

# THE DIVE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL

April 1, 2024 - Vol 24, Issue 4

A full-page photograph of an underwater cave system. The scene is dimly lit with a deep blue hue. In the center, a diver is swimming away from the viewer into a bright opening at the end of a passage. The walls of the cave are covered in various marine life, including sponges and what appears to be a jellyfish on the right. The floor is sandy and uneven.

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# EDITOR'S GREETING

Welcome to the April 2024 edition of *The Dive Industry Professional*. We are celebrating our 23-year anniversary this month. As a Trade Publication dedicated to Dive Industry Professionals, we are expanding our marketing reach and frequency as we continue to improve our *Daily Blog*, *Weekly News* press release service, monthly trade magazine *The Dive Industry Professional*, and our annual *Trade Directory & Buyers Guide*. Our goal is to increase the readership of our marketing communications in order to raise the bar of business professionalism and to *Build a Better Industry* for the good of the entire Global Diving Community.

Our Trade Magazine, *The Dive Industry Professional* is dedicated to the professional advancement of Dive Industry Professionals worldwide. Our mission is to bring Buyers & Sellers together and our use of 21<sup>st</sup> century marketing tools and technologies continues to increase with every issue. We look forward to collaborating and working closely with our industry partners, members, and colleagues.

In this month's issue we begin with our editorial, *Success Is When a Plan Comes Together*. This month's editorial gives you an insider's look into our method of creating an industry plan by using a step-by-step format. We publish business related articles that are smaller pieces of a larger theme. Our articles are integrated into a larger series of articles that become part of a chapter, and then a section, and then an entire book on a subject. We plan our articles so that you can follow our format from start to finish. We hope you enjoy the process of following our progress through our unique approach. The Dive Industry Network Series continues with *FAM Trips for Travel Advisors*. Have you ever wanted to get invited to a FREE FAM Trip on some exotic tropical island? Well, FAM trips do exist, and some of them are free, but there's more to FAM Trips than what you've been told. We explore FAM Trips in the diving industry at great length. Warning – it is a long article, and it's meant to be that way because FAM Trips are for serious Dive Industry Travel Buyers and not for the scuba diver who is just looking for a free trip. Our article covers what FAM Trips are, what FAM Trips should be, and what FAM Trips could be.

Our Network Series article entitled, *SWAG Gift Bags for FAM Trip Participants*, shows how one successful Dive Travel Wholesaler impresses her clients and attracts key industry sponsors with her innovative welcoming gifts. And finally, our Shows & Events column brings you upcoming events for 2024 and into 2025. **Enjoy the read.**

*Gene Muchanski*  
Editor  
*The Dive Industry Professional*

*Dive Industry Association, Inc. is the Premier Trade Association in the Diving Industry, with Members Worldwide.*

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## Trade Publication

*The Dive Industry Professional*  
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“GIVE THEM A WEEK THEY WILL REMEMBER FOREVER”



Photo Shaun The Sheep by Kewin Lorenzen

**AT KIDS SEA CAMP THE DAYS ARE SO FULL  
THAT WE GO TO BED COUNTING SHEEP!**

SEE STORIES ON PAGES 58-61

[www.familydivers.com](http://www.familydivers.com) 803-419-2556 [dive@familydivers.com](mailto:dive@familydivers.com) [www.oceanwishes.org](http://www.oceanwishes.org)

# EDITORIAL



## Success Is When A Plan Comes Together

by Gene Muchanski, Editor  
*The Dive Industry Professional*

Before I begin, ***I would like to wish the Dive Industry Association a Happy 23rd Year Anniversary.*** It's been a great journey so far, and I am honored to have had the privilege to work alongside so many outstanding Dive Industry Professionals in so many different shareholder groups and industries. Thank you. I am looking forward to continuing to serve the Global Diving Community and the Global Diving Business Network for many more years to come, in whatever capacity I am blessed to possess.

In our February 2024 Edition of *The Dive Industry Professional*, I wrote an article for our Dive Industry Network Series, entitled ***Create Your Own Circle of Influence.*** That article prompted more responses and conversations from my fellow diving peers and colleagues in the diving industry than I have experienced in a very long time. The article seemed to hit a hot button with Dive Industry Professionals who agreed that creating a strong circle of influence is one of the keys, if not the most important key, to unlocking your success potential in the diving industry. I couldn't agree more.

One of my esteemed colleagues in the industry suggested that I should expand the topic into a full-length book. He must have been reading my mind. That is exactly what we have been planning to do for some time now. If you have been reading our Newsletter, which is now a Magazine, for the past 23 years, you'll

know that most of our articles are actually chapters or sections of a bigger issue. *Creating Your Own Circle of Influence* is part of an expanded version of the original twelve chapters first published in the series, *The Dive Industry Network*. The series focused on how Dive Industry Professionals could learn, participate, lead, and mentor important principles in the diving industry. Maybe we will call the next series of articles, Section II. In addition to creating a circle of influence, we'll be showing Dive Industry Professionals how to work with Dive Travel Wholesalers, qualify for FAM Trips, and learn how to set up group travel dive trips, among other things. There are so many things a Dive Professional can do to launch their career and give them a competitive edge; we could write a book about it. Dah!

I am currently working on another major series of articles that will most definitely end up as a text for developing a blueprint for growth and success in the recreational diving industry. Perhaps you have already read the first twelve chapters in our monthly series, *DIVE LOCAL – A Community Effort*. Section I focused on *Building a Local Diving Community*. We showed the industry what the DIVE LOCAL concept was all about and the importance of local diving. We explained the major components of the program and the levels of participation industry members could partake in. We laid out geographically the foundation of the Global Diving Community and broke it down into Local Diving Communities. We even discussed the problems, potential solutions, and actionable items industry members could take to grow the recreational diving industry. And finally, we introduced the Regional Summit Conferences that could oversee the program.

Section II covered *The Four Pillars of a Local Diving Community*: Dive Stores, Dive Boat Operators, Dive Clubs, and Dive Instructors. We went into detail to describe what these local ambassadors do to build, maintain, and grow our industry. Section III will cover our four-part message to the general public to create and retain more divers for the Global Diving Community. Our four steps will explain how prospective divers can Learn to Dive, Buy Their Gear, Go Diving, and Stay Active. It may seem like you've been reading a long list of unrelated articles, but I assure you that it is a well thought out, intricate, and integrated business plan that builds the stage, introduces the trade, and implements programs, products, and services for

the buying public.

Two years ago, I worked on a nine-part *Starting your Own Business* series for the diving industry. We covered everything we could from start-up to exit strategy, to give a clear picture of the challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs typically face when starting, growing, and succeeding in their own business. My research was based on over 40 years of experience working with small businesses in countless industries, to start, develop, grow, succeed, and eventually exit their own small business. Working as a Small Business Development Specialist for Small Business Development Centers, Colleges and Universities, the SBA (Small Business Association), and educational organizations in the diving industry, I got to observe and work with hundreds of small businesses owners to achieve their dream of starting their own business. For every entrepreneur that was undertaking their quest for the first time, it must have been very intimidating, trying something new and venturing into unknown territory. Like riding a bicycle for the first time, it's scary. As a Small Business Consultant for many years, I had seen this scenario play out hundreds of times, from start to finish. It wasn't my first rodeo. I appreciate the power of a good plan and how it can increase the chances of succeeding.

Seeing a start-up go through the process of business planning from start to finish is a rewarding experience. It is like witnessing a product go through the transformation from conception to consumption. It's exciting. From my own experience, the most dramatic example of seeing a vision come to life through a successful planning process happened when we had a swimming pool built. Having never built a pool before, we hired a professional pool builder to do the job. Based on his many years of experience in the pool building trade, he helped us design the pool we needed, wanted, and could afford. The builder returned to us a few days later and presented us with a drawing of our pool, explained how and when it was going to be built, and told us what it would cost. From the day we broke ground until the day we added water to our pool, I photographed and videotaped the entire process and shared the progress with our diving friends and colleagues on social media. I have to admit, there were days when I wondered if we were ever going to get the pool we wanted, on time, and on budget. You might say that I had my doubts at times. But through the entire process, the pool build-

er reassured us that according to his plan, everything was going like clockwork. You have to understand that the builder could see the finished product in his mind's eye, from the very first day he broke ground. ***It wasn't his first rodeo!*** The pool was indeed finished on time, on budget, and functioned just like the builder said it would.

Our vision for the recreational diving industry is to bring buyers and sellers together in an integrated marketing approach that meets the needs of both buyers and sellers. Our articles and promotional content will be focused on how business partners in the supply and demand chains relate to each other for their mutual benefit. We are looking to praise symbiotic relationships in the Global Diving Business Network where both sides of a promotion are equally compensated. Not where one group is charged so that another group can benefit. I want to work in an industry where there are two, three, or four links in a supply or demand chain that can participate in a united promotional campaign for the benefit of their entire channel of distribution. We have the data to support our concept. We understand and can relate to the various components of our system and pieces to our industry puzzle. ***Now is the time to work within our circle of influence while we work to increase its size and influence.***

This is an exciting time to become part of the Global Diving Business Network. For more information about global marketing opportunities, contact Gene Muchanski, Executive Director of the Dive Industry Association, 2294 Botanica Circle, West Melbourne, FL 32904. Phone: 321-914-3778. Email: [gene@diveindustry.net](mailto:gene@diveindustry.net) Web: [www.diveindustry.net](http://www.diveindustry.net)

###



# SERIES ARTICLE



## Dive Industry Network Familiarization (FAM) Trips

By Gene Muchanski, Executive Director,  
Dive Industry Association, Inc.

### FAM Trips for Travel Advisors

The travel industry has been using familiarization trips for many years to entice Travel Agents, now called Travel Advisors, to learn more about their properties, in hopes of getting increased bookings. Actually, it is more than just learning about their properties. It's about developing a relationship with Travel Advisors and becoming a preferred supplier in the Advisor's arsenal of travel destinations that they sell to their customers. That makes a lot of sense to me. You want my business? Show me. Better yet. You want my business, impress me!

**The Travel Industry vs the Diving Industry:** The last time I checked; the Travel Industry was a 4 trillion-dollar industry. Not so much with the diving industry. One thing is for certain. Adventure dive travel is very important to our industry and the travel stakeholder group accounts for a great deal of the industry's total

revenue. Some may even say that adventure dive travel is one of the main reasons people get certified. Speaking from my personal experience, the only time I purchase diving equipment is when we are getting ready for a dive trip. Why would I buy gear if I wasn't going diving? I don't buy camera equipment if I'm not going to be taking pictures.

There is no question about it. We get certified to go diving. We buy gear when we go diving. Equipment, training, and travel are so dependent on each other. But as a recreational industry, do we know enough about the travel industry to make the most of its vast opportunities and perks? Do we know the difference between an industry and a market? Do we know the difference between a business partner and a customer? More importantly is that we know how these differences affect the relationships between buyers and sellers of equipment, training, and travel. ***My feeling is that if I have to pay you, I'm your customer. If you pay me to bring you business, I'm your business partner.***

Our mission is to bring buyers and sellers together for mutual benefit but before we can do that, we must first understand the roles that each sector plays in the movement of goods and services of the supply and demand chains, through the industry's channel of distribution.

**What Are Diving FAM Trips?** In the diving industry, FAM trips are short visits to a diving resort destination or liveaboard. Mostly resorts. A typical FAM Trip to a Caribbean destination is usually 3-5 days in length. One day in, one day out, and three days at the resort. This includes three days of 2 tank diving and maybe an extra dive or two. The idea of a familiarization trip is to introduce a Wholesale or Retail Travel Buyer to a new diving resort destination and give them a taste of the resort's accommodations, cuisine, and diving. It's not meant to be a free, full week vacation, just a sampling of what the resort has to offer to their guests. More exotic dive destinations across the globe may be a little longer in length due to the travel time involved. Either way, most FAM Trips include the option to extend your stay for a minimal charge.

**Who are FAM Trips For?** Familiarization Trips are designed for Wholesale and Retail Travel Buyers. People who sell dive travel or run group trips for their travel business, dive store, or dive club. Successful

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Dive Travel Wholesalers, like [Roatan Charter](#), put a disclaimer on their FAM Trip Ads, *“Only Available to Our Dive Shop Partners. 2 Person Limit Per Dive Shop.”* That makes it clear who their target market is. As Dive Travel Consultants, we are always on the lookout for high volume group trip operators to refer to dive resort destinations. For high volume travel buyers, dive resorts are willing to roll out the red carpet to impress new potential high-volume customers. It’s like the casinos in Las Vegas. They make it their point to acquire and retain high rollers who do a lot of gambling with them.

Familiarization Trips are designed for different levels of the dive travel industry’s channel of distribution. Most Dive Travel Wholesalers are excellent candidates for consideration. Travel Wholesalers in the diving industry are travel businesses and travel advisors. They are licensed and bonded travel professionals. They are in the business of selling travel packages to individuals and groups. On a wholesale level, they target Dive Stores, Dive Clubs, and Tour Operators to sell to. This is the primary group that dive resorts and liveboards want as their business partners. Dive Travel Wholesalers have extensive websites and travel catalogs, featuring the properties they do business with. They promote their business at trade and consumer shows that feature adventure dive travel.

The second group to consider for a FAM Trip are Dive Stores that have a dive travel program. Dive stores that book group travel trips should be a high priority for dive resort destinations. Dive clubs that have a dive travel program or even an annual dive trip also make excellent contacts for resort destinations looking to increase their occupancy rate. Another category that has grown in recent years are Tour Operators who run escorted group trips to diving resorts and

liveboards. Tour Operators are legitimate businesses that set up group travel trips and usually accompany their group on the trip. The best way to understand how the travel sector works is to put yourself in the shoes of the resort destination owners. They are in the business of selling time and space, 365 days a year. They are of course, always looking for customers, but if they can attract and retain repeat customers who bring large groups of divers to their resort, so much the better. So, regardless of whether their customers are Dive Travel Wholesalers, Dive Stores, or Tour Operators, there is a way to work with them through a cohesive channel of distribution. That is why working with Industry Planners like us, becomes beneficial. Through advertising, promotions, shows & events, and organized FAM trips, industry planners work to bring travel buyers and sellers together.

In this article, we will be talking about some new ways FAM Trips can become more successful and profitable. Based on the number of FAM Trips we’ve been involved with, there are definite improvements and adjustments that can be made to turn a stale, pale, event into a successful campaign. You just have to define the outcome you are trying to achieve and make the necessary adjustments to the way you have always been conducting your promotions. You’ll be surprised at the benefits a few small improvements can make.

**Who are Familiarization Trips NOT for?** FAM trips are not for the person who is looking to go diving for free. For those of us who have been on a FAM trip or two before, you realize that it is a lot of work. Sure, it can be fun, especially with a good group and a great host. But think of a FAM trip as a learning experience to get yourself familiar with a new resort destination. As a professional seller of travel programs, the more you learn about one of your properties, the better you can represent it to your customers. First of all, there is nothing better than a firsthand, face-to-face experience at a resort destination. You’ll learn about the country, the airline that gets you there, the resort, the diving operation, and the group of FAM participants you’ll spend a few days with. You’ll experience firsthand the resort’s check-in and check-out procedures, the organization of the resort, the dining experience, the service experience, and you’ll interact with the resort staff who you will hopefully see again on your return trip. There is nothing better in my opinion than diving with the resort’s diving operation

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and interacting with their crew. By the time you finish a successful FAM Trip, you will be better prepared to represent that property to your customers. Believe me, FAM Trips are more than just diving.

**How To Qualify for FAM Trips:** Register with the Dive Industry Association. We have a Retail Travel Buyer survey you can fill out. We are looking at your history of booking group trips. Do you currently book group trips? How many trips have you booked? How many divers have you taken? Do you currently use a Dive Travel Wholesaler? We have access to 23 Dive Travel Wholesalers, in addition to hundreds of dive resorts and liveaboards. We do our best to follow FAM trips that are offered throughout the year. We can make a referral on your behalf. You can also register with any Dive Travel Wholesaler who runs FAM Trips. They may have a waiting list. You should definitely let your current Dive Travel Wholesaler know you are interested in FAM Trips. They will already be familiar with your group trip booking history.

**Who Sponsors FAM Trip?** FAM Trips are normally conducted by Tourism Boards, Dive Resorts, Dive Operators, or Dive Travel Wholesalers. Depending on who the sponsors are, the trip itinerary may vary from group to group. Sometimes a FAM Trip is sponsored by one group and conducted by another. Although any single Tourism Board, Dive Resort, or Dive Travel Wholesaler can conduct a FAM Trip, it can be a very expensive and time-consuming event to plan. The timing of the trip has to be favorable to the participant. Choosing the correct dates are important to the resort because they should not take valuable space away from their peak season clients, yet they may give a false bad impression if they conduct the trip in their off season. It's best if the resort and dive operators are busy, but not too busy. Again, it all depends on the number of FAM Trip participants. I've seen FAM Trips conducted for groups as small as 4 and as large as 35.

Over the past 40 years, I've seen Tourism Boards, Dive Resorts, Liveaboards, Dive Operators, and Dive Travel Wholesalers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars promoting their individual businesses at trade shows and consumer dive shows. Equipped with a box full of printed brochures and a small 10 x 10-foot booth, I just don't see how they could be happy with that kind of presentation. Many of them don't even bring a laptop computer with a video presentation of their



property. No offense, but the same thing goes for many of the Dive Travel Wholesalers. The time and resources invested to exhibit at a dive show does not necessarily produce the same results that a face-to-face, hands-on experience at a FAM Trip can produce. It might be a good idea to analyze the results you get from a trade or consumer show, compared to the bookings you get from sponsoring a FAM Trip. See which one produces better results.

Even though the travel business is big business, it is still very competitive. Dive destinations are basically selling heads on beds and butts on seats, with a shelf life of one day. The opportunity to sell yesterday's spot today doesn't exist. Comparatively, the diving industry is very small. The numbers of traveling divers may be significant, but the total universe of customers is finite. We have over 1,000 dive travel businesses in our database. Why would one resort be more attractive than another? That goes the same for the Islands of the Caribbean. My favorite place. We have over 30 major islands we correspond with and over 70 tourism bureaus in our database, and yet I still ask why we should recommend one island over the other?

Although many of the Caribbean Islands are united in their promotion of Caribbean tourism, they are still competing amongst themselves for our travel dollars. ***I don't see why more links in the travel supply chain do not combine their efforts to promote an integrated familiarization trip for the industry's best dive travel buyers?*** An integrated FAM Trip that is jointly sponsored by an island's tourism board, major dive resorts, dive operators, and island dive stores would be of significant importance for Dive Travel Wholesalers, Dive Stores, and Tour Operators to attend. I could sell an annual FAM Trip like that to our Industry.

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**Making FAM Trips Better:** Remember what I said about treating your business partners like customers? That's the first thing that has to change in order to produce better income generating FAM trips. Resort destinations cannot be so short sighted that they try to make money off FAM trip participants. **The end goal is to book group trips with these participants and make money from their customers.** That's why we screen our Retail Travel Buyers. We recommend dive stores that have a history of conducting successful group trips. They get on our list because they are industry rain makers and deserve the respect and special treatment they get from travel vendors. They book group trips and lots of them.

Having an individual dive resort or travel wholesaler sponsor a FAM Trip is the norm in our industry, although it does have its limitations on the quality and quantity of incentives that can be offered. An improvement that would make FAM Trips more productive and desirable would be to integrate the number of links in the supply chain as sponsors of the FAM Trip. Each link in the supply chain has a purpose in the flow of goods and services in their channel of distribution. When Tourism Boards and Bureaus are involved in sponsoring the trips, they sometimes give inland funded credit to the participants to spend on their trip. I've seen \$200 and \$300 credits given by the Virgin Islands and the Bahamas Tourism Boards. It is an incredible incentive to visit the island. It would work in Bonaire if the Tourism Bureau would waive the \$75 Tourism Tax they charge individual tourists. Isn't \$75 a good investment to entice a tour operator to bring a group of 30 divers to Bonaire? That would be an extra \$2,250 in revenue for Bonaire, by the way.

A major resource for a Caribbean Island, or any destination for that matter, are the airline carriers. Airlines have a vested interest in selling airfare to destinations. Has anyone ever tried to get the airlines to participate as a sponsor in a FAM Trip? I've been on FAM Trips where the airline fee was discounted or provided by the airlines. My favorite airline is Southwest Airlines because two of my bags fly free. Good to know for divers and underwater photographers. When guests arrive at the destination airport, let's not forget to consider the local ground transportation services and the local restaurants and bars. They all have a vested interest in promoting tourism.

Our FAM to St Lucia was very pleasurable and well or-

ganized. We stayed in one resort the entire trip. That was a plus in my book, because our group did not have to change hotels. We did, however, visit a few resorts which gave us a good sampling of the resorts on the island. On a different FAM trip we changed hotels in Dominican Republic and I think that took away from the flow of our trip. In my opinion, a resort visit is sufficient to learn about a new property. When it comes to the resort's dive operation, I prefer to dive with a different dive operator each day.

Some Dive Travel Wholesalers may disagree with me on this one. In St Lucia, I had the pleasure to be on a FAM trip with two travel wholesale companies, a number of dive store travel buyers, and a non-diving travel advisor. I think that mixing Resort Managers, Dive Travel Wholesalers from different companies, and Retail Travel Buyers on a FAM trip can be a very synergetic thing and show support for a common channel of distribution. Granted, I am aware of the potential for industry channel friction here.

**We Introduced the SWAG Bag:** A SWAG Bag is a promotional item that is handed out to attendees of an event. Roatan Charter and the Dive Industry Association executed this concept on two of our FAM Trips to Belize and the Turks & Caicos Islands. We did it for a number of reasons. Primarily, dive travelers need certain items while on a dive trip in the Caribbean. Essential items like sunscreen, insect repellent, sunglasses, ball caps, towels, and water bottles, are important to bring for your safety and enjoyment. We explained to our sponsors that we will be traveling with up to 35 qualified retail buyers for a weeklong trip to the Caribbean. In addition, we will be spending quality time with buyers from the Dive Resort and Dive Operations. When you consider how expensive it is to hire sales representatives to cover the Carib-



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bean, having a captive audience with us for a week seemed like a winning proposition to a number of sponsors. Creating a SWAG Bag for our FAM Trip participants was an enjoyable challenge for us and our efforts were well received by our participants, as well as the resort and dive operation managers. All the sample products we distributed were used on location and contributed to an enjoyable event. It may have even led to a few new dealers for the sponsors and a few new vendors for the dive store retailers.

**More Improvements and New Ideas:** I am a big fan of integrated marketing campaigns. I have been a strong supporter of trade and consumer shows and have attended and exhibited at over 50 shows. I have also assisted with and participated in a number of FAM Trips and on-sight visits of dive resorts, dive operators, and liveaboards. I have seen the strengths and limitations of each but have been encouraged by things we have been able to bring to the table that has increased the success and effectiveness of our promotions by implementing improvements and new ideas. When you think about what we are doing by conducting FAM Trips, you see that we are in fact,



bringing buyers and sellers together. But it is not just about travel buyers and sellers. By integrating our efforts with buyers and sellers of diving equipment, training, travel, and lifestyle products we can open up a whole new concept in dive travel.

For more information on future FAM Trips, contact Gene Muchanski, Executive Director, Dive Industry Association, Inc., 2294 Botanica Circle, West Melbourne, FL. Phone 321-914-3778. Email: [gene@diveindustry.net](mailto:gene@diveindustry.net) web: [www.diveindustry.net](http://www.diveindustry.net)



# DIVE LOCAL FLORIDA



and



Together With



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## CLEAR THE PATH

June 28-29, 2024

The Cove Restaurant & Tiki Bar | Deerfield Beach

\$100/ Team – 2 Divers

Grunts, Grits, and Dive Boat Divisions | Cash Prizes for Largest, Most & Smallest Kill  
 “Rock the Dock” Cocktail Party Fri. & Sat., Calypso Music by Mango Man and Silent Auction

**Not diving, but want to Support the Cause? With a \$25 donation join the Friday night festivities.  
 For anglers in the crowd, IGFA legend Capt. Bouncer Smith will be on hand to share his celebrated lifetime of  
 Saltwater Fishing Tips, Techniques and Exploits!**

### June 28, Friday. Kickoff & Dock Party

1730-1830 HRS Capt. Bouncer Smith Fishing Seminar  
 1900-1930 HRS Dive Team Captains Meeting  
 1730-2030 HRS Dock Party, Music by Mango Man.  
 Docktails and Tall Tales Told by  
 Diving Legend Neal “Dive God” Watson,  
 Sportfishing Legend Copt. Bouncer Smith  
 & Lobster Sniper Jim “Chiefy” Mathie

### June 29, Saturday. Weigh In, Awards & Dock Party

0700 - 1500 HRS Open Water Warfare.  
 1500 HRS Return to Base, Scale Opens  
 1500 - 1900 HRS Dock Party, Music by Mango Man.  
 1600 HRS Lionfish Cooking Demo & Tasting  
 1800 HRS Scale Closes. Kill Counts Tabulated  
 1830 HRS Awards & Veteran Salute  
 1900 HRS Silent Auction Closes, Dismissed

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For More Event Info visit:  
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# DIVE NETWORK



## Dive Industry Network SWAG Gift Bags for FAM Participants

By Gene Muchanski, Executive Director,  
Dive Industry Association, Inc.

### SWAG Gift Bags

A SWAG Gift Bag is a promotional item that is handed out to attendees at an event. While they are considered a singular promotional item, swag gift bags are in fact a bag of multiple items that attendees genuinely appreciate. The number of items in a swag gift bag depends on the number of sponsors that participate in the giveaway. The promotional items included may differ depending on the type of event being conducted. The items could be sample size products or full production sized. They are given as a gift to attendees by event producers, to express appreciation for attending an event.

Swag Gift Bags are effective attention getters at shows and events because they start the program off on a positive note. Think of it this way. An attendee arrives an event, having spent considerable time, money, and manpower getting there. They are greeted by the producers who present them with a gift, thanking them for attending. If the swag gift bag contains items of value, it's a double win for the attendee, producer, and sponsor.

Swag Gift Bags gets their name from the word *sway*, and not from the words to an acronym you might be thinking of. By presenting attendees with a gift upon arrival, producers are trying to sway us, or persuade us to think of them favorably. In the travel industry, swag gift bags are used extensively, because the producers of travel events are doing their best to get our

business. And it works.

As a Marketing Professional, I have seen the effective use of swag bags when dealing with buyers and sellers in a variety of industries. Especially in the travel and hospitality industries. I learned very early in my career that the sellers of programs, products, and services, are always looking for customers who need, want, can afford, and are willing to purchase what they sell. I also realized that the person with the checkbook always has a competitive edge in a buyer-seller relationship. I've made it my mission to bring buyers and sellers in the diving industry together for mutual benefit, by using innovative marketing ideas like swag gift bags and personal matchmaking referrals.

**Swag Bag Use on FAM Trips:** Providing FAM trip attendees with a bag of useful product samples accomplishes a number of objectives for the event planner, the recipient, and the sponsor.

- Trip Planners establish goodwill with attendees, resorts, and dive operations
- Product samples may be useful on the trip
- Vendors/Sponsors may receive new customers/dealers
- Travel/Equipment Buyers may discover new products or vendors
- Product samples may be tax deductible donations or a promotional expense

**Who Receives Swag Bag:** Swag Gift Bags are given to qualified retail buyers on a FAM trip as a means to introduce them to new products. On trips where dive stores are permitted to bring two attendees, each one should receive a bag of their own. Trip Planners may get a little creative when couples are involved, if samples are different in color, size, or purpose. It may also make a difference if the guests are divers or non-divers. The key is to be creative but remain inclusive. I also found it appropriate to give a special swag gift bag to the Resort Manager and the Manager of the Diving Operation. Preferably the ones who are in charge of product purchasing.

**Popular Swag Bag Items:** Popular swag items on dive trips include reusable water bottles, environmentally safe sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm, sunglasses, ball caps, rash guards and beach towels. Specialty diving accessories make great gift items also, depending on their size, cost, and usage.

# DIVE NETWORK

**Typical Swag gift Bag Sponsors:** Any company with a vested interest in diving and dive travel can and should participate in swag gift bag promotions. We've seen sponsorships from tourism boards, dive resorts, dive travel wholesalers, dive equipment manufacturers, non-profit organizations, and lifestyle product companies.

**Benefits of Swag Gift Bag Promotion:** Right before the pandemic and shortly after, Roatan Charter and the Dive Industry Association worked together on two FAM Trips to Belize and the Turks & Caicos Islands. We came up with the idea of presenting our participants with a swag gift bag at the beginning of each trip. We did it for a number of reasons. Primarily, dive travelers need certain items while on a dive trip in the Caribbean. Essential items like sunscreen, insect repellent, sunglasses, ball caps, towels, and water bottles, are important items to bring for your safety and enjoyment. We explained to our sponsors that we would be traveling with up to 35 qualified retail buyers for a weeklong trip to the Caribbean. In addition, we would be spending quality time with the buyers from the Dive Resort and Dive Operation. When you consider how expensive it is to hire sales representatives to cover the Caribbean, having a captive audience with us for a week seemed like a winning proposition to a number of sponsors. Creating a SWAG Gift Bag for our FAM Trip participants was an enjoyable challenge for us, and our efforts were well received by our participants, as well as by the resort and dive operation managers. All the sample products we distributed were used on location and contributed to an enjoyable event. It may have even led to a few new dealers for the sponsors and a few new vendors for the dive store retailers.

**More Than Just Travel Buyers:** When you think about what we are doing by conducting FAM trips, you see that we are in fact, bringing buyers and sellers together. Normally you would think that a FAM trip is about introducing 35 travel buyers to 2 travel sellers: the dive travel wholesaler and the dive resort. ***But it is not just about travel buyers and sellers.*** On a typical FAM Trip, we will be spending a week with as many as 35 qualified retail buyers of diving equipment, training, travel, and lifestyle products. When you add the buyers from the resort's gift shop and the dive operation, you have a five-day event in which to build relationships with almost 40 buyers.



**Belize FAM Trip:** Right before the pandemic, we had the opportunity to work with [Roatan Charter](#) on a FAM Trip to Belize. Roatan Charter and [Belize Dive Haven](#) had scheduled a FAM Trip 2 weeks prior to their Grand Opening. Our goal was to select up to 30 participants from our databases of high-volume group travel buyers for this inaugural FAM Trip. While Debbie Helms from Roatan Charter was finalizing the details for the trip, we were putting out a request to the diving industry for FAM Trip sample products for our SWAG Gift Bags. The response was better than we had anticipated. The following Vendors donated 30 sample products each. Thank you all for your generous participation.

- [4Ocean](#) – Reuseable Water Bottle & Wrist Bracelet
- [Lita's All Natural](#) – Insect Repellent
- [Pepper's Polarized Eyewear](#) – Sunglasses & Lanyards
- [SeaCure Custom Mouthpiece](#) – SeaCure Custom Mouthpiece, 4 colors
- [Stream2Sea](#) – 3 Piece Sampler Pack- Sunscreen, Conditioner, Sun & Sting Gel

We ended up with 28 FAM participants. We presented 28 SWAG Gift Bags at our arrival dinner at the resort, to qualified buyers from 14 Dive Stores, 1 Dive Travel Wholesaler, 1 Industry Media, and the Resort Owner and Dive Operations Manager. All of the products we distributed got excellent usage on the trip. The water bottles were refilled multiple times per day, and we carried them everywhere.

# DIVE NETWORK



**Turks & Caicos Islands FAM Trip:** We had such a good experience with the gift bags in Belize, that we ran the program again on South Caicos Island, in the Turks & Caicos Islands. We would like to thank DAN for the water bottles and Gold DAN Pins. They went with us everywhere. Thanks to Stream2Sea for the 3 Sample Pack of Sunscreen, Hand Sanitizer, and Mask Defog. The perfect post-pandemic products. Thank you to Lita's All Natural for the Insect Repellent and Insect Bite Itch Relief. You never know how much you need them until you need them.

- [DAN](#) – Divers Alert Network – Reuseable Water Bottle DAN & DAN Pin
- [Lita's All Natural](#) – Insect Repellant & Insect Bite Itch Relief
- [Stream2Sea](#) – 3 Piece Sampler Pack- Sunscreen, Conditioner, Sun & Sting Gel

**What We Learned:** The first thing I realized was that Debbie Helms from Roatan Charter is a Rock Star. I always knew it, but these two trips showed us all why Roatan Charter is the best Dive Travel Wholesale Company in the Industry. Debbie and her Staff are always open to new ideas, and they go out of their way to enhance their clients' dive travel experience. Our experience with the SWAG Gift Bags enabled us to form a closer bond with our Retail FAM Trip Participants and it led to a partnership with a number of dive equipment suppliers and manufacturers. FAM Trip visits can double as an opportunity to present and demonstrate diving equipment and related products to qualified retail buyers who are participating in the FAM Trip, as well as to the equipment buyers at the dive resort, dive operation, and resort gift shop.

**A Paradigm Shift in FAM Trips:** From a marketing perspective, I am always thinking about ways to increase the frequency, reach, and effectiveness of our marketing messages, increase market penetration and market share, maximize the flow of goods and services through our channels of distribution, and continually acquire, retain, and service my current customer base. I sincerely believe that an integrated marketing strategy, like the one we are currently using, can make significant inroads in the Caribbean dive market. I am looking forward to expanding our marketing influence in the Caribbean and beyond.

For more information on raising the professional bar in the Global Diving Business Network, contact Gene Muchanski, Executive Director, Dive Industry Association, Inc., 2294 Botanica Circle, West Melbourne, FL. Phone 321-914-3778. Email: [gene@diveindustry.net](mailto:gene@diveindustry.net) web: [www.diveindustry.net](http://www.diveindustry.net)

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# ADVERTISEMENT



**INDIVIDUAL TRAVELERS**  
Updated January 2024

# SHOWS & EVENTS

## 2024 TRADE SHOWS



**June 1-2, 2024: Scuba Show.** 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Scuba Show. Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA. Contact Mark Young, Executive Director. Phone: 816-665-8679. email: [mail@scubashow.com](mailto:mail@scubashow.com) Web: [www.scubashow.com](http://www.scubashow.com)



**November 19-22, 2024: Dema Show.** 48th Annual Industry Trade Show. Las Vegas Convention Center, South Halls, Las Vegas, NV. Phone: 800-687-7469, email: Web: [www.demashow.com](http://www.demashow.com)



**June 28-29, 2024: Operation Lionfish – Clear The Path.** Lionfish Derby, Contest, and Dock Party. All Net Proceeds Benefit Warfighters Scuba. Deerfield Beach, FL. Contact Mark Ellert, President Guy Harvey Outpost. Phone: 954-368-4845. email: [mhellert@guyharveyoutpost.com](mailto:mhellert@guyharveyoutpost.com) Web: [www.OperationLionfish.com](http://www.OperationLionfish.com)



**September 5-7, 2024: Surf Expo.** 47th Annual Industry Trade Show. Orange County Convention Center – South Concourse, 9800 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819. Contact Rod Tomlinson. Toll Free Phone: 800-947-7873. email: [rod.tomlinson@surfexpo.com](mailto:rod.tomlinson@surfexpo.com) Direct: 678-781-7914. Web: [www.surfexpo.com](http://www.surfexpo.com)



**September 7-8, 2024: ScubaCon – In-Person Scuba Event.** 41<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Scuba Event. Boulder, CO. Contact Steve Weaver, Dream Weaver Travel. Phone: 303-499-0942. email: [steve@diveDWT.com](mailto:steve@diveDWT.com) Web: [www.DreamWeaverTravel.com](http://www.DreamWeaverTravel.com)

## 2025 TRADE SHOWS



**January 8-10, 2025: Surf Expo.** 48th Annual Industry Trade Show. Orange County Convention Center – West Concourse, 9899 International Drive, Orlando, FL. Contact Rod Tomlinson. Toll Free Phone: 800-947-7873. Phone: 678-781-7900. email: [rod.tomlinson@surfexpo.com](mailto:rod.tomlinson@surfexpo.com) Direct: 678-781-7914. Web: [www.surfexpo.com](http://www.surfexpo.com)



**January 18-26, 2025: Boot Dusseldorf** – 54th International Boat Show. Dusseldorf, Germany. Diving Pavilion in Hall 3. Contact: Justin Kesselring, Project Manager, Messe Dusseldorf North America, 150 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 2920, Chicago, IL 60601. Phone: 312-781-5180 email: [info@mdna.com](mailto:info@mdna.com) Web: <http://www.mdna.com/trade-shows/details/boot>

# SHOWS & EVENTS



**March 15-16, 2025: *The Boston Sea Rovers 71<sup>st</sup> Annual International Underwater Clinic.*** CoCo Key Hotel & Water Resort, Danvers, MA Contact David Caldwell, Exhibit Co-Chairman, Email: [djc.searover@gmail.com](mailto:djc.searover@gmail.com) or visit [www.bostonsearovers.com](http://www.bostonsearovers.com)



**March 28-30, 2025: *Beneath the Sea* - 46th Annual International Oceans Exposition.** New Jersey Meadowlands Expo Center, Secaucus, NJ. Contact Maria Hults. Phone: 914-664-4310. Fax: 914-664-4315. email: [info@beneaththesea.org](mailto:info@beneaththesea.org) Web: [www.beneaththesea.us](http://www.beneaththesea.us)



**November 11-14, 2025: *Dema Show.*** 49th Annual Industry Trade Show. Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Phone: 800-687-7469, email: Web: [www.demashow.com](http://www.demashow.com)

## 2024 PHOTOGRAPHY EVENTS



**August 24 – September 8, 2024: *MantaFest Photography School & Contest.*** 18th Annual Event. Yap, Micronesia. Contact Bill Acker. Web: [www.mantaray.com](http://www.mantaray.com)



*BlackwaterFest*  
Yap - Micronesia

**September 7-15, 2024: *BlackwaterFest 2024 Photography School.*** 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Event. Yap, Micronesia. Contact Bill Acker. Web: [www.mantaray.com](http://www.mantaray.com)



# MEMBERSHIP



The Dive Industry Association is a Marketing and Trade Association dedicated to *"Building a Better Industry, One Member at a Time."* Founded in April 2001, Dive Businesses and Individuals have joined our association to promote their business and grow the diving industry.

*"Building a Better Industry, One Member at a Time"*

**Our Purpose** is to build a cohesive and functional Global Diving Business Network.

**Our Vision** is to *Build a Better Industry, One Member at a Time.*

**Our Mission** is to Bring Buyers & Sellers together to facilitate business success and industry growth.

**Our Focus** is to concentrate on the industry's sale of diving equipment, training, travel, and lifestyle products.

**Our Goals are to:**

- Unite the Industry to a common purpose
- Promote Professional Business Development within our Membership
- Generate maximum marketing exposure and sales leads for our Members
- Increase business opportunities for our Members

**Reasons to Join:** Annual dues are \$125. Annual renewals, if paid by your annual renewal date are \$100. There is no place in the industry where you get as much coverage for so little an investment. The association promotes your business using blogs, websites, directories, social media, at trade and consumer shows and through direct referrals. Our networking capability is the envy of the International Diving community. The discounts you receive from Constant Contact by being a member and the FREE weekly press releases you receive more than pay for your dues many times over. Don't be a *Lone Marketeer*. Join the Dive Industry Association this year.

For more information: Contact Gene Muchanski, Executive Director, Dive Industry Association, Inc., 2294 Botanica Circle, West Melbourne, Florida, 32904. Phone: 321-914-3778. eMail: [gene@diveindustry.net](mailto:gene@diveindustry.net) Web: [www.diveindustry.net](http://www.diveindustry.net)



# MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS



*"Building a Better Industry, One Member at a Time"*

We would like to thank the following New Members for joining our Global Diving Business Network.

We would like to thank the following Charter Members and Members for renewing with us for another year.

## NEW MEMBERS

0434 – MGW Productions – Service Provider, Film Maker – [www.mgwpro.com](http://www.mgwpro.com)

## RENEWING MEMBERS

0061 – Travel Resource Solutions – Travel, Reservation Service – [www.trsrres.com](http://www.trsrres.com)

0135 – Prescription Dive Masks – Service Provider – [www.PrescriptionDiveMasks.com](http://www.PrescriptionDiveMasks.com)

0138 – Captain Slate's Scuba Adventures – Dive Operator & Retail Dive Center – [www.Captainslate.com](http://www.Captainslate.com)

0163 – Diveheart Foundation – Non-Profit Organization – [www.diveheart.org](http://www.diveheart.org)

0210 – Sea Robin Cozumel – Travel, Dive Operator – [www.searobincozumel.com](http://www.searobincozumel.com)

0332 – Roatan Charter – Travel, Wholesaler – [www.RoatanCharter.com](http://www.RoatanCharter.com)

0357 – Lita's All Natural LLC – Manufacturer – [www.LitasAllNatural.com](http://www.LitasAllNatural.com)

0362 – Mayan Princess Beach Resort – Travel, Dive Resort – [www.mayanprincess.com](http://www.mayanprincess.com)

0369 – Stream2Sea – Manufacturer – [www.stream2sea.com](http://www.stream2sea.com)

0395 – Go Deep Scuba – Travel, Tour Operator – [www.GoDeepScuba.com](http://www.GoDeepScuba.com)

0420 – Ultralight Camera Solutions – Manufacturer – [www.ulcs.com](http://www.ulcs.com)





"Building a Better Industry, One Member at a Time"

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Proprietorship [ ] Partnership [ ] Corporation [ ] LLC Years in Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person's Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Years with Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Toll Free Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Toll Free Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook: \_\_\_\_\_ Skype: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address for directories: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address for DIA correspondence: \_\_\_\_\_

Web Site (URL): \_\_\_\_\_

Trade Directory by-line (1-2 lines only): \_\_\_\_\_

DEMA Member? [ ] No [ ] Yes Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Votes: \_\_\_\_\_ Voting Delegate: \_\_\_\_\_

Category – Business - (Choose One) \$25 Registration Fee + \$100 Annual Membership Dues

- [ ] Manufacturer [ ] Distributor [ ] Retail Center [ ] Charter Boat [ ] Dive Club
[ ] Service Provider [ ] Industry Media [ ] Trade Association [ ] Training Association
[ ] Service Organization [ ] Trade Show Organizer [ ] Training Facility [ ] Travel Business

Category – Individual - (Choose One) \$25 Registration Fee + \$50 Annual Membership Dues

- [ ] Sales Representative [ ] Professional Educator [ ] Industry Professional

Payment Method: [ ] Cash / [ ] Check / [ ] Credit Card / [ ] PayPal / [ ] Square

[ ] Check (payable to Dive Industry Association, Inc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] If paying by Credit Card, please fill out: Type: [ ] American Express [ ] MasterCard [ ] Visa

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Holder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

\* DIA retains the right to re-classify members according to our membership standards.

Mail to: Dive Industry Association, Inc., 2294 Botanica Circle, West Melbourne, FL 32904-7339



# ARE WE THERE YET?

SCUBA DIVING

EXCURSIONS

LIVEBOARDS

GROUP TRAVEL

1 (800) 282-8932 | [Info@RoatanCharter.com](mailto:Info@RoatanCharter.com) | [www.RoatanCharter.com](http://www.RoatanCharter.com)



# DIVE INDUSTRY FOUNDATION

PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WATERSPORTS



Dive Industry Foundation  
501(c)(3) Non-Profit, Tax Exempt  
Charitable, Educational Organization  
[www.diveindustry.org](http://www.diveindustry.org)