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UNDERWATER
 MARKETING

PHOTOGRAPHY MAY KEEP DIVERS INTERESTED IN DIVING

LEARN
 HOW

**We all know
 what happens
 when someone
 has pictures
 they're proud
 of . . . They
 want to show
 them off.**

The key to maintaining a successful dive store operation is understanding what keeps divers interested. Once divers have been certified and the initial enthusiasm has worn off, new divers will look for more challenging activities underwater. If the dive store fails to provide the challenge, they eventually may lose these divers to other sporting activities. Underwater photography is one way to keep the diver's interest high.

To understand why underwater photography is so important to dive store owners, you need to understand the benefits of having it as part of your operation. First, and most important, underwater photography gives divers something to show from their diving experiences. Underwater photography allows divers the opportunity to share with others their wonderful underwater experiences and extol the beauty of the sea. When they show their pictures to family and friends, it usually sparks additional interest in diving.

Once a diver has become "hooked" on underwater photography, they increase their bottom time, add new dive equipment, and generally keep a very active diver status, just so they can take better and better pictures. The better the pictures, the more they want to dive. The more they dive, the more they want to travel and dive exotic locations. As these divers become proficient at underwater photography, they tend to treat each dive as an underwater scavenger hunt, always looking for that one great photo. And, you know what happens when someone has great photos . . . they want to show

*Jack & Sue Drafahl
 Image Concepts*

them off. This could be a great source of exposure to non-divers.

STEP ONE

The first step in creating a photo wise dive store is to organize underwater photography courses. If you have a professional underwater photographer in your area, contact him or her and set up a few beginning underwater classes. As the photographic skills of your diving customers improve, you can then offer underwater photography classes at a variety of experience levels.

Make sure that as many of your staff as possible attend these classes. Your store's personnel should be more knowledgeable in photography than the customer. Your personnel should keep up-to-date on the underwater photography equipment and and be familiar with underwater tips and techniques.

If you have no one locally that can teach these courses, you can schedule a weekend seminar, and import lecturers or underwater photography instructors. One excellent way to get your group motivated is with guest speakers that have a varied photographic background, with films, videos or slides to illustrate their work.

INCREASED SALES

As interest grows in underwater photography, your more exotic dive trips will become easier to fill. As well, these divers will want to purchase additional accessories and dive equipment to make their diving easier. Some of the more serious underwater photographers will even buy new or extra color coordinated equipment, so their pictures of divers will look great. You will also find they purchase more books on underwater techniques, as well as animal identification.

If your dive store does not sell underwater camera equipment, you should still be prepared to educate

your customers on what and where to buy. We have found that many underwater photographers buy their underwater photo gear outside dive stores, but almost all return to the dive store to learn how to use it. This should not necessarily be considered a negative, as you still sell the dive equipment, charge for the photo classes, and take your percentage on the dive trips.

We feel that dive store personnel should be more knowledgeable about underwater photography, so we'll cover more photo related topics in upcoming issues of SELLING SCUBA. Specific topics will include helping your customer select the correct camera system; choosing the right electronic flash; how to set up underwater photo classes; which film is best for the traveling diver; traveling with your photo gear; and tips on camera maintenance.

We know that photography works for dive store owners, because we have seen the changes it has made to dive stores in our area. When we started teaching classes at one store, the interest level jumped from 0 to 10 in the first beginning class. We then added an advanced class and an additional beginning class in order to accommodate the demand.

Interest in underwater photography is definitely there, so you should capitalize on it. With all the economic turmoil in today's world, it gets harder and harder to make a living. Here is a prime opportunity for dive stores to rejuvenate diver interest -- the key to diver retention -- with everyone having fun doing it!

Jack and Sue Drafahl are a husband and wife photography and writing team, and have contributed to many magazines and books. For almost 20 years, Jack and Sue have taught seminars and classes on all aspects of photography, both topside and underwater.

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