

**Our World Underwater Scholarship Society  
HydroOptix Internship  
Final Report**

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**Introduction:**

The Underwater World Scholarship Society in partnership with HydroOptix LLC has allowed me to apply my university education and learn vast amounts of the manufacturing, marketing and sales channels involved in the scuba industry. It truly has allowed me to develop my professional skills while being directly involved in a sport and lifestyle that I love.

**The Company:**

HydroOptix LLC is an exciting and inspiring company that has an even more impressive product. Jon Kranhouse and Terri Mackay, who like many in Los Angeles originated in the movie industry, have taken time away from Hollywood to develop an idea into a product that has been cited as being the biggest innovation in the scuba industry since the introduction of the dive computer in the 1980's. Now several years into the project HydroOptix has established itself in the dive community and is continually growing. Currently over 1,700 divers around the globe dive with the MEGA 4.5 Double Dome mask and are there dive shops and other retailers stocking the masks in seventy-six countries. The dive industry is picking up on what HydroOptix is trying to accomplish. That is to offer divers a safer and more enjoyable diving experience by providing the best possible quality of vision under water. Acknowledgement has come from numerous diving and adventure magazines include PADI's Australasia magazine and the National Geographic Adventure Magazine but the largest support is coming from the divers who use the mask. They are spreading their support via internet message boards and word of mouth. As any advertising guru will admit the buzz in and around the consumers is far more valuable than any hype that can be created by advertising dollars. As the dive industry begins to shift towards HydroOptix the company has not missed a beat and has plans to introduce future products that will help it grow as it continues to develop high quality products.

**MEGA 4.5 Double Dome Mask:**

The MEGA 4.5 Double-Dome mask has been referred to as the biggest innovation in the diving industry since the introduction of the dive computer in the 1980's. Divers continually spend thousands of dollars on regulators, BCD's, wetsuits, and fins but choose a thirty-dollar mask, put it on their face and go diving. Even worse they pay a premium price for a more expensive conventional mask and suffer the same tunnel vision. All the equipment needed to allow a diver to breath and remain underwater for a long period of time is very important but the whole reason scuba diving evolved, the only reason a person chooses to breath compressed air from a tank on their back, is to fulfill that need adventure that drives us all. We want to see what lies beneath the rolling wave of the earth's lakes, rivers, and oceans. A regular flat mask, which is every mask that is not made by HydroOptix, blocks approximately seventy five percent of your natural field of view. Refraction throws off your depth perception and hand eye coordination as well as distorting images and causing colours to blur and fade. The quality of view that a diver has with a regular mask would not allow them to pass a simple eye exam required to drive an automobile. The whole purpose of scuba diving is to get underwater and look around. The HydroOptix MEGA 4.5 Double Dome mask is the only mask that can

deliver the field of view and the quality of view that you experience on land. With a horizontal field of view stretching one-hundred and seventy degrees and a vertical view of ninety degrees a diver now sees approximately five times more than a regular flat mask can provide. The domed lenses eliminate refraction of light rays making the twenty five percent rule of objects appearing closer and larger obsolete. The quality of view delivered by the mask is ten times better than the optical quality required by the military for their aviator lenses. Every diver can benefit from the mask. The most extreme technical, wreck, and cave divers will appreciate the perfect hand eye coordination and greater situational awareness. Instructors appreciate the larger field of view to better watch and supervise their students. Photographers are able to see their strobes easier while still looking through the viewfinder to find that perfect shot. Beginner divers enjoy a more relaxed environment while under water and can keep track of their buddy easier and have better communication. Many new divers stop diving or some people do not even try diving because of their fear of feeling claustrophobic due to the tunnel vision. HydroOptix hopes to make people feel as comfortable underwater as they do on land resulting in increasing the number of active divers and making people more comfortable in trying the sport of scuba diving.

### **The Internship:**

The sun filled sky, sandy beaches, and cool salt water had to wait. As soon as I arrived in Los Angeles for my summer internship at HydroOptix I was immediately helping the team get ready for the Long Beach scuba trade show. Introductions were made as we checked over inventory and made sure all was ready for setting up the booth. I was glad I spent several days surfing the HydroOptix website and completing their on-line VisTa (Visually Trained & Authorized) training. I had a fairly strong understanding on how the mask worked and had the opportunity to experience diving with the mask while working as a divemaster before leaving for Los Angeles. That pace continued all weekend as Jon and Terri asked me to take a role at the trade show helping explain and demonstrate the mask to retailers, consumers, and other interested divers. I've always found the best way to learn and truly understand something is to teach it to other. After that weekend I had a strong grasp of how the MEGA 4.5 Double Dome mask worked. After observing Jon and Terri answer inelegant questions that they have heard hundreds of times over the past few years at many trade shows I was able to apply that to questions that I was able to answer.

My job at HydroOptix was sales and marketing. But anybody who works or has worked at a small company knows your daily tasks are not limited to your job title. That is one thing that I really enjoyed at HydroOptix. It was a true opportunity to take part in discussions concerning everything from sales and marketing to operations, product design, and shipping. I was able to get a taste of what it takes to turn an idea into a tangible product and market it and sell it to seventy-six countries across the world. Day to day operations involved spending a lot of time on the phone and computer responding to questions from retailers and consumers while trying to maintain good relations with all to increase sales and also the perception of the company and our product in the dive industry. Orders that were taken over the phone or that arrived from our on-line store had

to be processed and shipped. We spent a lot of time re-writing the copy for our instruction manuals, and gathering materials for media guides and press releases. The easiest thing was to get caught up in a conversation about the next product idea or innovation that could shock the dive industry. Talking about the possibilities of the future is good motivation for making cold calls.

A large opportunity that was available to me because of the internship was the time spent away from the office after work and on the weekends. I joked with family and friends that basic Monday to Friday everything I did in LA could have easily be done at home. It was on the weekends that I was able to get a taste of what Los Angeles and Southern California had to offer. I made a point to be in the water every weekend. If I was not diving with a local dive shop or diving off the steps at Catalina Island I would be at the beach trying to learn to surf and working on my sunburn. Just by chance a friend whom I had known since kindergarten was in Los Angeles learning to become a helicopter pilot. He is a certified diver and we went out a few times but we spent a lot of time exploring the beaches from Santa Monica to New Port, trying to hit a different beach every weekend. I made several trips to San Diego to dive and also took a boat to the Santa Barbara Islands to visit the sea lion rockery.

### **Trade Shows:**

The Long Beach Trade Show was a true trial by fire. It was my first trade show that I had ever worked at and it was a much different experience than I suspected. Any show that I have visited I found to be laid back but I always left exhausted. I still left exhausted but we were always busy with new people arriving asking more questions, many I had already answered a few times but it always seemed like a new experience. I think it partly has to do with the company and their revolutionary mask. Before I graduate from the University of Saskatchewan I was really worried about how I was going to apply my education in the work force. The real world. I remember lectures that my professors gave talking about how important shelf space is in Wal-Mart and the advertising that made P&G's swifter or MacDonal'd's restaurants such large successes. I truly questioned my area of study several times. To land a summer intern position with an up and coming company in the scuba industry that has a truly remarkable product that I instantly was drawn to was a dream come true. Actually it was better than a dream come ture. I would have followed a dream but had never envisioned finding a situation like this.

The Sea Space Trade Show in Houston Texas was another interesting experience. It was a great opportunity for me to get out and interact with other professionals in the dive industry. It was interesting to be the new kid on the block for several reasons. First, because HydroOptix is such a young and growing company with a strong buzz generated by the divers people were often interested to hear more about the company and learn more. I was also the youngest person around by close to five years. People were interested to know who this kid was hanging around and who I was with. It also did not hurt being able to drop the OWUSS name every now and then. Some people had never

heard of the society while others were active supporters and very happy to meet someone who was benefiting from the organization.

### **Memorable Moments:**

The things that I have learned and experienced because of this internship started long before I arrived at HydroOptix and the benefits gained will not stop with the end of my internship. This really has been a life changing experience and I just wanted to mention a few memorable moments that were a direct result of this internship and the OWUSS.

I first found out that I had been given the intern position about a month before I finished my last year of university. I had told my closest friends and everybody was very happy for me almost more because I would be spending my summer in Los Angeles than because of the work I would be doing. One day a girl I knew approached me and congratulated me on my getting the position. She had known that I was a diver and wanted to do something in the dive industry, most likely become an instructor and try to get a job at some resort. She said the strangest thing to me, something along the lines of, “when I first heard your dreams of working as a scuba diver I honestly thought it was to farfetched and just a dream. But it seems that this really going to live your dreams and I’m happy for you.” I thanked her for the congratulations but as soon as she said it something struck me. What is wrong with living your dreams? Again this just shows that I am happy doing what I am doing.

There is a song that titled *Nobody walks in LA*. Anybody who has spent any time in Los Angeles knows this as fact. Because of this I decided it would be best for me to drive my car down to have a vehicle as opposed to using the public transportation. My father and I made the four-day drive and it was a road trip I never would have taken if not for the internship. The drive was mostly quite enjoyable. We made our way from Saskatoon, Canada to San Francisco and then took the old Route 101 down the California coast to Los Angeles. It was not the shortest route but the drive along the coast from San Francisco to LA was incredible and one I will never forget.

One of the most memorable moments of the intern program was the weekend I was able to spend with the OWUSS President George Wozencraft. He was visiting San Diego on business and we were able to hook up for weekend to do some diving and also meet a past scholar Alison LaBonte. It was a good opportunity for me to learn more about the society because until then I honestly did not know very much. I had visited the website but a lot of the society still seemed like a mystery to me. It good to learn more about the organization that was providing me with so much valuable work experience and life experience in Los Angeles for the summer.

**Conclusion:**

Sometimes things just fit as soon as you try them. For me HydroOptix truly feels that way. I was able to hit the ground running when I arrived and I think the first trade show in Long Beach was the best introduction to the company I could ask for. It was not until after the trade show had ended that Jon, Terri and I were actually able to sit down and talk to get to know each other. The prior week was spent running around the office trying to get everything ready with little time for conversation. It was at that dinner that Jon and Terri first asked me if I had given any thought to staying and living in Los Angeles and having this intern position turn in to a career, or was I just planning on spending a couple months at the company and moving back to Canada and pursuing different career options. I had hoped that this intern position might end with a job offer. I was not expecting the job offer four days into the internship but I was glad they saw a future for all of us. Currently I am back in Canada finishing this internship report. It is great to be home with friends and family. I had not seen rain for the three months I was in California and it has already rained on two different days here. The weather is a little cooler but every couple of days we get a hot California like day. It is the place that I grew up and one that I will always love but I am looking forward to getting back to California with the hot sun, sandy beaches and a growing company.

Appendix



My dad and I the day we left for California.



Casino Point on Catalina Island, California



Trade show booth in Houston, TX



Hanging in Hollywood...didn't see any celebrities



Diving the Yukon wreck of San Diego (I'm on the right)



Ron Beltramo, Dive shop owner, huge fan of HydroOptix