



CINDY SOMMER

A few industry Do's and Don'ts from a colleague across the pond

I was born into a family of all boys; two older brothers and one younger. My father was employed with the Boeing Company when suddenly, he was laid off. He applied for and was given the position of Deputy Sheriff for the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department. (back in the day when all he had to do was show up, they gave him a uniform, a badge, a gun and a patrol car and then said, 'go to work'.) This experience left an indelible mark on my mind. His uniform, the service, the power, all of it...and although his career was very short and he eventually returned to the Boeing Company, it left a lasting impression upon me as a child.

So, you probably guessed my background by now... yes, I was a cop for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. I worked for nearly fifteen years before resigning to take a non profit organization full time in order to help kids and families with addiction prevention and treatment, a lot stemming out of my work on the streets as a cop. After that, I returned to law enforcement, this time as a Reserve Police Officer. I eventually made my way into Executive Protection amongst those in the Entertainment Industry. After a few years, I landed the most fantastic job working with Royal Families & Diplomats and have been doing that ever since.

As I write this article, I am in the heart New York City. I recently finished a job here in the Big Apple with a Royal

Middle Eastern Family and the security team was majorly comprised of women agents. It was hilarious because I'd never, since working the jails, worked with so many women. (Especially doing any kind of dignitary protection work) There are so few of us who do this type of work with any consistency really... and even fewer that are really good and confident in the work they do. So I thought to myself, 'hey, this might be fun.'

Thanks to my good network in this field, I was asked to locate females in the industry that could perform the task. Upon

close scrutiny of the CV's I saw a couple things that stood out: Qualifications were out-dated and although the agent was well qualified on paper, usually the training was old, or the certification was about to expire. Another thing I noticed was a lack of consistency in the work experience. Either there was a lack of willingness to work full-time in the field or the CV was simply poorly written. Never underestimate the power of your CV/ Resume. It has to be concise, clear and always contain a professional picture.

Some of the dos and even more importantly, some of the don'ts in this industry is what I would like to highlight for you. These basics apply to both genders but there is a difference working with females and so if you want to work with other females and make it successfully, here are a few tips:

The Do's

Be Open to learn: Get to know your team members and communicate. If you don't have 'all that' experience in the field of executive or dignitary protection, it's okay, but don't act like you do. It's not something you can cover up easily and you will lose credibility. Just say "wow, I have a lot to learn" and be open to doing just that. There are very few women in the world who have been assigned to a full-time team with someone who is a Royal or a Diplomat. These positions are few and far in between. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to work with a team, we are always learning from each other. We know each other's strengths and each other's weaknesses. Work as a team and remember good communication is a key factor.

Come Prepared: Your attire must be professional at all times however there are variables. It will depend upon several factors: the age of the principle, the activity you are engaging in and the weather. Whether it is business attire, smart casual or casual, know that your suitcase contains the proper attire from the beginning of the job. Have a small flat purse with a shoulder strap that you can use for various items you may need to carry. We all know that female suits do not have the necessary pockets that men's suits have. Take your suits to the cleaners and have the appropriate pockets added if necessary. At the very least, have all your clothing professionally cleaned and pressed before arriving for the assignment. Remember

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to take an extra battery for your radio and your phone charger wherever you go.

Be On Time: There is nothing worse than beginning a briefing without all the team members present. Being on time means showing up at least fifteen minutes prior to the posted briefing time. If you show up at the time of briefing, most people will consider you 'late'. Prepare your clothes the night before and make sure your shoes are the proper type. No open toed shoes, no heels. Clean, polished and shined. Get your rest and sleep at least six to eight hours. Set your alarm and a back up alarm if you are a heavy sleeper.

Do Your Job: If the contractor wanted you to be a supervisor and 'take charge' he would have hired you for that position. Don't assume you are better than your supervisor. Most likely, he or she has years of experience in a vast array of venues and this is just one of them. At the same time however, if your principle comes to you with a proposed idea or request, listen to the principle gracefully, but always remember the hierarchy should be respected. Bring the issue to your superior and let them make the decision. Even though the VIP is the final client, you immediate supervisor is the one that will keep you employed.

Build Relationships: Use the time you have with co-workers and super-

visors to bond. This is a priceless opportunity that can lead to a more positive work environment, better flow and even future job opportunities.

The Don'ts

Don't get too close to your principle. Be genuine, but keep it professional.

You are hired to provide protection and security. Stick to what you know best. Your principle may give you permission to 'go shopping' whilst on duty. Don't do it. You are on duty and regardless of how comfortable you feel never forget that you are working and are always being watched.

Don't Gossip: Women talk a lot. Working with an all women team, this area can be a real challenge. If you have a problem with a team member, go directly to them and discuss the issue in a forthright but professional manner. If you cannot talk nicely about someone, keep your mouth shut. Anything negative will only serve to break apart the team and make it weaker. Put your focus on building the team up and increasing effective communication.

Don't Party: It's good to let off some steam after work and have a drink with a team member but limit the amount of alcohol you drink because it can affect your entire next shift when you think it might not. Remember that you are always being watched.

Women like to talk a lot



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