

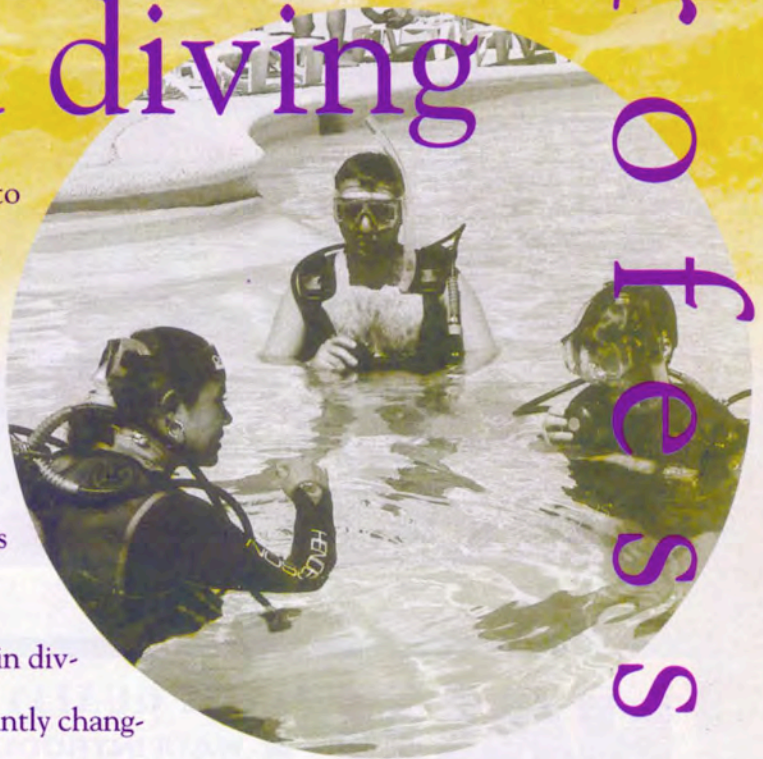
Your **career** as a diving professional

Fifty years ago, if you wanted to start a career in diving, you joined the U.S. Navy. The only choice was the Navy—take it or leave it. Today, as we approach the millennium, people face a wide and bewildering range of options for careers in diving.

Today, there are hundreds of careers in diving. Job and skill requirements are constantly changing as the diving industry becomes more complex. But most

careers fall into one of two broad categories: recreational dive leaders and commercial divers. A recreational dive leader instructs and supervises recreational divers. A commercial diver accomplishes work under water. Both categories call for education beyond open-water certification. Acquiring the appropriate formal education for a career under water is usually the first step.

—by Rob Curran



On the recreational side, people work as:

- ▶ divemasters and instructors
- ▶ instructor trainers and examiners
- ▶ resort, dive center and live-aboard personnel
- ▶ journalists, photographers and cinematographers
- ▶ leaders of scuba training and certification agencies
- ▶ sales and marketing professionals

On the commercial side, divers usually work for diving contractors to:

- ▶ construct underwater structures and oil platforms
- ▶ salvage ships and treasures
- ▶ build and maintain boats, bridges, docks, dams, nuclear power plants and coastal structures
- ▶ operate marine farms and mariculture stations
- ▶ conduct engineering and scientific surveys and inspections
- ▶ operate and maintain complex remote operated vehicles (ROVs), air and gas supplies, and life-support systems
- ▶ provide hyperbaric first-aid and diving emergency medical care

Careers in recreational diving

Recreational dive leaders are paid to help people safely enjoy their recreational time. They play the roles of tour guide, teacher, entertainer, adviser and host. Most recreational training organizations classify any divemaster, assistant instructor or instructor as a "professional." However, if you're interested in a full-time career as a recreational dive leader, pursue an instructor rating. Without it, your opportunities to find work and earn a living as a dive leader are limited.

Most retail, charter boat and resort facilities require employees to possess skills beyond leading and instructing: retailing, scuba equipment repair, boat handling, compressor and engine maintenance, resort operations, and bookkeeping. In addition, dive stores and resorts often expect their instructors to teach specialties: computer-assisted diving, underwater photography and video, underwater naturalist, nitrox, rebreathers, etc. Thus, it's smart to learn these special instructor ratings at the earliest opportunity. A number of instructor programs offer additional training in skills and subjects that make you valuable in retail and resort settings.

There are several paths to instructor certification. First, on a part-time basis, you can complete the required courses in a series of evenings and weekends over several months. Second, you can

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DIVING PROFESSIONAL ADVERTISING SECTION

train at a "dedicated" school—an institution that does nothing but train instructors. Some of these schools are affiliated with resorts. At a dedicated school, you can enroll in a full-time program that can take you from open-water diver to instructor in a matter of weeks. Or third, for an ultimate "real world" resort experience, you can enroll in a state-side or overseas school that conducts instructor training within a fully functioning dive resort and retail operation.

Finding work as an instructor

Training organizations and schools tend to offer valuable job-placement services to their students and graduates. Most schools maintain contact with scores of resorts and dive operations around the world that are looking to hire graduates. The effective job-placement service matches the particular skills and preferences of each candidate with the particular requirements of each resort or dive operation. A job-placement office can also provide assistance on practical matters: preparing resumés, required documents for jobs overseas, housing, and the cost of living at each destination.

Careers in commercial diving

Complex technical and scientific problems develop in all oceans and waters of the world. Many involve complicated mechanical structures: ships, bridges, dams, nuclear power systems or pipelines. Others involve simple search and recovery. Wherever and whatever the problems, they create work that needs to be accomplished by well-trained commercial divers. The work of a commercial diver is always physical, exacting and demanding, and is often exciting and rewarding.

Commercial divers are mechanics, engineers, equipment operators and analysts. They are usually people who like technical problems, working with tools and machinery, and facing rugged and changing work environments. Commercial divers use diving as transportation to reach a work site in oceans, lakes, harbors and rivers. They work under water, both offshore and inland. Today more than ever, commercial diving offers many niches to explore. Individuals can develop their own niches by matching their particular skills, talents and education to emerging industry needs.

Commercial diver training

Accredited commercial diving schools offer safe, broad, comprehensive entry-level training in all phases of commercial diving, and thorough preparation for employment and advancement in the industry. Advanced training comes in an on-the-job apprenticeship throughout your entire career in commercial diving. Commercial diver training is more rigorous and expensive than recreational scuba training. You will invest six to seven months in full-time study at an accredited institution.

The goal of commercial training is to

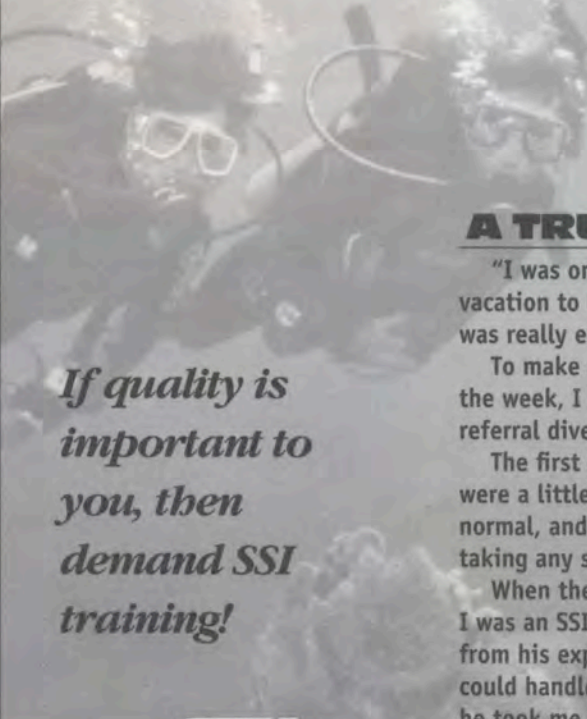
produce divers who are ready to enter the work force in both inland-coastal and offshore oil field diving. Commercial diving schools teach all basic skills required by the trade, including use of commercial dive gear with air and mixed gases, underwater welding and inspection, basic hyperbaric medicine and underwater rigging.

Commercial divers: demand exceeds supply

Commercial diving educators report that today's demand for entry-level commercial divers exceeds supply. With this state of

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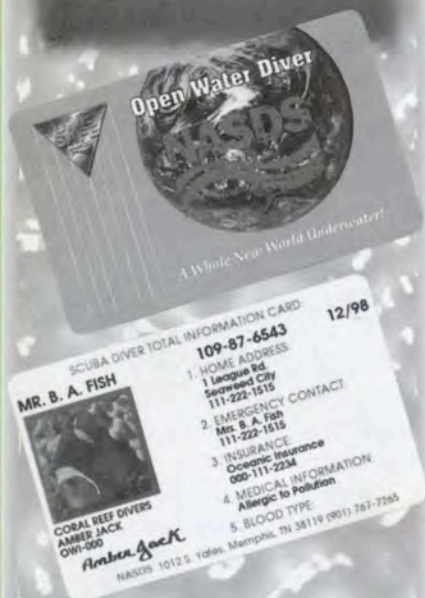
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affairs, many students are able to consider offers from three to five different employers—before they graduate.

Make a plan

Before you embark on the diving career of your dreams—your journey of a thousand steps—you need to develop a personal plan. To start, ask yourself “where do I want to go?” Then ask yourself “how do I get there?” The planning process involves educating yourself on “how do I reach my objectives?” and “are my goals realistic?”

To obtain knowledge for your plan, use the tactics of the investigative reporter: interview people who are “in a position to know.” Then sift and interpret the facts in light of your personal goals.

You may find yourself interviewing various individuals:

- operators of diving schools and training programs
- instructors
- graduates of particular schools
- people who currently work in—or who have left—the field you are considering
- resort operators
- diving contractors

- representatives of personnel agencies that specialize in providing leaders for recreational diving.

As you develop and refine your plan, ground your expectations in reality. Ask yourself some important questions: Are my goals for a career in diving compatible with my other personal goals? Will I be able to earn enough money in my chosen profession? How long do I expect to work in my field? Is my plan flexible if things don't work out as I anticipate, or are there possible dead-ends? Do I have “the right stuff”: the determination, knowledge, skills and personality traits? Other than diving, what can I offer an employer?

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