

By: Orlando "Andy" Wilson

# CLIENTS SHOULD YOU TRUST THEM?

In theory, when providing close protection services, you should show unflinching loyalty to your clients, but will they show you the same level of commitment in return?

I am fortunate as the clients I tend to work with are those who understand that I will work with them 100% if they let me, if they cooperate with me, and if they pay me! Mutual respect and efficient communications are essential in any business, and I think more so in the close protection industry as you tend to become very involved in your clients' private lives.

Boundaries must always be made clear as business is business, and this works to protect you and the clients' interests. Your clients are not your friends, they are clients paying you to provide them with a service, and if boundaries are ignored, it can undermine any respect in the business relationship. You need to decide if you are providing protective services to your clients so you can ►

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earn money or are you just going to hang out with them?

I stopped dealing with a client that used to come to me for firearms and self-defense training. In many ways, he could have been an excellent client to have, but he had an obsession for strippers and hookers. He could be classed as reasonably high-profile, but when his wife and kids were not around, he was making a lot of stupid decisions, which he liked to brag about. When he asked if I could get someone to go and get his wife's favorite designer coat back from a hooker he had lent it to, while she'd been staying at his apartment, when the wife and kids were away, I stopped answering his calls. It's easy to make money from stupid clients, but remember, shit sticks!

There needs to be a healthy relationship with your clients, you don't want to let them dominate you, and you don't want to try to dominate and control them. I have had students come to me who have been told on close protection courses that when they are working their clients must do as they are

told. They were told that clients should not question security procedures as they are not the experts and that they must always have control of their clients passports etc. To me, this is wholly unrealistic and unnecessary. I know from the clients I have worked with that if some asshole tried to bully them around, they would be fired on the spot and rightly so.

Forging and maintaining professional relationships can be very difficult, and there needs to be give-and-take on both sides. If people are mature enough and understand the situations they are in, most will be able to cooperate effectively without unnecessary drama.

The question this article asks is "should we trust clients?", my personal view on this is that you should never trust them... respect them, but never trust them! Now, think about it, and give me a reason why a client would want to deceive you about their true intentions for hiring you?

There are multiple reasons as to why a client would lie, and as counterintuitive as it seems, divulging the actual threat level is one of the main ones. Many

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years ago, I had a client that did not exactly lie to me but certainly didn't tell the whole truth about a situation. The job was a simple asset check on an ordinary businessman investing in Eastern Europe. The client conveniently forgot to tell me that they knew he was working with suspected organized criminals and that he was under active government investigation. Eventually, we found all this out and adapted accordingly, but we were fortunate it didn't turn out worse, and it would have been far safer for my people if we had been given the heads-up from the outset.

Why did the client not tell us? He would probably claim that he'd expect us to have access to this information or to find out independently. However, I know that they will have thought that by being honest it would have led to a far higher quote than I gave them, and he'd have been correct in his assumption! Understand that where business and money are concerned, many clients will see you as expendable and replaceable.

One incident, early in my ►



career, highlighted perfectly why clients should never be fully trusted and why everything they say should be questioned. Many years ago, I was working in South Africa, and the boss of the company I was working for said he had a special job he wanted me to do, which meant little to me at the time as the pay was the same.

A factory owner had a problem that he needed fixing. Every night, trucks that parked up on his site were being broken into. I'm in South Africa, so naturally, I was armed and understood the risks. That night as I was waiting close to where the vehicles parked, I heard someone climbing over the sheet metal gates and into the complex. It was dark, I had my 4" .375 revolver out, and as I slipped between the parked truck to intercept them, they'd vanished. Luckily, I'd heard them get into one of the many trucks but, all I could do then was wait for them to make a move and try to intercept them. Early in the morning, at about first light, I heard movement coming from amongst the vehicles. I rushed across and managed to intercept the person who turned out to be a homeless local. When he saw me and the revolver pointed at his head, to put it very politely, he shit himself!

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He was compliant, not at all aggressive, had no weapons, and even opened his coat and lifted his shirt to show me that he hadn't stolen anything. When I asked what he was doing, he explained he'd been sleeping in the trucks and had nowhere else to go. I told him to go and not to come back.

However, when I reported what had happened to the owner of the complex, he was not happy and wanted to know why I had not shot the homeless guy. When I stated there was no reason to do so, he accused me of being a coward. Then, when the boss of the company I was working for turned up,

he too wanted to know why I hadn't shot the homeless guy. I think my response was something like "let's go find him, and you can shoot him". My view, both then and now is that I would definitely have been a coward for shooting an unarmed homeless man who was just looking for somewhere to sleep. That situation could have played out differently had I bumped into that homeless guy without warning, as he climbed over the gates. He would likely be dead now. Why? Because I was young and stupid? Maybe, but mainly because I'd been given false information about what was really ▶







going on and believed it. The owner of the complex, the true coward, thought he could hire people to do the dirty work he would never have had the guts to do himself. The owner of the security company that employed me was another coward who's only concern was about keeping the contract and impressing the compound owner. That one short night taught me to always question the reason why someone is hiring me, especially if there is the likelihood of hostilities occurring.

I can recall many more examples of ways in which

clients have demonstrated they should not be trusted until they have proven to be half-trustworthy. Even though the romantic and Hollywood image of the "bodyguard" is of someone who would unquestionably die for their clients, the reality is that you must question everything. Think about this; if things go wrong who will be paying your hospital bills, bailing you out of jail, paying for your lawyers, looking after your family while you're in hospital, prison, or the morgue? You think it will be the client or your boss?

I think neither!

*Orlando Wilson has worked in the security industry internationally for over 25 years. He has become accustomed to the types of complications that can occur, when dealing with international law enforcement agencies, organized criminal and Mafia groups. He is the chief consultant for Risks Inc. and based in Miami but spends much of his time traveling and providing a wide range of kidnapping prevention and tactical training services to private and government clients.*

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