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**ALTITUDE EXPOSURE
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**INSTRUCTORS
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Blackwater Photo of Longarm Octopus in Bonaire
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

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

DIVE TRAVEL FOR RETAILERS: HOW GROUP TRIPS BOOST SALES

Last month I calculated the size of our industry. If there's one message the latest industry data makes crystal clear, it's this: **dive travel is the true engine of our business**. Globally, travel spending drives more than 60% of all scuba revenues – over \$5.1 billion annually. That makes it, by far, the largest segment of our sport, outpacing equipment and training combined. **Travel isn't just a product; it's the heartbeat of scuba.**

In the U.S., the numbers tell a slightly different but equally important story. Of our \$1.02 billion market, nearly half is tied to travel (\$459M, 45%), with equipment contributing \$431M (42%) and training \$134M (13%). This balance reveals something powerful: American divers are not only gear buyers or students – they are travelers. **A single trip can trigger a cascade of economic activity:** refresher or specialty courses, new equipment purchases, service and maintenance, and, most importantly, a strengthened relationship with the dive shop that organized the adventure.



And yet, the data also highlights a missed opportunity. Globally, only about 30% of travel dollars flow through retailers. The rest bypasses local shops entirely, booked directly with resorts, liveaboards, or online travel platforms. **That means billions in potential revenue are slipping through our hands.**

For shops that do embrace travel sales and group trips, the benefits are undeniable. Not only does travel generate significant margins, **it cements long-term loyalty**. Divers who share life-changing trips with their local retailer are far more likely to return for future purchases, training, and more travel.

The lesson for 2025 and beyond is straightforward: travel isn't an "extra" in the retail toolbox – it's the most powerful lever we have. **Retailers that put travel at the center of their business strategy won't just survive; they'll lead the industry into its next chapter.**

William Cline, Publisher



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SAFETY

Altitude Exposure After Diving: Safety Risks Every Dive Pro Should Know

– by Dan Orr, President, Dan Orr Consulting



Larry and Sharon, friends and avid divers, had recently traveled to a very popular Caribbean dive resort. While waiting to board an island hopper flight to the main island and their flight home, Larry overheard another passenger discuss the great dives she and her husband had made. A question was asked by another passenger if they were concerned about the flight to the main island since they had been diving just a few hours before.

The diver's response was that there is not an issue flying over to the main island since they were in a small plane and had a long layover to the main island airport before flying home at high altitude. For your future knowledge, the island hopper would be flying in an unpressurized aircraft at an altitude of around 7,000' (2,134m), and the cabin pressure for most commercial aircraft is somewhere between 7,000 (2,134m) and 8,000' (2,439m).

The Medical Department at Divers Alert Network (DAN) has regularly received calls regarding concerns about flying after diving. Due to continuing concerns about the potential risks associated with decompression sickness (DCS) in relation to altitude, DAN initiated a research study to address this serious issue. The data collected from this project were used to develop the current "Flying After Diving" consensus guidelines for divers to follow when flying or ascending to altitude after scuba diving. Three major guidelines were established to inform divers of recommended minimum surface interval times following a scuba diving experience.

These guidelines are minimum surface interval recommendations. Longer surface intervals may further reduce the risk of DCS. It's important to remember that the study from which these guidelines were developed was conducted with volunteers who were at rest and sitting in dry hyperbaric chambers. Actual conditions would, of course, differ from those in the study because divers will have been submerged and involved in some level of exercise during the dives they were making. Therefore, it is wise to consider this when planning your post-dive surface interval prior to going to altitude to maximize your safety.

“So, the real issue is not limited to “flying” after a dive or series of dives, but it’s actually “exposure to altitude” following a dive.”

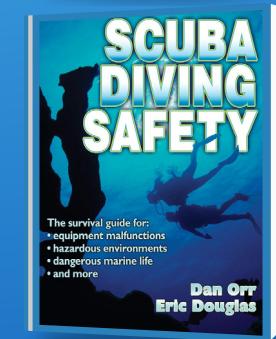
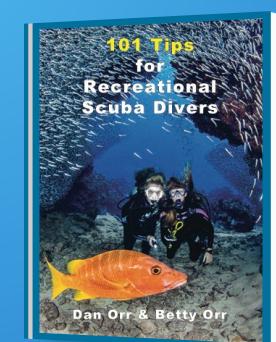
— Dan Orr

DAN conducted extensive research on exactly that subject and subsequently published "Flying After Diving Guidelines." There is, however, still significant confusion on that subject, as some believe you have to be in a commercial aircraft flying at high altitude for there to be any risk of decompression sickness following scuba diving. In our book, "101 Tips for Recreational Scuba Divers," Betty and I address this precise issue as Tip #63, "Altitude Following a Dive." So, the real issue is not limited to "flying" after a dive or series of dives, but it's actually "exposure to altitude" following a dive.

The DAN Medical Department used to receive calls from divers who had enjoyed an exciting day of diving the multitude of shipwrecks off the North Carolina coast and, as

they drove home, began showing symptoms of decompression sickness when they neared the crest of the 3,000' (915m) mountains of western North Carolina and West Virginia.

Exposure to altitude for any reason following scuba diving



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SAFETY

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may increase the risk of DCS due to the reduced atmospheric pressure at these higher elevations, causing the dissolved nitrogen to expand and potentially form bubbles in your bloodstream and tissues. The reality is, going to altitude for any reason (flying, driving, hot air ballooning, or even hiking) is the culprit, not just boarding an aircraft.

It's crucial to allow sufficient time for the body tissues to off-gas nitrogen absorbed during the dive before ascending to altitude. The higher the altitude, the lower the ambient pressure, and therefore, the greater the risk of DCS.

Current post-dive/pre-altitude exposure recommendations for recreational divers:

- **Single No-Decompression Dive:**

Wait at least 12 hours before going to altitudes of 2,000-8,000' (610-2,439m).

- **Multi-day, Repetitive No-Decompression Dives:**

Wait at least 18 hours before flying or going to altitude.

- **Dives Involving Required Decompression Stops:**

Wait at least 24 hours before flying or going to altitude. (Note: A "safety

stop" is just that, and not considered a required decompression stop.)

When it comes to your safety, it's always better to err on the side of caution and wait longer, especially if anything occurred during the dive that you feel may increase your DCS susceptibility.

While we don't know what happened to the person who was experiencing some confusion about flying following a dive at the popular Caribbean diving destination, we hope they suffered no ill effects from their ill-advised exposure to altitude so soon following a dive.

We do know that this risk of the potentially devastating effects of DCS was much higher than if they had followed the existing "Flying After Diving" guidelines. Remember, the mantra of a safe diver is to be well informed, be prepared, and, above all, be safe. References: Orr, D. and Orr, B. 101 Tips for Recreational Scuba Divers. Best Publishing Company (www.bestpub.com), Guidelines for Flying After Diving (<https://dan.org/health-medicine/health-resource/health-safety-guidelines/guidelines-for-flying-after-diving/>)



email Dan Orr

Bucket List: FIJI

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

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TRAINING

Instructor's Words: When Miscommunication Can Impact Dive Training and Safety

— by Al Hornsby, owner, Al Hornsby Productions, Singapore

Al is regarded as one of the industry's most experienced risk management litigation executives.



In our roles as instructors, dive masters, and dive guides, we can hold rather exalted positions among the divers and students in our care. Especially when learning to dive, students typically regard us with respect and even a degree of awe, realizing that we know a great deal and are very expert in an enviable activity that carries elements of risk.

The upside of this natural situation is that students and newer divers tend to pay close attention to the instructions given when learning to dive, but also when being briefed for diving, especially in locations or involving techniques that may be new to them.

However, there is also responsibility inherent within these circumstances, which, if care is not taken, can create misunderstandings or outcomes that were not the ones the pro intended. It's for these reasons that instruction and dive supervision need both expertise and awareness when instructional topics and/or dive planning are being presented. While our students and dive customers may enjoy humor or exceedingly detailed commentary, when being provided course information and dive plans we must be aware that in providing such information we must also remain effective communicators and teachers... this is why instruction and dive plans work best when they are succinct, to-the-point and unambiguous.

Education in providing instruction and directions – especially when there may be downside risks when something may be misunderstood – tends to be cautionary about saying too much or carelessly over-emphasizing, without maintain-

ing awareness of how our students or the divers in our care may be hearing, and perhaps misunderstanding, our actual intent.

I would think that most of us, at one time or another, have experienced instruction or direction-giving that lost effectiveness because the speaker went on for too long, with too much information (or not enough) being given, or diluted a serious safety issue through misplaced use of humor or even well-intended repetition. In this regard, I recently became aware of just how simple and significant this could be.

“For the instructor, the “always” overstatement and lack of clarity created a potential for a significant misunderstanding with a student.”

- Al Hornsby

In correspondence from the father of a child involved in an open water diver training course, he was concerned that the students were being taught that they “always, always should complete a safety stop before surfacing from a dive.” From this emphasis and lack of condition-

ality (i.e. “always”), the father, not a diver himself, based upon his child’s misunderstanding, interpreted it to mean that no matter what the situation – even with a malady or being low on air - the safety stop must be taken and completed before ascending.

In this case, the “always, always” was taken literally by a good student who was trying his best to pay attention and follow the instructions being given. For the instructor, the emphasis on doing safety stops was certainly positive, but the “always” overstatement and lack of clarity – such as including a caveat like “except when low on air, injured, etc.” – created a significant misunderstanding, which if followed, could potentially lead to an accident.

At best, the situation created confusion and concerns about the course standards and the validity of the training.



email Al

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BUSINESS EDU

Octopus Strategy for Dive Pros: How to Handle the Hustle Like a Pro

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



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

If you're anything like me, you've got eight things (or more!) going on at once right now. You're wrapping up summer dive classes, fielding emails about fall trips, tuning up gear, booking ad space, and prepping for DEMA all at once. I don't know about you, but this time of year makes me think of the octopus.

These incredible creatures are the ultimate underwater multitaskers. Flexible, fast, clever, and surprisingly good at escaping tight spots, they're a perfect metaphor for what dive pros need to channel when everything is happening at once. This is what I call Octopus Strategy: the art of staying cool, adaptable, and in control when the tide rises fast.

Think Like an Octopus: Octopuses are famously intelligent. They problem-solve on the fly; open jars, rearrange their environments, and use tools. When your dive shop feels like a game of Tetris, take a step back and think strategically. Can your class schedule be streamlined? Can your front desk staff be trained to answer more questions independently? Can you automate parts of your booking process or emails?

As DEMA approaches, be smart about what seminars and booth appointments you commit to. Don't overfill your calendar - pick the opportunities that will truly grow your business. A well-placed tentacle does more than flailing eight at once.

Stay Flexible, Not Fragile: Octopuses can squeeze through tiny cracks and change shape in a flash. For dive pros, that flexibility is just as important. Maybe a group trip cancels, or a team member suddenly needs time off, or a shipment's delayed. The ones who thrive are the ones who adjust, not collapse.

Have a Plan B for busy weekends. Cross-train staff. Build buffer time into your travel appointments. And if something goes sideways? Don't panic - shift. That's Octopus Strategy in action.

Tentacles in the Right Places: Multitasking doesn't mean chaos. It means smart delegation. Like an octopus managing eight arms at once, your business needs systems where everything stays connected - bookings, training, inventory, travel, and events. This is a great time to revisit your task lists and assign team leads for DEMA meetings, new diver outreach, or gear maintenance.

You don't have to do it all alone. You just have to know where each tentacle is going and guide them with purpose.

Master the Moment Before the Wave: The truth is, this season is a mix of momentum and anticipation. Summer's still roaring in places, but fall is on the horizon, and the dive industry's biggest trade event is right around the corner.

Now's the time to clarify your priorities, re-center your energy, and get organized before the DEMA current hits. Build smart systems, communicate with your team, and set clear goals for what you want to learn, see, and accomplish in Orlando.

Cover Feature: This month's beautiful cover photo of a longarm octopus, shot in Bonaire by the legendary Marty Snyderman, captures everything we love about these intelligent, graceful creatures. Adaptable, curious, and always thinking a few steps ahead, the octopus is a fitting ambassador for dive pros navigating the busy waters of fall planning and DEMA prep.

So take a cue from the octopus. Think fast, stay flexible, and guide your business with intention. The pros who thrive in this season are the ones who move with strategy, smarts, and just the right amount of squeeze.



email William



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



In my article from our May issue, *The Great Disconnect: A Plea for Better Environmental Education*, I discussed the shortcomings and impacts of the dive industry's current professional development model. Although significant changes to the instructor training process are unlikely in the near future, instructors can still enhance their knowledge of the environment independently. Helping dive professionals develop a higher "ocean IQ" is precisely the intent of this and upcoming installments of this column.

It's often assumed that a solid knowledge base for a dive professional means understanding the nuances of the creatures and ecosystems they, their students, and customers encounter most, such as coral reefs or kelp forests. Indeed, this is vital information, but even encyclopedic knowledge of any specific ecosystem still holds a significant deficiency. That deficiency involves understanding exactly how the ocean functions, not just in a particular location but throughout the entire Earth. In other words, as instructors, what should we know about oceanography?

Divers are the true explorers of Earth's last frontier. Yet, few know that the sea we explore and marvel at owes its very existence to forces within the planet. Understanding these forces isn't just academic – it deepens a diver's bond with the underwater world. And the exploration begins in places even deeper than the deepest ocean.

The Engine Beneath Our Fins: One of the most fascinating discoveries in Earth science is that our planet is not a static entity. It moves, and it moves a lot. At its core – both literally and figuratively – Earth is powered by a nuclear engine. The radioactive decay of elements like uranium, thorium, and potassium generates heat, keeping portions of the planet's interior molten and active billions of years after its formation.

This internal heat drives convection in the outer core, spinning Earth's inner solid core slightly faster than the rest of

the planet. The result? Earth's magnetosphere – a protective magnetic field that shields us from lethal solar radiation. Without it, the ocean wouldn't exist, and neither would we. Of course, divers depend on navigation tools like compasses, which rely on the Earth's magnetosphere. But even more fundamentally, life itself – and by extension, marine biodiversity – owes its survival to this invisible shield.

The planet Mars serves as a warning. Although once similar to Earth and possibly had oceans, Mars cooled too fast. Its smaller size and less internal heat meant there was no ongoing convection, no magnetic field, and eventually no atmosphere. Solar winds stripped it away. This difference between Mars and Earth shows why Earth's active interior is vital not only for forming oceans but also for supporting long-term habitability. Every time we dive into the blue, we're seeing a planetary process that Mars lost long ago.

How Continents and Oceans Are Forged: The shape of our oceans and the placement of dive sites worldwide are directly influenced by plate tectonics – the shifting pieces of Earth's crust floating on a molten mantle. Although the idea of "continental drift" dates back to the 16th century, it wasn't until the 20th century that the scientific community accepted it. The German geophysicist and meteorologist Alfred Wegener proposed that continents drifted across the ocean floor, but he was

unable to explain the mechanism. It wasn't until the 1960s, with the advent of ocean floor mapping and discoveries at the Scripps Institution and Columbia University, that the theory of plate tectonics gained full credibility.

The boundaries of Earth's hard outer crustal puzzle pieces come in three main types, each shaping the ocean floor and affecting marine ecosystems – many of which divers explore. These include the following:

1. Divergent Boundaries (Spreading Centers)

Here, tectonic plates move away from each other, allowing



magma to rise and form new oceanic crust. A well-known example is the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, part of which is visible in Iceland. At locations like the Silfra Fissure, divers can literally swim between the North American and Eurasian plates in clear, glacial water.

2. Convergent Boundaries (Subduction Zones)

At these boundaries, one plate dives beneath another, often creating deep ocean trenches and volcanic island arcs. The Mariana Trench, the deepest part of the ocean, formed this way. Around subduction zones, the interaction of water and magma fuels volcanoes, contributing to formations like those in Indonesia and the Philippines – prime dive destinations.

3. Transform Boundaries

These are lateral shifts, where plates slide past each other. The San Andreas Fault in California is a land-based example, but oceanic transform faults also exist and can influence the topography and biodiversity of the seafloor.

The Great Tectonic Conveyor Belt, Mountains, and Valleys: Plate tectonics explains how Earth's crust behaves like a huge conveyor belt, where it is created at spreading centers and destroyed at subduction zones. But it doesn't just shape the seafloor – it influences life too. When Pangaea, the supercontinent, broke apart over 200 million years ago, it didn't just form the modern oceans. It also triggered changes in climate and coastal geography that led to rapid evolution in marine life. The expanded area of continental shelves – where nutrient-rich runoff meets the open sea – created perfect conditions for coral reefs, mangroves, and other coastal ecosystems that divers enjoy today.

Mid-ocean ridges are more than just underwater curiosities. They're colossal mountain ranges stretching across the globe, making mountain ranges such as the Rockies look insignificant by comparison. In the Atlantic, early oceanographers were baffled when the sea floor unexpectedly shallowed mid-ocean – what they had discovered was the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. In some places, these ridges break the ocean's surface, forming islands like the Azores, Galapagos, and Iceland – all hotspot dive destinations. These underwater mountains are also biodiversity hotspots, acting as "stepping stones" for marine life and often hosting unique species found nowhere else.

Diving in the Red Sea? Here you'll witness a new ocean in the making. The rift between Africa and Asia is gradually widening as magma rises between them, forming new seafloor. This process is visible in the deep rift valley at the

Red Sea's center, where new crust forms beneath divers' fins. On land, this feature is visible in Africa's Great Rift Valley. Over millions of years, parts of eastern Africa may sink below sea level, forming a new ocean basin – and, far off in the future, new dive sites.

Hydrothermal Vents: A New Way of Life: In 1977, while exploring an area known as the East Pacific Rise off Baja California aboard the minisub *Alvin*, renowned oceanographer Robert Ballard made one of the most astonishing discoveries of the 20th century – hydrothermal vents (also called "black smokers"). Here, scientists discovered an entirely new form of life thriving in complete darkness, something previously thought to be impossible. It was soon determined these unique ecosystems were not nourished by sunlight but by chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide emitted from the Earth's crust. It turned out that hydrothermal vents were not restricted to those discovered by Ballard. Located along ocean ridges around the planet, they host unique organisms, such as giant tube worms, that feed on extremophile microbes. Although most are too deep for recreational divers, their existence challenges our understanding of life and hints at what might exist elsewhere in the world – and perhaps on

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other planets.

Divers explore only the top sliver of a planet shaped by billions of years of upheaval. The same tectonic forces that formed the Himalayas also created underwater ridges, trenches, and island chains. Mount Everest, Earth's tallest peak, would be swallowed whole by the Challenger Deep – the ocean's deepest point. (By the way, when measuring from its subsea base to peak, Mauna Kea in Hawaii at 6,800' /2,072m is taller than Everest.) And yet, all are products of the same planetary engine. Few humans have been to the Mariana Trench, but all benefit from the processes that keep Earth's oceans vibrant and oxygenated. Even the calcium carbonate (limestone) in coral reefs originates from geological processes stretching back to Earth's formative years.

For recreational divers, understanding Earth's dynamic interior connects every dive to a larger story. When you swim

over a coral reef in Bonaire, explore volcanic walls in Hawaii, or hover above the Silfra fissure, you witness geology in action. It's not just rocks – it's the living legacy of a planet constantly reshaping itself. This awareness fosters a deeper appreciation – and hopefully, a greater sense of responsibility. After all, the ocean isn't just a playground. It's the ever-changing surface of a planet that has labored for billions of years to make life, and diving, possible. Whether you're strapping on fins in a cenote, volcanic crater lake, or ocean trench, remember: you're not just diving beneath the sea. You're diving into Earth's story.

[Editor's note: This article is a brief synopsis of Chapter One: Earth's Ocean from the author's recent book, *Beneath the Blue Planet: A Diver's Guide to the Ocean*.]



Alex's links

Dive into Earth's Living Geology: The Strýtan Vent Field

Tucked into Iceland's Eyjafjörður fjord lies Strýtan, a shallow window into deep time and one of the most extraordinary geological dive sites on Earth. It's the only known shallow-water hydrothermal vent field in the world that is actively venting in seawater and accessible to recreational divers. Located at depths between 50 and 230 feet/16 and 70 meters, Strýtan features cone-shaped chimneys formed from mineral-rich geothermal water seeping from the ocean floor. Unlike the scalding black smokers found at great depths, these vents release hot freshwater (165°F/75°C) that interacts with the surrounding cold seawater, precipitating magnesium silicate and forming towering white spires up to 180 feet/55 meters tall.

Strýtan isn't just rare because of its depth. It's a unique geochemical environment that releases alkaline fluids rather than the acidic ones typical of deep-sea vents. This makes it more chemically similar to ancient Earth and even to potential extra-terrestrial vent systems, like those theorized beneath Europa's ice crust (making them of great interest to the new field of astrobiology). Divers exploring Strýtan are, in essence, swimming through a time capsule, witnessing geochemical processes that resemble the conditions believed to have supported the origins of life – and perhaps not just here on Earth.

For divers, Strýtan offers more than stunning visuals – it's a lesson in Earth's dynamic geology. The site has helped scientists study how hydrothermal systems operate in shallower, basaltic environments, which may be critical for understanding biogeochemical cycles and life's resilience in extreme conditions.

Unlike most vent fields hidden miles beneath the surface, Strýtan makes one of geology's most spectacular phenomena accessible – no submersible needed. Visiting Strýtan is more than a dive; it's a journey into the living history of the planet. Few places on Earth combine geology, biology, and adventure as seamlessly in a single dive. Due to its scientific value and fragility, diving at Strýtan is regulated. Local operators (notably Strytan Dive Center <https://www.strytan.is>) work closely with marine researchers to ensure sustainable access.

What Divers Can Expect

- **Location:** Eyjafjörður, near Akureyri, northern Iceland
- **Depth range:** 16–70 meters (50–230 feet)
- **Key features:** Towering chimneys, rich microbial mats, and unusual marine life
- **Marine life:** Cod, wolf fish, jellyfish, nudibranchs, sponges, and unique crustaceans
- **Water conditions:** Cold (35–43°F/2–6°C), with thermoclines near vent plumes

Know Before You Go

- **Training:** Advanced or technical dive certifications recommended
- **Temperature:** Dry suit diving required
- **Permits:** Diving must be arranged through licensed local operators
- **Best season:** Late spring through early fall for best visibility and condition

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Behind The Lens: Swimming with Norway's Orcas

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



In late November, the fjords of northern Norway are raw and governed by the elements. Snow blankets the peaks, clouds obscure the pale sunlight, and the cold air bites sharply. Yet beneath the dark cobalt waves pulses vibrant life.

I step from the boat into the freezing water, protected by a drysuit, hood, gloves, and a film of Vaseline shielding my face. My fingers grasp a Nikon camera with a wide 24mm lens, designed to draw me close – into the heart of the unfolding action. Cold vanishes from my mind the instant I'm beneath the surface, replaced by acute focus and anticipation.

Twelve orcas move beneath me, coordinating precisely as they encircle a dense school of herring. Birds scream and



©Amos Nachoum

dive above, piercing the surface tension with shrill calls and splashy impacts. Underwater, sound surrounds me: orcas clicking, chirping, and using high-pitched squeals to syn-

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chronize their movements. Their powerful tails slap the surface, creating percussive bursts that stun the herring, scattering silvery scales in clouds around me.

Amid this organized chaos, I hover carefully, responding instinctively to each surge of water and flash of motion. Yet even within the intensity of this moment, I find myself looking for quieter, subtler stories – the more intimate threads woven within the drama of survival.

A gentle, high-pitched sound draws my attention away from the frenetic feeding. Turning slowly, I see another pod approaching. At its periphery swims a large female orca, moving steadily and gently. Next to her side, matching her movement precisely, glides a young calf – only weeks old, so small and fragile against the vast ocean backdrop.

They stay a short distance away from the hunt, their movements calm and purposeful. The adult carefully adjusts her pace, subtly creating a slipstream in which the calf glides effortlessly, protected and nurtured. Against the background

of the aggressive hunt, their silent cooperation feels profound. It's an insight into something timeless: the quiet, steady care at the very heart of nature's fiercest places.

Aware of the delicate, fleeting nature of this interaction, I slow my breathing, matching their pace. With deliberate movement, I lift my camera, framing the scene carefully. The shutter clicks softly. I have captured more than a simple photograph – I've recorded a moment of intimate grace within the wild, enduring rhythm of life beneath these cold Norwegian waters.

Long after I surface, this quiet image of mother and calf stays vivid in my mind, a counterpoint to the chaos – a reminder of the profound tenderness quietly existing within even the harshest wild places.

Northern Norway Fjords, near Tromsø, Skjervøy, and Kaldfjorden. *Nikon F4, Aquatica housing, 24mm f/1.8 lens, Fuji Provia 400 film pushed to ASA 3200*



contact Amos

RETAILING

The Giant Stride, Part 2: How We Took the Plunge into Dive Shop Ownership

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



In 2024, we (Rachael and Michael) bought American Dive Zone in Grand Rapids, MI. Not inherited. Not franchised. Bought it.

It didn't start with a broker or a "business for sale" website. It started with a cold email. We found the shop while researching local dive businesses, wrote to the owner, and asked "Are you ready to retire and pass the torch?"

Starting a business from scratch is risky. You need to build a brand, find customers, earn supplier relationships, and train staff. All before you turn a profit. By buying a business, you get the whole operating machine from day one: the name, the goodwill, the instructors and service techs, the customer list, and the inventory. That's a head start worth paying for.

The Deal: We structured the acquisition as an asset purchase. Translation: we bought the stuff, not the company itself. That meant equipment, inventory, brand rights, and goodwill. The financing came together as a blend of a SBA loan, seller financing, and personal savings.

If you've never applied for an SBA loan, imagine getting a scuba certification from a government agency where the checkout dive takes place in a mountain of paperwork. It's not fun. But it's often the most realistic path for acquiring a small business without exhausting all your personal savings. This gives you more flexibility to use your personal savings for store renovations and a cushion as you get your feet under you.

Due Diligence: The Unsexy but Essential Part

This is where most deals die – and where they should die if the numbers don't work.

We started with cash flow. A dive shop isn't a Silicon Valley startup – you can't run it at a loss and hope to "scale." You have rent, payroll, insurance, and a constant need for inventory. We tore through tax returns, profit and loss statements, vendor relationships, customer reviews, and inventory counts.

Doing due diligence on a dive shop is like inspecting your

dive gear: if you don't look closely at every strap, buckle, and hose, you'll miss the one thing that's going to fail at 60 feet.

A few notes for would-be buyers:

- If the seller can't produce clean financials, that's a red flag.
- If the vendor relationships are tied to the owner's personal handshake, you'll need to introduce yourself quickly.
- If Google Reviews are ugly, you can fix it – but know it's going to cost time and marketing muscle.

The First 90 Days: Trial by Fire: We closed the deal right at the start of Michigan's busy dive season. Rookie mistake? Maybe. But in hindsight, it was the perfect stress test.

The previous owner agreed to stay on for six months, which was a gift. He handed us decades of operational

knowledge – all of it stored in his head, none of it documented. We became experts in "drinking from a firehose" while also trying to codify everything into systems.

Here's the thing: the former owner is still with us today as one of our top instructors. He gets to do the fun part – teaching, without the headaches of running a shop. That continuity is a win-win in any acquisition.

The First Big Change: We left the name "American Dive Zone" intact – brand equity matters. But we did update the logo. It was a small change with a big psychological impact: it signaled to the community that something new was happening without erasing the legacy.

The Hardest Part: This is the curse of many owner-operated small businesses: nothing is written down. Every supplier order, every maintenance quirk, every seasonal promotion was in the old owner's head. That works fine when you're a one-person show. It's chaos when you're taking over.

The fix? Document everything. If you want to scale, or just take a vacation, you need an operations manual.

The Best Part: Hands down, the community.

The old owner built a loyal following of divers who



RETAILING

continued

trusted him. Our job was to earn that trust and expand the tribe. Every new diver we certify, every gear servicing we do right, every class we run on time – it compounds into a deeper, stronger community. That's the lifeblood of a dive shop. If your divers trust you, they'll follow you into cold quarries in April. If they don't, they won't follow you across the street.

How Buying a Dive Shop is Different from Other Small Businesses: Most small businesses are about products and services. Dive shops are about passion. Every instructor, tech, and trip leader is in it because they love diving.

That passion is an asset – it's what makes the community vibrant and sticky, but it can also be a liability if the numbers don't work. Passion doesn't pay the rent. The best dive shops balance the two: they grow the community and run profitably.

Advice for Instructors Who Want to Buy: Owning a dive shop is not just about spending more time underwater. It's about growing a dive community and running a business that feeds it.

If you want in:

- Learn the business side first – customer service, inventory management, marketing.
- Build relationships with other shop owners.
- Understand that fun and profit have to co-exist.

Scuba diving is a niche sport with a high barrier to entry. Dive shops aren't just retail stores – they're the gatekeepers to the underwater world. Every healthy, profitable shop means more certifications, more gear in the water, and more people keeping the industry alive.

The Big Takeaway: Buying a dive shop isn't for everyone. It's chaotic, capital-intensive, and sometimes seasonal. But if you've got the passion for diving and the stomach for business, it's one of the most rewarding ways to make a living. Our acquisition of American Dive Zone isn't the end of the story – it is the beginning of the next chapter.

Thinking about buying a dive shop? Follow us on Instagram @adzscuba for behind-the-scenes looks at running one. And if you're serious about diving into the industry, email Michael for a free 30-minute consulting call. He will tell you what it really takes – no sugarcoating, no sales pitch. Just the truth about acquiring a profitable dive shop and setting yourself up for success through the acquisition. 



email Rachael

Dive Shop Acquisition Checklist

1. Spot the Opportunity

Don't wait for a "For Sale" sign. Research local shops, cold-email owners, and ask if they're thinking about retiring. Direct outreach beats waiting for a broker listing.

2. Check the Numbers

- a. 3 years of tax returns – clean and consistent revenue growth, gross profit, and seller discretionary earnings?
- b. Profit margins – if it's <10%, you'll need a turnaround plan.
- c. Cash flow – can you afford to pay yourself and keep the business running?

3. Inspect the Assets

Inventory, rental gear, service tools, compressor, and training pool (if owned). Don't buy things that won't serve you.

4. Validate the Relationships

Vendors, certifying agencies, and instructors. If these are tied to the current owner personally, get introductions early.

5. Talk to the Community

A dive shop without trust is a ghost ship. Gauge customer loyalty before you buy.

6. Structure the Deal

Most small shop acquisitions are asset purchases. It's cleaner and easier to complete. Financing? Think SBA loan + seller note + personal savings.

7. Plan the Transition

Negotiate to have the seller stick around for a few months. You'll need their knowledge – especially if nothing is documented.

8. Pick Your First Win

Make one visible change (new logo, updated shop interior) to show momentum without alienating loyal customers.

9. Systematize Everything

Turn the seller's tribal knowledge into documented processes. Future you will thank the present you.

10. Remember the Mission

This is a business, but also a gateway to the underwater world. Grow the community, keep it profitable, and you'll keep the industry alive.

BUSINESS EDU

Reaching the Right Audience: Why Every Dive Business Needs B2B Advertising

– by Carlos Lander, Caracas, Venezuela

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



A robust marketing strategy is essential for growth and visibility in today's dive industry. While consumer-facing advertising plays a role, overlooking the power of Business-to-Business (B2B) publications like *Scuba Diving Industry Magazine* is a costly missed opportunity. Recent research across multiple industries confirms that B2B advertising remains one of the most effective ways to reach decision-makers and build long-term growth.

The Dive Industry Is Built on Networks: Every segment of the dive economy relies on professional networks – whether it's manufacturers supplying gear, training agencies creating certifications, resorts selling travel packages, or local dive shops driving customer relationships. In each case, businesses must communicate with **other businesses** to reach the end consumer.

That's where B2B advertising shines. A 2023 analysis found that placing ads in **niche, industry-specific publications** delivers significantly higher-quality leads and better conversion rates because these audiences are already in "buying

B2B vs Consumer Advertising in the Dive Industry

Characteristic	B2B Magazine (Scuba Diving Industry)	Consumer Magazine
Target Audience	Dive businesses: retailers, distributors, resorts, training agencies, service providers	Individual divers & enthusiasts
Messaging Focus	Business value: profit margins, reliability, partnerships, long-term growth	Lifestyle value: adventure, fun, product features
Decision-Making	Strategic: long-term contracts, dealer relationships, professional loyalty	Transactional: one-time gear or travel purchases
Content Style	Formal, informative, educational. Focused on ROI and industry insights	Casual, entertaining, persuasive. Focused on trends and inspiration
Impact	Builds trust, credibility, and industry leadership	Generates short-term sales and diver excitement

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Last year's event was so popular, we're extending the time! Stop in and learn from fellow dive centers from all across the US about their successes and share yours!

Nov. 13th @ 8:30 AM | W303C


INTRODUCING THE DIVE INDUSTRY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS (DIYP)

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

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

Nov. 12th @ 10 AM | W303C


KICKSTART YOUR MORNING WITH OUR COFFEE HOUR

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

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Nov. 11th @ 9 AM | W303C


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mode" (StudioID, 2023). Unlike consumer magazines, which reach divers one by one, B2B platforms connect with the professionals who control product stocking, course offerings, and travel bookings.

Why Scuba Diving Industry Magazine Matters: The publication reaches **966 U.S. dive retailers** and is digitally delivered to more than **17,000 dive professionals in 165 countries**. Advertising here ensures your message is delivered directly to the decision-makers shaping retail inventory, training opportunities, and destination promotions.

And it's not just about efficiency – it's about trust. A 2025 MarketingProfs study revealed that **emotional branding plays an outsized role in B2B decisions**, often outweighing purely functional considerations. *In other words, industry professionals buy from businesses they trust, respect, and feel aligned with.* Advertising in trusted trade media helps build that emotional connection across the dive community.

Not Just for Manufacturers: While manufacturers may be the most obvious beneficiaries, B2B advertising is equally critical for:

- **Dive Resorts & Liveaboard** – Raising awareness among retailers who organize group trips.
- **Training Agencies** – Reaching instructors and shops

choosing which certifications to promote.

- **Distributors & Wholesalers** – Recruiting new dealers and strengthening regional sales.
- **Service Providers** – From insurance to software, visibility in B2B channels keeps solutions top-of-mind.

The Content Marketing Institute notes that while 95% of B2B marketers have a content strategy, only **29% find theirs "very effective."** Success comes when businesses combine content with targeted, strategic advertising in channels that professionals already trust (CMI, 2024).

The Payoff for the Dive Industry: Research also shows divers who engage with their local dive stores **stay active longer and spend more on equipment and travel** (DEMA 2023). Supporting retail visibility through B2B media strengthens the entire ecosystem, ensuring manufacturers, resorts, and training agencies benefit from an active diver base.

In conclusion: Consumer advertising reaches divers. **B2B advertising powers the ecosystem that supports them.** In a niche market like ours, trust and visibility are everything. If your goal is sustainable growth – whether you're a manufacturer, resort, training agency, or service provider – **B2B advertising isn't optional. It's indispensable.** 



email Carlos

BUSINESS EDU

Going Gonzo: Using Unconventional Marketing Strategies to Grow Your Dive Business

— by Cathryn Castle Garcia, Owner, *ClearStoryCoach.com*, The Azores

Cathryn is a writer, business strategist, & co-owner of *C2G2Productions.com*, a multimedia production company.



I'm excited to be a DEMA-featured speaker at the upcoming DEMA trade event in Orlando, FL, November 11-14. If you're attending DEMA, opt for the Educational Package, which costs only a few dollars more than general admittance and gives you the best all-around access to the show floor and the special sessions. Several other regular contributors here are also DEMA-featured speakers, so it's a great bang-for-buck investment.

In this issue I'm overviewing one of my sessions, titled, "Going Gonzo: How to Use Unconventional Marketing to Grow Your Business."

What is "Gonzo"? The term likely comes from Italian American slang, where "gonzo" meant "foolish" or "crazy." The most widely accepted origin traces it to the early 1970s and Hunter S. Thompson, a writer who popularized a wild and unconventional reporting style that got dubbed gonzo journalism. The word quickly gained broader cultural currency, coming to mean anything bizarre or off-the-wall. Incidentally, the Muppets got on the gonzo train in the early 1970s too, introducing the crazy daredevil character, Gonzo the Great. (Also incidentally, if you're ever in a creative dry spell, it's practically a scientific fact that watching an episode of *The Muppet Show* will fill your brain with sparkly new ideas.)

I use the word gonzo to define the ABCS of marketing strategies I consider to be Audacious/Alternative, Bold/Brave, Clever/Crazy (but crazy as in crazy good fun, not anything dangerous or malicious). And the S? S is for silly. Slightly silly. Because even though growing a business is serious business, it doesn't pay to take ourselves too seriously.

This kind of marketing is also known as guerilla marketing. I'm not fond of the term guerilla marketing because it borrows from guerilla warfare, in which small military forces strike using nontraditional tactics. I'd rather keep it on the bright side; gonzo has a nicer ring to it.

“The best gonzo marketing combines the element of surprise, plus creativity, plus fun to capture attention. By lighting up emotions like joy and curiosity, we create a buzz that can make our marketing go viral.”

- Cathryn Castle Garcia

The best gonzo marketing combines the element of surprise, plus creativity, plus fun to capture attention. By lighting up emotions like joy and curiosity, we create a buzz that can make our marketing go viral on social media. And through good old-fashioned word of mouth. The keys are:

- Be creative. Do something unexpected, clever, and fun.
- Keep it simple. Make sure your marketing message is clear and actionable.
- Make it easy to remember and share.
- Think organic, low-cost. You don't need a big budget to make a big impact.
- Stay true to your brand. Don't step outside your brand just to generate a buzz. That'd be a buzzkill.

What Gonzo Isn't: I'm not proposing marketing strategies that involve prank-pulling or publicity stunts that shock or offend people. And we don't want to do anything that violates the law. The aim is to attract potential clients, not enrage anyone. In the DEMA-sponsored session, we'll outline ways to push the edge of the marketing envelope and increase sales without plunging our business's credibility off a cliff.

Where and How to Go Gonzo: Once we get a handle on what gonzo marketing is and how to make it work, the possibilities are limited only by your imagination. Main areas we'll focus on include:

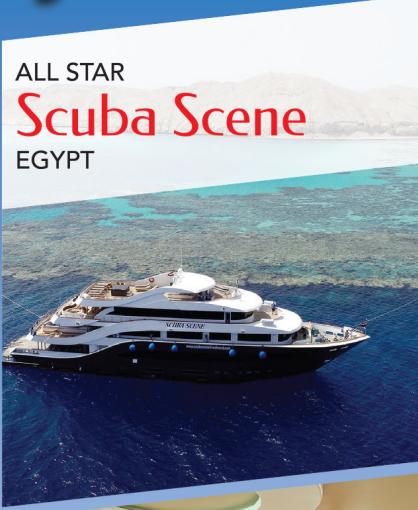
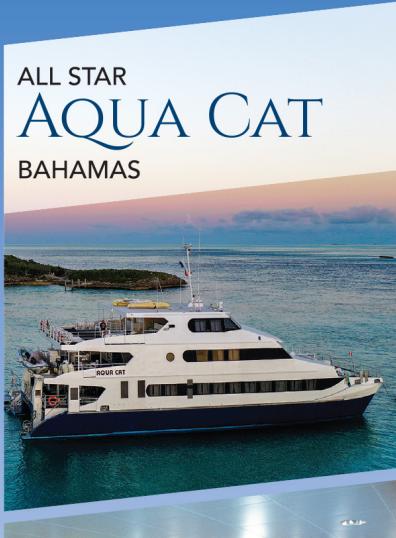
- Your business's social media presence and promotional calendar.
- Your physical location (storefront/classroom/pool).
- Trip planning and events.
- Business-to-consumer marketing.
- Business-to-business marketing.

The best gonzo marketing plans start by putting lots of ideas on the drawing board. I suggest scheduling a "no idea is a dumb idea" brainstorming meeting with your team. Preferably with pizza as fuel for creativity. My motto in business and in life is, "Make it fun. Let it be easy." With the right attitude and objectives, marketing can be both.

An easy way to start compiling "gonzo light" marketing ideas is to click on a calendar website that lists the year's na-



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tional/international celebration days. My go-to is calendarr.com. There, you can scroll a full year's worth of celebrations, from widely recognized holidays to whacky ones like National Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day (January 26) or National Margarita Day (February 22). Think of ways you can use an existing holiday to create a buzz around an upcoming equipment promotion, dive trip, course, etc. Piggybacking your first gonzo marketing initiatives onto an already existing celebration is great because you don't have to invent the wheel – just figure out how you'll roll with it to promote your business.

Let's Gonzo Together: My DEMA-featured session takes place on Thursday, November 13 at 10 am. Please plan to attend. And remember, you'll need to purchase the Educational Package for full access to all the special sessions. Come prepared for a fun and fast-paced introduction to a bunch of slightly silly ideas you can use to create marketing gold – and grow your business.

I'll also have a limited amount of consulting slots available. These 20-minute meetings are available free of charge, but you must reserve ahead of time. To get on my calendar, email hello@clearstorycoach.com. See you at DEMA! A small icon of a scuba diver.



email Cathryn



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How We Use AI In Our Dive Business

– by Wayne B. Brown, author “From Rags to Enrichment”



A lot of people equate Artificial Intelligence (AI) with generating photos and videos. While that is an amazing part of the artificial intelligence model, the most productive part for Aggressor Adventures, and almost every other business around the world including yours, is the ability to quickly and easily crunch data. What used to take us hours upon hours of coding to generate customer metrics like our customers' average age, which cities they are concentrated in, what certification level most have, etc. (all essential to our marketing and advertising efforts) is now done in a matter of minutes without ANY programming whatsoever.

I also run my Profit and Loss statements through it and find areas that are an anomaly from previous months/years and forecast cash flow. I also use it to highlight the months, over several years, when sales peak so we can more accurately know when to target sales efforts, or even what hours of what days the most reservations come in. This just names a few of the many ways AI can help give you amazing insights to any business. Integrating AI into Aggressor Adventures is not only increasing our staff productivity, but we are finding new ways to use it to better understand the business and our customers. Feeding AI our customer reviews lets us know where we have been successful in providing them their Adventure of a Life-

& CEO, Aggressor Adventures

time® and, more importantly, areas where we have not met their expectations. AI's ability to parse thousands of reviews and understand similar words to put them in common areas amazes us every time we run it.

On the graphics front I mentioned earlier, while we would never use AI to create fake destination videos, it has helped us create amazingly detailed destination maps, T-shirt designs, and marketing ideas that we may not have ever thought of or were willing to invest the time and money in. In my ‘to do’ list, I have ideas and notes that I jot down to either immediately work on or, in some cases, let it simmer for years or decades until they finally materialize in a useful project. In the case of AI, the idea can now come to fruition. I never delete any idea I have ever written down. You never know when changes in how you do business, what your customers' needs are, or how a new technology like AI will be available to dust off these notes and use them to continue building your business.

This type of detailed insight removes any doubt about exactly where our business is, where we can effectively target our resources, and how all our staff can be their most productive. I am sure there are hundreds of additional uses that we will find for the current ability of AI and, of course, future versions that are even more robust to ensure we are successful for another 41 years.



email Wayne

Make a Difference Challenge



This exclusive club invites Aggressor Adventures guests to share stories and photos of how their actions have made a positive impact on individuals or communities. As a veteran-owned company, Aggressor Adventures is passionate about honoring those who selflessly serve others.

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

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From Rags to Enrichment
How I Define Success in Business and in Life
by Wayne B. Brown
Owner & CEO of Aggressor Adventures

TRAVEL

Palau Dive Travel Guide: How to Plan the Perfect Group Trip to a Pristine Destination

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

As a PADI diver since 1985, Gil has authored more than 300 scuba articles, blogs, and newsletters that have appeared in over 25 magazines and websites.



Palau is often regarded by magazines, websites, and scuba enthusiasts as one of the world's most pristine dive destinations. It's no wonder that a growing number of groups want to experience the biodiversity of this magically beautiful country. This article about the Pristine Paradise offers a non-biased guide for retailers, travel agents, groups, and dive clubs about who to dive with, where to stay, and what your clients can see.

- Frequent encounters with sharks, turtles, giant manta rays, and other pelagics.
- Over 60 iconic dive sites like The Blue Corner, German Channel, and Ulong Channel.
- More than 1,400 species of tropical fish, plus 700 species of hard and soft coral.
- Five-star dive operations for drift, wall, wreck, and cave diving. Excellent visibility.
- Top-rated resorts. Delicious sea-to-table food.
- Wonderfully warm water year-round.
- Friendly locals and a rich Micronesian cultural heritage.

With all this and more, Palau has been a bucket list destination for decades. In fact, in 2020, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary created one of the world's largest Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

The information presented here has been culled from each company's websites. Check their sites for the most current offers and promotions. *Most prices do not include 10% Palau Goods and Services Tax.*

SUGGESTED GROUP DIVE OPERATORS

Blue Marlin: Established its dive shop on Malakal Bay in 1987, then expanded its business by moving into the 5-Star Palau Royal Resort in 2005. Today, Blue Marlin has five boats all designed for divers (from 25 to 37 feet long) with on-board heads, all available for charter, powered by environmentally friendly Suzuki four-stroke engines. From 150



Clownfish by Gil Zeimer

USD/day for a two-tank dive with beverage, lunch, and free Nitrox. 4.9 stars for 52 Google reviews.

Fish 'n Fins: A resort operation with 14 instructors, free Nitrox, and 11 fast, comfortable dive boats. From 209 USD/day for a two-tank dive. 4.6 stars for 197 Google reviews.

NECO Marine: A National Geographic Center with five divemasters among its crew of 90. As Palau's largest and oldest dive operation, it offers free Nitrox, six dive boats (35' and 38'), one drone/survey boat (42'), two 42' fishing charter boats, and one 54' Grand Banks for charters (sunset cruise, weddings, etc.), plus the area's only scuba training pool. Its popular Drop Off Bar & Grill is adjacent to the dive shop. From 220 USD/day for a two-tank dive with lunch and bottled water. 4.7 stars for 57 Google reviews.

Sam's Tours: This award-winning eco-adventure tour company is Palau's top-rated and family-owned dive center since 1990, with seven instructors among its 25 employees, and six dive boats. Sam's offers a full range of dive courses for recreational diving and technical diving, as well as scuba dive trips, snorkel trips, land tours, kayak tours, and more. From 236.50 USD/day for a two-tank dive, including 10% Palau tax, free Nitrox up to 32%, lunch and refreshments, and Koror hotel transfers. 4.7 stars for 197 Google reviews.

Palau Dive Adventures: A family-owned and operated resort operation that provides a boutique dive experience, with six instructors, eight to 10 divers per boat, and up to 13 dives over five days. From 291 USD/day for a three-tank dive. 5.0 stars for 152 Google reviews.

Most dive shops offer free pick-ups for groups at the resorts listed below.

EXCELLENT RESORTS FOR GROUPS

Cove Resort Palau: A 4-star bed and breakfast hotel with 71 rooms. Hungry Marlin Bar and Restaurant, Wellness Gym, and Palau's largest lagoon swimming pool. Complimentary breakfast buffet daily. From 270 USD/day. 4.4 stars out of 225 Google reviews.

Palasia Hotel Palau: A 3-star, seven-story deluxe hotel with 165 rooms and suites in the heart of Koror. Enjoy an on-site restaurant open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, plus sunsets and cocktails with bay views at the Weltz Bar, and unwind at the Spa Bali. From 219 USD/day. 4.2 stars out of 396 Google reviews.

Palau Pacific Resort: A 3-star lush hotel on 64 acres. 165 pristine cottage-style rooms with balconies or patios and a white sand private beach. On-site spa, gym, Jacuzzi, tennis, and nature excursions. From 373 USD/day with Fish 'n Fins. 4.6 stars out of 668 Google reviews.

Palau Royal Resort: A 4-star NIKKO Hotel. 157 rooms with balconies, two restaurants, Mandara Spa, swimming pool, private beach, and shallow lagoon. From 297 USD/day with buffet breakfast included. 4.5 stars out of 843 Google reviews.

GREAT LIVEABOARDS FOR GROUPS

MV Black Pearl: Magazine ads for this 12-cabin, 46-meter-long ship call it “The grandest and fastest superyacht in Palau, custom-built for divers.” Exceeding industry standards, it combines sleek design and comfort with cutting-edge safety and dive technology, including free Nitrox. From 371 USD/day.

Palau Aggressor II: With nine cabins and a length of 32 meters, this luxury liveaboard transports divers and non-divers in roomy comfort to the Best of Palau’s incredibly diverse sites. From 304 USD/day.

Palau Siren: Explore the Pacific’s finest dive sites aboard this eight-cabin, 40-meter yacht with elegance and comfort, spacious cabins, a dedicated dive deck, and exceptional amenities. From 292 USD/day.

Ocean Hunter Palau: Hosting only six divers, this sailing yacht provides a unique, customizable experience. Passengers have private bathrooms and can enjoy superior cuisine from around the world. From 481 USD/day.

Solitude One: This well-equipped, spacious boat of 10 cabins and a 52-meter length lets divers explore the world-



Giant Manta Ray. Photo by Gil Zeimer



Palau Aggressor II

class, shark-rich sites of Palau before relaxing in the onboard Jacuzzi and watching the pristine waters drift by. From 462 USD/day.

Solitude Gaia: A 40-meter long yacht launched in 2023, it's designed for comfort and adventure. It provides nine cabins, a spa suite, expert-guided dives, and exquisite cuisine. From 536 USD/day.

SOME OF THE BEST DIVE SITES IN PALAU

These are among the sites that I enjoyed with a group of 12 on an April 2025 trip to Palau:

Siae's Corner, 20-meter depth. A great wall dive using eight-foot reef hooks to watch grey reef sharks, small jellyfish, and schools of colorful reef fish. This experience was like an underwater spacewalk.

Ulong Channel, 20-meter depth. Hooking into this reef, we watched hundreds of barracudas, sharks, groupers, and yellowfin tuna float by at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. On another dive, I saw triggerfish, groupers, reef sharks, and the world's largest cabbage coral.

Blue Corner, 25-meter depth. Many call this one of the best dives anywhere. We drifted by a gorgeous wall, then hooked in to watch a half-dozen thresher and reef sharks eyeing us.

German Channel, 16-meter depth. Dredged in 1908 by the Germans to deepen the channel for shipping, this is one of the world's most famous dive sites because of the frequency—and size—of the Giant Black Manta Rays. We saw wave after wave float by, just a few feet away, flapping their majestic pectoral fins, dining on plankton as wrasses did their things at this cleaning station.

Teshio Maru Wreck, 30-meter depth. This Japanese merchant marine ship sank in 1944 just five miles from

the Palau Royal Resort. It's now a fully encrusted artificial reef over a football field long.

Jake Seaplane Wreck, 20-meter depth. Our two boats' divers convened for an impromptu group photo on this wrecked Japanese plane with pontoons sitting upright in the sand.

TRAVEL

continued

Chandelier Cave, 13-meter depth. We entered the first cave that led to five connected chambers filled with stalagmites and stalactites. Four had room at the surface to gulp breathable air.

Milky Way: If you like stinky, sulfuric-smelling, white limestone mud, ask your boat driver to indulge you with a visit to this popular site with some saltwater crocodiles nearby.

THE BEST TIMES TO DIVE PALAU

The dry season, October to May, is generally regarded as the ideal time to encounter the larger marine species, while June through September brings occasional storms and fewer tourists. Year-round, the air and water temperatures are generally between 82° to 86°. However, most dive sites are located approximately 45 to 60 minutes from Koror resorts by fast boats.



HOW TO GET THERE

China Air and United Airlines fly from the USA to Palau, with stops in Taipei, Guam, or direct. The U.S. dollar is the currency of Palau. The country has banned environmentally harmful sunscreens, so only bring or buy reef-safe products.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I encountered many groups in Palau. These included my own of 12 from Southern California, about 20 Americans on the Palau Aggressor II who ate at breakfast daily at my hotel, and several clusters of 10 to 20 Asian divers at various sites and restaurants.

Dive operators typically offer a 10% commission, plus one comped space for groups of 11 or more, but as you well know, everything is negotiable. For help on promoting a group trip, where to stay, or where to dive, email gil@zeimer.com.



email Gil



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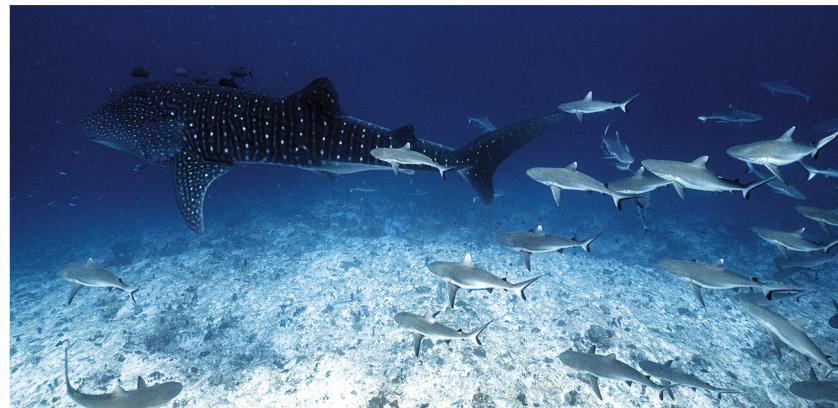


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TRAINING

Oxygen Safety and Gas Mixing for Dive Operations: Handle with Care

— by Joel Silverstein, www.joelsilverstein.com

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



Nitrox is the standard breathing gas at many dive resorts, with most producing it on-site through membrane separation or partial pressure blending. While these methods provide cost savings and a reliable gas supply, they pose significant hazards, especially when working with oxygen or nitrox mixtures containing over 23.5% oxygen. Safe operation requires strict adherence to oxygen handling procedures and system maintenance, as complacency can lead to serious consequences.

This article outlines the operational and safety requirements for nitrox production, based on industry standards, NFPA guidelines, and urges dive professionals to protect their staff, clients, and facilities by ensuring proper respect for oxygen and its delivery systems.

Partial Pressure Mixing: High Risk, High Responsibility:

Partial pressure blending is a common method for producing nitrox, involving the introduction of pure oxygen into a scuba cylinder, which is then filled with hydrocarbon-free air. While cost-effective and straightforward, this method poses significant hazards due to the handling of pure oxygen at pressures exceeding 2,000 psi. Filling errors and rapid pressurization can lead to fires or explosions, particularly from adiabatic compression, where quick oxygen flow can cause heat spikes over 1,300°F, potentially igniting metal.

To minimize these risks, dive centers must ensure:

- All oxygen-contact components are properly cleaned and rated for O₂ service.
- Oxygen fill rates are limited to 50–100 psi per minute.
- Staff are trained to open valves slowly and avoid filling closed systems.

Membrane Systems: Lower Risk, Still Needs Oversight:

Membrane systems reduce the need to handle pure oxygen directly by using gas separation technology to create nitrox, removing nitrogen from compressed air. The resulting gas typically contains around 32% oxygen and is sent to storage banks or gas boosters at high pressure.

Although membrane systems reduce some hazards, they require regular maintenance. Neglecting the filters can lead to contamination from hydrocarbons or moisture, which may decrease oxygen output, damage the system, or introduce hydrocarbons into the entire system.

“Air to mix with oxygen is an oil contamination issue.”

Glenn Butler, Life Support Technologies

Cleanliness is Life: Oxygen Service Standards: Oxygen supports combustion. Contaminants like oil, silicone, and debris in an oxygen (O₂) system can act as fuel, so all components must be cleaned to oxygen service standards.

The cleaning process involves degreasing with compatible solutions, ultrasonic agitation to remove contaminants, and thorough rinsing. Cleanliness testing using pH strips and blacklight inspection follows. Components are then dried with pure nitrogen or filtered air, reassembled with halocarbon lubricants, and handled with gloves to prevent recontamination.

The term “clean for oxygen service” is valid only on the day of cleaning; any subsequent contamination makes the components unsuitable for oxygen mixing. For example, filling a cleaned cylinder with air from a non-oxygen-maintained station can lead to contamination.

In the industry, the “40% Rule” suggests that equipment not exposed to more than 40% oxygen does not need clean-

TRAINING

continued

ing for oxygen service. While we have over 35 years of reasonably safe experience with this practice, prudent operators follow the more conservative NFPA guideline of 23.5% oxygen.

- **OSHA:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration sets the upper limit for breathable air in workplace atmospheres at 23.5% oxygen. Any atmosphere above that is considered oxygen-enriched and hazardous.
- **NFPA:** The National Fire Protection Association defines an oxygen-enriched atmosphere as one in which the oxygen concentration exceeds 23.5% by volume.

Why 23.5%? The 23.5% oxygen threshold isn't arbitrary. According to the NFPA-99 Hyperbaric Facilities Code – supported by the Koch/Cook flame spread diagram in the appendix – 23.5% marks the point where flame propagation in open air accelerates dramatically. As Glenn Butler, who was the sole source for design and installation of the nitrox system at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Lab, explains:

"The 23.5% figure came from the NFPA-99 Hyperbaric Medicine code and the Koch's diagram showing rapid acceleration of flame spread. It was placed as the maximum allowable percentage of oxygen in free air. Air to mix with oxygen is an oil contamination issue."

Above that level, fires ignite faster, burn hotter, and requires less fuel to sustain combustion. Even a small hydrocarbon

contaminant – like a trace of compressor oil – or oils from your own skin can cause ignition if exposed to high-pressure O₂ (pressures above 200 psi (\approx 1,380 kPa / 13.8 bar)). When adding air to oxygen, any oil contamination from the air source becomes a primary hazard, making filtration and air quality just as critical as oxygen handling.

I service every regulator, cylinder, and valve as if it were to be used with pure oxygen. We don't use silicone-based lubricants for diving gear – only oxygen-compatible lubricants.

Keeping Your System Clean: Even with the best practices, nitrox blending systems can accumulate contaminants over time. Routine cleaning is crucial for maintaining system integrity and does not have to be complicated.

According to the NOAA Diving Manual, all equipment exposed to oxygen concentrations above 23.5% must be free from hydrocarbons, particulates, and other combustible contaminants. Cleaning should be done using oxygen-compatible solutions, followed by a thorough rinse with deionized water. Finally, dry the equipment using filtered, oxygen-compatible compressed air or nitrogen. The NFPA 53, which outlines recommended practices for materials, equipment, and systems used in oxygen-enriched atmospheres, supports this guidance. Removal must be verified through visual inspection and, where applicable, with white-light and ultraviolet inspections.

For larger fill systems, a high-pressure steam cleaner can effectively remove trace oils, moisture, and particulate matter

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TRAINING

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from fill lines. With the proper fittings, steam can be pushed through a single open fill whip. After cleaning, ensure the lines are thoroughly dried using high-pressure nitrogen or clean, oxygen-compatible compressed air.

However, steam alone may not remove all hydrocarbons. For components such as valves, regulators, or fill whips that have been exposed to oil or silicone contamination, using oxygen-compatible degreasers is the most reliable method for restoring cleanliness.

Why Crystal Simple Green? Regular Simple Green contains green dye and fragrance additives that can leave residue if not thoroughly rinsed, which may appear under UV inspection as contamination. These additives are not oxygen-compatible and, as noted in the NAVSEA report “Aqueous Oxygen Cleaning Products and Processes” (Antin, 1994), such residues can become ignition promoters in high-pres-

sure oxygen environments, making the product unsuitable for oxygen-service cleaning.

Best Practice:

- Disassemble the component before cleaning.
- Use the cleaner per manufacturer instructions (often diluted in warm water).
- Rinse thoroughly with deionized or distilled water.
- Dry with filtered, oxygen-compatible compressed air or nitrogen.

Handle with clean, powder-free gloves to avoid recontamination. Cylinders and valves should receive annual oxygen-service cleaning, ideally during slower business periods. When done properly, this preventive maintenance ensures your gas system remains clean, safe, and compliant – saving you far more than it costs in time and effort.



Verifying Oxygen Cleanliness (NOAA & NFPA Guidelines)

According to the NOAA Diving Manual and NFPA 53, a component is only considered “oxygen clean” once contaminants are removed and cleanliness is verified. Visual appearance alone is not sufficient.

Verification Methods: White Light Inspection – Use a bright white inspection light to check for visible residue, discoloration, or particles.

1. Ultraviolet (UV) Light Inspection – Hydrocarbon residues fluoresce under UV light; any visible glow indicates contamination.
2. pH Testing – Rinse water can be tested with pH paper to ensure all cleaning agents are fully removed (pH should be neutral, ~7).
2. Particle Test (“White Glove” Method) – Wipe internal surfaces with a clean, lint-free swab; inspect for any visible dirt or discoloration.
4. Dryness Check – Confirm the component is completely dry using oxygen-compatible compressed air or nitrogen to prevent corrosion or microbial growth.

Pro Tip: Document the cleaning date, verification steps performed, and the technician’s name. Keep records on file for each cylinder, valve, or component. This is not only good practice – it can protect your operation in the event of an incident investigation.

The Danger of “It Looks Clean” Thinking: Visual inspection is not enough. Just because a valve or hose appears clean doesn’t mean it’s oxygen compatible. Dive shops must adopt standardized cleaning protocols. Over 40% oxygen requires not just chemical compatibility of materials, but documented cleanliness and a system free of ignition points – especially for partial pressure blending.

Staff Training: More Than Just Checklists: Proper training is crucial for anyone operating a blending station or servicing oxygen systems. This training should include both theoretical knowledge and hands-on practice, preferably through an apprenticeship with an experienced technician. Staff must grasp key concepts like adiabatic compression, blending math, and safe oxygen handling under high pressure. Facilities should offer ongoing education and regular reviews of standard operating procedures (SOPs). Cross-training staff helps fill gaps during technician absences. Annual refresher sessions and internal audits can reinforce compliance and safety, especially during busy periods. Once a system or piece of equipment is compromised, signs of failure may not appear until it’s too late. Comprehensive training enables staff to identify minor deviations before they lead to serious errors.

Final Words – Respect the Gas: Nitrox, Oxygen, and Trimix have become staples of modern diving – and a significant revenue stream for dive centers and resorts. But that convenience cannot come at the cost of safety. Whether you’re running a partial pressure blending station or a membrane-fed compressor, your system must be clean, your process must be deliberate, and your staff must be trained. Oxygen is unforgiving. Handle it correctly, and it will support your business and your divers. Handle it wrong, and it can destroy both. Dive professionals owe it to their clients, staff, and themselves to get it right every time.

TRAVEL

Dive into Europe: Denmark – Wrecks, Reefs, Kelp and Great Diving

– by Peter Symes, Publisher, X-Ray Magazine



Denmark is where I was born, grew up, and learned to dive – and I still enjoy exploring its waters today. While I wouldn't consider it a primary destination for dive travel, it is a place that certainly rewards those who may be visiting for other reasons – be it work, study, or holiday – and decide to bring their dive gear along or just rent some at a dive centre. And visiting Denmark, I can only warmly recommend.

The country itself is a delight. Copenhagen, in particular, is an intimate yet vibrant metropolis that consistently ranks among the world's most liveable and happiest cities. It's steeped in history, brimming with cultural events, and home to some of the world's best restaurants. The city is safe, relaxed, and easy to navigate, with modern, efficient public transport, pedestrian-friendly streets, and a superb network of cycle paths.

When it comes to diving, Denmark does not have the all-inclusive resorts you find in Southeast Asia or the Caribbean. Instead, it offers a network of friendly, well-run dive centres – mostly SSI or PADI affiliated – scattered across the country. Many dive clubs, listed on the Danish Sportsdiver Federation's homepage, also welcome visiting divers. Renting equipment or joining local outings is straightforward and often a social experience.

For those willing to explore, Danish waters are a surprisingly rich playground. This is an archipelago nation with an extensive coastline, and most of its seas are within recreational diving limits. The three Danish straits connecting the

Baltic to the North Sea have been busy shipping lanes for millennia, and the seabed is strewn with wrecks from every era. The well-preserved Viking longships now displayed at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde are famous examples, but finds range from Stone Age canoes to war wrecks and modern vessels and aircraft.

It's not all wrecks – there are also vibrant stone reefs carpeted with sea anemones, kelp forests, sponges, and abundant marine life.

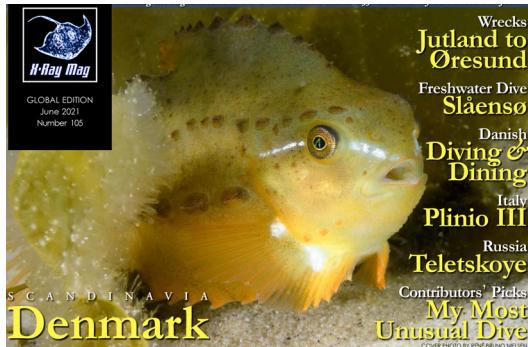
It is best to visit from late spring to early autumn. You can dive year-round, even in a wetsuit, but winter's short days and grey skies are less inviting. In summer, the long days and "white nights" are magical, and the light around midsummer is soft and romantic. Copenhagen sits at the same latitude as Juneau, Alaska, but enjoys far milder weather, with summer daytime temperatures typically around 24°C (75°F). May and June are my personal favourites, as

there is little planktonic algae, which means excellent visibility – up to 30 metres (100 feet) below the thermocline. July and August are also beautiful, though busier with tourists.

With its rich history, vibrant culture, and unexpectedly rewarding diving, Denmark offers more than most visitors imagine. Copenhagen is Scandinavia's largest air hub, with direct flights to about a dozen US cities, so getting here couldn't be easier. It's the perfect place to combine world-class culture, cuisine, and sightseeing with memorable dives – whether joining local divers for a relaxed day trip, exploring storied wrecks, or discovering the rich marine life along Denmark's varied coasts.



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RETAILING

Adaptive Diving in Retail: Seeing Possibilities for Your Dive Shop

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



We love scuba diving. We are passionate about being underwater, experiencing freedom as we move weightlessly through this incredible environment. Diving offers us a measure of peace and tranquility from a hectic and noisy world.

As dive shop owners and dive professionals, we are engaged in sharing this passion with others. We empower individuals to experience this world by equipping them with quality gear, training them to safely engage in the sport, and then taking them on trips to exotic dive destinations. And when we think about our customers, we don't normally think about individuals with a disability. We can, however, see the possibilities that adaptive diving provides not only to the individual with the disability but also to the dive shop.

The world isn't really designed for people with disabilities. There are many examples of this in our daily life. Many build-

ings lack the ramps necessary for wheelchair entry. Public transportation is a challenge. The physical and digital infrastructure many times reinforces exclusion versus inclusion. As a dive community, we like to think of ourselves as being inclusive. Adaptive diving offers an inclusion for those from the confinement and constraints of a disability. First, there

are many testimonials from adaptive divers who tell us that the freedom from gravity provides relief from pain. Being weightless enables them to experience not only this relief but also gain an independence of movement and regain a sense of autonomy. But more importantly, adaptive scuba diving makes them scuba divers and being a part of our dive community. Included, not excluded!

Adaptive diving can be defined as scuba activities modified to accommodate individuals with disabilities. The goal is to have these divers be as independent as possible. Adaptive diving normally incorporates adjusting training techniques that are adapted to a specific diver's needs. For example, if a



Dive Pirates Week on Cayman Brac



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diver has limited mobility in an arm or if they have had an arm amputated, a method of regulator recovery will be different from how we traditionally teach the arm windmill method. There is also special equipment or modified gear necessary. Mesh lifts are necessary for getting paralyzed divers out of the water. Additionally, I recently encountered a diver who had a special wetsuit designed for easy donning and doffing, along with small weight pockets sewn into their ankles to accommodate a one-pound weight.

Buddy systems are also adapted to the specific diver. Buddies are trained in various techniques. Some organizations have specialized training for buddies. SDI offers their Scubility Adaptive Dive Buddy certification. Diveheart also provides training for buddies. Depending on the level of disability, the adaptive diver will need various support. Some may only require one buddy, while others may need up to three buddies to safely experience the underwater world.



Dive Pirates Week on Cayman Brac

Dive shops and dive professionals have a number of reasons to take a look at offering adaptive diving. First and foremost, the dive community is an inclusive community. Dive shops integrate into the local economy and culture. Individuals with disabilities are part of that community. These individuals may not see the opportunity to engage in diving, but

a local dive shop offering adaptive diving can change that. Perhaps there is a local rehabilitation facility or VA hospital close by and offering adaptive diving may be a way to change lives. Additionally, many adaptive divers will have friends or family members who also take up diving to be their buddy. You may also have existing customers who have a desire to learn more about

adaptive diving and want to help out by being certified adaptive dive buddies.

Dive shops have a long history of giving back to the community. There are various ways this manifests itself, from supporting local youth programs to other charities or beach



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Michelle
Cove



Michelle Cove played a key role in building Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas into one of the Caribbean's largest dive operations. A passionate advocate for shark safety and marine conservation, she now owns and operates Albany and Lyford Cay Watersports through Resort Lifestyle Ltd., offering premier diving and watersports experiences in the Bahamas.



Anne
Hasson



Anne Hasson revolutionised liveaboard scuba diving by launching the Cayman Aggressor in 1984 and expanding Aggressor Adventures to 24 dive yachts, lodges, and eco-cruises worldwide. A 2010 Women Divers Hall of Fame inductee, she also serves on the Sea of Change Foundation's Board, supporting global conservation.



Rosemary
E. Lunn



Rosemary E. Lunn is a globally respected diving instructor with PADI IDC Staff, BSAC Advanced, Trimix, and CCR certifications, teaching both in the UK and internationally. She made history as the first non-military civilian and first female diver to join the UK Ministry of Defence's Defence Diving Standards Team.



Hidy Yu
Hiu-Tung



Hidy Yu Hiu-Tung is an international actress and model with 19 years of scuba diving experience. A dedicated marine advocate, she has led ghost net cleanups in Hong Kong since 2019 and, in 2023, became ADEX Singapore's Ghost Net Ambassador, completing a 23-hour nonstop cleanup in Sabah.

EARLY PIONEERS



Simone Melchior Cousteau

Simone Melchior Cousteau was a pioneering French explorer, widely recognised as the first woman scuba diver and aquanaut, and the beloved wife and partner of legendary oceanographer, Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

In 1963, Simone made history by becoming the world's first female aquanaut when she visited the Conshelf II undersea habitat in the Red Sea.



Women Divers Hall of Fame

The Women Divers Hall of Fame™ (WDHOF) is an international non-profit honour society dedicated to celebrating women divers and supporting the next generation.

Founded by leaders in the diving community, Jennifer King, founder of the Women's Scuba Association; Patty Newell Mortara, co-founder of Women Underwater; Carol Rose, President of the Underwater Society of America; Hillary Viders, Ph.D., an award-winning writer and speaker; Capt. Kathy Weydig, Instructor Trainer and Course Director with NAUI and SDI/TDI and Zig Zighan, President of Beneath the Sea, Inc.

WDHOF has awarded \$915,000 in scholarships and grants since 2002, benefiting 700 individuals pursuing diving careers or enhancing their skills.

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RETAILING

continued

cleanups. Incorporating adaptive diving is yet another way to extend the impact of giving back.

There are a number of organizations, typically non-profit entities, that provide programs for adaptive diving. Groups like Diveheart, Adapt Able Scuba, Patriots for Disabled Divers, and the Dive Pirates Foundation offer opportunities for both individuals and dive shops to engage in adaptive diving. Dive shops can become affiliated with certain organizations and begin to open up possibilities to their community.

Here's how the Dive Pirates Foundation engages with dive shops. A dive center can become a Dive Pirate Chapter.



There are certain requirements that are outlined on their website (divepirates.org). There is no cost to become a Dive Pirate Chapter, but you must have at least one adaptive diving instructor on staff and support the Dive Pirates mission. Should you have someone with a physical disability in your area who is interested in becoming a scuba diver, they can apply for the Dive Pirates program. If they are selected, the foundation will pay the dive shop for the training and equipment for not only them but for their adaptive dive buddy (i.e. a spouse, sibling, friend, parent). The revenue is yet another benefit of the program.

In addition to training adaptive divers under the Dive Pirates program, you can also educate your existing customers on other opportunities for them to expand their diving horizons. Dive Pirates conduct annual trips where they take their recipients, both past and present diving. Your divers who are interested in adaptive diving and seeing it in action can participate in this trip as a volunteer. Should they decide to join one of the trips, you might also offer adaptive dive buddy training prior to their trip.

Our passion as dive professionals extends well beyond venturing underwater in pursuit of our individual aspirations, whether it be reef, wreck, cave or technical diving. We want to open up this incredible underwater world to others. Dive shops and dive professionals are in a unique position to open this world to those with disabilities by seeing the possibilities in adaptive diving.



email Jeff

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RETAILING

5 Tips for Future-Proofing Your Dive Business in the Digital Age

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



We're living in a world of continuous innovation, and the dive industry is no exception. Some experts say we're already entering the "second wave of digital transformation," driven by the growing demand for digital solutions to modern challenges.

In this new environment, the business leaders who thrive will be those who adapt and grow alongside their market. The good news is you can increase your company's chances of long-term survival by ensuring it is properly "future-proofed" for the digital age.

Here are five of the most effective ways to adapt today and prepare for the promises of tomorrow.

1. Update Outdated Systems: In a landscape dominated by artificial intelligence, big data, and rapidly evolving tools, leaders can't afford to cling to "if it ain't broke" thinking. Outdated systems might feel safe, but they often hold a business back. The COVID-19 pandemic proved this point clearly: companies already equipped with cloud-based platforms could quickly transition staff to remote work, while those tied to on-premises systems struggled just to keep operations running.

Being ready to adapt means investing in flexible technology that grows with your business. From cloud-based contact centers to VPNs, the goal is to create an environment where work is not limited to a physical location, but can happen anywhere, anytime.

2. Embrace Mobility: Future-proofing is about more than cloud access – it's about mobility. Today's businesses must enable employees to work securely from any device, wherever they are. For dive operators, that could mean managing bookings from a tablet on the dock, or accessing customer data from a laptop while abroad.

If you've started using BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policies, extend them with mobile device management systems that allow you to secure company data, update apps remotely, and maintain compliance. Flexibility should never come at the expense of security, and a proactive strategy ensures both.

3. Collect and Use Data: Data has become the most valuable resource in business transformation. For years, smart leaders have used information about their operations, employees, and customers to guide growth. The dive industry is no different.

Collecting and analyzing customer service data can reveal what clients value most, highlight recurring issues in your

products or services, and pinpoint peak times of demand. This insight helps with everything from staffing schedules to marketing strategies.

Of course, collecting data also comes with responsibility. To fully leverage this resource, businesses must implement strong compliance, privacy, and data-sharing policies. When used properly, data becomes the compass that directs smarter decisions.

4. Offer Innovative Leadership: Future-ready companies don't just have bosses – they have leaders. A great leader inspires, motivates, and cultivates a culture where innovation is valued. By rewarding creativity, you encourage your team to think differently and adapt quickly to change.

This could mean holding brainstorming sessions where everyone has a voice, or creating formal feedback loops where employees can share ideas for improvement. **Supporting a company-wide growth mindset allows your organization to pivot when needed.** In an era where change is constant, agility is critical.

5. Invest in Your People: Above all else, the most important step toward future-proofing is investing in your people. Technology alone won't create loyal customers or memorable experiences – your employees will. They are the backbone of your products, services, and customer relationships.

Prepare for the future by investing in staff development today:

- Offer training and educational opportunities so employees can build new skills.
- Support flexible workstyles and foster inclusive environments to attract and retain talent.

The more you show that you value your people, the more they will reward you with loyalty, creativity, and performance. In the long term, this gives your business the resilience needed to compete.

Final Thought: The dive industry is evolving just like every other global business sector, and those who want to thrive must be proactive. Updating systems, embracing mobility, harnessing data, leading with innovation, and investing in people are no longer optional – they are requirements.

Contact me today to learn more about our professional staff and leadership development programs. The Dive Business Academy can help prepare your team for the digital future of diving. Reach me at shelli@diveprocoach.com and future-proof your dive business today! 



email Shelli

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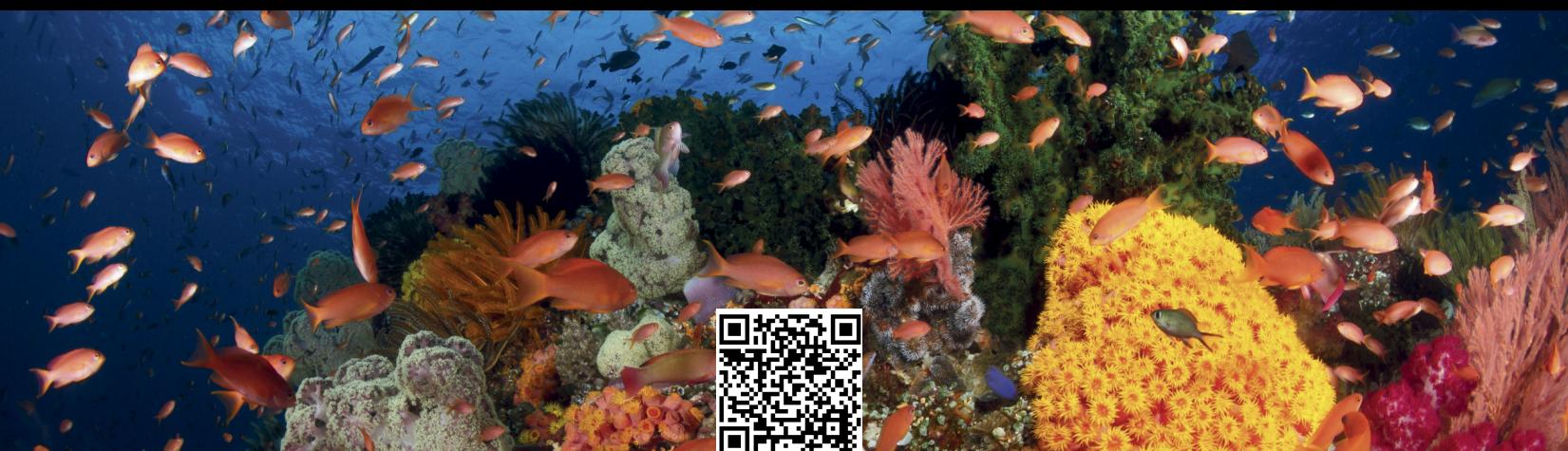
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