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PHUKET - THAILAND

What I look for when Employing a Scuba Diving Instructor. Tips from the boss.

How to get your Scuba Diving Curriculum Vitae (CV) taken seriously.

Being a PADI Scuba Diving instructor is one of the best jobs in the world. Given that PADI has dive centres in more than 170 countries around the globe. Effectively this could give a dive instructor the opportunity to travel and work. I don't think there is a dive instructor out there that does not dream of working their way around the world and diving in exotic locations.

However, with over 170,000 PADI Pros already out there and 1,000's of new divemasters and instructors coming through each year, only the best will be able to fulfill the dream.

As a busy and well known scuba diving centre in Thailand, barely a week goes by where we do not get three to four emails requesting employment. On top of that we often have instructors walking into our stores requesting employment.

Although we have never advertised a scuba instructor position, we still get about 200 job requests and CVs throughout the year. As you could imagine these applications add to the workload of an already busy schedule. We take a select few into consideration, however most will end up deleted.

Here are some tips that hopefully will get yours considered rather than ending up in the electronic trash bin.

Research

Most CV's we receive are well done and present nicely. However most are generic, similar and repetitive. Granted, it is easier for you the instructor to produce one CV and send it out to a number of dive centres around the world in the hope of snaring a job somewhere exotic. However, if you use the exact same CV for all applications to different types of dive centres, your CV could be more detrimental to your application than it is advantageous. If the information on your CV reads like it is not relevant to that dive centre or region, then you could be wasting your efforts.

My greatest advice is to research the dive area and dive centre you are applying for. This means that you may have to alter each CV to suit that application. Focus your application to

suit that dive centre. If you want your CV to be taken seriously then you have to be serious about your CV.

If you want to work in Thailand then research it, if you want to work in the Philippines then research that region as well. Talk to those that have worked in those areas, talk to PADI staff about the regions and try and find out as much information as you can about living and working in that country.

After that, look at the individual dive centres and see what type of scuba diving they focus on. For example, Thailand is very course-oriented destination, whereas the Philippines do a lot more certified and guided dives. Does the dive centre you are applying to advertise a lot of beginner courses or are they into tech diving? If you can't work that out by the website itself, look at the dive centre's social media profiles. That will usually show their primary focus.

The same goes for the type of work they require you to do. In Australia, being able to skipper or a mechanic for a scuba diving boat is a distinct advantage, in Thailand, it is illegal for a non-Thai to skipper a commercial boat, or even work mechanically on one. Anything more than a single line in the CV is not required to this specific area.

Personalize your CV to suit the destination and dive centre you are applying to. One CV is not going to suit all applications.

Employment laws of the Country When You are Applying

In most countries of the world there are laws in place for international workers and Thailand is no exception. Here in Thailand the laws are quite strict on foreigners working and application is somewhat complicated. Work permits are required for paid work, unpaid work and volunteer work. Working without the correct paperwork can result in fines up to a million baht (USD\$ 30,000) for both the employer and employee, jail or deportation. As you will read, it is the instructor's responsibility and cost to arrange the work permit. You can read more about that in this blog.

I would say that less than 10% of the emails we receive are even aware that work permit is required to work in Thailand. To me this shows a lack of research, planning or initiative on behalf of the instructor. That can be even more frustrating if you or the applicant have written words such as "I have always wanted to work in Thailand" or similar.

Do your research, understand what is needed to work in the country you are applying for.

Most owners or employers are more than help with specific questions about the work permit application, however walking you through the whole process is time consuming for the business owner. You should be able to find everything you need to know on the internet.

Know the Seasons

Most dive regions in the world have dive seasons. Here in Phuket, the high season starts around mid to late October and finishes late April. This is also the time the liveboard vessels operate as well.

The low season/wet season or monsoon season sees a drop in tourism and has the local instructors scratching for work. It is not a time of the year that a dive business is considering work applications. Sending a CV around September/October has a greater chance of having your application considered, however a CV arriving late April/May will most likely be deleted before being read.

What courses you have taught

Most CV's include the instructors certification and what specialties they have and often the number of dives they done. Personally, I believe that the number of dives is irrelevant. After all, PADI only requires 250 dives to become a PADI Course Director. What I look for, as does PADI, is what courses you have taught and how many of each.

On the PADI Pro Site you will be able to find your breakdown of your student certifications. This can be downloaded and attached to your CV.

I am interested in what certifications you have, but I am more interested in what you have courses you have actually taught.

As a dive instructor you should be trying to get an even spread in your teaching. Doing DSDs and OWCs are your bread and butter. However, having the ability to confidently teach hPADI Rescue and Divemaster courses along with specialty courses is what an employer likes to see. If you have helped out on Instructor Development courses that should also be mentioned.

Languages

In the world of employing scuba diving instructors, languages spoken is a highly desirable skill. It is not unusual to find some instructors with the ability to speak four, five even eight languages.

What is starting to become a common trend are CV's with percentages of what they can speak. I can speak 70% French or 50% German and so on. Speaking a language alone is not going to tick that box.

What an employer is more interested in is what languages you can teach in. I would be particularly interested in the PADI Open Water Course and the number of courses you have taught in your spoken languages.

It is nice to hear that you can speak Italian, it is better if you have done 50 Italian Open Water courses and impressive if you have done five Italian Divemasters and 20 mixed Italian specialty courses.

What are you bringing to the table?

Finding new customers, divers or contacts for the dive centre is a constant challenge for dive centre owners and managers.

As a potential employee, your employer will be interested in what you can offer them as well. For example, if you have a lot of past students following you on Instagram or Facebook and a lot have expressed doing continuing education with you no matter where you are in the world then that could be a positive for you.

One of our current staff used to be a Regional Sales Manager for a very well know scuba equipment manufacturer in Australia. His list of personal contacts continues to valuable to the company years down the track.

If you think you have a very good con-ed upgrade rate or are very good a selling equipment to students then that is a very valuable asset. Include that in your CV as well. You will however need to back it up with some sort of evidence.

Bin the Ego

As the store owner and manager, I have always placed my desk front and centre of the dive shop. More often than not I am the first contact of anyone entering the store.

I have lost count of the number of instructors that have entered my store looking for work armed with nothing more than a business card. This is often accompanied with, "John Smith, Dive Instructor, if you have any work call me".

I find this attitude incredibly arrogant. I often ask, where is your CV, then followed by something similar to, "in all your previous employment, how many jobs did you get by throwing a business card on the table". The answer in my situation with about 10 different jobs spanning more than 40 years is none. As a dive centre owner I cannot see why that would change for a scuba diving instructor.

References

The PADI family has a great network of contacts and like-minded people. Most shop owners and course directors know like-minded all around the world. References do hold weight in a CV especially if they are from someone you know or trust.

Try to use the most senior people you have met along the way, especially those who are involved with PADI. If you have close relations with your local PADI Regional Manager, ask them for a reference.

I know you have a Passion for the Sea

If I would have to guess I would say 90% of CV we receive states that the instructor “has a passion for the sea”. I would assume you have a passion for the sea else you would not want to be a dive instructor.

Your passion for the sea does not help a nervous open water student learn to clear a mask. A “passion for underwater photography” is no good if you lose customers when guiding a dive.

A passion for teaching and a desire to have people learn to scuba dive is a lot more impressive in my view.

For me personally, comments like “I like to travel”, “I have always dreamt about working in Thailand” or my favorite food is “Pad Thai” are not required on a serious CV.

Supporting Documents for a CV

I always like to see supporting documents attached to a CV. Along with your student certification records, on the PADI Pro site you can download your current teaching status. Attach that and copies of any insurance you have and any awards you may have won.

If you have a work permit then most definitely attach that and if you are applying for work overseas then a copy of your passport may also be required.

Conclusion

So what would I be looking for?

Probably the first thing I would be looking for is personality, closely followed by empathy and humor.

The best scuba instructors (teachers) are not always the most knowledgeable or the experienced teachers. Learning to scuba dive can be terrifying for some students. Any instructor can get a good student through, the best instructors are those instructors that are able to get the most difficult students through a course. That takes patience, empathy, personality and sometimes humor.

The words “I have a passion for teaching” are a lot more impressive than a “passion for the sea”.

A well researched application is good with an understanding in what is needed to work in that country. Better still, visit that country and speak to instructors there. The country of choice may not be what you think it is.

A personalized approach to the dive centre is appreciated. I would like to work for Aussie Divers Phuket because..... Some reasons could include, greater opportunities to teach different courses, it could be that you would like to assist on IDC's, you want to work for a professional dive centre etc. It would be nice to know why you selected our dive centre.

Set out your goals and plans as a dive instructor. If you are an OWSI, then your plans on becoming a MSDT or Staff Instructor. If you are Staff Instructor then your plans on becoming a Master Instructor or Course Director.

A good safety record should always be mentioned and if you have never had a PADI QA issue should be noted. Stating that you comply with all PADI Rules and Regulations should be highlighted as well.

A breakdown of what you have taught and if there are some in different languages, in what languages is helpful.

If you have a good upgrade rate then mention that. i.e if 20% of your OWC students go on to AOWC that would be something I would mention in a CV.

Working well in a team environment and having a good work ethic are nice words to read. These would of course be supported by references.

If you are a walk in, then please have a CV ready with you when asking for employment.

Hopefully these tips will help you gain the job of your dream.

Take care and safe diving.