

By Raffaele Di Giorgio

The Renaissance protection specialist, is it the direction for you?

“Life is pretty simple: You do some stuff. Most fails. Some works. You do more of what works. If it works big, others quickly copy it. Then you do something else. The trick is the doing something else.”

Leonardo da Vinci

“What skill should I specialize in?” or “What course should I take next?”. These are the two questions I hear the most, out of up and coming protection specialist as well as those established specialists who are trying to increase their marketability. Most of this is directed towards the medical discipline as it is a core competency for me as well as one of my passions. What I try to explain is that there is no magic “one size fits all” skill set that guarantees continued employment in this field.

The beauty of the Da Vinci quote above is that it speaks both to the newcomer and the experienced in any profession, but especially well to ours. Speaking from past experiences, in the early years, there were a lot of courses, mentors and

unfounded suggestions that I followed, which unfortunately failed me horribly.

“Life is pretty simple: You do some stuff. Most fails. Some works. You do more of what works”.

Where I lacked experience and core skill sets in the beginning, I made up for with my ability not to chase a failing technique. Back then it was pretty easy since my successes and failures were directly proportional to the balance of my checking account. As is often said, experience can be painful, but it is an excellent teacher and you do learn from them.

As the years progressed, I entered what I refer to as the “do more of what works” phase. One especially important lesson was that the end of the week paycheck was not the litmus test as to whether my future was secure in this career field or not. Just as I learned the total number of years in this field was/ is not directly equivalent to, or a testament to your actual experience/aptitude in this field.

So fortunately, with the help of some great mentors and some hard life experiences I learned that it was not a matter of whether I was an extremely competent individual in any one skill set, but my ability to have a solid proficiency over several skill sets that would keep me gainfully employed.

As a natural progression took place over the years, I then noticed that more people “copied” what I did on details. This to me was the indicator that I needed to take the next step and decided to make my move into starting my own business, -- the “then do something different” phase.

When the businesses became profitable, it was time to “do something different”, yet again. This has turned into a never-ending cycle of pursuing new skill sets, the sustainment of current ones, delivery of services to different customers (celebrity, high net worth individuals, government & high threat environments), constantly being a protégé to some, as well as a mentor to others.

With all of the different avenues that are available under the family of protection services. The questions I ask back to inquiring professionals are; where do you want to go? What do you want specialize in? What is your passion? The fact of the matter is, it’s pretty staggering just how many people cannot answer these three questions succinctly.

My advice would be as it has always been – First pursue the skill sets that are of the most interest to you. This stacks the deck in your favor and gives you the best possibility of reaching an acceptable competency level in that particular skill. Understand that does not negate the fact that additional skills are still necessary and important not only to your personal development, but to your professional standing as well. There will always be certain skills that different people will not enjoy doing, but are still a requirement of the profession. Whether we like it or not as professionals we are expected to have competency and proficiency across the board.

This “Renaissance” aspect is what separates the continuously employed protection specialist from what I have classified the intermittent employee/contractor. The ability to cover any position on the detail is one that absolutely multiplies the opportunities afforded any individual in this profession. If you’re only skill is driver, medic, advance, DDM et. al., then it would stand to reason

that the only time you could be called is when one of those skills has an opening. As a Renaissance professional you separate yourself from the pack, not only because of your multiple talents, but also because of your ability to see across the different skill sets and actually be able see the overall picture.

As a final caution, having learned these lessons painfully, make sure you conduct your due diligence investigations before you invest your time or money in courses, instructors, employers, and most especially your mentors. These four aforementioned areas, more so than anything else, will shape and mold the rest of your career.

“A renaissance man or polymath is a person who is skilled in multiple fields or multiple disciplines, and who has a broad base of knowledge.” Could this be you? These concepts have been successfully practiced for hundreds of years.

Just ask Mr. Da Vinci.