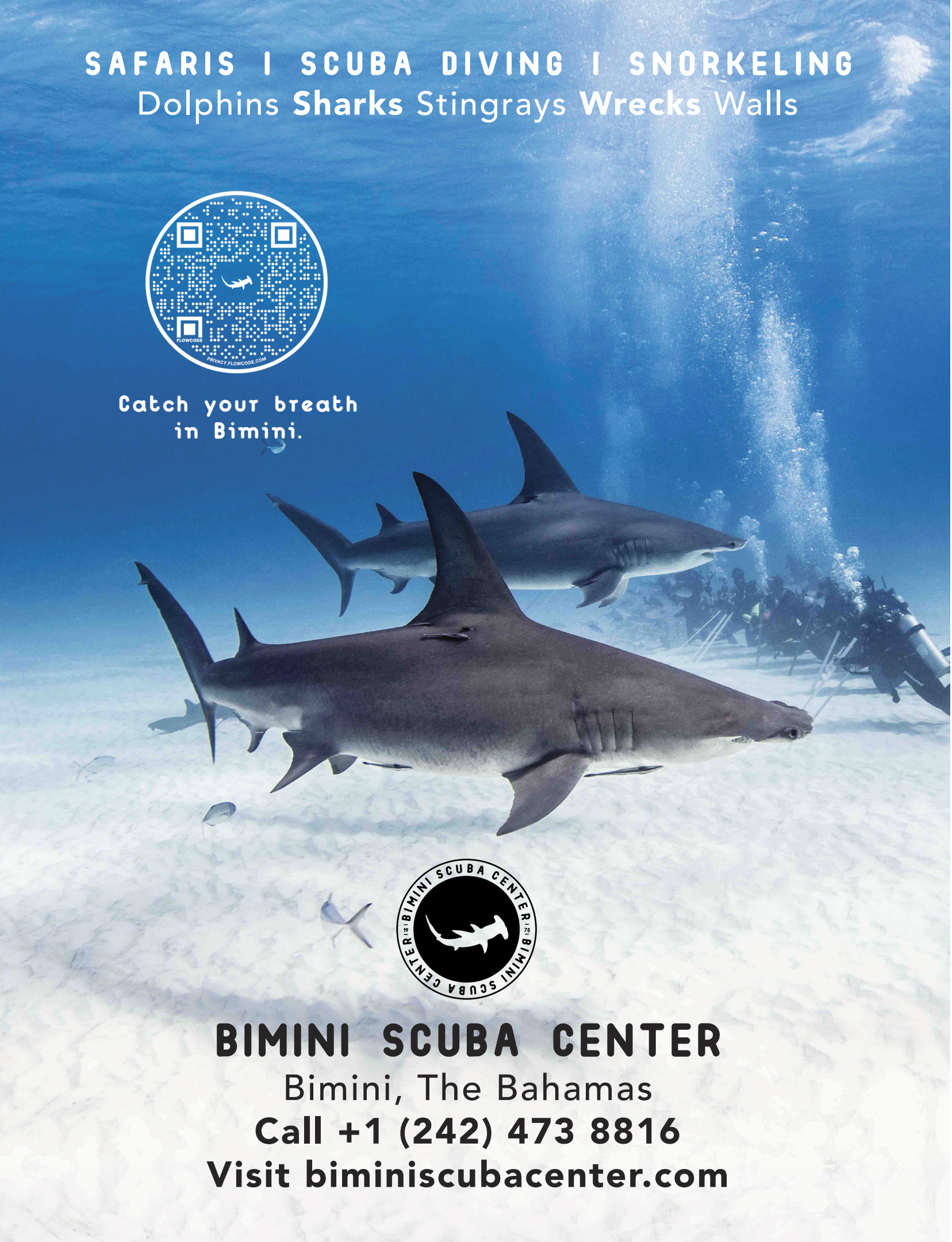
The key advantage of this model lies in its transformation of the teacher's role. Rather than delivering one-way lectures, instructors become facilitators and coaches, helping students deepen their understanding through guided practice. This enables more personalized support, peer collaboration, and formative feedback during class, when students need it most.

Flipped learning also promotes student agency. Because students control the pace of their initial exposure – pausing, rewinding, or reviewing materials as needed – they can arrive in class better prepared to engage. Class time, in turn, becomes more interactive and student-centered, shifting the focus from passive listening to active participation.

This model is especially effective in settings where higher-order thinking skills are emphasized. By front-loading basic content delivery and prioritizing in-class application, the flipped classroom aligns well with how we understand people learn – something known as Bloom's taxonomy – allowing more time for analysis, evaluation, and creation – the top tiers of cognitive engagement.

Flipped learning does, however, come with challenges. It assumes that students have the self-discipline and access to technology required to complete pre-class work. Fortunately, we already have that technology in place. It also demands a shift in both teaching practice and classroom culture, which can be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some instructors and students.

Despite these challenges, the flipped classroom model has gained popularity across various educational levels and disciplines – especially in science, technology, and skill-based training, such as diving – because it promotes deeper learning, more effective use of instructional time, and increased student engagement.

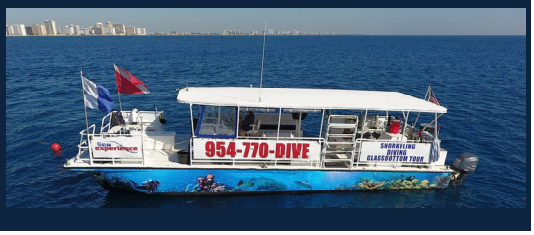

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Behind The Lens: Mobula Rays are Diamonds in the Sky

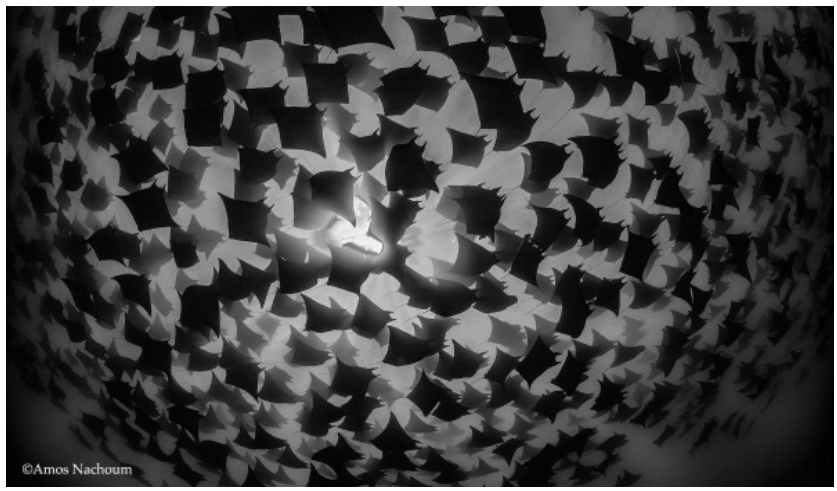
– Photos and text by Amos Nachoum, Big Animals Global Expeditions



In the bright summer waters off Baja, the mobula rays gather in extraordinary numbers. Hundreds – sometimes thousands – swim together near the sunlit surface, their dark wings rising and falling in quiet rhythm. Seen from below, they scatter across the bright water like a constellation – stars pressed into the sea, each ray catching the sunlight as it moves.

The longer I spent with them, the more they resembled a sky in motion – a field of stars, but here the light was alive. The rays shifted and glimmered, drifting together, each one shining for a moment before another passed into its place.

At first, I approached as most divers would. I swam toward the school from above, aiming to get close. But each time I descended, the rays reacted instantly – diving together, vanishing into deeper water in perfect coordination.



For days, I repeated the same mistake. I collected image after image, but they all showed the same thing: rays beneath me, framed against the sandy bottom or lit by the slanting sun. The images were fine, but they weren't the ones I had pictured. I wanted to see the rays overhead, silhouetted against the midday sun – as if they were flying across the sky.

I tried a new approach. I asked my skipper to position me far ahead of the school, hoping I could wait in their path. But the rays sensed me even at a distance. They turned away before they ever came close. I couldn't swim fast enough while holding my breath to meet them where I needed to be. That season ended without the image I was looking for.

I thought about the problem for a year. When I returned to Baja the next season, I brought a pony scuba tank, a small harness, and a wide fisheye lens. I planned to dive deeper – well below the school's path – and wait quietly at forty feet, looking up, ready to capture the rays as they crossed above me.

On the first dive, I made a new mistake. As I exhaled, my bubbles rose through the water and startled the rays. They scattered instantly, just as they had before. Even from below, even at a distance, they remained exquisitely sensitive.

I spent the next two days adjusting. I rehearsed holding my breath longer and learned to move with even greater care. I slipped into the water slowly, feeling the weight settle against my shoulders, the water cool against my face, the light pressing down from above. The sound underwater is thin and distant – just the soft hum of the sea, my own heartbeat, the faint clicking of other life somewhere out of sight.

I descended gently, turned onto my back, and began to wait.

The cold crept in as the minutes passed. My arms and legs tingled with the steady pressure of the water, but I stayed still, watching the surface, my body relaxed, my focus pinned to the sun overhead. I practiced waiting long enough for the rays to drift into the right position, carefully holding the last of my breath until the moment they crossed the sun, briefly eclipsing its light.

Each dive was a quiet rehearsal, a small refinement in breath, distance, or timing. The longer I stayed, the more I could feel the rhythm of the school – the slow, steady pace of their movement, the soft flicker of sunlight as their wings passed between me and the surface.

And then, it came together: On one dive, the school passed overhead with perfect spacing, perfect timing. The rays crossed the sun in staggered layers, their dark wings etched cleanly against the white water. The light flickered as their bodies briefly blocked the sun, one after another, like shutters passing in slow motion. For a few seconds, the surface was filled with their shapes – a sky of moving diamonds, gliding silently above me.

The rays didn't scatter. They didn't change course. I had finally learned how to be there without disturbing them.

It wasn't about chasing. It wasn't about swimming faster. It was about learning to wait properly. *Nikon D850, Nikon RS 13mm lens, f- 8, 1/2000 sec. 200 ISO.*

contact Amos

TRAVEL

Planning That Long-Haul Group Bucket List Trip

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



You have successfully led your clients to multiple short-hop tropical locations for dive trips but now many of them are asking to expand the range of their underwater adventures to include areas in the South Pacific that boasts higher diversity of marine life than what they have seen before. Do you use the same planning method for this trip halfway across the world as you would for the nearby tropical locations?

In *Star Trek III – The Search for Spock,* Scotty explains how easy it was to sabotage the newer and faster Excalibur ship (by swiping a few key parts) saying: "The more they overthink the plumbing, the easier it is to stop up the drain." In planning long-distance travel, a few overlooked parts can wreck your "trip of a lifetime."

A long-haul trip for many people involves many stages of the journey, and you want to make sure you understand the details of each stage so that there are no complications. How are you getting from your departure airport to your destination? If you are lucky enough to be able to use the same major airline to the destination (or a combination with an alliance partner airline), then you can generally send your checked baggage all the way through to the final airport. The fewer the connections, the less likely a bag may accidentally head to a different location or get left behind.



Often the final flight to a remote island can be on much smaller aircraft that are limited on luggage capacity and on-board storage like this flight from Nadi, Fiji to the island of Taveuni.

Many dive resorts in the South Pacific are not served by the larger airlines so you must book a separate flight reservation from your major air carrier's final stop to your destination using a regional airline. These airlines have their own set of rules and may not honor your previous carrier's terms or limits on baggage allowance and weights. If you checked two 50-pound bags initially on your first carrier, then you may be surprised to find that the regional carrier only allows 20 kilograms (44 pounds) "total," so you will need to purchase additional baggage allowance when you booked the flight or be prepared to pay hundreds of dollars in overweight luggage fees – each way!

Even your carry-on bags may be subject to different size and weight limits. The overhead bin spaces are often much smaller so the roll-on bag (usually packed with camera and crucial dive gear) that fit in your initial airline's overhead space will now have to be checked into the plane's luggage compartment – perhaps at an additional fee. Carry-on bags are often weighed and, if over the limit, you will either pay an additional fee or need to repack contents to your check-in bag.

While you may not be able to avoid these additional fees, you can keep from being shocked enroute by investigating each stage of your journey and understanding what the limitations are for each segment so that you can plan for it in advance and pass the information to your group so they are prepared.

Another key planning rule when connecting to a different airline at a foreign flight hub is to make sure you have plenty of connection time between flights to iron out any issues (please see our article in the June issue concerning this important detail) as non-affiliated airlines do not transfer luggage to another and often the regional airline is located in a different terminal than your previous airline. All this can be planned out in advance if you check all the details and ask the right questions.

Most airlines now will only help you (customer service) if you booked directly with the airline. If you booked with a travel agent or an online travel website, then they tell you to go through them to fix any problems. If your travel agent has a 24/7/365 help line that you can reach with your phone, then that is a solution. But, if they only have office hours, then you could be dealing with a major problem on your own until they report to work. Look into trip insurance to cover unforeseen delays and flight cancellations on your journey.

You also have to plan for your body to be confined to a tight space (your seat) for flights that can be a half a day or more for the "long" segment of your trip, plus the various smaller segments to and from your destination. The plane's cabin is pressurized to around 8,000 feet (while the plane is around 35,000 feet) so it is like being in the mountains with a lower oxygen content and low humidity that creates higher dehydration issues and dry skin, so drink plenty of water and use moisturizers.

TRAVEL continued

To keep from developing blood clots (deep vein thrombosis) air travelers need to periodically move around by either getting up and walking around the cabin or by doing foot and leg exercises often while seated. Bring a face mask in case a neighbor appears sick and avoid touching surfaces that haven't been sanitized (by you).

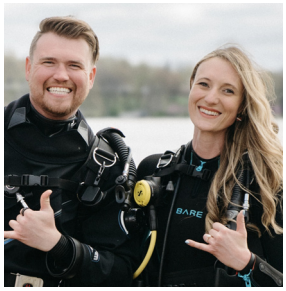
Don't plan any activities the day of arrival at your destination as you will likely be suffering from both "jet lag" going through multiple time zones and even the international date line and from lack of sleep as it is difficult to get rest in a cramped airline seat. If you can afford or use air miles for a business or first-class ticket, then the long trip is much more comfortable, and you also get a lot of extra perks.

email David

RETAILING

The Giant Stride: We Bought A Dive Shop – Now What?

– by Michael Connors & Rachael Scott, Owners, American Dive Zone, Grand Rapids, MI



We are Michael and Rachael, owners of American Dive Zone, a full service scuba diving center in West Michigan. Both of us came from a decade of experience working in corporate America. Michael's experience is in private equity, finance, and operations. Rachael's experience is in sales, marketing, and partnerships. We are scuba enthusiasts who met through talking about scuba diving, got engaged on a dive trip, and acquired a dive shop to run together. Our goal is to help usher in the next generation of dive shop owners who will carry the torch that previous shop owners have held, and keep this industry growing and thriving. Over the next few months, we will be sharing the process we went through to acquire our dive shop, remodel and re-market an existing brand, implement operational efficiencies, hire and train new staff, and exponentially grow sales. This monthly series is for any dive shop owner looking to pass the torch or for any scuba enthusiast looking to carry the torch forward. Not sure where to start? We are here to help.







Our story begins with a cold email that Michael sent to dive shops in Michigan with the title "Thinking About Retirement?" Retirement for a dive shop owner means they get to focus on the things they love like teaching scuba, going on scuba trips, and blowing bubbles for fun. It also means feeling torn about leaving your "baby," your business, and turning it over to someone else, or worse, having your shop converted into a convenience store, fast food restaurant, or clothing boutique - wiping the legacy you built over 20+ years away forever.

Our journey to becoming scuba shop owners started with an understanding of this dilemma and began with the message: "Have you thought about your retirement plan, and are you interested in a conversation on how we can continue your shop's legacy?" By showing you want to carry on the shop's legacy, you are respecting the previous owner. You are showing them that you care about the business they built, and you are on their side. You create a win-win. The previous owner gets to be released from their operational burdens and can rest assured their "baby" will continue to grow - their life's work will not be forgotten.

After sending several cold emails, within two days we got a response, and from there we set up a face-to-face meeting over lunch. Meeting face-to-face allowed us to start to develop a relationship with the previous owner. It showed the previous owner that we were serious. It helped us make our first impression - and that first impression is what helped us gain trust. Trust is fundamental in any acquisition.

The face-to-face meeting with the previous owner led to a mutual interest in kicking off the acquisition process, and in just 10 months the torch was passed. We will outline the acquisition process from A-Z in more detail next month. Stay tuned!

email Rachael

TRAINING

Creating a Healthier Scuba Diving Business with a Fitness Profit Center

– by Gretchen M. Ashton, CFT, SFT, SFN, SSC, NBFE Owner, ScubaFit®, FitDiver®, DiveFit®, SurfWalking™



Fit individuals are more likely to participate in recreational activities. Of the top recreational sport activities, at least four are fitness activities that are likely to lead individuals to try scuba diving. Divers that participate in a fitness lifestyle may extend their biological health by as much as 20 years, are more likely to advance their training, and dive more often. A diver certified at 20 years of age that remains in good health might enjoy 50 years or more of a diving lifestyle. The benefits of good health are profound for everyone, and particularly for divers; reducing risk and improving diving performance, yet less than 30% of divers exercise.

As the diving population ages, existing clients and professional staff need to know how to become and remain physically fit, prevent illness and injury, quickly rehabilitate, as well as manage conditions reported by divers, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, and obesity. New, already fit clients may need an understanding of the appropriate physical effort at depth and safe training between diving activities. It is important for divers of all ages and fitness levels to prepare for the physical and mental demands of different types of diving, conditions, logistics, potential unexpected situations, and comfort and efficiency in the water.



Dive centers with pools have a unique opportunity to bring ScubaFit based activities to their diving clients.

Keeping and attracting diving clients with a sustainable physical fitness profit center is as simple as the science-based ScubaFit® Diver Course. It is a PADI Distinctive Specialty and is also available to all credentialed agency instructors. ScubaFit is the only fitness program approved by both diving and fitness agencies.

"With ScubaFit you can build a routine that fits your needs and lifestyle. I incorporate ScubaFit into my dive shop and with my instructors. For us it starts at the top with me. As a ScubaFit instructor, I've been able to help reshape my staff's lives and help them get started on a healthier lifestyle. We offer it in store for all of our customers and friends. You are never too old to start; it just takes one day. That first day may be the change you need, for me it was," shares Danny Fugate, Instructor and Owner of Alpha Divers in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The diving and fitness industries are parallel in many ways. Professionals from both industries make excellent referral networks for new clients. ScubaFit, as a distinctive specialty for diving professionals and continuing education for fitness professionals, provides the tools to bridge diving and fitness to create a fitness profit center for diving businesses - without the overhead of water certification. Once the instructor completes the specialty, online or in-person, the teaching materials, instruction manuals and workbooks, and, if necessary, an affordable professional liability rider are available. Recommendations include 7 to 10 hours of eight-to-one instruction.

Value is created by combining ScubaFit with other diving certifications and at certain training milestones. New Open Water courses, Advanced Diver, Rescue Diver, Technical Diving and Staff Development are effective pairings. Physical fitness for diving programming fits well with specialty course packages like underwater photography, improved buoyancy, and preparation for destination group travel.

Nutrition and hydration for fitness and diving are included in the course, along with self-health assessments. It is customized to determine current fitness levels, set goals, and transfer the information to diving activities. Divers can pursue improved health and fitness privately and independently or by finding fitness-for-diving buddies.

The course also brings understanding of perceived exertion, and the safe mindset of conserving, not exerting, while diving. One of the biggest mistakes is to attract new divers by promoting scuba diving as a workout. Whether the new client is deconditioned or incredibly fit, based on diving physiology and by definition, workouts belong on dry land or the surface, not at depth. However, scuba diving is great motivation for staying in shape.

For information: Gretchen M. Ashton, CFT, SFT, SFN, SSC, NBFE click or scan the QR code, or call 760-271-6069, www.scubafit.com.

email Gretchen

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BUSINESS EDU

Vision, Values, Mission: Making Statements That Benefit Your Business

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



If you're in business, you're on a mission. Do you and your team know the mission and how to achieve it? And are you equipped to succeed? The iconic phrase, "Your mission, should you choose to accept it," is a hallmark of the blockbuster *Mission: Impossible* spy movie franchise. No matter which "MI" flick you're bingeing, the scene that follows is a message saying, "should you choose to accept this mission, in the event you are captured, the agency will disavow any knowledge of your existence." In short, "good luck with that." This is spy life. It's business life, too. There aren't any guarantees your business will survive and thrive. My mission is to help you understand why your business's mission statement is a key to your success – and it's why I'll help you write it. If your business already has a mission statement, yay for you. That's great. You can use this article to revisit your mission statement and see if it could benefit from a revision.

> **"Your company's mission statement describes what you do, how you do it, and who you serve by doing it. Most importantly, it shares why you do it."**
> **- Cathryn Castle Garcia**

But First, Vision and Values: Before we start on the mission statement, let's go over vision and values statements, which are foundational to the success of any business's mission.

A vision statement is your company's long term goal. It's aspirational and forward-facing. As the business owner, use your imagination to envision where you want your business to be in five years. Or 10. Take a few notes you'll use to craft a simple sentence or two that communicates your vision of the future.

Here's an example of a vision statement: "Our goal as the premiere dive center in the metro region is to expand our reach across the tri-state area so we can help more people safely enjoy becoming underwater explorers and ocean advocates."

A values statement is what you'll share with staff members that outlines the core principles you and your team will use to turn your aspirational vision statement into your future success story. These are the non-negotiables that answer important questions like, "What do we stand for?" and "How do we behave?" and "What matters most?" Your values statement is action-oriented and specific to your company. Ideally, it includes no more than four to six key values (more than that can be overwhelming) and it includes brief explanations of what each value means to your company. Incidentally, your values statement is also the foundation of your employee handbook, but we'll save that topic for another time.

Here's an example of a values statement: "Our core values include Safety, Stewardship, a Spirit of Adventure, and Service. We make sure all aquatic activities are conducted with uncompromising safety standards; we promote environmentally safe practices; we share our love of adventure and inspire exploration that fosters education; and we work to support and improve our local community."

Once you craft your company's vision statement and values statement, you'll weave elements of them into your mission statement. You've probably been on enough boats to know that a braided dock line woven from three strands of rope is strong, flexible, and resists snapping when under pressure. The same is true for a mission statement that includes your vision and values.

Your Mission Starts With Why: Your company's mission statement describes what you do, how you do it, and who you serve by doing it. Most importantly, it shares why you do it.

I highly recommend you watch the classic YouTube video by Simon Sinek, author of *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Action*. It has been viewed more than 12 million times since it was posted 15 years ago. I've watched it dozens of times and recently ordered the updated 15th anniversary edition of the book, which came out a couple of months ago.

To aid in crafting a compelling mission statement, grab a notepad and follow along with Sinek's famous "Golden Circle" YouTube illustration. Draw a circle and inside it, write "Why." Draw a circle around that circle and label it, "How." Lastly, draw a circle around that circle and label it, "What."

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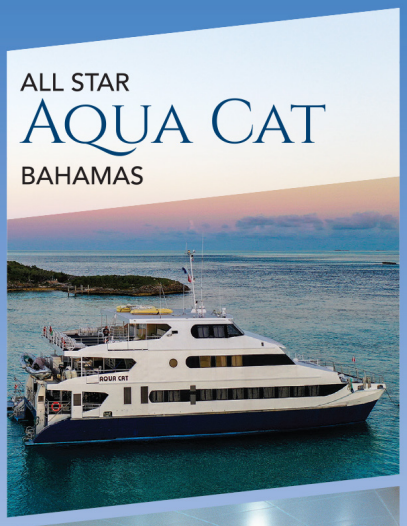
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Sinek explains that most businesses work from the outside of the circle inward, first explaining what they do and how they do it before explaining why. (Some even leave out their why. Ouch.) But in his research, Sinek discovered that great leaders – and successful businesses – work from the inside out. They start with why.

What's your why? Don't let the why question confuse you. We all are in business to make money. But making money is (hopefully) the result of our being in business. It's not the reason why. Your why is the purpose, cause, or belief of our business. Some call it the driving force. If we're in the business of scuba diving because we believe it's the fastest and easiest get-rich-quick scheme out there, we're mental. But if we're in the business of scuba diving because we're passionate about helping people explore the underwater world by teaching them to scuba dive and leading them on trips, we're onto something.

Sinek suggests using a simple fill-in-the blank statement to help you solve for why; "We exist to [fill in blank] so that [fill in blank]."

A Stealth Mission: I love author and artist Austin Kleon's *Steal Like an Artist* book trilogy, in which he encourages artists to "steal" ideas from other artists. For inspiration. Kleon isn't suggesting you steal actual works of art. That would be wrong. But idea stealing is perfectly legal. Study successful businesses you admire and emulate them. Jeffrey Abrahams stole/wrote an entire book about it, titled, *101 Mission Statements From Top Companies: Plus Guidelines for Writing Your Own Mission Statement.* Here's what I gleaned from Abrahams' book:

- Learn from companies that utilize effective mission statements.
- Understand the practical function. View mission statements as working documents, not motivational posters. Review and update as needed.
- Tailor them to fit. Adapt principles to fit your needs rather than following a rigid formula.
- Focus on clarity and purpose. Create statements that guide decision-making and inspire action.

"Should You Choose to Accept It" Here are your instructions for crafting a compelling mission statement for your business:

- Start with vision and values statements, then weave them into your mission statement.
- Be brief. And inspirational. The best mission statements are often a single sentence that includes words like "empower" or "transform" or "inspire."
- Be authentic. Use your own voice, but make it your upbeat, "I've had my coffee and I'm ready to rock the world today" voice. Don't go overboard with the inspirational language just because I suggested it. Be you. You are your brand. You are why people will do business with you.
- Be impactful. If you're a regular reader of my columns, you know your mission statement *had damn well better* include the value proposition of your product or services – it must answer the question, "How will you (your business) make my life better?"

Want to go on a mission with me? I'm currently creating a "How To Write A Mission Statement" mini-course and I need testers to try it out. If you want to work one-on-one with me – for free – as I test my material, hit me up at my QR code. Or if you just want to say hi or suggest a future column topic, I always love hearing from readers.

email Cathryn

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RETAILING

Managing Peak Season: Stop Burnout Before It Starts

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



Especially during the high season, it's not unusual to experience long days of high demand. Although we enjoy the increase in business and higher customer interactions, burnout is a very real concern I hear about frequently from dive pros. Burnout can significantly affect your mind and body causing you to suffer from exhaustion, anxiety, and even depression. In one study, researchers found that the effect of feeling tired was similar to the effects of being under the influence of alcohol. If left unchecked, *burnout can lead to even more severe health problems such as heart attacks or strokes.*

In order to avoid burnout, it's important to get into a habit of recognizing its warning signs so you can stop it before it begins. Even some relatively simple life changes may make it more likely for you to avoid burnout all together.

Here are some tips dive pros can use to manage burnout during peak season:

1. **Analyze Your Workload.** It's quite easy to take on too much without realizing that there are only so many hours in the day. If you continue to run on overdrive without giving yourself a break, you're sure to eventually reach burnout. You have two choices when it comes to altering your workload:

   - First, you can **study time management** and prioritization techniques in order to work more efficiently. You'll be able to get more done in less time.
   - Second, you can **drop things off of your workload.** This may not be ideal, but it's important for the sake of your health and happiness. Have a conversation with your manager or other team leaders. Who else on your team might be able to assist you or task swap to ensure full coverage? If you are experiencing burnout, odds are the whole team is feeling it too.

2. **Avoid Exhaustion.** When you're in-tune with your body, you can sense when you're reaching a point of exhaustion. As soon as you start to feel this way it's time to stop and make a change. You can book a mini vacation, go on a dive trip, or you can spend time at home. The important thing to remember is that you need to leave your sources of stress behind. If this means no access to a cell phone or computer, then so be it! What are the activities that give you a change of scenery to recharge?

3. **Change Is Good.** If you keep reaching a point where you think you'll burnout, then it's time to make a major life change.

   For example, you may have a job that is causing you to repeatedly burnout despite your best efforts to avoid it. Perhaps it's time to start looking for a more suitable job. Even small changes to your schedule or routine can be enough for mental and physical change of pace.

4. **Take Breaks.** There is a reason why it's mandatory to offer breaks to employees. You need breaks to refresh, rejuvenate, and renew your mind. Go for a 10-minute walk, play a Sudoku puzzle, or just get away from your source of tension for a few minutes. Is there another part of the business where you can rotate assistance to support each other in taking breaks?

5. **Ask For Help.** Sometimes we feel so alone with our problems that we forget to ask for help, yet that just might be the antidote to our stress! Talk to your partner, friend, or a personal coach to vent your frustrations and seek advice.

6. **Learn To Say No.** There is a difference between someone who is open and accommodating and someone who says yes to everything. If you tell everyone yes, it's likely that someone will take advantage of you at some point or another. Learn that sometimes saying no is in your best interest. You don't need to give yourself extra stress!

The Time Factor: In the end, the most important tip is to listen to what your inner self is telling you. If you've taken on too much, make a list and figure out the most important things that need to get done. The other stuff will have to wait or someone else will have to complete the tasks.

Take Time to Vent: If you ever start to panic, just like in diving: stop, breathe, think, and then make choices. Take a moment to step away from what is adding stress. Vent your emotions appropriately. Vent to friends outside of work, to yourself, or in a journal. Pent up emotions are likely to lead to unwanted burnout. The simple act of naming the emotion can help to reactivate the decision-making prefrontal cortex in your brain. We offer training workshops to help recognize and manage emotional intelligence for dive pros. Book time with one of our career coaches to explore resources or visit us online at DiveProCoach.com.

These are just a few strategies to stop burnout in its tracks and enjoy your life. Take action and implement these tips today, and you'll soon be free from the crushing pressure of burnout!

email Shelli

INNOVATION

Garmin's Revolutionary SubWave™ Sonar Technology

– by Gil Zeimer, ScubaStoryteller.com and Zeimer.com, San Rafael, CA

As a PADI diver since 1985, Gil has authored more than 300 scuba articles and newsletters that have appeared in over 25 magazines and websites. He looks forward to having his first book published this fall and presenting three seminars at DEMA 2025.



Garmin is committed to developing the world's most innovative, highest quality, and easiest to use marine electronics the industry has ever known. I recently had the opportunity to interview one of its executives about a revolutionary new technology for Garmin's dive products lineup.

How does the Descent™ S1 buoy benefit both dive operators and divers?

This compact, 7"-wide, 2-lb. diver communication buoy floats on the surface to provide a deeper connection with SubWave™ sonar technology.



Garmin's New Descent S1

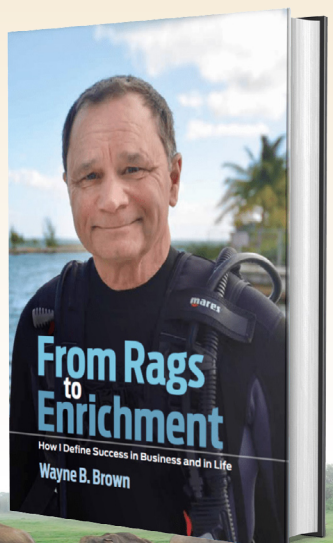
The Descent S1 buoy enables the topside crew members to monitor up to eight divers, has an IPX8 water rating to 10 meters, a rechargeable lithium battery that provides up to 15 hours of battery life for a weekend of diving, and it has a wireless technology range of up to nearly 200 feet (60 meters) away.

"Garmin is focused on creating essential products designed to help keep divers safe. The groundbreaking Descent S1 buoy adds game-changing communication, navigation, and safety capabilities between divers and their surface crew, making it the next must-have piece for dive teams, charter operations, instructors, and more."

– Susan Lyman, Garmin Vice President of Consumer Sales and Marketing

What was the "lightbulb" moment behind it?

Though Garmin has been developing marine products for decades, we wanted to create a product that provides increased situational awareness,



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by Wayne B. Brown

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Throughout 2025, Aggressor guests submitting qualifying "Make a Difference" testimonials will receive an official award plaque including a handsome Challenge Coin. The tradition of the challenge coin originated in the military, where it serves as a symbol of honor, loyalty, and camaraderie. These coins were often given to recognize acts of bravery, selflessness, and exceptional service. Over time, challenge coins have become a meaningful way to honor those who make a difference.

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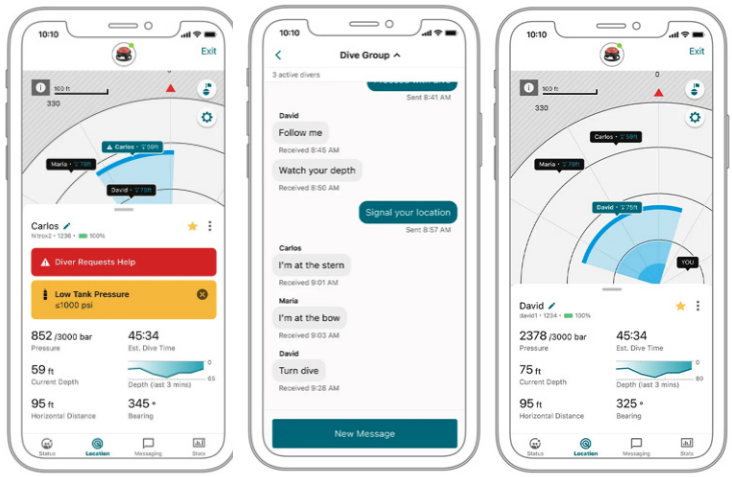
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strengthens diver communications among themselves, connects divers with the crew, and increases peace of mind.

What does it do better than anything else in the Industry today?

The Descent S1 buoy's proprietary technology offers divers four advantages:

- **Find my buoy:** Connected divers can see the distance and direction back to the buoy – whether it's tethered in place, on the boat's anchor line, or on the boat's tag line during a drift dive – and use it to navigate back to the buoy.
- **Diver-to-surface messaging:** When using a connected Descent dive computer, divers can tell those on the surface where they are, where they're going if they need to come up early, and even their remaining decompression time.
- **Extended diver-to-diver messaging:** While beneath the surface, the buoy extends the range of diver-to-diver messaging capabilities. Divers with compatible Descent dive computers can exchange preset messages with one another up to 328 feet (100 meters) away.
- **Post-dive review:** After returning to the surface, divers can view underwater heatmaps on the Garmin Dive™ smart-device app to see where their explorations took place.



Plus, three revolutionary advantages for crews from the surface:

- **Remote Diver Monitoring:** Track tank pressures, divers' locations and depths, and more, when divers are equipped with a compatible dive computer and Descent T2 transceiver. Automatic alerts can also let the topside crew know a diver's tank pressure is low or if there's an issue with depth.
- **Surface-to-Diver Messaging:** The boat crew can exchange preset messages with connected Descent dive computers underwater, enabling them to send out a diver recall if the dive needs to be cut short.
- **Diver Location Tracking:** Track the approximate range to each diver in the SubWave sonar network – up to 328 feet (100 meters) away from the buoy.

Are there other details dive operators should know?

In order to take advantage of the full suite of capabilities provided by Descent S1, divers beneath the surface will need Descent T2 transceivers on their tanks, paired to a Garmin air integrated dive computer – either the Descent Mk3i or Descent X50i. Also, conditions such as surface, waves, chop, objects, and diver position can obstruct the signal and reduce range; for more details, visit Garmin.com/subwave.

"At Garmin, we are always striving to push the industry forward and provide divers with tools to increase their situational awareness and communication underwater. Descent S1 not only provides divers with these benefits, but also allows those on the surface the ability to monitor and message with divers below. We believe this is a game-changing technology that can benefit divers of all kinds.

"Whether you're a dive retailer looking to expand your product lineup, a resort operator aiming to enhance your guests' experiences, or a tech-savvy diver seeking the latest innovations, we hope you'll consider the Garmin Descent S1 buoy for your next dive."

– Patrick Danko, Garmin Dive Marketing Product Manager.

Any last thoughts?

This product launched on July 15 and has a suggested retail price of $2,499.99. Because our products are engineered on the inside for life on the outside, we believe that the Descent S1 buoy can ultimately ensure diver safety and crew communication like never before. For more information, visit Garmin's website.

For help telling your innovative diving product story, email gil@zeimer.com.

email Gil

TRAINING

Time to Tighten the Standards: A Call for Rigor in Nitrox Gas Analysis

– by Joel Silverstein, www.joelsilverstein.com

Joel is an industry leader and a Technical Diving Instructor Trainer (TDI) who has authored nitrox and mixed gas training materials for organizations such as NAUI, YMCA, and NOAA. Since 1990, he has mixed and analyzed diving gases and manufactured thousands of nitrox analyzers through his company, Tech Diving Limited. As an experienced expedition leader and contributor to the NOAA Diving Manual, Joel is dedicated to improving diving safety and professional standards



In the early days of enriched air nitrox (EANx) diving, precision and discipline were paramount. Analyzing gas was a personal responsibility, a ritual step between tank pickup and splashdown. Today, many divers receive pre-labeled cylinders with no witness to analysis and often no analyzer in sight.

This isn't nostalgia – it's a warning. As professionals – whether at resorts, liveaboards, or training organizations – we share the responsibility to uphold the standards that protect our clients and colleagues. Many have become too casual. That complacency is eroding diving safety.

Analyzers Are Only as Good as Their Calibration

Most oxygen analyzers use electrochemical oxygen sensors. They're convenient, portable, and cheap. But they drift. They age. And they require proper calibration every time they are used.

NOAA guidelines suggest calibration should bracket the expected sample, either with a zero gas (like nitrogen or helium) and a span gas (such as compressed air or a known oxygen mix). But what we often see is a quick "calibration" using ambient air – assumed to be 20.9% – without regard for flow rate, humidity, temperature, or sensor age. Waving it in the air is not enough.

A typical electrochemical sensor's output can be off by 2–5% if it is not properly calibrated. Add in an old sensor, fluctuating flow rates, and imprecise sampling methods,

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and the final reading could easily be misleading, perhaps dangerously so, possibly leading to central nervous system (CNS) oxygen toxicity or decompression sickness.

One Analyzer? Really?

Many dive resorts and liveaboards have one or two working analyzers for the entire operation. Sometimes, that analyzer hasn't had its sensor replaced in a year. That same analyzer might be tethered to the deck or passed around hastily as the crew rushes to get everyone geared up and off the dock on time. Improperly trained crew are often seen adjusting the calibration knob between samplings to return it to zero, which negates the accuracy of subsequent samples.

This practice contradicts the primary reason gas analysis is conducted: individual accountability and precision. NOAA standards recommend using two calibrated analyzers when available. Not one for 30 people. Not one operated by a distracted divemaster who's juggling gear bags and departure times.



Proper gas analysis in action: A DiveSoft Analyzer sampling through a 2 LPM flow regulator. This setup ensures consistent pressure against the sensor for accurate readings.

Every diver should analyze their own gas, record the result, and initial the contents label. If we cut corners here, we chip away at the foundational safety principle of mixed gas diving: know your gas.

Sloppy Labeling = Lost Information

Another disturbing trend is sloppy cylinder labeling. I've seen tanks marked only with masking tape, "EANx" or "32" sometimes just a green band – no date, MOD, initials, or pressure. If a diver sets down their tank mid-dive, how does anyone know what's inside?

Proper labeling is essential. Every label should include the oxygen percentage, MOD, fill date, pressure, name or initials of the person analyzing, and diver signature. Permanent labels should be filled out with waterproof ink and securely attached. Anything less invites dangerous mix-ups.



An incomplete cylinder label: displaying only a number and percent sign, with no indication of gas type, analysis date, or analyst. A casual shortcut that risks safety.

Proper labeling is not just helpful – it's essential. The label should include:

- Oxygen percentage
- MOD (Maximum Operating Depth)
- Fill date
- Fill pressure
- Name or initials of the person analyzing
- Signature of the diver accepting the mix

Flushing Fill Whips: The Invisible Contaminant

One of the more hidden yet widespread issues occurs at the fill station. Many resorts use long fill whips to fill cylinders at their dock or on their boats from storage tanks. But few flush these whips between fills, especially if the previous gas in those fill whips was air.

If no final analysis is performed after filling, the resulting mix may not accurately reflect the intended mix, potentially resulting in a higher nitrogen content. Every fill whip should be flushed thoroughly with the target gas before filling the next cylinder. Failing to do so means your mix is not what you think it is.

Nitrox Membrane System Maintenance

Mixing nitrox with pure oxygen can be inconvenient and costly, but membrane systems simplify and reduce the cost of nitrox blending. Regular maintenance is crucial; expert Danny Graham notes that membranes rarely fail if pre-filters are well-maintained and the heater works properly. Pre-filters should be changed every 250 hours with a refrigerated air dryer or every 50 hours without one. Neglecting maintenance can affect gas quality, so it's essential to follow a strict schedule for pre-filter

changes and treat membrane systems and air supply as separate components.

Industry Drift: Are We Getting Too Comfortable?

It's easy to attribute these oversights to the demands of busy operations or the belief that "everyone does it this way." However, the truth is that normalized deviance – small, accepted deviations from best practices – accumulates over time, ultimately leading to a collapse in the system's reliability.

What we model, they will mimic. If divemasters quickly check a valve with an analyzer for just a few seconds and say, "Yep, you're good," that becomes the habit we teach. Similarly, if incomplete labels are used, the message is clear: shortcuts are acceptable. We must work actively to reverse this trend.



Calibrating an oxygen analyzer using ambient air at atmospheric pressure – standardized to 20.9% O_2 for reliable reference.

Raising the Bar: Best Practices for Professionals

Consider the following a checklist – not just of actions, but of values:

- Use two analyzers per fill station and boat. Replace sensors regularly and keep calibration logs.
- Calibrate daily with a flowmeter and clean air. Verify analyzer stability.
- Flush fill whips before every nitrox fill.
- Label cylinders completely and require divers to double-check.
- Train staff to model precise gas analysis.
- Allow enough time for proper analysis and logging.

Nitrox has become a profit center for most dive resorts. Invest in the tools, training, and maintenance needed to ensure client safety and limit your liability – it's good business.

Final Word: Our Standards Are Our Signature

Nitrox itself isn't dangerous – complacency is. As nitrox use has become routine, we risk losing the discipline that has kept divers safe for decades. The fix isn't costly or complicated. It's about culture. Raise the bar, lead by example, and refuse shortcuts. Precision isn't a luxury – it's our responsibility.

email Joel

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Nov. 13th @ 8:30 AM | W303C

INTRODUCING THE DIVE INDUSTRY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS (DIYP)

We're launching our first-ever DIYP meeting to support the next generation of dive industry leaders. If you're a young pro—or want to support one—this is your chance to be part of something new.

Currently free to join, you can come together with fellow young professionals to connect and make vital contacts in the industry in a laidback atmosphere.

Nov. 12th @ 10 AM | W303C

KICKSTART YOUR MORNING WITH OUR COFFEE HOUR

Start DEMA with our popular Coffee Hour—grab a cup, connect with industry peers, and catch up on the latest buzz before the show officially opens on Tuesday, November 11th! Or simply grab a cup to go and get pumped for another exciting DEMA!

We'll be serving hot, fresh coffee from 9-10 AM in our sponsored seminar room!

Nov. 11th @ 9 AM | W303C

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Bucket List: FIJI

We've all heard the phrase "Bucket List" and when talking to divers, Fiji is always either on the top of very near the top of that "Bucket List" and then of course Fiji's Premier Dive Resort, VOLIVOLI BEACH RESORT sits at the pinnacle of that list.

So, why VOLIVOLI BEACH RESORT?

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- With a fleet of seven (7) modern purpose built dive boats, they are able to get groups of almost any size to their 90+ world-class dive sites in comfort.
- Full survey, marine toilets, twin Suzuki 300HP outboards
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TRAVEL

Dive into Europe: Attersee Lake in Austria, Diving in the Alps

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



To recap, this series on European dive destinations came about because I noted that so many of my American dive industry colleagues considered Europe as merely a stopover on their way to distant tropical locations, rather than a destination in itself, despite being only a single flight away, and half the distance. My goal was to list destinations that are easily accessible with just one flight from the US East Coast, ideal for groups, and easy to arrange. While I was asked not to include cold-water dives – "nobody wants that" – there are incredible experiences like swimming with orcas in Northern Norway, where cooler waters are inevitable. So, should such destinations be excluded? That would be a shame. No place in Europe is quite as warm as Southeast Asia or the Red Sea anyway, but water temps are still comfortable.

The next destination is a bit of an outlier – one that might surprise most – but it's a truly fascinating choice: the Alps. This vast mountain range in central Europe offers some of the world's most beautiful freshwater dive sites.



Crystal Clear Waters of Attersee Lake

I'll focus on Austria, though the Alps span eight countries, as I've dived here myself and found it immensely rewarding, and there is a substantial dive community in the country.

Narrowing it down even further, the Salzkammergut region alone has almost 170 lakes. The region is renowned for its alpine landscapes, crystal-clear lakes with a diverse and beautiful aquatic habitat and rich fish life, including pike, bass, and perch. And no, you don't need to be a mountaineer or an outdoors enthusiast to enjoy these stunning dive spots. In fact, most dive sites are accessible by car or located in front of your accommodation, like a house reef. You'll also be quite comfortable in a wetsuit.

Many lakes in the region have dive centres, some of which also cater to technical divers, much like tropical locations, and plenty of cosy hotels with stunning views.

Attersee, the largest lake in Austria, offers enough variety and sites to keep visiting divers busy for a long vacation. The water, said to be of drinking quality, provides stunning visibility and a unique topography from shallow plateaus with a rich vegetation and schools of fish, to steep walls reaching depths of over 100m/ 328'. Several wrecks are available for exploration, and many dive sites are equipped with buoys, lines, steps, and platforms.

There are several dive centres around Attersee (listed on training agency sites), and plenty of accommodation options offered on hotel booking sites. The classic city of Salzburg, Mozart's birthplace, is rich in history, music, and alpine charm, and is just an hour's drive away. Munich (Germany), a major European hub with many US connections and probably the easiest point of entry, is only 2.5 hours by car. Austria is uniquely photogenic, both above and below the surface, and it is no wonder that so many award-winning u/w photographers and leading u/w photography equipment brands are Austrian.

read more

email Peter



RETAILING

Keeping Divers Diving by Selling the Big Three

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



I can remember when I was younger the big three meant the three big names in the auto industry - GM, Ford and Chrysler. Well, today we have a lot more than three big names producing cars around the world with a lot of choices. When it comes to diving, I have an opinion on the big three. In my last article on the balanced scorecard, I introduced a KPI centered around selling the big three - a regulator, the buoyancy compensator and the dive computer. Let's drill down a little more on this idea.

As dive professionals and dive retailers we all inevitably get the question from our students and customers about what piece of dive gear should they buy first. There are many different opinions on this topic with valid reasoning. Over time, I crafted my answer. I would tell my students and customers that I really couldn't tell them what they should buy first but I could tell them what they need to be a diver, centering around the three key pieces of equipment. With the stage set, our discussion would then be about my reasons and then addressing specifically what they would ultimately purchase and the timing.

Let's start with the practical reasons for divers to make the investment in this specific equipment. These divers have made a commitment to your shop. Most have purchased their personal gear (mask, snorkel, fins and boots), procured their electronic learning, and paid their tuition for your open water class. As they progress through their training, we've reinforced the elements of safety, comfort and confidence in the water. Having this baseline, we can now have a meaningful discussion on the value of the big three.

Starting with the regulator, our open water training tells us that the most important feature of a scuba regulator is ease of breathing. There is a whole lot more information that needs to be provided. First, the scuba regulator is the most intimate piece of dive gear that we use. Owning their own regulator means that they know who was the last per-



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son to use it. That mouthpiece on the regulator is theirs. They will also know how it has been maintained, cleaned and stored. While there is no guarantee that a regulator might not have a failure, they have control over this risk by having their regulator properly serviced and handled with care.

Buoyancy, trim and control in the water should be at the top of every divers mind. As the name implies our BCD is critical in our buoyancy and control. There are many different models of BCDs on the market from jacket style, back inflate, and the backplate and wing. First and foremost the diver needs to be comfortable with the fit of their BC. Too many times we see divers with a BCD that is too big and flops around seriously compromising their control. Additionally, if they are comfortable with their BC, they will consistently dive that rig and should improve their buoyancy and control. Finally, by having their own BC, they will know all the safety elements associated with their gear including dump valves, releases and the weight system.

Today, we are very fortunate to have affordable dive computers readily available. While not specifically required to conduct a dive, there are many operators whose policies require that each diver have their own dive computer and for the most part will have rental computers available. This however presents a challenge. First, it might seem obvious but a diver needs to be able to read the screen. Font size, layout, brightness and the amount of information may make it difficult for an individual to read the data. Secondly, with the wide array of dive computers on the market, each has nuances in their menu structure and set up. A diver who owns his own computer should be able to properly prepare the computer for each dive and ensure that they know where to find critical information.

While dive computers all provided the key data during the dive, they do display information in different ways. Safely conducting their dive requires that the diver be able to properly interpret that information real-time. Finally, after the dive, the log function allows the diver to document and review the parameters of their dive and in many cases provide download capabilities to ensure they have a complete dive log.

Purchasing the big three represents a significant investment for new divers and there are various marketing and

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sales strategies to help them with their purchase. One obvious approach is to offer various "Big Three Bundles." These different bundles should balance budget along with quality. A word of caution however is that you must ensure that you are not violating dealer agreements or minimum advertised pricing (MAP). There are also various financing options, like Synchrony or Klarna. You may also consider a layaway program. As an inducement, consider offering a free pool session to shake down their new gear.

There is no doubt that scuba diving is an extremely gear intensive sport. It seems that there is always one more piece of gear to purchase or upgrade and new divers can be overwhelmed very easily. They will seek out your advice and guidance. Consider starting your dialog with the big three - the regulator, buoyancy compensator and dive computer - three essential pieces of dive equipment that should allow your divers to become more competent and safe as well as help keep them engaged in diving. Both the dive shop and the student have made a significant investment in certification. Selling the big three can help everyone see a return on that investment.

email Jeff

INDUSTRY NEWS

Dr. Sylvia Earle's Focus On Ocean Conservation

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



"Einstein was a pretty smart man but he didn't know what kids know today. He didn't see the Earth from outer space," Dr. Sylvia Earle remarked at the Future Wavemakers symposium, held at Florida Power and Light's Manatee Lagoon complex on the Intracoastal Waterway in Riviera Beach, Florida. The event championed ocean conservation and Dr. Earle's ambassadorship promoting individual commitment to saving the seas.

"We need the ocean. The ocean really needs us," she told a large audience of outdoor enthusiasts, parents, teachers, and young people who came for breakfast overlooking the water and to hear innovators share their dedication to making an impact.



Gabrielle Mcgee (left), Dr. Sylvia Earl (right), Wavemakers Symposium

With plastic debris and drastic pollution threatening the world's oceans, Future Wavemakers has taken responsibility not only for educating and inspiring young people to act, but also for addressing Florida-specific conservation challenges to protect marine wildlife and ecosystems.

Founded by Gabrielle Raymond McGee, the nonprofit began as a school incentive program and has grown into a major platform bringing scientists and experts together to restore the ocean and secure its future. Gabrielle, inspired by a TV program featuring Dr. Earle when she was six, created the organization that would later bring her hero back to Florida.

"Wavemakers sparks curiosity for kids to dive in and learn about the oceans. We are teaching the next generation what's happening. We ask: What's the one action you can do to make an impact?" Gabrielle said.

"We are looking at the next generation of ocean leaders," added moderator Danni Washington. "Wavemakers started as a small ripple."

Their mantra – that even a ripple can make a difference – was echoed by 18-year-old Ryan Moralevitz, who began picking up plastic trash at age four. "I got told 'no' bunches of times. I kept going. Everybody, no matter your age, can make an impact. Just pick up one plastic bag to keep it from blowing into the ocean and killing marine life," he said.

"I'll never forget that moment," Dr. Earle reflected, recalling her own youth underwater, sitting still as a fish and lobster approached. "Just letting things happen. Give life a chance. At 90 years old, I'm a witness. We can change."

She continued, "There are plastics in the ocean that didn't exist when I was a kid. Sharks are being depleted. It's never too late. My inspiration came from national parks. The ocean is a system favorable to us. What are you going to do with the gift of being alive? Make that little ripple – you can make an impact."

email John

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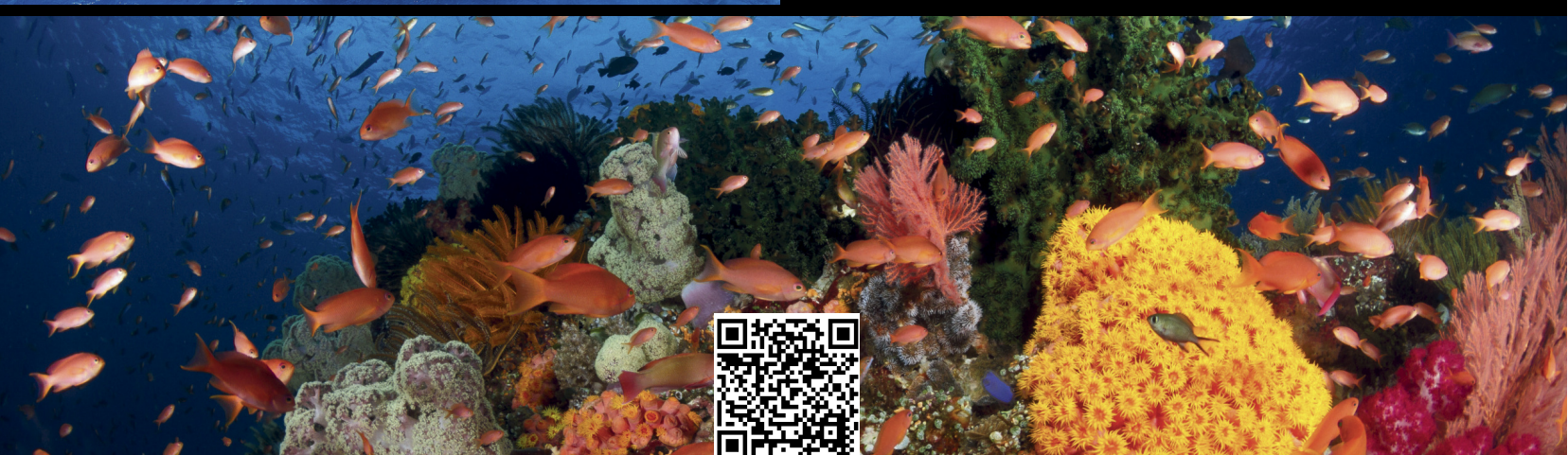


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