



What do you look for in a training agency? Is it enough to just get certification cards and materials from them? If so, you should just choose the agency that is the cheapest and go for it. We have always looked deeper than that in choosing an agency or an equipment vendor, for that matter. We believe that in any business we work with we must also be a partner in building our business. A true partner is not just one that offers lip service partnerships. A true partner will have the people behind him that not only have a Degree but will also have real world experience.

Scuba Educators International (SEI) has the most real-life dive shop experience over any training agency and realizes that a partnership is a two-way operation. You will find that our Executive Team has experience in all aspects of the industry, have multiple degrees and one of the least expensive Agencies to work with.

Our founder, Tom Leaird, has owned a dive shop in Muncie, IN for over 50 years, worked as an area Supervisor for the YMCA, wrote all our materials, a current Board of Director for DEMA and a Board of Director for the RSTC. Tom still serves as the Director of Training for SEI.

Our CEO, Jim Gunderson, has been and is an Independent Instructor and scientific diver. In years past, Jim was Assistant Director of Training for another large Training Agency and the Director of Training at the Divers Alert Network.

The Director of Marketing and Sales, Kenny Wheeler, started his career in the SCUBA industry as a hobby to earn money for SCUBA equipment and Dive Travel working as an Independent Instructor at a Louisville, KY dive shop. He discovered that he loved this life and sold his grocery store to go full time at the shop. He quickly rose from a store employee to training, sales and travel manager. After many years, he moved to Key Largo, FL to manage Tavernier Dive Center, American Diving Headquarters and the largest dive operation in south Florida, Ocean Divers. After 18 years, he moved back to Kentucky and began working with multiple SCUBA equipment manufacturers traveling throughout the Midwest, partnering with retailers to grow their business. Kenny also worked as a regional manager for one of the larger Training Agencies covering as many as 21 states at one time. He became known as the best sales representative the shops had ever had. How did he do that? Simple, He treated his customers just like he expected to be treated when he worked in the shops. This philosophy carries throughout SEI's management.

The Director of IT and Public Safety Dive Team coordinator, Dean Zerbe, an independent instructor and team leader for a Sheriff Departments PSD team. Dean is a Course Director for SEI and like the rest of the team had been a CD for other agencies in the past. Dean brings SEI a wealth of knowledge to SEI, not only as an IT, but as a highly experienced Dive Professional.

SEI has worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop our Career development Program for our Veterans over a few years. This task has fallen solely onto the shoulders of our Director of Military Affairs, Scott Earnhardt. Scott is a retired Green Beret, and this job is near and dear to his heart, as it is with the entire SEI staff and especially to the Veterans on our staff. The VA became distressed after finding that some agencies and individual dive shops were not following the rules and regulations set forth by the agency. This resulted in the unfortunate arrest of some of our fellow shop owners. Scott assisted the VA in creating a new program and SEI is the first Training Agency to be fully certified to conduct the training.

As you can obviously see, SEI is well equipped to offer a partnership that will benefit both parties. I'm sure you noticed that there was no mention of higher education. I can assure you that there is plenty of that at SEI. Multiple degrees in Business Administration, Business Management, Psychology, and Computer science. Sometimes it's the Degree of Hard Knocks that is the most important in real life management. SEI brings both. Give us a call, email or stop by DEMA booth 833 and meet us face to face for information on how to cross over to an agency that cares.

Kenny Wheeler

SEI Director of Sales and Marketing

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