



EXECUTIVE PROTECTION
INDUSTRY ETHICS AND PRACTICES
THE ROLE OF THE CONSULTANT
Chuck Cheesman, PPS (Personal Protection Specialist)

EXECUTIVE PROTECTION

The executive protection (aka Bodyguard) field, is probably one of the least understood industries on the face of the planet. After several years in this industry, starting back in 2000, I have had many experiences and worked with a wide range of personality types. I was trained at the Executive Protection Institute in Berryville, VA. This institution is headed by Dr. Richard Kobetz, who not only consults to members of the White House and various agencies of our government throughout several administrations, but has also trained protection personnel for various foreign governments and corporations abroad. Since then, I have worked with clients in Corporate America, with celebrities in the entertainment industry and foreign dignitaries alike. Before becoming educated in this new profession, I believed like most people, that since I was an accomplished martial arts competitor and a Marine Rifle Expert I could protect someone from a threat. After all, all you need is some military training or a short law enforcement career and you are automatically qualified as an EP Agent. Right? The answer is emphatically NO! In fact there are and have been many such individuals working in the industry for quite some time. Most are good men with good intentions. However, in most of these cases, the only reason these details have not ended in tragedy thus far is because no one has made a committed attempt on the person being protected. The most common mistake made by the untrained agent is the mindset that if anything happens they will react, in most cases by engaging an attacker once an attack is initiated. Or, responding to the threat. This is a reactionary mindset. The truth is, once your adversary initiates an attack it is too late and you will find yourself far behind the curve with no way to catch up. The case of Tupac Shakur is a good example of this. His bodyguards were big and allegedly carried guns. However, when the attack came they were unable to react. If those in charge of his security would have had some knowledge of proactive strategy, threat assessment, advance work, moving with a principal or driving a chase vehicle, they might still be protecting Tupac today.

Some of the best agents I have ever worked with in this industry have been former law enforcement officers and military personnel. But, at the same time, the absolute worst agents I have ever worked with are former law enforcement and military personnel too. The fact is simply this, they do not teach executive protection in the academy or basic training. The difference is that as a law enforcement officer if we suspect there may be danger down a dark alley we will make preparation and go down the alley to enforce the law and apprehend suspects using any force necessary. As a soldier we would assault the alley using whatever force at our disposal to secure the objective and accomplish our mission. As an EP agent we will be proactive and execute our contingency plan and avoid the alley altogether and not expose our principal to any danger that may be waiting there. The whole time we are doing this the client usually has no idea the danger even existed. This is a simplistic example but it outlines the different mindset



involved. We are not there to fight. We are there to anticipate any situation that may pose a threat to the well being or state of mind of our client and make preparations to avoid that situation. Whether that is physical danger or threat of public embarrassment. This may include making sure the senior board member of a major corporation has his heart medication when he is traveling or making sure you have a spare set of reading glasses handy before a political figure you are protecting goes up to deliver an important speech. You may want to make sure there is nothing he may trip over as he enters the stage in front of the cameras. These are only a few of the details the EP agent needs to be aware of. It is not glamorous, and most of the time it is not exciting, but it is just as necessary as looking out for assassins or doing bomb sweeps. The law enforcement officers and military personnel that make the transition to become effective EP agents are the ones that take steps to learn the trade and incorporate the skills, discipline and team work that were necessary to be effective in their previous career.

INDUSTRY ETHICS AND PRACTICES

There are many people in the security industry that preach about ethics and the EP code. This is common among service providers in the security field. Ethics is a common subject taught in just about any EP school you can find in the yellow pages. Ethics or the definition commonly referred to as ethics in the EP field are not the same as Webster's definition of Ethics. I will give you a definition of ethics in the EP field as I learned it. Working in this field you are commonly in close proximity to the people you protect and are often witness to private matters that pertain to the lives of these individuals. Ethics and professionalism prevent the agent from making that information public. A good example of this would be the sex tapes of Pamela Anderson and her husband at the time, Tommy Lee. That tape was allegedly stolen and released by Tommy Lee's bodyguard, for profit. This is an example of professional ethics being violated. Ethics dictate that you do not violate that kind of trust.

However, there are those service providers within the industry that put a different spin on the definition of professional ethics. As an EP agent you do not steal clients, you do not point out the mistakes made by other agents to the client to make yourself look good and you do not complain to the client about the way the company is handling the contract and the list goes on. In this light these ethics are a matter of common sense and should not need to be taught. But, what happens when the same companies that rant about ethics are the same ones that sell the client a contract claiming to hire only trained experienced personnel with proper licensing and then send out agents that have no licensing, experience or training at all, so they can bill the hours. These agents are usually friends or relatives that need a few extra bucks and work much cheaper than a qualified agent. In addition these companies often brag about having world wide service and a vast pool of qualified personnel to draw from. Yet, when you hire the new company you'll find that often times the agents representing this company are the same agents that were employed by the company you replaced. These are the same companies that are constantly worried about someone trying to compete with them for the contract. The truth is, if the company and its employees did what they were being paid to do there would be no reason to worry about competition from anyone.



I was recently involved in a detail working for a company based in Northern California. This company had a large contract in the Inland Empire here in Southern California protecting a family that allegedly had a credible threat from elements of organized crime. This family decided to go away over the holidays to a place they did not believe they would be in danger and based on the information we had at the time I believed the risk was minimal and I made this assessment known to my supervisor. We used Nextel phones for communications at the time. One day my AIC is sitting there with his Nextel phone in Southern California while the senior vice president is in a meeting with the president of the company and CEO of marketing up in Northern California when the senior VP accidentally keys his phone so we can hear them. The whole topic of the meeting was how we can elevate this threat to the client enough to justify the family taking the protection detail on the trip so they can justify billing for those hours. The family was constantly being briefed that the threat was now elevated based on information from unknown sources in corrections and law enforcement. The client was told that there was a contract on the younger members of the family. The company brought on additional personnel that were supposedly special response agents. These agents basically drove around in rented vehicles at the client's expense in case something happened and the protection detail needed backup. They mostly spent their time shopping at Target and making runs to Starbucks. This was supposed to be an armed detail but there were members of the team that did not possess the proper permits and were unable to even carry a weapon. At no time was any actual threat assessment being done. The client was being told they were being watched but no counter surveillance would be done to verify this or determine who it was that was watching. There was no information gathered on the threat, the people responsible for the threat, or the source of the information they were presenting to the client. They would present this information to the client to justify the enormous expense of the service. At one point we were being told that a source within the department of corrections verified there was a real threat on the family from within the prison system. As it turns out the source was a corrections officer who interviewed for some side work on the detail and took the information disclosed to him back to his roommate who also worked in corrections. This information was disclosed to a person outside the detail by the detail leader then went through a few of his friends and came back through the rumor mill and was presented to the client as credible information to keep the family in fear.

The conflict comes when you are the agent in charge of the family protection and the head of that family or his wife, who trusts you, comes to you and asks do we really need this? Is my family in this much danger? Now, to stay within what the company would call professional ethics, I am supposed to lie to them. I declined to answer and referred them to the company so the company did not look bad. It was at that point I decided to explore my other opportunities and left the detail. This is only one example of many that could be presented to illustrate what are far too common practices in this industry. It should be the goal of the service provider to literally work themselves out of a job when possible. Instead, it is far too common that the company keep the client in fear as long as possible to keep the money coming in. We like to talk about ethics but what good are ethics without integrity.



THE ROLE OF THE CONSULTANT

So what if you find yourself in a situation where you or someone you are responsible for need security services? How do you know what you need or who to call? I suppose you could call a security company that provides security services and have them tell you. You could hope they will have your best interest in mind. How would you know what questions to ask? Would you know if what you are being told is the truth? When Warren Buffet was asked about taking advice from stock brokers his comment was never ask the barber if you need a haircut. Why would you ask the marketing rep at a security company if you need security? There are many good companies out there that have integrity and will take care of your needs, but there are many more that will take advantage of you. They send a representative or two that look the part and use all the right terms and tell you how they will take care of you. But, seems they always fail to mention they get a commission if they sell you the service. Just as you would not want to face a criminal trial without a competent person representing you, you should not make decisions regarding your security and safety without the guidance of someone knowledgeable in that field. You would want to hire someone to represent you; a representative that has the knowledge and experience to identify the needs and make recommendations based on a thorough threat assessment. This representative would identify the level of a threat and hire services in specific areas based on the need. This person will have reputable service providers that have the client's interests in mind. If additional assets are required, your representative will know what questions to ask and can not be misled by service providers looking to increase their cash flow by trying to justify additional assets in order to bill more hours. This is the role of the security consultant, to represent you the client. The security consultant is responsible to hold service providers accountable and makes sure the client is actually getting what he is paying for. The consultant will ensure that the services are being provided by qualified professionals with proper credentials in a professional manner and not someone's nephew or retired uncle sleeping in your driveway while your family sleeps. While the cost of a good consultant may seem expensive, the alternative is much more costly.