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SEPTEMBER 2024
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TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION, HEALTHY HEARTS & DIVING



Cover photo of photographer Cristian Dimitrius with a Banded Sea Krait (10X more venemous than a rattlesnake), on Moyo Reef, Indonesia, between Komodo and Bali.

Photo by Eric Cheng/echengphoto.com.

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Feeding whale shark by Mark B. Hatter
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Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Palmyra Atoll, central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
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FROM THE PUBLISHER



THE DEMA SHOW IS COMING – ARE YOU READY?

This issue is dedicated to getting ready for the DEMA Show in November. As dive professionals, there is no other event in the world that is more important to attend than the DEMA Show in November. This year it's in Las Vegas, and in spite of the Formula One race starting the last day of the show, hotel rooms are still typically inexpensive. The convention center is far removed from the strip where the race will take place. Regardless, if you have not booked air already, I would suggest you do that today. As of now, the DEMA hotel block is still open for rooms as low as $127. Does this sound like a DEMA Show commercial? Yes, because the show is good for our industry, and we are all about the 'dive industry.'

There is no other place to communicate, socialize and educate about all things diving than the DEMA Show. It's an essential part of our community so please go. We feature three articles this month on how to plan and make the most out of the show. Next month we will dedicate the entire issue to show-related content. Why? We need the DEMA Show. Whether you're a manufacturer, liveaboard, resort or any other part of our industry, the four days in Vegas will bring 80 to 90% of all retailers in the USA under one roof. As our Editor-At-Large, Neal Watson always says: "The cost of exhibiting at the DEMA Show is a fraction of the cost it takes to visit the same shops that will wander by your booth over those four days. It's one of the best marketing expenses any company can make in the dive industry." And DEMA is also about our future...

I touched on the need to reach the next generation of divers in the last issue. It's all our future and we need to train the next generation of divers. Sherry Hammer wrote a beautiful story about how she is doing exactly that with her children's dive programs she runs in the Chicago area. She's doing what we all need to do since probably 90% of you reading this are instructors. Make an effort to reach out to a sibling, cousin, friend of the family, or someone underprivileged and teach a child to dive. We need that next generation and there is a great place to see the young dive professionals: The DEMA Show in November as they celebrate young professionals with the Wave Maker awards.

See you at the show, booth 8075 on the Bonaire Aisle, between the Cayman and Bahamas pavilions!



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email William

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SAFETY

Cardiac Issues – Getting to the Heart of the Matter

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



In a previous article, I addressed the issue of diver responsibility. One of the basic tenets of personal diver safety is the importance of maintaining good mental and physical fitness for diving, and a critical component of fitness to dive is cardiac health. Cardiovascular diseases are a leading cause of death globally in the general population. Of the nearly 18 million premature deaths annually (for those under the age of 70), nearly 40% are caused by cardiovascular diseases. Of these deaths, 85% are due to heart attack and stroke. We can reduce the likelihood of most cardiovascular diseases by considering behavioral and environmental risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet, obesity, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, and air pollution. It is imperative to understand the warning signs of cardiovascular disease and detect cardiovascular disease as early as possible so that management with counseling, medicines, lifestyle changes, and possibly corrective surgical interventions can begin.



While cardiovascular disease is of critical importance to the general population, it is even more critical in the diving population. This is due to the fact that divers may be in remote locations, potentially far from medical support, or they are underwater in an environment that is very unforgiving when it comes to the potential for loss of consciousness. The difficulty of rescuing and recovering an unconscious diver underwater can be problematic and reduce the overall chances of survival.

Having a cardiac event underwater can result in loss of consciousness and, possibly, drowning. There is a new safety device that is currently under development that may improve the chances of an unconscious, non-breathing diver being located and resuscitated. This product, called DIVO (www.divo.se), is designed to automatically inflate the diver's buoyancy compensator if the diver stops breathing for 35 seconds, bringing the unconscious, non-breathing diver to the surface. It is far better for the stricken diver to be on the surface where rescue and resuscitation efforts can, hopefully, prevent a bad situation from turning into a fatality.

Although it is disturbing that cardiac-related fatalities occur during an otherwise safe and enjoyable sport, what is also distressing is that a significant number of those who died as a result of a cardiac event associated with scuba diving had signs and/or symptoms that could have been recognized as cardiac-related before or during the dive, but they continued to dive anyway. Had these divers or one of their diving companions simply questioned whether it was prudent to continue or 'called' the dive, the fatal situation may have been averted.

In 2008, DAN published an analysis of 947 diving-related fatalities from the DAN fatality database. The published article, "Common causes of open-circuit recreational diving fatalities," indicated that the number one triggering event that turned an otherwise enjoyable recreational dive into a fatality was "insufficient breathing gas." In 2015, DAN reviewed their fatality records, and the number one triggering event was now "underlying health problems." This may indicate that the number of cardiac events taking place in the diving population is on the rise.

Additionally, from information published in the DAN Annual Diving Report-2019 Edition, in 2017, among the 29 cases where autopsy was available (20 scuba and 9 breath-hold), in 10 scuba diving cases and six breath-hold cases, the cause of death or disabling condition was an acute cardiac event.

With an aging active diving population (the average age of injured recreational divers being somewhere between 40 and 50), diseases associated with age are likely to be an issue. When you look at sports-related deaths, coronary artery disease is the leading cause of sudden cardiac death in those over the age of 35. The risk of cardiac-related death in divers steadily increases with age, with divers older than 50 having a risk 12.9 times that of younger divers. From the DAN data, 25% of

the divers who suffered a cardiac event while diving were completely asymptomatic and were totally unaware of an impending cardiac event.

It is estimated that over 3 million Americans and approximately 2.8 million Europeans will scuba dive this year. While recreational diving fatalities are rare (averaging 82 per year worldwide), the number involving cardiac-related issues is increasing. From 1989 to 2015, the proportion of diving fatalities involving those from the 50–59-year-old age group increased from 15% to 35%, while fatalities in the over-60 age group increased significantly from 5% to 20%. Cardiac events now rank as the second leading cause of death in scuba divers, behind drowning.



Divers using the Avelo system. Photo by Jennifer Idol.

We know that diving exposes divers' bodies to various stressors that independently affect cardiovascular function that may initiate an irregular heartbeat called an arrhythmia. These stressors include immersion, exposure to cold, and increased workload while diving. While we cannot mitigate the stressor of immersion, with some degree of forethought and preparation, we may be able to mitigate the potential for an arrhythmia by managing the other stressors. With immersion, blood pressure slightly increases, and the heart must work harder to maintain circulation. These conditions contribute to various changes in heart rhythm that range from a slow heart rate (bradycardia), caused by cold, to fast heart rate (tachyarrhythmia), caused by the body's response to stress. Older divers, especially those with cardiovascular disease, are at greater risk of adverse reactions to these stresses. It is vital that divers be aware of the effects of immersion on the cardiovascular system while scuba diving. There is also an increased strain on the heart due to immersion and constriction of peripheral blood vessels, as well as an increased physical workload due to the resistance of water and the increased work of breathing through the regulator. When you add additional exertion caused by swimming against a current, wave action, or simply working hard to compensate for poor buoyancy, the risk of a dive-provoked cardiac event may be significantly increased. This risk can be exacerbated by emotional stress brought on by diving in an unfamiliar location, having been away from diving for an extended period or diving beyond one's limits.

Divers who are aware of the conditions that contribute to arrhythmias may be able to mitigate these risks associated with immersion. For example, the risks associated with exposure to cold can be mitigated by having the appropriate exposure protection, whether it be wetsuits or drysuits. For those diving in extreme cold-water conditions, heated undergarments and heated gloves are available. For the increased risks associated with increased workload, divers can mitigate those risks by having a properly tuned regulator and reducing drag in the water by becoming more streamlined. There is equipment available that can significantly reduce diver drag, eliminating overweighting and the need for a drag-producing buoyancy compensator. This equipment, Avelo (www.diveavelo.com) is lighter than traditional aluminum scuba cylinders, does not require the use of a BCD and, therefore, reduces drag and workload. The reduction in drag and workload generally reduces breathing gas consumption making for a longer, more enjoyable diving experience. Besides reducing drag, the Avelo Diving System reduces the amount of lead weight necessary to achieve neutral buoyancy and not having a BCD eliminates the possibility of a rapid ascent or rapid descent caused by BCD failure.

If divers have been away from the sport for a period of time, their skills may have deteriorated, and they may need some refresher training prior to returning to the water. Refresher training can bolster confidence, reinforce good diving techniques, and reduce the stress associated with returning to the water after a prolonged absence.

Maintaining good general health and having an annual physical performed by a physician familiar with diving medicine and your life priorities is perhaps the most effective way to reduce the likelihood of these types of accidents. It is important that your healthcare provider understands that scuba diving is an important component of your active lifestyle so that they take that into consideration when providing you with your fitness to dive advice. One caveat is that scuba diving should never be so

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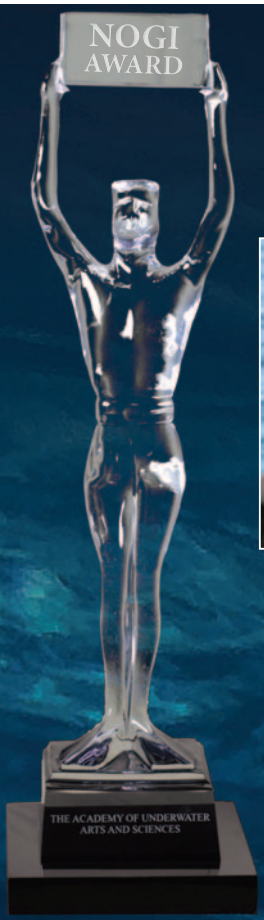
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important that your participation in the sport endangers you or those you dive with. Also, any time there is a noticeable change in your health, you should consult a physician. Regular medical evaluations for those over the age of 45 may help identify health conditions that may need attention prior to diving. These regular health checks should also include a periodic cardiac evaluation. Once diagnosed, a physician may advise against continuing to dive or impose modified diving habits or limits. Remember, if your family physician is unfamiliar with diving, you can consult DAN for a referral to a physician familiar with diving medicine or to consult with your family physician or healthcare provider. A word to the wise: a physician who dives may not be sufficiently familiar with diving medicine or all the medical conditions associated with scuba diving. Therefore, the Medical Department at DAN should be considered a valuable resource by your family physician. It is also important that your family physician understands your life priorities. If your physician understands that recreational diving is an important part of your lifestyle, they are less likely to simply declare that you stop diving at a certain age without fully understanding what health conditions may allow you to continue to safely enjoy diving or snorkeling.

The best way to avoid cardiac-related issues in diving and not put yourself or your diving companions at risk is to adopt a healthy lifestyle, have regular health checks including a periodic cardiac evaluation and always be aware of signs or symptoms of a potential medical problem. It's far better to 'call the dive' or 'call for help' than to risk a tragic outcome. A good healthy philosophy is just as essential as any piece of life support equipment.

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BUSINESS EDU

To "A.I." or Not "A.I.": That Is The Question

– by Gil Zeimer, ScubaStoryteller.com and Zeimer.com

As an advertising copywriter and Creative Director for over 40 years, my travel clients have included the Federated States of Micronesia, Red Sail Sports, Princess Cruises, All Nippon Airways, Marriott, Hilton, Westin, plus more than 20 scuba magazines and websites.



Many of my scuba industry and advertising clients have asked if I use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to write my blogs, website content, emails, scripts, or other projects. Before this article, I had not yet embraced this new technology, but I thought it would be an interesting exercise to try it and then compare it to one of my own stories on a similar subject. To further validate AI's popularity, I reached out to some well-known scuba-related companies to ask how they're leveraging its vast potential.

The A.I. Blog

My instructions to ChatGPT.com were: "Write me a 400-word blog in the humorous style of Gil Zeimer about snorkeling near humpback whales in Maui on my honeymoon." This was the result *in just 16 seconds*…

Snorkeling with Humpback Whales in Maui: A Honeymoon to Remember

Ah, Maui. The very name drips with the sweet nectar of romance and adventure. So, what better way to kick off your honeymoon than with a whale-watching and snorkeling extravaganza? You're thinking, "Nothing says 'I love you' like an aquatic serenade and a few whale breaches," right?

You and your newlywed spouse, full of the kind of giddy optimism only a honeymoon can inspire, hop aboard a boat that looks like it was designed by someone who just discovered the joys of open water. Your captain—who seems to have an unspoken pact with the whales—casually mentions that due to a 100-yard no-approach perimeter, the boat must stay as far from the whales as your aunt's fruitcake stays from Thanksgiving dinner.



'Real' Breaching Humpback Whale, Maui, HI

As you glide over the sparkling waters, you can practically hear the whales gossiping about your nautical predicament. Your captain, with all the charm of a maritime magician, points out the distant, but spectacular, sight of a whale breaching. It's the ocean's version of waving from a mile away while shouting, "Hey! Look at me! Over here!" You squint, trying to catch every splash and spin, like you're at a water ballet where you can only see the performers' grand jetés from a mile away.

Now it's time for snorkeling. You leap—or rather, flop—into the water, feeling like a graceful manatee. As you float there, your snorkel gear making you look like a particularly unsteady deep-sea creature, you hear it: the hauntingly beautiful songs of the humpbacks. It's as if the ocean itself is serenading you, only it's a karaoke contest where the whales forgot to bring the lyrics. You and your spouse exchange wide-eyed glances, utterly amazed by the acoustics of nature's underwater concert, which you're experiencing from a respectable distance.

Then comes the pièce de résistance: you spot another breach, this time closer. You wave your arms and shout, "There's a whale!" to your spouse, who responds with an equally enthusiastic, "Where?" You're both simultaneously enchanted and exasperated, as the whales continue their aquatic ballet, blissfully ignoring the no-approach perimeter rule.

As you climb back onto the boat, you realize that your whale-watching experience was one of the most unforgettable moments of your honeymoon. After all, love isn't just about proximity—it's about enjoying the view, no matter how far away it might be.

The "G.Z." Blog

For comparison, here's one of my own stories. I wrote it for the Summer 1998 issue of *Adventure Journal*, though I've now changed the headline.

Our Humpback Honeymoon During Maui March Madness

While on my honeymoon in 1992, I fell in love with another man. So did my wife. And we're not even swingers.

He was a big fella—45 feet (13.7 meters) long, 30 tons (30,000 kg), and had a beautiful voice. Though he was about three miles (4.82 km) away, I heard him singing when I went scuba diving the day before at Ka'anapali Beach along Maui's northwestern shore.

Later, we both listened to his haunting calls from a mere 200 yards (183 meters) away as we snorkeled on a whale-watching cruise near Lahaina.

We actually felt the sound vibrations reverberate through our bodies. It was like getting splashed with a liquid wave of sound.

Allow me to blubber on. Only male humpbacks sing, but no one knows why. Their songs are complicated with phrases and sub-phrases that they repeat every 6-18 minutes. However, their melodies do not repeat year after year; instead, the whales pick up from where they left off the previous year.



A.I. generated Whale from the author.

Each whale has its own ditty, and they tend to point their heads down when they sing, so it's suggested that divers and snorkelers look down when they're trying to tune in.

As many as 12,000 humpbacks migrate up to 3,600 miles (5,800 km) annually to Hawaii from Alaska, from roughly December through April. So, there's a whole lotta singing going on.

Humpbacks trek to tranquil Hawaiian waters to mate, give birth, and fast before returning to the colder feeding waters. They come to Maui's leeward side because of the shallow, sandy ocean floor, 75-80 degrees F. (24-27 degrees Celsius) waters, and the protected channel.

This special sanctuary is the only place in the U.S. where humpbacks come to reproduce and is the best place in the world for tourists and researchers to see so many whales, so close to land.

As Jacque Cousteau once preached: "We are but visitors to the underwater world of the humpback whales. Please be kind to the gentle giants."

Thanks to the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the urgings of Cousteau and other activists, humpbacks have come back from near extinction. The MMPA strictly protects them from human contact; there's a hefty fine of $100,000 for hassling them, and all boats must honor a 100-yard no-approach perimeter, especially whale-watching cruises. So, choose an operator accordingly.

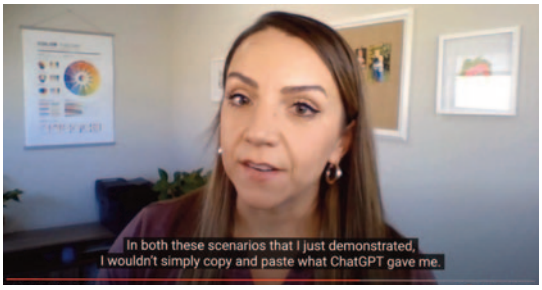
How Industry Leaders Are Working With A.I.

Now that you've seen a long form of what ChatGPT can do, I interviewed various industry experts on how they're using A.I. platforms – or not – in their content creation.

DEMA: Yes.

Rachelle Reimers emailed me this: "As the Association's Communications & Publications Chief, my insight is limited to how we use A.I. in our communications. While I am familiar with the program and its capabilities, I'd say at present, I mostly use ChatGPT to occasionally help repurpose content (as appropriate) or maybe to help generate inspiration for an email subject line (or something else of that nature).

She demonstrated this in a Life Hacks marketing lesson video she made last year when she asked ChatGPT to generate multiple variations for a very specific audience for a social media post that she had already written. Secondly, she asked ChatGPT to repurpose an email as a Facebook post.



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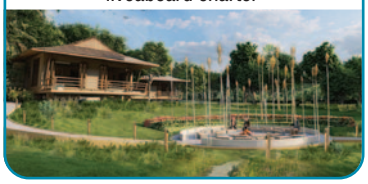


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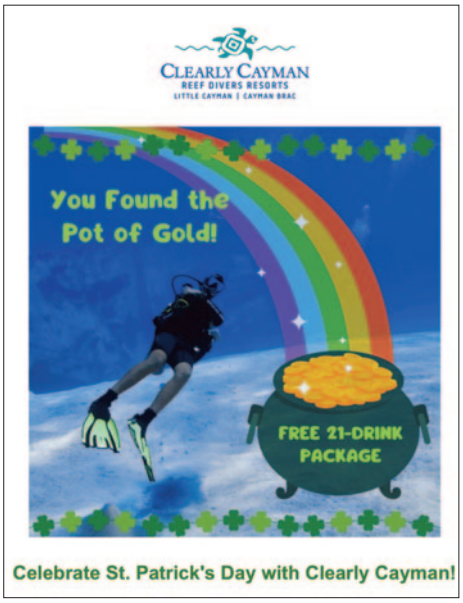
BUSINESS EDU continued

She closed this video by stating, "Please do not use what it gives you verbatim… Use it as a starting point, then make modifications based on accuracy, brand voice, logic, and so on…. No one knows your business and customers better than YOU. A.I. can certainly be helpful by providing inspiration and saving you time."

Jeff Cinciripino: Yes.

As the former owner of Scuba Shack Dive Shop in Connecticut, author of a blog, host of a bi-weekly podcast, and frequent contributor to this magazine, Jeff has "Used A.I. to jump-start scripts for videos, subject lines for emails, Google ad content, plus ideas for potential blog posts about scuba, sustainability, ocean health, and more."

"But it's a slippery slope," he continues. "A.I. is great to have in your toolbox. You can't ignore it. You should embrace it. But once everyone is using A.I., we should put boundaries on its use so that everyone isn't creating the same content."



Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Clearly Cayman!

Clearly Cayman: Yes.

Sarah-Jane Harlan, Sales and Marketing Manager, answered my query: "We haven't dabbled too much in the A.I. stratosphere, but we're not opposed to it. We've started using Canva with A.I. integrated into its program to help create online graphics."

"One example was animating a still image of a diver for a St. Patty's Day email," she added. "It was effective, and we received a great response with a 63% open rate."

"A.I. certainly helps generate some ideas when you're looking to write press releases. We like it for idea generation, but it doesn't harness our brand voice."

Diventures: Yes.

Jessica Jarosh, Chief Marketing Officer, said, "We're definitely in the testing phase, using it as a start to get a quick leg up with new ideas for creative, or to do research. It's acting as a superpower for our team. We've had some fun with images, but we're still cautious because of IP use. It's a good toolbox in our shed."

Divers Direct: No.

Robert Darmanin, Marketing & eCommerce Manager, replied, "No, we don't use A.I. We have a team that produces all of our creative content and writing in-house."

The Bottom Line.

My esteemed colleagues and I agree that A.I. is a great place to inspire your needs for blogs, web content, emails, and more. But use it wisely because it's not fact-checked, it doesn't offer exclusivity versus someone else using similar instructions, and, most importantly, it does not utilize your unique writing style or personal experiences.

So why use "A.I." when you can use "G.Z." (AKA me.)?

email Gil



TRAVEL

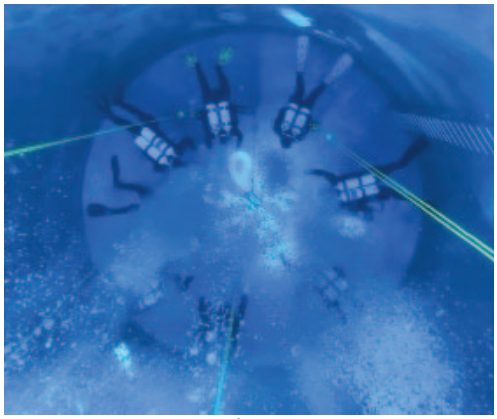
Korean Diving Country Clubs: From a Small Stream...

– by Karl Shreeves, Education and Content Development Executive at PADI Worldwide
First certified in 1970, his first role in the dive industry was as a retail salesperson 1975. He became an instructor in 1985 and joined the PADI Worldwide staff in 1987. He has 37+ years interacting with the global dive community as he carries out his duties as a writer, instructional designer, imager, trainer, and subject matter expert.



Koreans have a saying: 개천에서 용 난다. Expressing the idea of reaching prominence from humble beginnings, it translates to, "Dragons come from small streams" -- and nothing better describes Korea and the Korean dive industry themselves. One of the poorest places on earth following the Korean War, by 1990, the Republic of Korea (a.k.a. South Korea) was back on the world's economic radar, and the Korean dive community with it. Since then, diving has grown steadily and, apart from the pandemic, has largely defied regional and global economic dips even when other industries – and diving in other regions – experienced stagnation or declines. As an experienced American dive professional, my observations seem to suggest that we can learn some things from the Korean dive industry.

Some Caveats: To be clear, I'm a student of but not an expert on Korean culture; this article is based on my 35+ years in the dive industry, coupled with what I've learned interacting with the Korean dive industry. To the extent that I'm wrong, Koreans have an expression for that, too: 가끔 원숭이도 나무에서 떨어진다 -- "Sometimes even monkeys fall from trees."



Tec divers at 36 metres/110 feet at Paradive.

Also, this is not about Korea's traditional women divers, the Haenyeo, who breath-hold dive to harvest seafood. They are a respected, important part of Korea's Jeju Island culture, but they understandably keep their traditional culture largely separate from modern diving culture.

Some Background: Isolated by location on a peninsula until relatively modern times, Korea has a long and complex history that dates back more than 2,000 years, creating a strongly united culture with solid, distinct cohesive values that influence interactions – including in the dive business. These include:

Respect. Respect is expected in Korean culture to the extent that Korean language grammar forms vary depending upon whom one is talking to and/or about, and when. Older age and/or position (e.g., the boss, parents) are expected to be shown respect (specific manners as well as language), even when disagreeing. Respect is even part of drinking etiquette. As an extension of this, Koreans tend to follow rules and laws, with a far lower rate of serious crimes than the U.S.

Education and effort. Koreans value education highly, with its educational system ranking among the world's top eight countries. Teaching is very respected; not only is it common to show respect by addressing someone (not necessarily a teacher) as 선생님 – "honored teacher" – but it is even the preferred title for medical doctors. Not surprisingly, self-discipline, hard work, and excellence are cultural values entwined with this. Long work hours are typically expected, with 60+ hour weeks reportedly not unusual.

Meals. Sharing food and drink is central to Korean culture. Guests (even unexpected ones) are invariably offered at least coffee and often something to eat. Meals are social events with family, coworkers, and/or friends. Historically a drinking culture, drinking is also part of this, though etiquette has evolved to embrace appropriate moderation and abstinence. Coffee has become socially significant, and Korea has become a major coffee consumer; cafe culture is a big deal, now served by 75,000+ diverse coffee houses.

New things. Though Korean culture reflects its history, Koreans are not stuck in the past, but the opposite. Koreans are very interested in the latest technologies (they usually get the latest phone when it comes out –

even if their old one isn't that old) and trends. Usually early adopters, it's culturally expected to be aware of and part of trends.

Dive Industry: Dive operations in Korea vary, ranging from dive centers comparable to those you'd expect anywhere to ones that differ distinctly. However, they all share general characteristics that not only seem cultural, but are tied to success and are applicable almost anywhere.

Customer first. As a service culture, Korean businesses put customers first (there is no tipping in Korea). With dive operations, which means not only are you invariably greeted when you enter, but most offer visitors coffee (remember, coffee's a big deal), have a cafe business within, or both. And we're not talking instant (though Korea makes the world's best instant coffee in my opinion -- but what do I know?) or Keurig, but high-end barista-quality coffee machines. Korean dive centers focus on what works for customers, such as diver lifts on boats (no giant strides or ladder-climbing – common on Jeju Island) or a collapsible pool building (indoor or outdoor pool according to the weather). But it's also the little, obvious things, like dive gear stored poolside so it doesn't have to be lugged far, ample setup benches at dive sites/boat loading areas, towels available and ready after divers get out, etc. It's more work -- but that's how a service culture thinks.



Freedive center. Note seating to make people feel welcome to stay awhile -- and guests drinking coffee, which the staff served them.

Instructors honored and excellence expected. Quick with trends, the Korean diving industry quickly embraced recreational, tec, freediving, and mermaid diving as they emerged -- and excels at all of them. Consistent with Korea's high esteem for education, dive instructors are respected as professionals. Almost invariably, Korean dive operators and their instructors display exemplary diving skills, which they pass on to their students.



Underwater monitoring system at K26 -- note cafe in background.

Social, social, social. Diving is social, but Korean dive operators take it up a notch as a standard operating procedure, an essential part of student, customer, and staff interactions. Communities form around dive operators and instructors but integrate with each other. Most dive centers have seating (with coffee and other beverages) to encourage appropriate socializing and hanging out. Classes and trips are events; camaraderie often extends into evening Korean-style group meals. The close of a class or final dinner of a trip is typically big with awards, certification presentations, gifts, music, and/or even a collaborative slide/video show. And these gatherings are not always or exclusively about diving. Diving brings everyone together, but not everything has to be about diving. As an example, the PADI 2023 Diving Festival talent show on Jeju Island included ocean-themed contestants, but the winners were a rope jumping couple (they were really awesome, BTW). The dive community is highly active on social media, particularly KakaoTalk -- Korea's homegrown but globally usable chat/text/call/buy-things-and-more social media app.

Country clubs for divers. Specialized purpose-built sites for diving are emerging globally, and at this writing, Korea has three: Deepstation, K26, and Paradive. Although differing in many ways, all share multistory complexes with deep wells (26 m/85 ft and deeper), viewing windows, close-circuit monitoring, underwater structures, and diver convenience. All three have changing shower facilities, classrooms and dining and beverages (coffee!), and are popular with rec, tec, mermaid and freedivers. Instructors from Seoul area dive centers train (typically) at all three, selection depending upon availability, scheduling, and logistics.

But what makes them special is that they are for divers what country clubs are for golfers: places to gather, socialize, dine, and have access to professional guidance – as well as dive. Bring your own gear if you want (many divers do), but they even have towels if you forget yours,

much less equipment. Everything you need is there by the water -- gear up, dive, get out, hang it up (they rinse it), shower, catch a bite with friends while watching other divers through the windows, then head home -- perfect after leaving the office in a works-long-hard-hours culture. These are not "wannabe" pool-only divers. Thanks to super convenient access, they dive more, so you mostly see good to excellent skills appropriate to the training level.

"K26 strives to provide as many benefits as possible to all divers who visit," says Park Jae Jung-Elliot, a PADI Course Director at K26. "Free admission is provided for instructors who register with us as visiting for educational purposes, and instructors get a 20% entry discount with all their students." K26 entry fees include the use of all basic dive equipment, he notes.

"Paradive can be enjoyed by both beginner and advanced divers," says Kang Soohyun, manager of Paradive, "because it has a deep depth of 35 meters and depth sections in five levels." Kang also says Paradive's Egyptian concept structures, large viewing windows, and equipment use included in the entrance fee are also parts of what makes Paradive different and popular.

Competitive cooperation. Korean dive operators compete fiercely but know when and how to cooperate. They don't waste energy over petty disagreements; direct competitors not only respect each other but are often close friends. Korean dive operators are good at seeing how collaborating and leaning in together to make events like sports shows, the PADI Diving Festival, pro-level training, etc., benefits them by benefiting the entire dive community. The Korean dive community stands up for itself tightly. That is, Koreans disagree, compete, and at times fight among themselves – but an outsider who tries to do so faces them all unified as one.



Post event meals and celebrations are not only fun, but create community and social ties that unite customers, instructors and the dive community overall.

Summary -- What the Global Dive Industry Can Learn from the Korean Dive Industry:

1. Put the customer first in everything, big and little. Groom a service culture that thinks, "if it makes things better for the customer, it's worth it." Make customers feel welcome -- serve coffee or whatever is customary where you operate. The answer to all requests is "yes." It may have to be a qualified "yes," but it's still "yes."
2. Treat instructors as high-level professionals and expect excellence. Put staff on the same level as professors, master technicians, etc., and watch how they rise to that expectation. Not only does this show respect, but it also transmits respect. Your customers will do the same.
3. It's all about relationships and interactions. Make your dive operation a place to hang out a bit. Lace training and travel with group meals and other social activities -- not all necessarily diving activities. Be reachable on the social media your customers prefer. These are not nice-to-haves, but essential.
4. Do everything you can to remove barriers between your customers and going diving. You don't have to run a Deep Station/K26/Paradive to think "country club." Little conveniences go a long way, and customers notice.
5. Highlight the new. Although cultures differ in how fast they adopt trends or technologies, all have early adopters who get excited over something new to try or buy. Be conspicuous about the just-released regulator, the updated course, new type of dive activity, etc.
6. Compete, but cooperate. Work with other dive operators to make diving bigger; don't get narrow-minded about stuff like whose name gets listed first on a banner or which table is 2 centimeters closer to the stage. When something outside of the dive community comes against any of us in the dive community, make that something contend with all of us in the dive community. 끝 (the end)

email Karl



Tuesday, November 19 • 6:30-10 pm

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Mikki McComb-Kobza, Ph.D.

Explorer and Shark Conservation Biologist

Executive Director, Ocean First Institute

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ADVERTORIAL

Merchandise Your Store to Sell More SeaCure & Provide a Better Consumer Experience

– by John Flanders, SeaCure Mouthpieces, john@seacuremouthpiece.com



As a scuba professional, it is your responsibility to inform, educate, and guide your divers to the best solutions possible to safely enjoy scuba. There are many products that help accomplish that goal. However, to a recreational diver, walking into a scuba shop can be intimidating and daunting. They can experience a visual information overload that overlooks some of the accessories that can improve their dive experience. Over the last 32 years, SeaCure Custom Mouthpieces has helped divers create a safer and more comfortable dive environment. However, SeaCure Custom Mouthpieces are not always promoted well in-store. Today, consumers want a guided experience in a retail store. Following are ten ideas that may create a better experience as well as highlight a valuable piece of equipment.



1. Display all 5 of the SeaCure colors at eye level. Position the showcase near your regulator display.
2. Near the display, hang a printout of SeaCure's Size Chart QR Code. This will assist customers in picking the right mouthpiece.
3. Students don't always have a lot of time to spend in the retail store. Help them learn more about SeaCure by strategically placing flyers in your classroom.
4. Annual service is a great time to promote SeaCure to a customer. Many stores add a "new" SeaCure mouthpiece as an option on the regulator service form.
5. Consumers love bundles. Add a SeaCure Mouthpiece in your Regulator Packages.
6. People are visual. Display SeaCure Mouthpieces on your display regulators.
7. Your customers are still browsing while they are checking out. Place a SeaCure "shelf-talker" at your point of sale/check out and you might just add an additional item to their basket.
8. When you are doing advertisements, always include a SeaCure Mouthpiece alongside regulators and regulator service.
9. Everyone needs an inexpensive but valuable gift. Promote SeaCure as a great holiday or birthday gift for your customers' favorite dive buddy.
10. Most importantly, keep a healthy back stock with all colors and all sizes. Even sizes for regulators you don't sell. The one thing that separates retailers from online sellers is the convenience of right here and right now. You can win a new customer just by having what you sell in stock.

If you need help merchandising your retail store, email merchandising@seacuremouthpiece.com and we will be happy to assist.

REGULATOR SIZE CHART

Scan here

TRAVEL

Diving into Europe? Try Portugal's Diving

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



Following my previous column on diving in Europe, I received feedback from a travel agent who criticised my suggestion that divers book their own flights, accommodation, and dive packages. The agent argued that it "isn't safe" to do so. There are a couple of issues to unpack here.

Firstly, I want to emphasise that I do recommend using a reputable travel agent whenever possible. Travel agents are professionals who can provide a seamless and worry-free experience by working with reliable local operators and offering various forms of coverage and protection. In any case, my intention is certainly not to undermine the business of dive travel agencies.



My aim is to address the surprising lack of awareness among American divers about the unique and diverse diving opportunities available in Europe. Many US-based dive travel agents also seem to overlook European destinations, possibly because they view them as less profitable compared to Asian resorts and liveaboards or perhaps because they share the same lack of knowledge as their clients.

So, what should you do? Should you disregard the idea of diving in Europe? That would be a right pity.

I suggest starting by researching destinations that fit your preferences, time constraints, and budget. In upcoming columns, I will propose several destinations, mainly in the Mediterranean, that are easily accessible from the US, such as being served by non-stop flights. Meanwhile, you can explore a range of inspiring European destination features on this link: https://xray-mag.com/section/Travel. Just scroll down to the European section. Articles are free to download without any registration.

Once you have a specific location in mind, reach out to a trusted travel agent to see if they can assist. They might be eager to explore new opportunities or at least help with practical arrangements and do some business. However, if that doesn't work out, don't hesitate to book flights, accommodation, car rental, etc., independently, as you would for any other trip, or simply book some regular (non-diving) travel package and arrange dive excursions separately. Booking travel in Europe is straightforward and quite safe, and the hospitality industry is highly regulated.

Coming full circle and back to the core issue, my first recommendation would be to check out portugaldive.com for dive travel to mainland Portugal, the Azores, and Madeira. In the US, this inbound agency collaborates with Bluewater Travel, Caradonna Adventures, Roatan Charter, Scuba Travel Ventures, and South Pacific Island Travel. For a specific suggestion, consider Madeira, which was extensively featured in the previous issue of X-Ray Mag (#127) in an article by American photojournalist Brandi Mueller. This article is also available for free download. Madeira is served by a weekly direct flight from New York, with an average flight time of just 6 hours and 10 minutes—conveniently accessible.

email Peter



RETAILING

Importance of DEMA and the DEMA Show

– by Tom Leaird, Owner Tom Leaird's Underwater Service, Muncie, IN



I have been a DEMA member since 1998. I cannot remember missing a DEMA Show. I will try to reflect on what I have gained during that time because of my involvement. Several years ago, Mr. Dan Orr called me and suggested that I run for the DEMA Board of Directors. I have served several three-year terms and currently serve on the Public Policy Committee and as the DEMA organization Treasurer. My final year will be 2025. At age 85, I can't promise service beyond that.



DEMA Board Meeting at the Show.

Arranging for a venue to host the annual show requires at least three to four years to secure. Currently, we rotate between Las Vegas, Orlando, and New Orleans. There are few locations that can support our size with convention space, hotel rooms, air travel, and other needs. These convention centers always provide an ideal experience for everyone involved.

In recent years, while attending the DEMA Show, I have worn two hats. One is my Board of Directors duties, and the other is representing our local dive center, Leaird's Underwater Service in Muncie, Indiana. As a board member during the DEMA Show, I visit each booth across a few of the aisles, thank the person in charge for being part of the show, and also asking if I can do anything for them. Most often, I am met with very positive comments and thanks.



DEMA Show Opening Ceremony.

While representing our dive center, I visit the vendors we most often use to see what is new to have a chance to "feel" those new items. I also look for other booths that have items that might be of use in our store. This is the one time of year I can really get my hands on new products and communicate with our vendors and potential new ones. I would be lost without this contact.

During the show, there are many presentations, both DEMA-sponsored, and other informational ones. I attend as many as possible with a tight personal schedule. The cost is only my time, and the benefit is tremendous. There is no other way outside of the show to gain the information and knowledge available. There have been years when I was unable to walk every aisle. I often bring some of our local instructors and dive center employees. They benefit greatly from these programs and spend valuable time networking with other industry professionals.

Looking at what DEMA does beyond the annual show, as members of the Public Policy Committee, we have made many gains that support diving and dive locations. We hire attorneys to help keep a watch on what is proposed in all popular dive destinations. I have written my U.S. Senator several times requesting assistance on pending legislation. An example is the current challenge with the Dive Boat Act, which has major implications for insurance rates in the USA, especially for dive boat operators.

DEMA members have a wealth of information available just by logging into the DEMA site www.dema.org. When your dive center needs to know who your potential customers are within a 20-minute drive from your location, for example, research is available for you to request. Our President and CEO, Mr. Tom Ingram, has a background in research that is extremely valuable to any dive center.

In all, my local dive center would not be as successful as it is (53 years) without the support of DEMA and all it provides for our industry. I feel good about my involvement, including contributions through the Board of Directors. Every local dive center should be a member of our industry's representative, who is there for the support of safe diving.

email Tom



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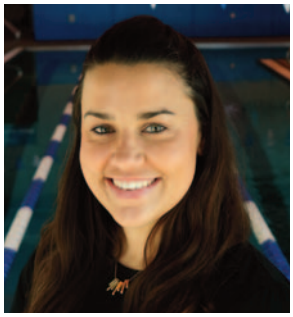
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BUSINESS EDU

Communicating A Change in Ownership – Part Three for Selling Your Business

– by Jessica Jarosh, Chief Marketing Officer at Diventures, Omaha, NE



We hope you found our last two articles on selling your dive business helpful. As you go through the deal process, it's critical to keep it confidential, as it can be very distracting for others. However, once a deal is finalized, you need a communication plan for sharing the news.

At Diventures, we have a communication playbook that we use for all our acquisitions. We then collaborate closely with each seller to refine the communications plan specifically for their location. We felt it may be helpful to share some of the key points:

1. Share the "why."

In most cases, this news will be a surprise to everyone. Their first question will be, "Why?" Communicate openly about what led you to this decision and the emotions you have. Be honest and as transparent as you are comfortable with in sharing your reasons why.

Being upfront and authentic with this news lets you control the story and sets up the next chapter of your legacy in your own words. It's also important that this comes directly from you, the seller, and not a third party or others not involved in the deal.

2. Consider your audiences.

The news will affect dive professionals, retail staff, vendors, and customers differently. Tweak the overarching message to each audience and speak to what's changing for them. They will want to know WIIFM, or "what's in it for me."

Start by sharing with your team members first. They deserve to hear it directly from you. Customers will go to them with questions, and you don't want to catch your team off guard. Overcommunicate and never assume people know the answers if you haven't shared them.

We developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for each audience to help prepare for all the things they may ask.

3. Acknowledge that change is inevitable.

People are inherently resistant to change. Don't sugarcoat it - change will happen, especially when there is a change in ownership. Acknowledge it, even embrace it. Alongside the changes, you can talk about why you selected the new owner, what they've committed to continuing, and the positives they will bring to the business. Keep the communication lines wide open.

4. Offer ways to answer questions and engage.

Effective communication is a two-way street. Schedule a Q&A session with your staff (including your dive pros!) and the new owner(s) after the big announcement. Host a customer event where they can talk with you and meet the new owner(s).

At Diventures, the customer comes first, always. This includes internal team members and external customers. Having these events after an acquisition has allowed us to listen to all customers and stakeholders so we can proactively engage, learn, and act.

> **"People are inherently resistant to change. Don't sugarcoat it - change will happen, especially when there is a change in ownership. Acknowledge it, even embrace it."**

The Diventures team is committed to maintaining the legacy of the dive shops we purchase. Having a good communication plan around the acquisition allows us to get started on the right path.

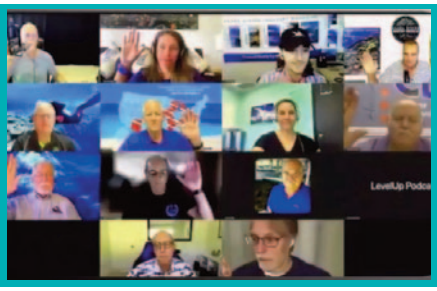
Exploring a change in ownership for your business? We're happy to talk and share more from our communication playbook. Reach out to Jessica at the QR code/link here.

email Jessica

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The Sea of Change Foundation – Small but Mighty!

– by Samantha Whitcraft, Executive Director, Sea of Change Foundation



Founded in 2015, the Sea of Change Foundation (a U.S.-based 501c3 nonprofit) has emerged as a small but mighty conservation organization over the past decade. Its creation was propelled by a shared passion for preserving underwater environments and promoting sustainable practices among leaders in the dive and adventure travel industries who comprise the Boards of Directors and Advisors. As the official conservation partner of industry-leading Aggressor Adventures®, the foundation quickly established itself as a key player in marine conservation efforts, leveraging the leadership of its Board Chair and owner/CEO of Aggressor, Wayne Brown. Importantly, through this vital and generous partnership, 100% of funds raised go directly to support community-based conservation projects around the world. In 2017, conservation biologist Samantha Whitcraft joined the team as Executive Director of the nascent foundation. From the start, Whitcraft led the charge to define the focus areas of the foundation so funds raised could be maximized to create meaningful, positive change. The three focus areas of the foundation are:



1. Coral Reefs – Restoration & Resilience

2. Ocean Pollution – Public Awareness & Action

3. Threatened Species & Habitats

Soon after, with guidance from the Board Chair, the mission of the foundation was expanded to include competitive funding opportunities for both terrestrial and marine community-based conservation. The mission of the foundation is to create positive change for the natural world we all love to enjoy and explore. The foundation works towards this mission by raising funds yearly for targeted conservation programs, educational outreach, and community engagement.

A few examples of such innovative, community-based projects supported by the foundation include:

- Funded Project Seahorse to analyze data from their iSeahorse community science app and diver outreach work, resulting in an important published/peer-reviewed paper in support of global seahorse conservation.
- Funded Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society to plant thousands of orange tree saplings as a cash crop for local farmers while avoiding negative interactions with endangered, foraging elephants that avoid citrus (because elephants don't like oranges, but people do!).
- Funded Reef Renewal Curaçao to create a new coral nursery with 1,100 fragments of growing, imperiled species such as star and pillar corals as reserves against the impacts of stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD).
- Funded the Science Exchange's International Sea Turtle Internships program to develop and test sustainable egg incubation boxes to replace coastal-polluting and overused Styrofoam coolers, with promising preliminary results presented at the 41st Annual International Sea Turtle Symposium in Cartagena, Colombia, 2023.

Additionally, the Sea of Change Foundation has made strides in diver education by helping to fund scholarships, especially in partnership with the Women Divers Hall of Fame and the Captain Wayne Hasson Memorial Marine Conservation scholarship.

By funding local communities and innovative research, the foundation aims to support effective solutions that ensure the long-term health of terrestrial and oceanic ecosystems. To date, the foundation has raised nearly $550,000 via individual donations and a popular, yearly fundraising auction sponsored by Mares, SSI, Aggressor Adventures, and more. This year's online auction will be live from November 1 to 30, 2024, so stay tuned!

These crucial fundraising efforts help empower divers, travelers, and their communities to take proactive steps in protecting marine and terrestrial species and their habitats for future generations to enjoy. While the Sea of Change Foundation continues to delve into funding innovative, new projects and partnerships every year, its leadership and Board of Directors remain focused on its primary goal: creating positive change. Join us and learn more at seaofchange.com.

email Samantha

TOURISM TRENDS

South America's Dive Industry: Brazil Dive Show Report

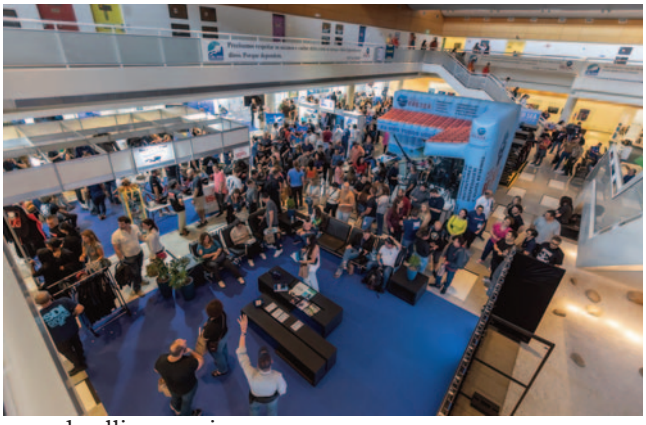
– by Andre Valentim, founder AV Dive Marketing Brazil



On August 2nd and 3rd, the Scuba Diving Show Brazil 2024 took place in São Paulo, Brazil.

The 2-day event is open to general admission, but it is clear that the event on Friday concentrated on a good quality and quantity of trade and dive pros, and that Saturday got much more publicity from the diving community. Because of this, it somehow brings superior results for both the public and trade shows.

The official numbers given by the organizers were over 1,000 visitors and sold-out booths, totaling 32 exhibitors.



A couple of international players from the travel industry, such as Solitude Fleet and Blue Force, had their own booths, and many important travel destinations were present through local representatives. Additionally, some manufacturers like Cressi and Scubapro, and some important local brands such as Seasub, had booths showing and selling equipment.

The show is organized by the same owners of the International Training franchise in Brazil, so there is a massive presence of TDI/SDI centers. It is also fair to say that international training has been growing a lot in the country, but slowly we can see this bubble being penetrated by the other centers. The expectation for 2025 is to see a more diverse show reaching more of the public and exhibitors, regardless of their training agencies.

Besides the show floor, there were many lectures and presentations in various rooms around the venue, and some attractions to divers, such as a very beautiful photo exhibition by renowned photographer Fabi Fragonessi, featuring well-printed images. There were also many NGO booths with a lot of eco and conservation information.

One of the show's highlights was the recognition prize awarded to Mr. Claudio Guardabassi, a pioneer of diving in many ways. He was one of the first instructors, a world-class free diver and spear fisherman, an equipment manufacturer, among many other achievements.

The show was originally held in Brazilia, the political capital of Brazil, but was smartly moved to São Paulo, the most important city in Brazil. This was the third edition in São Paulo.

The 2024 edition generated some concrete results in travel bookings and equipment sales, and much more that cannot be measured now will come in the next few months.

The 2025 show expectation is good. Personally, the 2024 edition was my second one with an AV DIVE Marketing booth, and I had already booked my 2025 booth. There is some small but solid growth, and I believe that with a couple of innovative ideas and a lot of hard work, the show will be able to reach more and more divers, regardless of their training agencies. We all know how important a good show can be to help push the diving industry. We hope the trade understands that shows and magazines are vital to the maintenance and growth of the activity. If you want to have more info about 2025 edition, I'm happy to share more just scan the QR code or click the link.

email Andre



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DEEP BLUE ADVENTURES

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



"You may have read our article earlier this year in DiveNewswire, *From Dive Center to Adventure Center: Why Diversifying Your Business Could Be the Way Forward for the Dive Industry.*

As the only travel wholesaler created for & still absolutely committed to the success & support of the local dive store for over two decades, we have always offered a variety of services & tools to build & grow your business through travel.



While underwater exploration remains very much where our roots & hearts lie, we recognized the need to evolve in response to the latest travel demands from divers & non-divers alike. By taking things "beyond the blue" & offering all kinds of adventures—even in places where water isn't a focal point—we have reimagined not only our own business but also those of our dive center clients. These dive centers, by expanding their travel portfolios, are already seeing great success & rewards from this pivot.

We are here now to share that knowledge & experience to elevate your business. We believe diversifying your offerings will revolutionize & revitalize the dive industry.

These changes can be as simple as adding more water-related classes & corresponding gear to your inventory, or as dynamic as expanding your current location with a ski shop or rock-climbing wall. We're not suggesting you become the next REI (at least not overnight!) but capturing a small piece of their market that complements your existing offerings—& ultimately enhances them—could dramatically expand your horizons.

The DEMA Show is the perfect opportunity to launch a variety of programs. In addition to our booth (#4068), where our team of experts will guide you through over 200 specials to maximize your profit potential, we will also have our dedicated Deep Blue seminar room, Room 221. Along with guest speakers presenting a variety of exciting destinations to get to know better, we are hosting multiple classes & a unique roundtable discussion on several topics that will help you:

- Begin & build a robust travel program
- Market what you really sell—the sense of adventure
- Identify recent trends & answer the new demands of the typical traveling diver
- Attract a whole new demographic
- Retain older divers as clients long after they slow down or even stop scuba completely
- Diversify what your business offers to capture a whole new revenue stream

All of our seminars are completely free & do not require advance registration. However, you don't need to wait for the show to learn more—many Pre-DEMA Show specials are available to book now. Contact our experts today to learn more!"

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TRAINING

Using Seal Team Training to Change Lives

– by Sherry Hammer, Lemont, IL



Years ago, I decided to teach the PADI Seal Team. I wasn't sure how it would go, as I have no children and had no idea what to expect. It definitely had its challenges and was a huge learning curve for me. Boys are so different from girls, and every age presents something unique. The one thing that didn't change between the sexes was that the kids were eager to learn, had an interest in the water, and didn't want to be treated like babies. They adapted well to the required skills and loved the fact that the program was designed for kids by kids. I always tell them, "No parents are allowed." They get a kick out of that.



After a while, I figured it out, and we were off and running. I always promote to the parents that it's like a Jr. Open Water prep class. With each Aqua Mission (there are five in total), they learn a skill or two for diving, much like what is taught in the Open Water classes.

The Seal Team is a supervised children's program. There is no certification at the end of this class — it's more like an introduction to our underwater world. Once the kids have successfully completed the Seal Team, they can move on to the Master Seal Team, which consists of ten more Aqua Missions.

They get really excited for this program. They learn the fundamental skills for diving in the Seal Team, and now they get to apply those skills and do fun missions. They learn how to do a proper search pattern, continue to work on good buoyancy, identify reef creatures, learn how to use a camera, do a simulated night dive, and so much more.



Once the kids have completed the Master Seal Team, they are more than ready to become certified. I watch them mature and gain unbelievable confidence over the course of these programs. When we do the Jr. Open Water course, they are not afraid or intimidated. Once they have completed the academic portion and confined water dives, they're ready for the open water dives. They are always my shining stars in the open water. It is repetition and excitement that make them very good divers at ten years old.

I use these programs as a kind of holding pattern. They can enroll at eight years old but can't get certified until they're ten. So, we meet every other week, which helps build their excitement to see what we're going to do next.

This program is a huge commitment on my part due to its length. The great thing is you really get to watch the kids not just physically change in height and appearance but mature and find their true passion for the water. They are our future ambassadors for the underwater world. I have had kids start with me at eight, and I have brought them all the way up the ranks to become PADI Instructors. I have not only built relationships with the kids, but many of the parents have become dear friends over the years.

The kids were sad when they finished the program and wanted to know what was next.

So, my husband Patrick Hammer and I created another program after the Master Seal Team that consisted of ten more classes and five certifications. There were six kids in the first class that rolled over from the Master Seal Team. I asked the kids to help come up with a name. Internally, we referred to it as the "$875 Program" because that was what we charged for it.

After about ten minutes, the kids came up with "Planet GPS." When I asked them how they got that name, their response was that they took the first letter of everyone's name (including Patrick and me) and it spelled out Planet GPS. It seemed fitting since we traveled the planet to scuba dive. The new program incorporated pool sessions to continue perfecting buoyancy, as well as a session for what to do in emergency situations.

We gave them different scenarios to attend to, such as

disconnecting the low-pressure inflator hose, untangling a diver, helping bring up a diver with a marine injury (like a sting or bite), and then wrapping that injury in gauze, which was fun because they all thought it would be easy, like wrapping an arm or leg. We would tell the diver playing the injured victim what their injury was before they went underwater — maybe a neck injury. They would grab their neck, tell the diver they got bit and needed to go up. The divers would ascend, and then we would hand them the gauze and have them figure out how to wrap them.


Photo Credit: PADI

We had several dry classes, each coming with a certification card. The World of Scuba Diving, Orientation to the Historian Diver, Introduction to Hazardous Marine Life, and AWARE Coral Conservation — this was our finale and the kids' favorite! We collected items to build an artificial coral reef underwater. We did a lecture on it first, and in the next class, we assembled a reef. They all participated by bringing something to add to the reef. We supplied the majority of the items, many of which we bought at the dollar store. We did EFR and Oxygen Provider certifications as well.

The kids have been our best source of advertisement. We are the only store around that teaches these kids' programs. We get kids from other states that come in for the classes. We promote it to our swim students as well as on social media platforms.

It is a good moneymaker for the stores: Seal Team $375, Master Seal Team $600, and moving on to Planet GPS $875. It's amazing — all this before they even start the Jr. Open Water Diver course, which is $749. Plus, we require them to have a mask, fins, snorkel, slate, and mesh bag. Along the way, they outgrow the fins, which need to be replaced.

You need someone who is good with kids and passion-





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TRAINING continued

ate. Due to the small numbers required by standard ratios, many instructors shy away from it. This is my main teaching job. We run the classes every other week, which is a huge commitment on my part. The kids are with me an average of two years. Sometimes there is a younger sibling that I will also get in the class.

Every summer, I offer a parents' scuba class with certification. Many of the kids that enroll in the scuba programs have parents who are not divers, so we encourage one or both parents to get certified. These kids work really hard to learn all these skills. Without a parent being certified, the kids don't have much chance of diving. We make it a family activity, bonding the kids with their family. I love teaching the kids and watching them grow not only as divers but as individuals.

Some of the kids were still not quite old enough to start the Jr. Open Water program, which requires them to be ten. We wanted to keep the kids engaged and keep the momentum going until they could start the Open Water program. Once the kids are certified, we start promoting what classes are next. So every year, the kids come back and participate in our Family Weekend. They go on to do the next classes at the lakes. All the parents come out too, as the kids continue their quest to dive. We have a big BBQ after the dives with our new diving families.

It's always great to watch the kids march into the water for the next class. The parents have become friends over the years because of how much time we all spend together. These programs have become my life. I love these kids, and my heart is very full being lucky enough to find something so rewarding.

email Sherry

BUSINESS EDU

You're Invited! Come Join Me at DEMA and Let's Grow Your Business

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

Cathryn Castle Garcia is a writer and business strategist and co-owner of C2G2Productions.com, a multimedia production company. She lives on Faial Island in the Azores.



To me, the DEMA Show is more than a trade show. It's also a family reunion of our dive buddies and friends in the global diving community. It's where we connect with people, check out the latest scuba gear and accessories, catch up on the latest trends in diver training, consider where we'll book our next trips, and more.

I've been attending the DEMA Show for 40 years, and I always have a great time. I'm especially excited about this year's show because, for the first time, I will be a DEMA-sponsored featured speaker. I'll be facilitating two interactive seminars and a few bonus sessions, and I'd like you to join me.

Consider this your personal invitation.

What? I'll be presenting Marketing 101 and Marketing 201 sessions on Marketing Direct to Dive Retail Customers. Both sessions focus on selling aquatic adventures with passion and purpose and are titled, "Connect. Profit. Repeat." Session 101 will focus on creating personal connections with potential customers, while Session 201 will focus on building business-to-business connections that will increase your visibility in your community. Session 101 is for everyone: dive center owners, managers, and staff, and the session will also benefit independent instructors and travel specialists. Session 201 is geared toward decision makers – dive center owners and managers – but all are welcome to join one or both sessions.

You won't just plop yourself down in a chair and listen to me go on about how relationship-building benefits your business's bottom line. Nope, we'll get right to work collaborating and building connections in real time, right there in the room. Why? Humans are social creatures. We crave real connections – not just social media "likes" and "follows." (By the way, we'll not be spending any time on strategizing about your socials; other DEMA-featured speakers will be devoting sessions specifically to that topic, so check the DEMA website for more information.)

In both sessions, we'll outline plans to connect you and your business with your neighbors in ways that build valuable relationships – relationships that put money in your pocket. And we'll have fun doing it.

We'll touch on the neuroscience of relationship-building and how it affects potential customers' purchasing decisions.

BUSINESS EDU continued

We'll create an action plan you can easily and inexpensively implement right away. We'll identify resources you can use to learn more about relationship-building for fun and profit.

When – DEMA Sessions "Save the Date"

- November 20, 11 am – 11:45 am, Room S232, Session One
- November 20, 3 pm – 3:34 pm, Room S232, Session Two

Why? Because times have changed, and our industry appears to have a bit of an identity crisis. In these sessions, we'll get clear about what business we're in. We are not in the business of teaching scuba and selling dive gear. We are in the relationship business. Our businesses exist so that we can craft a lasting relationship with our customers – scuba students, equipment buyers, and travelers – that elevates their knowledge of scuba and deepens their personal relationship with the underwater realm.

We're not in the business of teaching scuba and selling scuba gear and travel. We're in the superpower business. We breathe underwater. We defy gravity. We are not scuba instructors. We're aquatic superheroes. And we have the awesome ability to turn others into aquatic superheroes, too. People don't seek us out merely to learn scuba and buy scuba stuff. They seek us out because we're interesting, exciting, and well-traveled, and they want to be like us.

"When – DEMA Sessions "Save the Date"
November 20, 11 am – 11:45 am, Room S232, Session One
November 20, 3 pm – 3:34 pm, Room S232, Session Two"

These sessions are aimed at changing how we think about what we do. We'll harness the "cool factor" of our aquatic adventures in a way that attracts more customers and builds our business.

Gifts and Bonus Meet-Up Opportunities: As an incentive for you to join me, I'll be surprising seminar attendees with gifts, including special extras for those who attend both DEMA-sponsored sessions.

In addition to the DEMA-sponsored sessions mentioned here, I'm happy to be available for "Connect. Profit. Repeat." bonus sessions on November 20 at 1 pm and again at 5 pm in Room S221, sponsored by my friend and colleague Cheryl Patterson and her team of travel experts at Deep Blue Adventures.

If you're interested in discussing Business Branding and Brand Refreshing, come join me at noon on November 21 in Room S221. We'll review branding basics and brainstorm on ways you can create or revive your brand. This exhibitor-sponsored gathering is also compliments of Deep Blue Adventures. If you'd like me to look at your brand material ahead of the show, use the QR code included here and send me a message.

AND throughout the DEMA Show, you can find me on the show floor or hanging out with the Cline Group gang at the Scuba Diving Industry Magazine booth 8075. I'm excited about this year's DEMA Show. I can't wait to meet you.

email Cathryn





Together, We Can Support Community-Based Conservation



The **Sea of Change Foundation** is a USA-based 501c3 non-profit organization founded by leaders in the dive and adventure travel industries. It is the official conservation partner of Aggressor®. The foundation develops and funds conservation and research initiatives that directly impact the natural world we all love to enjoy and explore. Their mission is to create positive change.

100% of Funds Raised Support this Mission.

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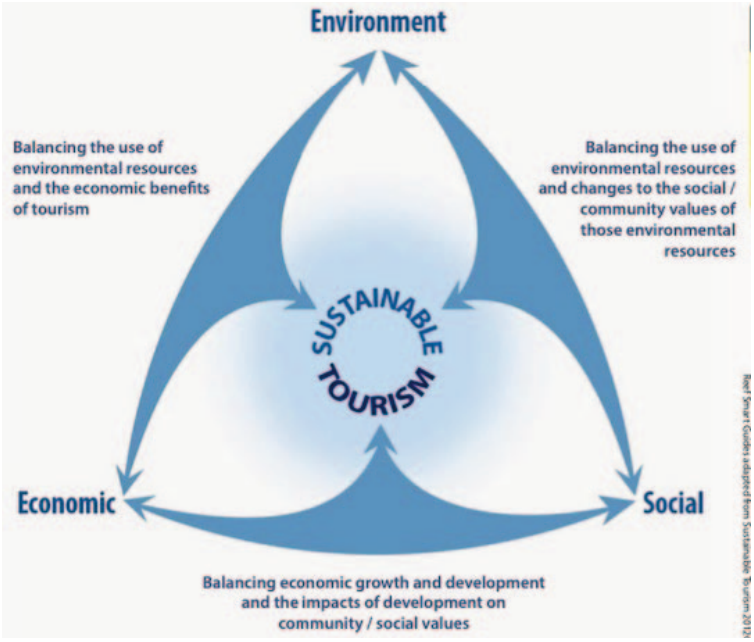
Sustainability: What is it and Why Should I Care?

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



Sustainability is a popular buzzword today. However, given that the concept of sustainable development was born in 1987 with the publication of a report called *Our Common Future*, it's curious that it took so long to become a significant topic of discussion in the diving community. The report defines sustainable development simply as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

While the dive industry has largely ignored the idea until recently, the broader business world has embraced sustainability through what has been termed the "triple bottom line," sometimes called the people, planet, and profit model. The gist of the model is that, for businesses to survive into the future, they must be concerned with more than just profitability. As the illustration shows, equal attention must be given to the operation's environmental impact and social responsibility. What a business should strive for is exemplified by the outdoor equipment and clothing companies Patagonia and Osprey.



The question for today's small business owners — particularly nature-based businesses such as dive operators — is whether the drive toward sustainability is a passing fad or is truly how businesses must operate to survive into the future. Furthermore, one must ask, if the concept of sustainability has been around for nearly four decades, why has it taken so long for it to gain traction in the diving industry?

It would be wonderful if the reason for this newfound concern for sustainability came from the initiative of the scuba industry, but sadly, this is not the case. We have not led the way but have been dragged into the 21st century by consumer demand. Some within our industry have adopted sustainability as the core of their business ethos. A shining example is Boulder, Colorado-based dive operator Ocean First, which became the first in the diving industry to earn the prestigious B Corp designation. Others have embraced the idea to varying degrees of commitment, while many dive operators have ignored the importance of sustainability almost entirely.

The Importance of Sustainability to Today's Consumer

Sustainability is not just a concern for many of today's consumers; it is now a significant social movement. Yet, the dive industry still largely underappreciates its significance. Evidence that we are missing the boat can be seen in a 2022 survey by IBM's Institute for Business Value, *Meet the 2020 Consumers Driving Change*. It shows unequivocally that consumers increasingly embrace social causes and seek products and brands that align with "green" values. According to the report, nearly eight in 10 respondents indicated that sustainability is essential in consumer decisions. In fact, nearly six in 10 consumers reported being willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact. For those who said it is "very or extremely important," over 70% would pay, on average, a premium of 35% more for sustainable and environmentally responsible brands.

Given the importance of travel to the diving industry, there's probably no more significant concern than how the sustainability juggernaut is affecting tourism. For evidence, let's turn to the *2023 Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report*, which surveyed over 30,000 respondents across 32 countries. Here are some highlights:

- 71% plan to make more effort next year to travel more sustainably (up 10% from 2021).
- 59% want to leave the places they visit better than when they arrive.

- 50% of global travelers say climate change has influenced them to make more sustainable travel choices.
- 41% want to help reduce their environmental impact.
- 33% want to have a more locally relevant experience.
- 32% would like travel companies to suggest things to do and places to visit while on vacation, expecting operators to give back to the local community.
- 27% actively familiarize themselves with local cultural values and traditions for their destination before their trip.
- 25% would be willing to pay more for travel activities to ensure they are giving back to local communities.

Not to be outdone, Booking.com's competitor, Expedia, conducts its own annual survey called the *Sustainable Travel Landscape*. Last year, it found that 90% of consumers looked for sustainable options when traveling, with three in five opting for more environmentally friendly transportation and lodging. Additionally, when asked what respondents wanted to see as part of sustainable travel, they found that nearly 70% wanted to lessen environmental impact and support local economies.

The key takeaway from the Expedia survey was that today's travelers seek clarity, authenticity, and value in their travel choices. Sustainable travel can be overwhelming and confusing, so operators must make their message clear through a well-designed website and show clear evidence of their contribution to improving the environment and local community. Regarding authenticity, respondents wanted to know and see how travel brands are committed to sustainability, not just checking a box. The importance of backing up messaging and proving claims with data cannot be overemphasized. Regarding value, respondents were willing to pay more for sustainable travel options. However, operators must illustrate how these more conscientious choices provide value and have a positive impact.



Looking at the attitudes of consumers who align more closely with scuba divers, the Adventure Travel and Trade Association found that 60% of US travelers believe they are responsible for not damaging their destination's environment, people, or economy. These attitudes were even more pronounced among UK travelers. Furthermore, 73% of global travelers plan to book eco-friendly accommodations next year.

What About Divers? Not long ago, data on the attitudes of divers toward sustainability was virtually nonexistent, but fortunately, that has changed thanks to the Reef-World Foundation. In 2022, they published *Sustainability in a Recovering Travel World*, which surveyed over 2,400 divers from all over the globe. This was the first opportunity to see if the attitudes of consumers at-large align or differ from those of divers. Here are some highlights from the questions asked in the survey:

- "Do you specifically look for sustainable alternatives?" (64% yes)
- "Is sustainability a main consideration in your travel booking process?" (60% yes)
- "Do you think dive operators should be doing more to conserve the reef?" (96% yes)
- "Are you willing to pay more for a sustainable option?" (70% yes)
- "Do you find it hard to see whether a dive center or resort is truly sustainable?" (85% yes)
- "What is most important to you when booking a trip?" (While 47% responded price, 19% responded sustainability)
- "Are you looking for further education on protecting marine life while you were on vacation?" (83% yes)
- "Have you ever had any bad or poor experiences (touching animals, waste management, etc.) due to an unsustainable operator?" (42% yes)

Jamie Sweeting, a long-time sustainable tourism guru and President of a global network of experts called *Planeterra*, provides a final word on the actual value of operating a sustainable business. "Being green doesn't work because it attracts a 'green' market, but because it will make for a better-managed business." So, take heed and do well by doing good!

This QR code will take you to a downloadable list of all companies, organizations, surveys, and websites mentioned in the article.

Alex's links



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our DEMA show programs

A Service Department Challenge - Antiquated Gear

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

Jeff is the founder and president of Scuba Educational Alliance of Connecticut - a non-profit fostering a new generation of ocean stewards. He is also the host of The Scuba Educational Alliance Ocean Podcast and former owner of Scuba Shack in Rocky Hill, CT. He serves on the DEMA Board of Directors as well as several DEMA committees and is a Friend of the Boston Sea Rovers.



A small full-service retail dive shop consists of several major business areas that must be balanced. Most full-service dive shops center around four main pillars: training, retail equipment sales, travel, and service. Each of these areas has its own unique benefits, challenges, and risks. The service area of the local dive shop business presents some interesting challenges and associated risks.

A quality service department at a dive shop represents a significant investment in tools, repair parts, training, and certification. Many manufacturers have created specialized tools for their equipment, and other generic tools can range in price from a few dollars to thousands. Having the right repair parts in stock is critical to meeting clients' needs, as is ensuring that technicians are trained with current certifications.



Scuba diving customers expect their local dive shop to offer all four components. In most cases, they start their relationship with the dive shop when they take their certification course or subsequent training. From there, they typically move toward purchasing equipment and then frequently travel with the shop on one of their trips. Sometimes, however, having their gear serviced may not be a priority.

Service Department Clients: Your service department customers cross a broad spectrum, and this spectrum can present challenges. Let's look at three broad categories of customers:

The Conscientious Diver

The Non-Diligent Diver

The Owner of Antiquated Scuba Equipment

Some customers are very diligent in maintaining their scuba equipment. They ensure that it is properly cleaned after use and stored appropriately. These conscientious divers are meticulous in having their gear properly serviced. They understand the value of maintaining their life support equipment. While the cost of maintaining their gear is significant, these divers don't balk at the price, recognizing the importance of having a quality service technician clean, inspect, overhaul, and properly test their scuba gear.

The conscientious diver is easy to talk to and discuss aspects of required maintenance that may be beyond the routine service. You don't have to convince them that the repairs are necessary. Some customers naturally understand this, while others may initially need to be educated on what it takes to maintain their gear in terms of timing and cost.

There are also divers who have not maintained their equipment properly. These non-diligent divers have not had their gear serviced according to the manufacturer's specifications. It may have been quite a few years since the gear was inspected, tested, or fully serviced. It may look to be in good shape; however, looks can be deceiving, as problems may be uncovered when the equipment is serviced.

Sometimes the non-diligent diver neglects their scuba kit. Neglected gear is easy to spot. The gear may be encrusted in salt due to a lack of proper cleaning after use. Dirt and grime can be evidence of improper storage, perhaps in a basement, garage, or barn. The gear is otherwise serviceable and may be of superior quality.

For gear that has not been maintained properly or neglected, it is important from a customer service standpoint

to tactfully remind the client about the proper maintenance cycle as well as correct cleaning and storage. The customer needs to understand that there might be challenges with their service.

Finally, there are the owners of old and outdated scuba gear. We can further break down these customers into non-divers who have inherited gear or divers who are looking to re-engage in the sport.



Challenges of Antiquated Gear: As a small business and a local dive shop, you want to help your clients engage in scuba. You also want to ensure that they do so in a safe and prudent fashion. We see gear from manufacturers that are no longer in business and equipment that is no longer in production.

Your first and foremost challenge is the availability of parts. Service kits are no longer available from the manufacturer. You may have the service kit in stock, but then there is the issue of other repair or replacement parts that could be needed. Should you take on servicing this outdated equipment, there is likely a chance that some other component will need to be replaced. The gear is difficult to disassemble and may be brittle.

Another challenge, should you decide to take on the service of this antiquated gear, is the reliability of the equipment when put into use. You may have done everything correctly with the proper service, parts, and testing, but because the equipment is old, it may fail.

That leads to one more big challenge: liability. Should you take on the service of discontinued and antiquated dive gear, you are potentially liable for any injury or damage caused by the gear you serviced. For example, did you both have the latest service manual for that gear and follow the procedures and specifications? Manufacturers may have requirements for training and certification for the service. Are your technicians certified to work on the gear?



Working with Customers who Own Antiquated Gear: Let's start by looking at the non-diver who brings antiquated gear into the shop. They have either inherited gear from a relative or perhaps discovered the equipment at a tag sale. They have come into possession of what, to them, is exotic equipment and believe it is valuable. So, they seek out a local dive shop and come in with expectations of selling their treasure.

For these non-diving customers, educating them on why the equipment is no longer serviceable or safe to dive is paramount. Most times, these non-divers will understand and take your advice in scrapping the gear. They might have something that would be of value to a collector of vintage scuba gear. You can then point them in the direction of eBay or other forums for selling vintage scuba equipment.

Many times, the owner of the antiquated scuba gear is a diver who may be looking to re-engage in diving. They often purchased this older gear when they first started diving. For various reasons, they dropped out of the sport and now their lifestyle has changed. They are looking to become an active diver again and recapture the enjoyment of diving, perhaps in an exotic location. Maybe they are planning a trip where diving is offered, and because they were once an active diver, the spark is rekindled.



They make their way to the dive shop, having retrieved their original equipment from their basement or garage, with the hope that they will be able to use this gear as they begin to dive again. To them, there is an expectation that the investment they made many years ago should still be paying dividends. When you indicate that this is not the case, the dialogue can go in one of two directions: the diver accepts the fact that they need new gear, or they are not willing to accept your evaluation.

For the customer who accepts that their scuba kit is antiquated, the discussion is now a dialogue with them to determine just how they are going to re-engage in the sport. Maybe they are only doing this because of that one trip. For those customers, you should discuss the aspects of renting equipment for that one-time trip. Other customers may be looking to do more diving and potentially take additional courses. Here is where you can outline the options for new gear. Because they are accepting of the fact that their gear is outdated, they will listen and then make an informed decision regarding purchasing new equipment.

There are customers who are not ready to accept that their scuba equipment is antiquated. To them, because they made a significant investment many years ago, they should still be able to use this gear, even if the company that manufactured it is no longer in business. This may have been top-of-the-line dive gear many years ago, but today it is obsolete. Some customers will take your advice, but some are not willing to accept that their gear should be replaced. They push to have it serviced. For the reasons outlined above—parts availability, reliability, and liability—we decline to service the gear. As a small business, that is a difficult choice, but a necessary one.

Make Your Choice: As a small business, a local dive shop faces the stresses and challenges that many small businesses face. And as a small business, you must make decisions that are best to keep you thriving and viable. When it comes to your service department, these choices become particularly challenging when customers come in with antiquated dive equipment. Our job at this point is to educate and ensure that these re-engaging divers come back to the sport not only with proper skills training but also with the right equipment. Turning away business is tough, but in the end, that may be the best way to educate.

email Jeff

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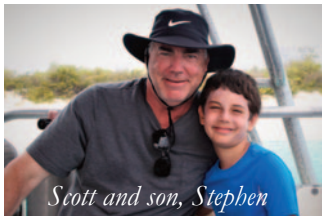
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Top Press Releases From This Month

– by Scott Jones, President, Dive Newswire Press Service



Scott and son, Stephen

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Divers Alert Network® (DAN®) will host its annual DEMA Show party on Tuesday, November 19! We'll gather at the Westgate Las Vegas, the show's official host hotel, at 6:00 p.m. on the first day of the show...

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Dive Center to Adventure Center – What it Means to the Industry

Let's talk candidly for a moment. We hear it everywhere, that the dive community is shrinking. While there is much discussion on reviving our industry – and believe me, we are very much dedicated to doing just that...

DEMA UPDATE

Navigating The DEMA Show: A First-Timer's Guide

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



As a seasoned attendee of the Dive Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) Show, I've seen firsthand how impactful this event can be for both personal and professional growth. The DEMA Show is not just an industry gathering; it's a celebration of the diving community, offering a unique opportunity for dive professionals to connect. For first-timers, the sheer scale of the event can be overwhelming, but with the right approach, it becomes an enriching experience.

Diving into the Industry: The DEMA Show is at the heart of the global diving industry, offering a platform for showcasing innovative products and shaping the future of diving. With a history spanning over 45 years, this event is a vital hub for professionals, bringing inspiration, innovation, and networking opportunities. Since 2001, I have attended the DEMA Show, which has been instrumental in both my career and business. It provides opportunities to discover trends and build essential connections.

An Ocean of Opportunities: Amid the bustling atmosphere, the DEMA Show features over 500 exhibitors and 200 sessions, workshops, and seminars. This vast array of offerings makes it a treasure trove of knowledge, with countless opportunities to explore new products and make valuable connections.

Key Attractions Await: Exhibitors: Find everything from dive equipment to accessories and cutting-edge innovations from leading brands.

Educational Seminars: Learn from experts on topics ranging from diving to business and career development.

Networking: Build relationships with dive professionals, industry experts, and potential partners.

Product Launches: Be among the first to see new, innovative products shaping the future of diving.

Setting Goals for a Productive Experience: Maximizing your time at the DEMA Show requires a focused approach. Here are some tips:

- **Define Your Objectives:** Clarify what you want to achieve—whether it's discovering new products or networking.
- **Prioritize Interactions:** Set time limits for conversations to ensure meaningful engagement.
- **Embrace Learning:** Focus on areas of interest to gain valuable insights.
- **Utilizing the DEMA Show Mobile App:** The DEMA Show Mobile App is an invaluable tool to help you navigate the event. With interactive maps, schedules, and speaker profiles, the app keeps you organized. It also provides real-time updates, exclusive deals, and social sharing options to enhance your experience.
- **Educational Seminars–Prioritize Learning:** The educational seminars are a highlight of the DEMA Show. Prioritize your schedule around sessions that align with your interests and goals, ensuring you leave with valuable knowledge and connections.
- **Exploring Exhibitor Booths:** Exploring the exhibitor booths is an exciting part of the DEMA Show. Approach the exhibit hall with a strategic plan, stay open to new discoveries, and prepare questions to engage deeply with product representatives. Take part in demonstrations to understand the practical applications of equipment and compare similar products to make informed decisions.
- **Networking Strategies for Success:** Networking at the DEMA Show is a fantastic way to connect with dive professionals worldwide. Have clear goals for your interactions and be prepared with business cards. Scheduling meetings in advance can help secure valuable facetime. Take advantage of evening events for additional networking opportunities. Follow up with your new contacts after the show to solidify relationships.
- **After the Show–Maximizing Your Experience:** The DEMA Show's value continues after the event. Reflect on what you learned, set future goals, and create an action plan to implement new ideas. Stay in touch with the connections you've made by sharing updates and maintaining communication. This ensures you continue to benefit from the relationships and knowledge gained at the DEMA Show.

By approaching the DEMA Show with a plan and a curious mindset, you'll gain valuable insights and make connections that enhance your diving career and business. Happy diving!

email Peter

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Automatic Functional Test (AFT)

- When the diving system is pressurized, Divo automatically tests all functions, the breathing sensors, time delay chamber and the Out of Air Guard valves for maximum safety during the dive.

Automatic start and stop

- Divo automatically starts in standby mode when the system is pressurized. The device is activated at 1.5m on descent and returns to stand-by mode when the diver reaches the surface.

LED Light Indicator

- At the top of the self-test button is an integrated 360-degree LED strip, designed to automatically activate when the diver descends below 1.5 meters and deactivate upon ascending above this depth.

- The LED indicator emits a flashing neon green light that is highly visible from both horizontal and vertical angles, ensuring maximum visibility in all conditions. This enables both the diver and those nearby to easily confirm that the Divo is active and functioning properly.

- When the Divo activates the emergency inflation mode, the LED indicator will change to a solid neon yellow light, with flashing intervals.

The electronic circuit is completely isolated from the main functions of the product.

Breathing guard

- Divo monitors the diver's breathing activity in the diving system. If the diver's breathing ceases for more than thirtyfive seconds, Divo automically inflates the diver's buoyancy control device (BCD), and lifts the diver to the surface.

Out-of-air guard

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

Reset function

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

ISDHF 2024 UPDATE

A Memorable Celebration: The Cayman Islands International Hall of Fame Ceremony

– by Amber Wagenknecht, Executive Editor and Reporter on the Beach, Grand Cayman



Attending the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Grand Cayman on Sept 28th was not just an event; it was an honor that resonated deeply with my passion for the ocean and its preservation. Set against the stunning backdrop of turquoise waters and sunlit shores, this ceremony was a celebration of individuals who have dedicated their lives to exploring and protecting the marine environment.

Scuba diving enthusiasts, professionals, and ocean advocates from around the world gathered to pay tribute to the honorees—individuals whose contributions to the sport and the ocean community are truly inspiring. Each inductee brought their unique story, demonstrating unwavering commitment to the underwater world. Their achievements ranged from pioneering new diving techniques to leading conservation efforts that protect fragile marine ecosystems.





Listening to the stories of the honorees was a powerful reminder of why we dive - passion. Their words resonated with all of us, igniting a collective responsibility to advocate for and protect our oceans. It was a call to action, a reminder that each dive is an opportunity to connect with the marine world and contribute to its preservation.

The camaraderie among attendees was palpable. Strangers exchanged smiles and stories, united by a shared love for diving and the ocean. I found myself engaging in conversations with seasoned divers and aspiring enthusiasts alike, all eager to learn from one another and share their experiences. This sense of community is one of the most enriching aspects of the diving culture; it transcends geographical boundaries and fosters friendships that often last a lifetime.



Each honoree expressed gratitude not only for the recognition but also for the support they had received from the diving community throughout their journeys. Their humility was inspiring, showcasing that the true honor lies not just in individual accomplishments but in the collaborative spirit that drives us all to dive deeper, learn more, and advocate tirelessly for our oceans.



The International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony was more than just a recognition of achievement; it was a celebration of passion, dedication, and the bonds formed in the pursuit of underwater exploration.

Hosted and sponsored by the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, the 24-year old ceremony is a one-of-a-kind experience in the diving world. Four international inductees and four local honorees were added to the impressive list of past inductees including Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Dr. Sylvia Earle and other diving royalty, a list too long to mention here (see isdhf.com).

Leaving Grand Cayman, I carried with me not just memories of an unforgettable evening, but also a strengthened commitment to the values that unite us all as divers. The word *passion* was mentioned by William Cline, the Executive Director of the ISDHF, and there was no better place to see the passion of diving than in Grand Cayman this past weekend. The honor of attending this ceremony reaffirmed my belief in the importance of community and advocacy in our shared love for the ocean.

email Amber

ISDHF 2024 UPDATE continued
































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