

Dream Jobs: Ocean explorer

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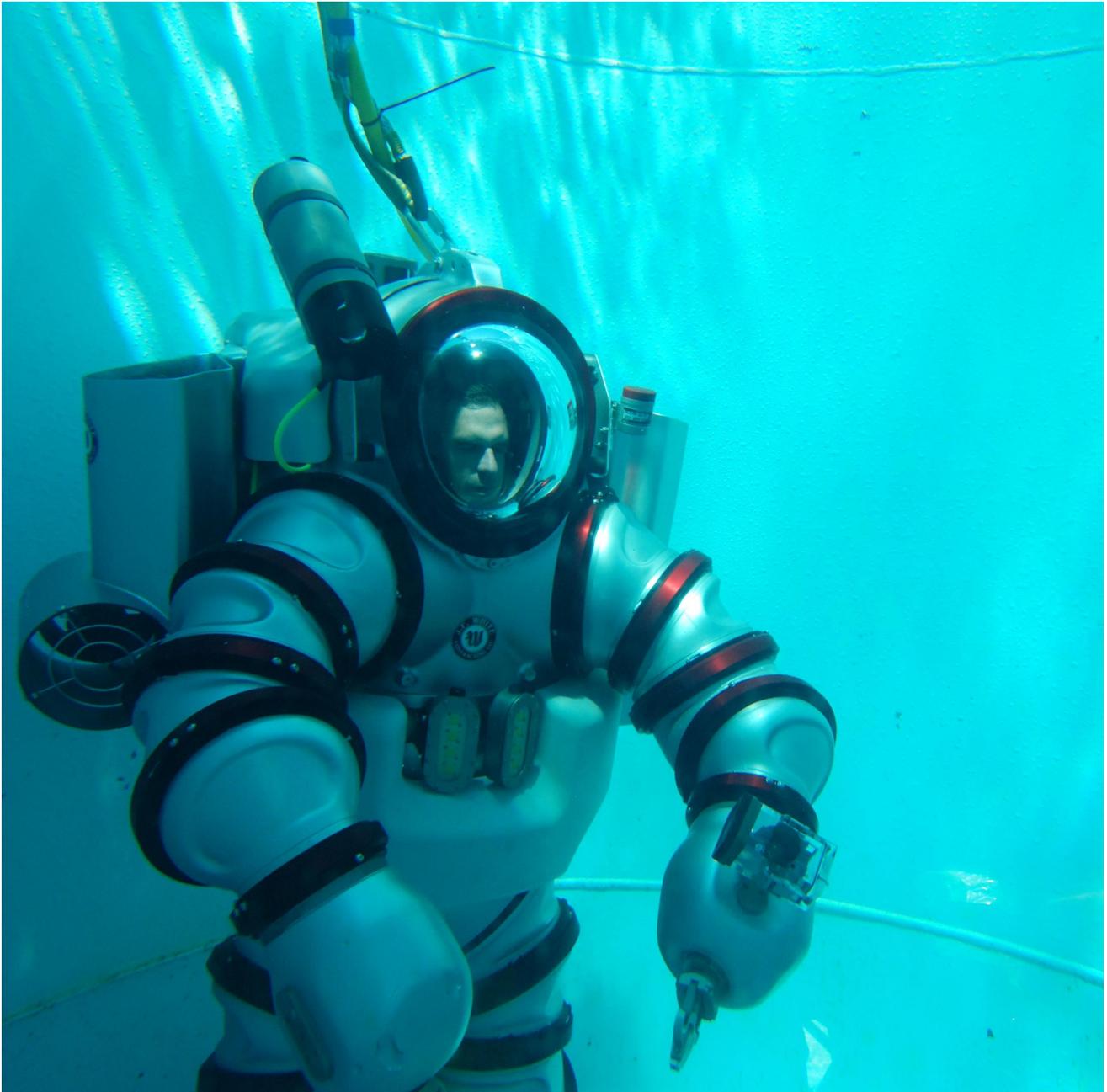
Michael Lombardi is a National Geographic explorer who dives to deep-water coral reefs like this one. Photograph courtesy Michael Lombardi.

Michael Lombardi dives to some of the world's deepest coral reefs. A coral reef is an underwater area where sea plants and animals live.

Lombardi studies these plants and animals, as well as their environment. One of the places he dives to often is a deep reef along Exuma Cays in the Bahamas. These are a group of islands near Florida.

On top of being an expert diver, Lombardi has also invented an underwater shelter, that looks like a tent. This tent helps divers not get sick when they come back up to the surface. This is called decompression sickness, and it happens when divers come up too fast.

Lombardi also started a group called Ocean Opportunity. This group offers education and activities that help people learn about the ocean.



Early Work

Lombardi grew up in Seekonk, in the state of Massachusetts. He grew up near a bay called Narragansett Bay. "I spent a lot of time fishing with my dad and my brother, so I always had an interest in the water," Lombardi said.

In fact, Lombardi's father helped give his son a passion for the ocean. His dad was in the Navy, so he spent much of his time at sea. The stories he told Lombardi made an impression on him.

While still in high school, Lombardi took a diving course, but it didn't go very well at first. "I had a really hard time with the dive class," he said. "I struggled with the swim test. I struggled with putting my face in the water for the first time. I struggled with the whole thing." Still, he was convinced that he needed to be a good diver. It was going to be useful for the work he wanted to do.

The hard work paid off. Because of his diving experience, scientists came to him when there was a difficult dive to be done.

Most Exciting Part Of Your Work

Lombardi said the most exciting part is being the first person to study a certain reef. "Some of these deep reefs have never been seen by humans firsthand," he said.

Most Demanding Part Of Your Work

Lombardi said you have to be in very good physical shape, but there is more to it than that. In the deep ocean, a diver has to pay attention to everything. There is no room to make a mistake, so you cannot relax.

Portable Habitat

Divers' bodies need to get used to the changing water pressures as they come up to the surface. Usually, they have a line running from a boat on the surface. As they come up, they rest at different stops along the line.

Lombardi's underwater tent is a way to make the trip to the surface easier. It can be filled with air and has bench seats inside it. This allows divers coming up from a deep dive to be more comfortable.

Geo-Connection

Lombardi hopes his diving in the Bahamas will help make others notice this unexplored area. One tool Lombardi often uses is the global positioning system, or GPS. It can tell you exactly where you are on Earth.

"GPS is very important on the exploration front and in my day-to-day work," he said. "It helps us map out work sites and identify new work sites or something that is lost underwater."

Google Earth is another tool Lombardi is excited about. It is a digital, or computer, map of the whole world. He said it is something all explorers should be using.

So, You Want To Be An ... Ocean Explorer

Lombardi suggests students study many different things. He said that being a marine biologist involves more than just studying sharks or dolphins. You work closely with people in geography, technology and education.

Lombardi sees one particular job field that will be important to the future of exploring the ocean: engineering. He thinks there won't be enough engineers who understand the technology needed for exploring.

Quiz

- 1 Read the selection from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4].

On top of being an expert diver, Lombardi has also invented an underwater shelter, that looks like a tent. This tent helps divers not get sick when they come back up to the surface.

Which phrase from the selection helps you understand the meaning of "shelter"?

- (A) an expert diver
- (B) like a tent
- (C) not get sick
- (D) come back up

- 2 Read the paragraph from the section "Early Work."

In fact, Lombardi's father helped give his son a passion for the ocean. His dad was in the Navy, so he spent much of his time at sea. The stories he told Lombardi made an impression on him.

What is the meaning of the word "impression" as it is used in the third sentence?

- (A) good imitation
- (B) deep indentation
- (C) strong influence
- (D) physical imprint

- 3 What effect has technology such as GPS and Google Earth had on ocean exploring?

- (A) It has made more people become ocean explorers.
- (B) It has made too many people visit unexplored areas.
- (C) It has made it easier for explorers to find new or lost sites.
- (D) It has made it easier for divers to come to the ocean surface.

- 4 What is the relationship between ocean explorers and engineers?
- (A) Engineers help explorers understand plants in the ocean.
 - (B) Engineers invented a new tent to help explorers reach the surface.
 - (C) Engineers study the places and things that explorers find.
 - (D) Engineers develop the technology needed by explorers.