



Text by Simon Pridmore  
Photos by Andrey Bizyukin

— The Scuba Confidential column in this issue is adapted from a chapter in Simon's book *Scuba Professional: Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations*.

**“Wait, wait,” you may say when you read the title of this column, “What are you talking about? Aren't those two things the same? Isn't a dive instructor by definition a scuba professional? And what do you mean by 'Road'?”**

A professional is someone who gets paid for plying a trade. At the point when you become a dive instructor, you may have done a lot of paying, that's for sure, but it is unlikely that you will have seen any cash coming your way yet. What you have achieved when you successfully complete your instructor course is the acquisition of a title that you can use on your business card. You have a few more steps to take before you have a profession—hence, the concept of a road to take.

As a new instructor, you are but one of



# Going Pro

*Part II: The Road from Dive Instructor to Scuba Professional*

a host of fledgling scuba instructors who have just been released into the diving world. Out there, ahead of you in the pecking order, are the countless multitudes of scuba instructors who preceded you.

Actually, that is not the case. Most of

those that passed this way before you are no longer working in diving.

Why is this the case? Here are a few possibilities:

• They only did the course for the card.

• Their drive and enthusiasm fades once they have achieved their goal.

• Their friends did not want to pay them for teaching them to dive.

• It is harder than they thought to find other people to sign up for a course.

• Working in diving is tougher than they thought it would be.





- Working in diving does not pay as well as they thought it would.
- They find out that it is actually diving they like, rather than teaching, and that as an instructor, they do a lot of teaching and not much diving.
- They discover that they do not know as much about diving as they thought they did, and suddenly, as an instructor, they feel they are supposed to know everything, which makes them very uncomfortable.

## A New Book for Scuba Divers!

*Scuba Exceptional* may be the fifth in Simon Pridmore's *Scuba* series, but it is actually the true follow-up to his first book, the best-selling *Scuba Confidential*.

The philosophy of safer diving through the acquisition of knowledge and skills is the same, although this time the themes are different. As before, Pridmore provides us with a whole host of extremely useful advice and techniques, illustrated by real-life experiences and cautionary tales.

The focus this time, though, is more on issues that experienced divers face. There is more technical diving content, and Pridmore covers some relatively complex issues in his usual clear and easy-to-read style. In many cases, the issues that concern technical divers reflect those that affect scuba divers at every level. After all, as Pridmore writes, technical diving is on the same spectrum as conventional sport diving:



It is just a different frequency.

*Scuba Exceptional* also deals in more detail with the psychological approach to scuba diving, broaching familiar topics from new angles and borrowing techniques and procedures from other areas of human activity.

While most of *Scuba Exceptional* focuses on the diver, it also takes a look at the wider picture and highlights a number of areas where scuba diving professionals and the "industry" as a whole are letting divers down.

As always, Pridmore is realistic in his assessments. He may shine a little light on the dark side of the scuba diving world, but he does this in order to illuminate bad practices and encourage change, while offering solutions.

*Scuba Exceptional: Become the Best Diver You Can Be* by Simon Pridmore is available on: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



One or a combination of these factors is usually what causes new instructors to drop out of the game. Of course, a lot of this has to do with the fact that people often sign up to become an instructor without really understanding what is involved. I wrote about this in my article "Going Pro—Part One," in issue #98 of *X-Ray Mag*.

Anyway, assuming you have become a dive instructor, are happy with your lot and have no intention of giving it up, what can you do to try to ensure that you will be one of those happy few who end up enjoying a long and fruitful career in this wonderful sport? Here are a few top tips.

### Keep learning

Practise your personal diving skills constantly. Then, at the point when you think your skills are perfect, practise some more. Everything you do in the water

needs to be absolutely instinctive in order to permit you to devote 100 percent of your attention to your students and/or the divers in your charge. Dive as much as you can, in as many different environments and conditions as possible. Stay within your personal comfort zone but try to push the envelope out little by little. When you pass knowledge on, you are more credible if you speak from a reservoir of personal experience.

When you teach, do not just parrot what the manuals say. Make sure you understand the background to what you are telling people. Read widely, especially books about the psychology, physiology and decompression theory in diving. Do not get fixated on established protocols. Be open to new ideas and ways to do things, but question everything.

Build on the basic underwater management and control skills you were taught on your instructor course. Learn

to observe and interpret behaviour so you can anticipate problems before they occur. Seize upon any chance that comes along to work with and learn from more experienced colleagues. Such opportunities are rare in scuba diving as most instructors work alone—but, if you get lucky, make the most of it.

Undertake more diving courses. Look particularly at technical diving, diving in wrecks, in caves or under ice. Even as an experienced scuba instructor, you may feel like a complete beginner again, but embrace the challenge. When you return to single cylinder no-decompression-stop diving after training like this, you will be astonished at the new levels of competence you have acquired.

### Work on your employability

If you do not already have a commercial background, then do some small business courses so you understand at



# opinion

least the basics of accounting, marketing, staff management and maintaining cash flow. Dive centres, liveaboards and resorts are primarily businesses after all.

Review the life skills you may have acquired elsewhere over the years. Operators of dive liveaboards and resorts love to take on people with a hospitality background. All

dive operations have a lot of machinery, from regulators and rebreathers to compressors and boat engines, so if you have mechanical or engineering skills, you will be much in demand. The same applies if you can speak multiple languages or have studied marine biology. All these things make you more employable and will help you negotiate better pay and benefits.

### Look after the pennies

Many instructors drop out of diving because they have not taken their finances seriously and are forced to leave the work and the life they love and return to the non-diving world simply on economic grounds. This is usually because they have not approached their work and career in a professional way. They have not

taken a long-term view.

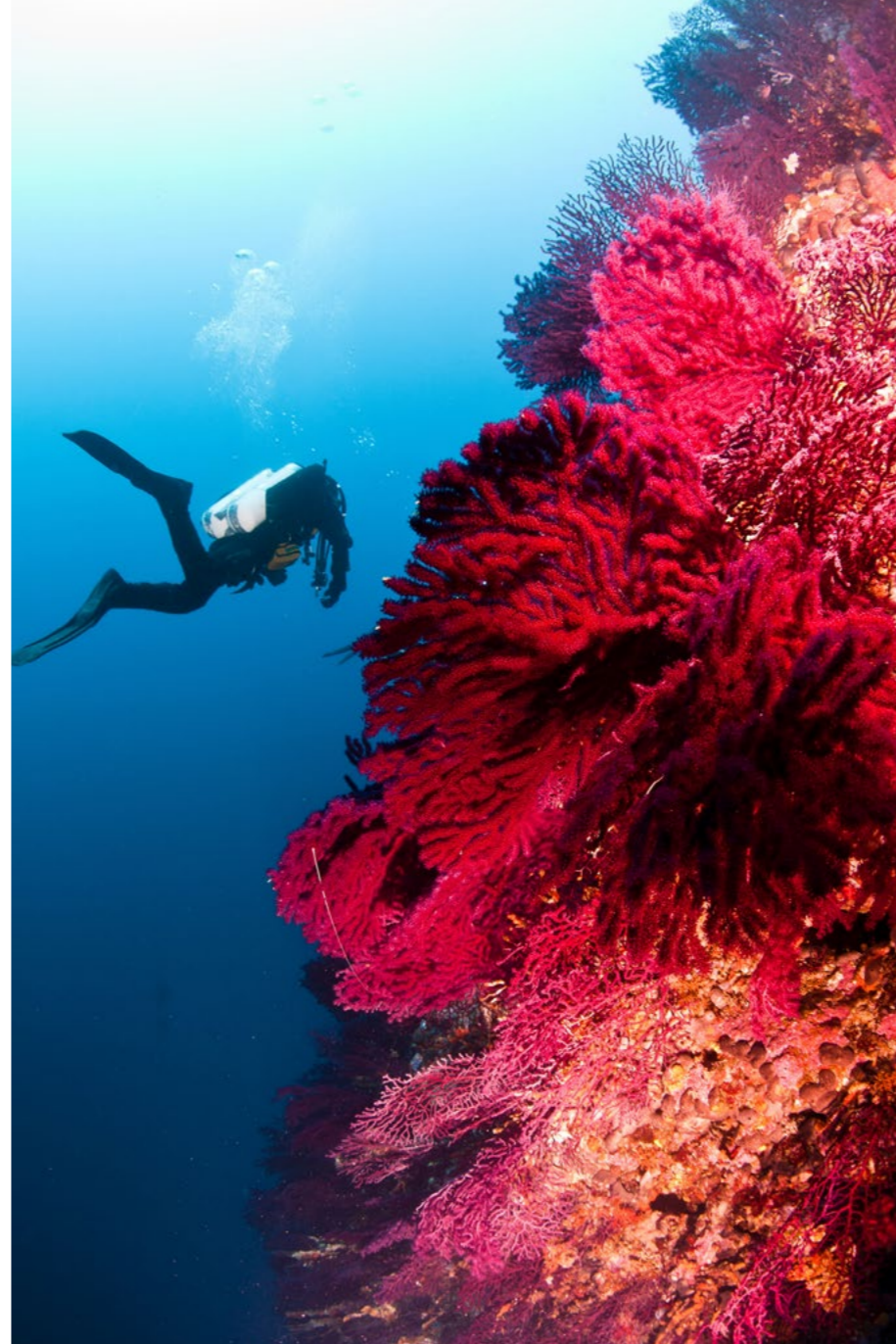
Scuba diving jobs are not well paid. But that does not mean that you need to struggle. Often, your work takes you to remote places where there are few entertainment options and, although your wages may be small, your board and lodging will be provided free of charge, so you will have no expenses. There is a good chance too that your wages will be supplemented by tips.

People react to this lifestyle in one of two ways. Some spend their time in paradise just dreaming of being elsewhere and planning what a great time they are going to have when they get back to "civilisation." They then blow all their money on entertainment and new toys, returning to work a couple of weeks later penniless.

Others take advantage of the opportunity to save their money, start up an investment portfolio or buy a small apartment back home to rent out and make a little extra. Meanwhile, they look ahead in their career and make a plan to perhaps become an industry leader or even one day start their own dive business and become an employer rather than an employee.

### Takeaways

Being a dive professional is an exciting career and can bring



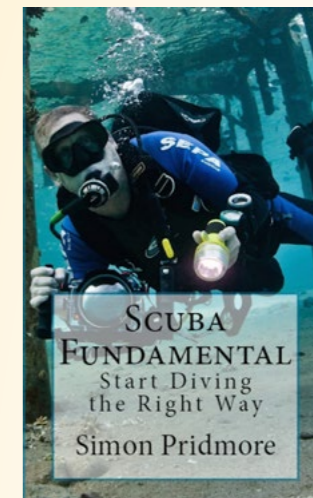
envious lifestyle rewards. But it takes focus and determination to succeed. You need to work at it, as you would in any other walk of life. Be ready and willing to learn and progress—and always keep an eye on the money. ■

*Simon Pridmore is the author of the international bestsellers Scuba Confidential: An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver, Scuba Professional: Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations and Scuba*

*Fundamental: Start Diving the Right Way. He is also the co-author of the Diving & Snorkeling Guide to Bali and the Diving & Snorkeling Guide to Raja Ampat & Northeast Indonesia. His recently published books include Scuba Exceptional: Become the Best Diver You Can Be, Scuba Physiological: Think You Know All About Scuba Medicine? Think Again! and the Dining with Divers series of cookbooks. For more information, see his website at: [SimonPridmore.com](http://SimonPridmore.com).*

# Get the series!

Essential books by Simon Pridmore that no diver should be without.

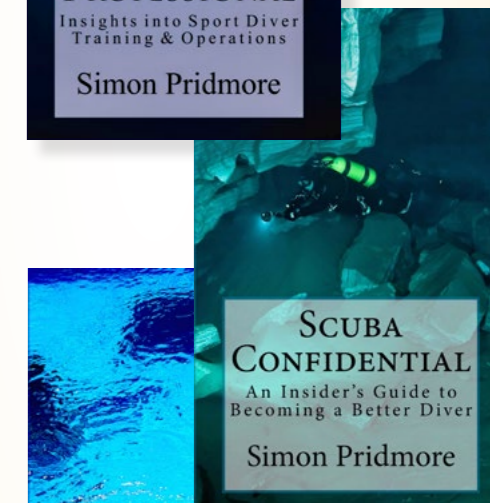


Available as paperback, ebook or audiobook at Amazon, Audible and iTunes.

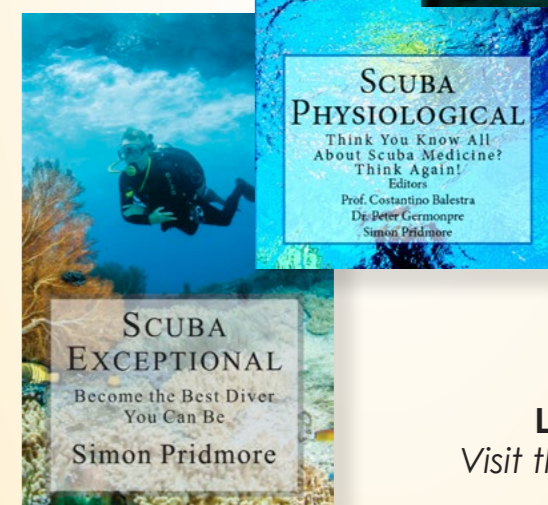


SCUBA PROFESSIONAL  
Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations  
Simon Pridmore

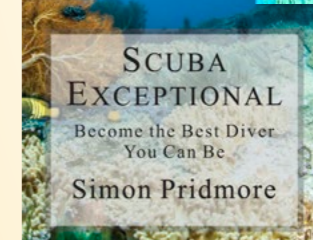
Buy it today!  
Click on each book cover to go to its order page.



SCUBA CONFIDENTIAL  
An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver  
Simon Pridmore



SCUBA PHYSIOLOGICAL  
Think You Know All About Scuba Medicine? Think Again!  
Editors  
Prof. Costantino Balestra  
Dr. Peter Geronpre  
Simon Pridmore



SCUBA EXCEPTIONAL  
Become the Best Diver You Can Be  
Simon Pridmore

Learn more!  
Visit the author's website at:

# SimonPridmore.com

