

**Crystal Winner:** Aimia

**Client:** Oracle

**Program:** "Shark Encounter–Shark Tag – You're it!"

**Partner:** University of Miami RJ Dunlap Marine Conservation Program



## Shark Tag – You're it! Aimia Takes Oracle on an Adventure to Preserve the Shark Population in Hawaii

Each year Oracle hosts its President's Club and Club Excellence to recognize sales leaders' achievement of annual sales goals. The company sought an initiative that would reinforce the value of the incentive trip and encourage employees to work hard to earn the award in the upcoming year. The client tasked Aimia with a goal to engage participants in a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity that was extraordinary, yet contributed to an important cause to the Hawaiian community. The client was thrilled when Aimia presented the opportunity for Oracle to partner with the University of Miami RJ Dunlap Marine Conservation Program to further research on sharks – a creature that is extremely respected and sacred to the Hawaiian culture.

Native Hawaiians consider sharks to be "guardians," however a lack of knowledge and appreciation for the ocean predators has caused many problems for the shark population. The urgency of the threats facing sharks necessitates the education of future generations about their ecological importance and risk of extinction. Shark populations are experiencing unprecedented declines due to overfishing, some by as much as 99%. Studies estimate that over 100,000 sharks are killed every day. They are primarily harvested for their fins, the main ingredient in shark fin soup. This practice is neither sustainable, nor humane. One of the highest priorities for shark conservation is the identification and study of habitats significant to the shark's life history and ecology. By ensuring that the local communities are aware of the issues affecting shark populations, the RJD Marine Conservation Program works to ensure the health and future of marine resources and to foster community involvement in achieving those goals.

Aimia worked with its partners to design a CSR activity where Oracle program attendees became researchers for a day—collecting data alongside RJD Shark Team members to be used in preventing the global decline in shark populations. The specific goal was to catch and tag a shark and release it back into the ocean in order to



*"Thanks again for an amazing day out on the water – we all had a blast, and your citizen science has made shark conservationists out of many of us. I can't wait to share this experience with my kids."*

*– Oracle Program Participant*

study the migratory routes and residency patterns of the species. Because the media has created an image about sharks that can be equated to danger, promoting an activity that encourages people to face a common fear was a feat in itself. Active participation was the first key to the success of the event. It was important to convey that the activity was designed to encourage attendees to gain a healthy perspective about sharks.

Oracle attendees left the hotel early in the morning. Arriving at the marina, they were served breakfast as they learned more about the day. Then it was time to board the boat and head offshore, approximately four miles, where their adventure began. Once caught, the sharks were brought in using hand lines. Depending on the size of the shark, it was either secured on the deck of the boat or next to the transom. Participants quickly became involved by taking tissue samples, muscle biopsies, blood, and

standard measurements. The sharks then had a harmless satellite tag placed in their dorsal fins and were released. This was an efficient process that does not distress the animal and lasted less than five minutes total per shark. For every encounter, the safety of the sharks and that of the participants remained the crew's top priority.

The shark-tagging mission did not stop at the end of the day. The event was designed to sustain Oracle's contribution to the cause long after departing the Hawaiian Islands. Participants are helping to spread awareness of this problem at home. Google Earth technology, on a dedicated client website, allows the attendees to continue tracking the tagged sharks in real-time and to share with family and friends the importance of the research. The knowledge gained from the research will help lawmakers create policies to protect the habitats of these magnificent ocean creatures. Aimia and its partners were able to exceed the client's CSR objectives by providing an inspiring and sustainable experience that contributed to the local community and motivated performance in the year to come. •

