

What Were They Thinking?

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How many of us have uttered those words when we find out that someone has gotten themselves into a bind whilst abroad?

A young journalist is captured while pursuing a story in a dangerous locale. Backpackers are accosted and robbed. A business woman is sexually assaulted in a hotel gym.

Why were they there in the first place?

It doesn't matter. They're our friends, our family and our colleagues. People are traveling around the world every day. Often to bravely pursue business opportunities in a globalized world. Bad things sometimes happen to good people. The oft quoted expression is that someone was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As business leaders we have a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to our employees to make sure that they travel safely. More importantly, if we hope to prosper, we need to go to destinations and to tap into markets that have traditionally been beyond our reach.

We don't let our staff operate machinery or even sell products to clients without training. Why do we hand them a plane ticket to a far off

destination without teaching them to avoid risk and to stay safe? Well over 90% of risks can be circumvented by simply teaching your staff to recognize and avoid problematic situations. Wrong place at the wrong time is only wrong because you don't know what was right.

Our people can be taught to protect their identities, health, well-being and financial security while on travel status. If something unpredictable happens, whether it be a terror attack, insurrection or natural disaster, they can survive and prosper while those around them are consumed in the maelstrom.

Our secret services and militaries have been teaching agents to identify and avoid risks for decades and they travel to places that the average citizen would steadfastly avoid. The common sense techniques that they use are unfortunately not commonly practiced by the traveling public. Bringing a rubber door stop when you travel to secure your hotel door will save your life. Understanding that going alone to the hotel gym for an early morning workout in Denver is a great way to start your day. It's a very bad idea in Cairo. When the violent, anti-government protest is taking place outside the hotel, the folks waiting patiently in the hotel's interior ballroom don't suffer the same accidental bullet wound as those watching from their balcony.

Avoid and survive. Let's do right by our people.