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The Solo Executive Protection Practitioner

One of the most common deployments in executive protection is the solo practitioner. The solo practitioner in the executive protection (EP) arena is the most difficult duty to provide correctly. The solo EP agent must be their own mission planner, advance, driver, provide close protection, medic and just being a business enabling assistant to the principal to achieve success. In this article I'll discuss what it takes to be an effective solo EP practitioner.

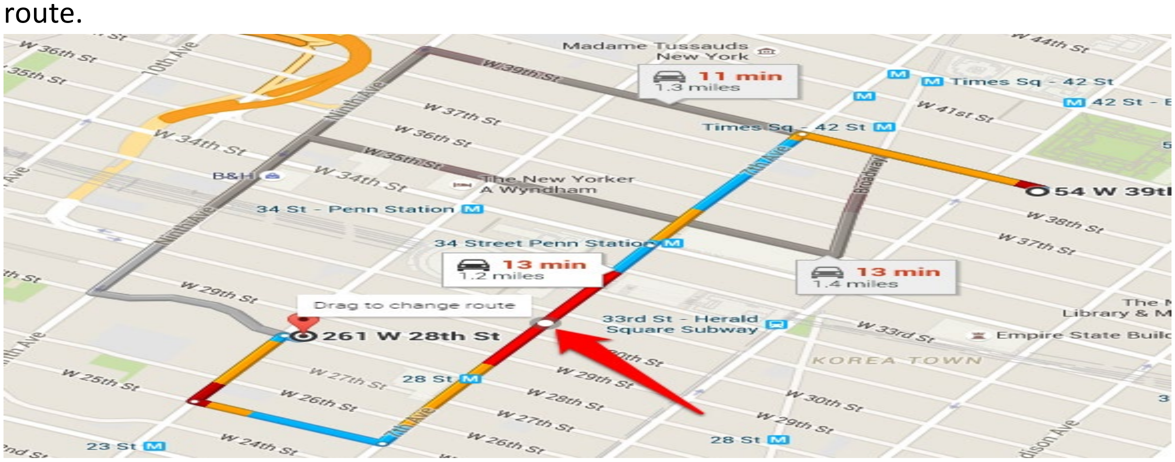
Mission Planning: For private security and executive protection companies mission planning is often overlooked either due to inexperience or putting profits before operational safety and success. In my career I've seen a little bit of both. At Secure Options Consulting LLC , we utilize a rapid planning process as our default standard operating procedure for our solo practitioner executive protection details. We do this to ensure that we can deploy on short notice. Each of these processes can be completed in the field with a smart phone, tablet or laptop in addition to being in your company's office.

Client Interview: The planning process begins with our comprehensive client interview. This is normally conducted in person, via email transactions or a conference call. This is completely dependent on the clients needs and availability to meet in person. The interview allows us to gain insight from the perspective of the client and find out their concerns and the reason for executive protection.

Intelligence Collection: Our next step is gathering information via open source intelligence. You may have heard the term OSINT. Open Source Intelligence is data collected from publicly available sources to be used in an intelligence context. In the intelligence community, the term "open" refers to overt, publicly available sources (as opposed to covert or clandestine sources). Additionally, during the client interview you may have ascertained information of potential hostile actor(s) whom you may want to conduct a background investigation on. Since we are licensed private investigator's we're able to utilize several sources to conduct these checks. The sources we typically use are Delvepoint and IRB Solutions to name a few.

Threat Assessment: As our investigative work continues, we more specifically examine any threats which were revealed from our previous work. The process we follow is our signature Situational Threat Assessment Indicator Rating (STAIR). Our STAIR process is simple, measurable and very efficient which saves us time and compliments the rapid planning process. You may ask why we conduct a formal threat assessment. The assessment is to quantify the appropriate level of threat as it pertains to the client. The threat levels we follow are: Low – Medium or High. From this model we can then determine what threat level the adversary poses to the client and recommend if additional resources are needed. Additionally, we begin a discussion into risk management alternatives or determine the appropriate level of risk that the client wants to assume.

Route Survey and Selection: As an executive protection solo practitioner you maybe tasked with driving your client. Today there are multiple apps that can aid you in this process. I like using Google Maps or Waze. These apps give you almost real time traffic updates and change your routes during the trip in order to save time. As a side note with these driving apps, there are times where you'll be re-routed due to traffic conditions, at times you maybe driving through high crime areas. It's important to maintain that situational awareness and determine if you want to take an alternate route.



As soon as you receive a client itinerary or addresses, begin planning your routes. It may be beneficial to have an alternate route as a backup plan. If time permits or there's a day or two notice on your movements, I'd get directions via mapquest.com or google maps, print them out or even drive the route(s).

Additional considerations:

Locate safe locations along your route

Hospital locations along or near your route

Danger areas, ie.. bridges / high ground, choke points. Think like an armed assailant. Which location gives you the best advantage to launch an attack.

Always stay one step ahead of the itinerary. If you have down time, always begin to examine what your next movement and directions are.

The Advance: The advance in executive protection is a venue visit prior to your client's arrival in order to facilitate an efficient arrival and escort the client to the specific meeting location. As a solo EP agent this is very difficult. There're several different choices you have. If you can travel to the venue a day early and conduct your advance that would be ideal. If you can't, then your next choice is using a google maps and street view. Although not 100 % accurate, it's close. It will give you enough information and photographs of the venue to aid you with your arrival. Lastly, contact the venue and ask them for the pertinent information you need to provide a seamless arrival. Below is an example of our Advance Survey Form.

Date:

Time of Arrival:

Duration:

Address:

Event Type:

Point of Contact Information:

Advance Conducted By:

Date of Advance:

Arrival Location:

Alternate Arrival Location:

Parking:

Evacuation Route:

Alternate Evacuation Route:

Located:

Emergency Exits:

Safe Rooms:

Elevators:

Meeting Rooms:

Restrooms:

Relaxation Rooms:

Business Office for: Wifi, fax, phone use

Communications Check: Can cell usage work in venue?

Additional Details: This list can be expanded or contracted based upon your EP needs. Some POC's will email you their floor plans in the event you cannot get to the location prior.

Close Protection: Close protection duties are extremely important. As a solo EP agent, you want to remain close enough to protect your client, yet at the same time you don't want to be overbearing and embarrass your client. As for distance to your client, use common sense. If during the client interview, OSINT and threat assessment process indicate a high threat level then naturally you'll want to remain close to your client until the client is in a safe location, meeting room etc... Whether the client wants you present during any business meetings is completely up to the client. Clients do a good job of informing you that they want you nearby. A viable option to aid the solo EP agent in protection is eliciting the assistance of the venue's security staff. The venue security staff is generally helpful as they want to provide a safe business friendly environment. I personally can't think of an instance where a venue's security team hasn't provided security support.

Arrivals: As a solo EP agent arriving at a venue, you have several options you can take as far as arrivals and close protection go. These options are as follows:

1. Drop off the client near the entry point, park the vehicle and catch up with the client. The negative aspect of this is losing control of your client and vehicle.

2. Drop off the client and remain in the vehicle parked near the venue never losing sight or control of the vehicle.

3. Drop off the client and valet the vehicle if available and move with the client, shadowing them preferably behind them scanning 360 degrees looking for threats. The negative aspect of this is you lose control of your vehicle.

4. Drop off the client, lock the vehicle, leave vehicle in place near the entry point, escort the client into the venue to their meeting location. Once this is conducted the EP agent can return to the vehicle and park it, then return to the venue.

Departures: Departing the venue also provides several options. It's important to attempt to make the departure as efficient as possible in order to save your client time.

1. Parked vehicle. Escort your client directly to the parked vehicle and begin your departure. Ensure to conduct a quick cursory search of your vehicle.

2. Valet parked vehicle. If your vehicle was valet parked, attempt to have the vehicle pulled up prior to your client's exit to ensure your client isn't needlessly waiting.

3. Parked vehicle. Leave the venue for the parking location several minutes prior to the end of the meeting, provide a quick cursory search of the vehicle and then pull up to the departure location.

Escorting and Shadowing the Client: Escorting / shadowing your client is simply walking with them, scanning for threats, looking for POC's or the direction your client should be moving to in order to keep things efficient. As a solo practitioner you may need to walk in front of the client in order to guide them in the right direction. You may even walk next to the client guiding them in the appropriate direction. At times you may even choose to walk 1 meter behind the client and 1 meter offset to the left or right of the client. Ultimately. this will be your client's choice on what they prefer. Some clients don't have a preference and just want you to guide them as you see fit while scanning for threats.

Attack on Client: This should be discussed during the client interview explaining what actions you as a solo practitioner would take in the event of an attack on your client. Explain you may have to stay and mitigate such a threat while you've instructed your client on what actions they need to take.

If the attack on client doesn't require any type of mitigation or physical application on your part, you may just have to escort your client away quickly to your preplanned location(s). If there is an urgency to move the client away quickly, get behind the client, grab their belt with your non-shooting hand and push the client in the direction you want them to go. Your strong hand can be used to push the clients head down, draw your firearm (if an armed detail) , draw other weapons or just maybe open a door.

Medical: Medical training is an important skill set of an executive protection agent. It's even more critical as a solo practitioner as you'll be expected to provide at a minimum some type of first responder care. Additionally, some clients prefer an EP agent to be at least an Emergency Medical Technician Basic (EMT-B). Ideally, you should carry some type of medical equipment with you on your person and in your vehicle. Prior to providing any type of medical treatment to your client you must ensure security is established or the threat has been mitigated. Below is a list of the minimum amount of medical equipment a solo practitioner should have.

Medical equipment list: (Minimum)

Tourniquets	Chest shields
Israeli bandages	Combat Gauze
Adhesive Tape	Defibrillator

Business Enabler and Assistant: This is usually a hot topic as many EP agents believe their sole purpose is to protect the client and nothing else. Not so true in the private sector where at times you may have to perform minuscule duties while still ensuring the client is protected. Soft skills are extremely important during this alternate EP task. Some of these duties include driving, holding your clients jacket momentarily as they field a phone call, opening a door for them, having an extra pen and paper readily available for them, getting them medication from the local pharmacy etc… All of these minuscule tasks throughout the day add up in time. Time is money is money for the client. If the EP agent can assist the client by being a business enabling protector, that EP agent has increased their value as well as the client's value to focus on running a business.

Conclusion: The solo EP practitioner, if conducted correctly is a difficult task. Rapid planning multitasking, conducting auxiliary protection duties, coupled with soft skills and being a business enabler occupies a bulk of the EP agents time. Factor in mindset, continual situational awareness of the client's surroundings, only adds to the complexities. To succeed as a solo EP practitioner, one must be self-driven, properly selected, trained and receive continual in-service training on hard and soft skills.

From the staff at Secure Options Consulting, LLC

January 2024