

Going along with the group Community Comment

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I wonder what people are thinking when they make obviously unethical decisions. People's judgment gets clouded when in large groups and they are more likely to go along with poor decisions.

One recent example involves a high speed caravan of exotic cars on a New Jersey turnpike, complete with a police escort, flashing lights and all. Witnesses said a large cluster of Ferraris, Lamborghinis and the like weaved in and out of traffic at speeds exceeding 100 miles per hour. Maybe owning an expensive sports car leads you to think that behavior is OK. But what would possess a State Trooper to go along with that idea?

I doubt that every car had a pregnant woman about to deliver. I think the glamour of fast cars and high rollers clouded people's thinking. I would like to think there would be one trooper who would stand up to it and say no.

Another recent example involves the Secret Service assigned to protect our President in Columbia. It appears that it was commonplace for this group of Secret Service employees to drink heavily and hire prostitutes. Dozens of secret service agents are being investigated and many have been forced out over the behavior.

Once again, it appears that this behavior was accepted by the group. If other people are doing it, it must be normal. One person was willing to speak out about it; a relatively new supervisor, a female, had the courage to report the behavior.

Another outrageous example is from the Federal GSA, the General Services Administration. These are the people we trust to monitor contracts and be the stewards of how our tax dollars are being spent. Apparently, the administration of GSA has a history of lavish expenditures on their own employees. Maybe they deal with large, private corporations and think they are one, but they are not. A large, successful business, like Apple, can throw themselves a million dollar conference if they want.

But when a federal agency does that, it is outrageous and makes me wonder how they thought this was acceptable behavior.

GSA staff spent over \$100,000 traveling to Las Vegas and another \$30,000 on food just to **PLAN** the conference in October 2010. Food for the actual five-day event cost \$150,000 and that included a budget of \$44 a person for breakfast. Heck, I could have shown them some \$10 breakfast buffets. They spent over \$6,000 for t-shirts and water bottles. They even hired a Las Vegas mind reader for entertainment. They should have hired a psychic to tell them how poorly this would all turn out.

And, they spent \$75,000 for bicycle parts for a team building exercise. I bet that was fun. They later donated the bicycles to charity. They could have had as much team building with some ping pong balls or less expensive props. But they used new bicycles.

Which leads me to a local example. Students at Alice Birney school had been given used bicycles as part of an after school bicycle safety and fitness program. People donated the bikes and the time to repair and maintain the bikes. Last weekend, thieves broke into the school and stole all 8 bicycles. Only if your thoughts were impaired by drugs and greed, could you think stealing bicycles from poor kids was acceptable behavior.

Alice Birney school kids now need some donated bikes. And apparently bike locks and a storage shed. And some thieves need brought to justice. This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment.