



THE STRAIGHT AND **NARROW PATH**



A happy consequence of developing an area of expertise and then sticking with it is that after a while, no one remembers when you didn't know what you were doing. Thus, to my amusement, I -- an American Studies major with three years towards a Ph.D in History that I will never complete -- get asked for career advice fairly regularly these days.

For these people, I developed a talk I call "The Straight and Narrow Path." It started as encouragement to my sports and entertainment law students to resist the push towards BigLaw jobs in favor of work that will sustain them even after they pay off their loans. There are lots of variations on the same advice, such as this article in The New York Times called "Wealthy, Successful, and Miserable." (Oh, I feel such pity...)

Recently, it occurred to me that this tendency towards straight and narrow thinking has important consequences for risk management at live events as well. Again, I used my law students as guinea pigs, challenging them to figure out why, in a class Arizona State University awkwardly titled "Risk Management in Venues in Sports," I asked them to read several cases about pyrotechnics. I tell that story in the video linked below.

Through this exercise, it became apparent that a too-narrow construction of words like "sports," "entertainment," and "risk" led event organizers to either discount or entirely disregard reasonably foreseeable responses to my favorite risk management question, what could go wrong?

In other words, if you think about a sporting event only in terms of the game on the field, then you might not spend enough time training security and guest services staff to safely evacuate the crowd in the stands. If entertainment law means intellectual

property rights first, then documentation in the advance regarding weather contingencies and shelter in place might get overlooked. If every exercise is about active shooters and unmarked box trucks, then you might not think about the consequences for queued up patrons of moving the security perimeter farther away from a building entrance.

The same open-mindedness that I encourage as career advice turns out to have real value for risk management at live events. In the Crowd Management ANSI standard that is currently out for public review, much of what our Task Group has tried to do is stir event professionals to ask open-ended questions in order to increase the likelihood that their answers will be reasonable under the circumstances of their event. That's what the law requires. And that's why I'm sharing this talk with you.

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