

Executive Protection and Michael Jackson (learning when to just say “no”).

As the media hype continues over the death of Michael Jackson, some serious allegations about drugs and other destructive behaviors are surfacing. As the media often does with these types of events, finger pointing is turning into an Olympic event. Should we hold the doctors and family members responsible? How about the fans for creating all of that intense “pressure to perform?” Maybe an undiagnosed birth defect caused the bizarre behavior in the “King of Pop.”

Jackson, as well as most big name celebrities, was supplied with a full time security team. This team should have been made up of professionals whose sole purpose is to ensure the safety and well being of their client. There is no doubt that protecting such a famous and easily recognizable public figure, would have some major challenges. Unfortunately, the distinction between security and “professional” executive protection has become obvious. Far too many of these “protectors” have gotten their clients sued, embarrassed and, yes, killed.

It would seem that keeping the boss alive would ensure job stability. Obviously, someone who insists on abusing drugs, or engaging in extremely risky pursuits, makes the job even harder. Assuming that the protector was professionally trained, allowing these obvious life threatening behaviors is not in the job description. Unfortunately, many who are employed in that role are not professional, professionally trained or, morally competent to hold that position. These jobs are often handed out to the former bouncer/martial artist/special forces operator, or other action figure now calling themselves a “bodyguard”. Having the intestinal fortitude to actually say “no!” to these enablers would risk the short term paychecks of these characters.

Some might say that the job is not to tell the client what he or she can or cannot do, but to protect them from harm while they are doing it. Again, the distinction between amateur and professional becomes more clearly defined. A contract is usually presented and signed by both parties before the work begins. If the executive protection agent does not clearly spell out what is unacceptable, such as unlawful activity, they could easily find themselves becoming an accessory to that activity. Worse than that however is the possibility that the client is injured or dies because of his negligence.

A former Jackson bodyguard is now cashing in on his employers death by releasing his “tell all” video, where he outlines the drug abuse that he witnessed and his inability to prevent it (not exactly something I would want on my resume). Matt Fiddes gave his interview to EOnline and bemoaned the fact that he could not prevent the boss from his self destructive behavior and would get yelled at when he tried to “interfere with his (Jackson’s) personal life.” So this “bodyguard” just allowed it to continue. On the other hand, since there is no longer anyone to protect, Fiddes can maybe cash in with his expose.

A professional training program offers more than a blueprint on how to prevent an assassination, drive fast and, look good while carrying a weapon. The goal of providing complete security and protection entails many small details that are often overlooked, such as conducting background checks on other employees. Knowing what meds are needed and the appropriate doses also should be noted.