

Busting Security Myths

You can't come in here wearing those

For many, the bodyguard, close protection or personal security brings images of XXL gentlemen looking outwards from the client as they hustle along. Suspicious, maybe even piggy eyes dart to and fro as they mutter self-importantly into their lapels or ears which sport a telephone-like curly cord. Simon Rowland of **Veritas International Consultants Ltd** contends that is hopelessly outdated and mostly inappropriate. Here he makes that case as well as suggesting an alternative approach with a very PC title. I won't reveal that now; to see what it is, read on.



Photo: Corbis

In today's world, everybody is conscious of security; many understand that there is an industry that provides security advice and specialists, and some may have somewhat stereotypical ideas of what the security consultant might do.

For many years, the security industry stood still and provided the same solutions to the same problems in the same one-dimensional manner: muscle bound heavies in ill-fitting suits denied access to people, places, and assets. This may have been and may remain an appropriate solution for a dodgy inner-city club, but it is a solution that lacks the sophistication that is inherent to exclusive events such as those held on the superyachts at the Monte Carlo Grand Prix or Cannes Film Festival. No wonder then that, to date, the traditional security solution finds little acceptance in the private high-end maritime market. However, times are changing and a new, more discreet and specialised service is gaining credence among skippers and owners alike.

“ *Unlike the traditional stereotype, the security chaperone does not have to look like a bouncer; such an image is best left to those who wish to use it for effect* ”

In the security industry bad news, more often than not, means good business. Since the tragic events of 9/11, the industry has expanded enormously and there is now a plethora of companies offering various security services of every shape and size. Most of these companies offer a broad spectrum of services that cross over into several distinct business areas, for example corporate security, manned guarding, surveillance and close protection. There are some security companies that have decided to specialise in a chosen area; that may be training, it could be corporate or it might be maritime. How can anyone distinguish between specialists in the same market, especially when the potential employer has had no prior experience of security?

More often than not, this decision falls to the yacht manager or captain. First, they must find a selection of security companies to choose from. Where does that individual look to find a specialist company offering services more suitable to their particular environment, and more importantly their client? Googling security companies will give you a selection of 269,000,000 pages (yes, 269 million) to choose from; this can then be narrowed to a manageable 2,990,000 from UK-only pages. On inspection of these pages, would an individual really trust a smart website as an indicator of competence? Is a shiny yacht a true indication of its quality?

The answer to this question can generally be found in studying the types of services that a company offers. A large security company with large overheads will often break down its offerings into 10 or 15 divisions (of which maritime might be one) in order to 'catch the most fish' and appear more dynamic and so employable. A specialist company might only offer services in three or four areas. Size, one way or the other, is not necessarily a virtue and does not guarantee excellence, but it might just be an indication of how personal the relationship would or wouldn't be and how important you and your client might be to that company.

As the large-yacht market is a specialised business, the security companies that service the sector have become as equally specialist. Most of these companies offer the same services, consultation on new builds, training, an array of ISPS options, support, and security. But what do they actually mean by security?

The traditional view of security is that the company will supply security specialists to deny access to the yacht, principally when transiting high-risk areas but also increasingly when in port. In addition, the company will also offer either close or personal protection for the owner or charter guests. It is this last aspect that has developed beyond its traditional boundaries and is beginning to form a major service in its own right – the security chaperone. This service is increasingly recognised as an essential and value-added element in the experience of owners and customers while on board.

Elements of the Security Chaperone Service

Travel Management – Covering everything from the client pick-up and drop-off, and anything else in between. The chaperone can take responsibility for the organisation and management of this essential logistical challenge, freeing the captain and crew to concentrate on the preparation and running of the yacht.

Travel Security – Closely coordinated with travel management, the chaperone will pass a critical eye over all venues and locations prior to the client's arrival. A comprehensive plan of action will be drawn up for each location and be briefed to the captain and relevant crew.

Emergency and Evacuation Coordination – Provides an assured pro-active response to a range of emergency situations which include non-medical evacuations. Specifically directed at providing ‘on-the-ground’ support as early as possible, the service is a key element within travel security.

Itinerary Management – Final adjustments, last minute changes and specific requests can be managed by the chaperone. Ensuring that the best table is identified and secured, the Maitre D’ is ‘recruited’, the waiter specifically briefed and the bills settled. These are just some of the tasks the chaperone carries out on behalf of the client allowing the group to fully relax and enjoy ‘seamless vacations’.

Incident Response/Crisis Management – Good crisis management gives the client a specific edge, an advantage, in any situation. If unfortunate enough to be caught in a crisis, the chaperone will have the specialist expertise required to support and effectively respond to a wide range of crises. The chaperone will protect the client’s reputation, environment, guests and employees. It is a given that in hiring the right service provider you are guaranteeing absolute excellence in this critical area.

Qualities of the Security Chaperone

Unlike the traditional stereotype the security chaperone does not have to look like a bouncer; such an image is best left to those who wish to use it for effect. The chaperone should blend in with the individual or group that he/she is with and not be obvious in the role; the last thing a client wants is invasive security while enjoying a well-earned holiday. Above all, the chaperone should display an agile mind and be prepared to voice an opinion when necessary.

It is the chaperone’s role to remove the client from a location before a threat or situation develops; this can only be achieved with the constant reassessment of the immediate environment. Discretion, Discretion, Discretion.

It goes without saying that the chaperone should be qualified and experienced in the role, and that is down to the employer to verify. It is worthy of note that in recent years there has been a huge increase of manpower from the Armed Forces made available to the security industry. As in any manpower pool, there

are talented people and there are not so talented people, and finding out which of these stands before you can be expensive and sometimes painful; it is certainly worth remembering that just because someone has been a member of the Armed Forces it does not necessarily follow that they are an able, qualified, or experienced security chaperone.



Photo: Corbis

Conclusion

Traditional security solutions still exist for those who are attracted to the idea and image of a screen of muscle. The really discerning superyacht owners or managers rarely wish to draw attention to themselves in this fashion, so require discreet and bespoke solutions tailored by people with genuine security experience in both the Maritime and High Net Worth environments. The chaperone service offering has developed to encompass a far broader role, one which fits seamlessly with the management of a superyacht and which really adds value as well as reassurance.

Simon Rowland
Veritas International Consultants Ltd