

The HangLine

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The Dive Shop – A Closer Look

The 'Dive Shop' is the driver of the industry. Without dive shops and retail outlets dedicated to the exclusive distribution of scuba gear, there would be a significant retardation in the evolution of the industry. Dive stores provide a portal for manufacturers and training agencies to market and sell their product. They also are a focal point for people to find that perfect diving destination for the next vacation. Of course the dive shop is also one of the best places to receive instruction because they can assemble an educational package best suited for each individual diver.

There are responsibilities that lie on both sides of the dive shop front door. The first belongs to the dive shop itself, one that involves a commitment to providing good reliable professional service, a decent stock of gear and an authentic level of competent instruction. The second belongs to the customer (the diver). The customer must contribute to supporting the dive shop.

There is a growing dilemma within the Canadian dive retail industry. It is a vicious circle and as such results in deteriorating economy for anyone who survives in this industry, from the manufacturer to the

warm water dive resort. First of all, we at DFP want to point out (and acknowledge) that there are many good solid respectable dive retailers throughout Canada. In fact these businesses keep our hurting industry alive.



What these pioneers and anchors compete against however, is a plethora of half-fast business people that hang a shingle for the simple reason they think they can. It usually begins with a newly certified Divemaster or Dive Instructor. This person, who has a limited amount of time actually working in the industry, for whatever reason feels he or she can 'get in on the profit' that their sponsoring dive shop appears to make.





Without any (or very little) business experience, much less experience in the industry, this person starts their own dive shop. With limited capital to invest they open a small, poorly stocked and less than professionally run dive retail outlet. At first they offer courses and product at just over cost in an attempt to 'attract' the already limited market. This puts an economic strain on the existing shops and a battle of 'who has the biggest amount of money to lose' begins. The one who has the most to lose may survive - the other closes his/her doors and yet another scar on the industry's already hurting reputation is made. With so many 'mom and pop' operations, very few shops can actually afford to stock enough product to compete with the 'on-line' distributors who enjoy low cost wholesale prices. Unfortunately these mail order operations cannot provide the same follow up service and support that helps regulate our sport and keep it safe. Therein lies the growing dilemma.

There is quite a variety of dive store operations across North America and throughout the world. Some are very small and offer little more than air fills and maybe some spare parts, others are large warehouses fully stocked with a wide range of brands and a complete selection of product.

Unfortunately many shops come and go quicker than night and day. So choosing a

dependable store to deal with can be an arduous and frustrating task. If possible, find a shop that meets your needs and then try to remain faithful to that business. It is easy to pick up a piece of dive gear across town or off the internet because it was \$20 cheaper than the one sold in the store that you frequent.



We all want a good deal and it seems even easier to justify

waywardness by upholding your right to be a 'prudent consumer', however there is a bigger picture here. By maintaining an allegiance with a specific outlet, you support that store's ability to better service you in the future. The rewards will bring a return far greater than the few bucks you saved by going to the competition to get a deal. ~ *The Gang at DFP*

