

How to verbalize the need to adopt the C.A.R. system  
to higher command Personnel.

**Marketing the C.A.R System**  
**An executive summary by**  
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**Objective:**

To persuade police, military, and selected private security organizations to adopt the Center Axis Relock (CAR) firearms/combat system as their standard operational system.

**CAR is assumed to have advantages over other systems :**

1. More effective combat performance.
2. More efficient training.
3. Increased qualification rates, especially among "nontraditional" Officers / Troops / Agents.

**These translate to several benefits :**

1. Greater safety of Officers / Troops / Agents and noncombatants coupled with increased effectiveness against aggressors.
2. Reduced training/recruitment costs.
3. Increased diversity of personnel.

**Communicating these advantages requires taking into account :**

1. Organizational contexts: the current state and history of the adopting organization and their motivation to change established practices.
2. The individual motives of organizational members.

**Factors which relate to persuasion at the individual level, including :**

1. Cognitive variables and the motivation to process new information.
2. Affective variables and their impact on judgment.
3. Long- and short-term effects of these on both attitude and behavior.
4. Social factors, including group support for the CAR system.

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**Action items include :**

1. Developing instructional materials for persuasive impact.
2. Organization analysis to determine where opportunities exist.
3. Personal contact and "outreach" activities.
4. Research to assess and support the effectiveness of the CAR system.
5. Appropriate branding of CAR and future development.

**Discussion:**

I am assuming, based on my own experience and observation as well as the reports of others, that the CAR system offers advantages over and above those systems. These include:

1. More effective performance of personnel in actual conflicts, leading not only to reduced casualties among officers / military personnel but among noncombatants and possibly suspects / opposing forces as well.

This stems from more effective use of firearms and other weapons, leading to quicker cessation of conflicts and thus less opportunity for injuries to occur, as well as greater combat effectiveness itself.

2. Training efficiency, due to the use of identical training principles for handguns, carbines, shotguns, "less-lethal" alternative weapons, and empty-hand techniques.
3. Higher success rates of nontraditional personnel, e.g., smaller-statured men and women, due to unique features of the CAR system which reduce dependence on muscular endurance, strength, and physical size.
4. Increased performance of all personnel on qualification courses as well as in actual combat, due to unique features of the CAR system.

**These points translate directly to several organizational and social benefits. These include :**

1. Increased safety of the officers / military personnel *and* of noncombatants, reducing social costs and financial liability while more effectively neutralizing violent criminals and/or enemy combatants.

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2. Reduced costs of training and recruitment.
3. Greater diversity of the force in question (e.g. ethnic and gender representation), better reflecting society at large.

The strengths of the CAR system, then, must be effectively communicated to both decision-makers and the rank and file in order for them to adopt it, and for subsequent experience to confirm the wisdom of that decision.

Furthermore, the arguments must be made in a way that will justify the initial costs-financial, psychological, and organizational-of a change in training systems.

### **The Organizational Context :**

Firearms and combat training is a central function of police and military organizations. Adopting a new system, then, qualifies as a major organizational change. In order for such a change to be successfully adopted, personnel at all levels must be convinced that it is to their benefit as well as the organization's to do so. This directly engages the question of motivation, both general and specific.

Motivation defines the direction of behavior, the energy or effort devoted to that behavior, and the persistence or endurance of the behavior. Specifically, "motives" involve the pursuit of goals or objectives, both general (e.g. self-enhancement, power, social welfare) and specific (e.g. awards, rank, protection of innocent people). Motives have power to energize and direct behavior because of their affective value, either to promote pleasure or reduce / avoid pain.

Furthermore, people will act to avoid or reduce pain before pursuing pleasure of the same magnitude. For example, consider the following question: Which would you prefer, \$10 for sure or a 10% chance of winning \$100? Most choose the \$10 certainty. Now, which would you prefer: Pay \$10 now, or take a 10% chance of losing \$100? Most people take the chance. The choices are "irrational," unless one considers that the loss is more painful than the gain is pleasurable, even though the amounts are the same.

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What does this mean for marketing CAR? Simply that presenting decision-makers with a better system is not enough. They must be motivated to make a change because it promises to help them achieve a large reward in terms of immediate, specific motives or avoid some negative outcome; the latter is typically more powerful. Furthermore, the reward gained or the problems avoided must be sufficient to overcome the cost of the change, which is an immediate negative outcome. Immediate outcomes are typically more powerful than delayed ones.

Who, then, are the likely clients for the CAR system? Organizations that have recently experienced a loss, and subsequent public or private criticism, because of inadequate performance of their personnel are one possibility. Tragic as it may be, the fact is that most organizations do not address deficiencies in training, equipment, or leadership until some disaster occurs.

The 1986 Miami shootout is a prime example, as is the later North Hollywood gunfight. Single vivid examples are often more persuasive than libraries of scientific data. A single widely publicized tragedy may prompt other organizations to consider changes as well, because that same example will cause decision-makers to consider possibilities that never occurred to them previously.

Another type of potential client is the organization under pressure to increase the diversity of its personnel, especially if it has budget constraints. They would be especially sensitive to data showing that nontraditional officers / agents / operatives perform well using CAR principles. In this case, political pressure provides the motive; CAR provides the means to satisfy the demand for a representative force while also satisfying those who demand a high standard of performance. Two types of social good are being done simultaneously.

A third potential client is the organization that prides itself on being "state-of-the-art." Elite units of various sorts, e.g. hostage rescue, SWAT, Delta, etc. not only strive for outstanding performance, but are willing to seek out and evaluate means of further improvement. Such "mastery" motives typify the highest performers in any field.

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To summarize, then, the organizations most likely to consider CAR would be those whose leadership and personnel have an objective compatible with CAR's greatest strengths, and these should be the focus of marketing efforts. Motivation does not end at the organizational level, though. For successful adoption, people at all levels of the organization must see it as a means to their personal goals. Unfortunately, but realistically, not all of these goals will include the accomplishment of the mission or even the safety of personnel or the public.

It has been said to me many times, by many different people, that police departments and military organizations are highly traditional and very political. Changes imposed from the top are likely to be resisted unless the motives of individuals are engaged. Firearms trainers may feel threatened by new methods that they must master in order to maintain their positions and the respect of trainees, and they are likely to have a network of "old-boy" relationships to support them. Thus, a key marketing activity must be to involve these "stakeholders" in the proper teaching and evaluation of the system.

One must build and maintain a network of 'sponsors' of the system at all levels, from command to the patrol or squad. Not only the "official" channels but the "informal organization" should be involved. Personal contact is best for this purpose, for instance being introduced to the system by an insider. Note that I am not proposing any illegitimate influence, only using informal as well as formal channels to communicate the benefits of the system and how the increased performance it supports can help the individual's career.

The rank-and-file soldier, Agent, Operator, or Officer is an important stakeholder as well. Unfortunately, it seems to be the case (again, as widely reported to me, and as I have experienced it) that the average police officer cares little about firearms or combat skills and may never shoot except when it is required. Their specific motives need to be engaged, as it is likely to be either too costly or simply impossible to get them to adopt the practices of the elite units. Here again, personal contact and the informal network are valuable, because the effort these people put into training bears directly on the success of the system.

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Safety and service to the public are common motives; so, too, is reducing the effort required to qualify. An additional important motive is the comradeship and respect of fellow Officers. To the extent CAR is seen as a benefit to them, rather than as a whim of "the bosses," it will be more readily adopted. In fact, since people tend to like what they do well, helping the rank-and-file perform better may create its own motivation.

### **The Individual Decision-Maker :**

The above considers people in organizations, and the factors that influence them. Individual persuasion is necessary, however, regardless of how well-understood the situation of the organization and the people in it may be. Here we are considering changes in belief, evaluation, and behavior-that is, attitude change, which also includes social influence and "conformity."

There are two general sources of persuasion-cognitive and affective-and two general processes-effortful / elaborative and low effort / "heuristic" (or "rule-of-thumb"). Which source and which process is effective depends on the situation and person being persuaded, but can be divided into two determinants, motivation and capacity. The former has been discussed already; the latter refers to the amount of attention available to be devoted to any given task. People have limited attentional capacity, and when some is devoted to one task, less is available for another. This is why multi-tasking leads to errors, especially at low levels of skill, but it also affects other aspects of behavior.

### **Cognitive sources :**

The typical persuasive message is cognitive, attempting to change beliefs, which then change the evaluation of related objects and behavior towards those objects. These evaluations are "attitudes." Research has shown that this approach, to be most effective, requires the persuaded individual to devote attention to processing and elaborating (thinking about) the information, drawing their own conclusions and inferences. It is these latter "beliefs" that actually persuade. To prompt action, specific intentions must be formed in some way. Therefore, in order to persuade by this approach, the person being persuaded must be motivated to attend to the message and devote capacity to elaborating on it.

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The message must "help" the person elaborate in the desired direction and create a plan of action. Importantly, if the individual in question has contradictory beliefs that are well formed or is otherwise motivated to *reject* the message, these sources of resistance have to be overcome. Social factors, including the trustworthiness of the source, prior commitments, social pressure pro or con, and so forth can influence motivation, as can personal attributes such as thoughtfulness, intelligence, etc. Motives such as "cognitive dissonance," the desire to appear sensible rather than foolish to others after making a commitment, can also motivate attention and processing. There are three lessons here:

1. Presentations using this approach should be designed to engage their strongest motives and encourage them to draw conclusions, while overcoming counterarguments.
2. Actions based on the persuasion should be phased, such that only small commitments are required at first, with increasingly effortful and costly behaviors following.
3. Supporting materials and documents should be as transparent and user-friendly as possible, appropriate to the audience, so that attention can be devoted to elaborating the arguments.

A second process of cognitive persuasion is the low-effort or "heuristic" mode in which simple "rules of thumb" are used. These typically occur when either motivation is low or attention is absorbed elsewhere. One rule of thumb is "experts are usually right." Another is "if a bunch of famous people are doing it, it must be good." In this process, social cues like credibility and reputation directly affect message acceptance rather than motivating processing.

Other cues that may be important are the style of a presentation or brochure, endorsements by numbers of experts, and dress and mannerisms of the presenters (again, relative to the standards of the audience). Here, attitudes are directly formed. However, because there is not a supporting structure of elaboration's, these are easily shifted by counterarguments.

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The attitude, real enough at any one moment, is unstable. It is also not reliably associated with behavior. This persuasion process, therefore, is only effective if the target is not very knowledgeable or does not care very much about the topic. This may characterize the typical officer, who will depend on the opinions of superiors and high-status peers, as well as some enthusiastic but not very thoughtful laypersons, who seek out whatever style of training or equipment seems most "tactical." Presentations to these people should include straightforward, simple arguments supported by endorsements, as well as social cues of expertise, status, etc.

Continuous social support for the conclusion advocated is necessary to maintain the attitude and desired behavior, at least until commitment is obtained and the person is motivated to support their choices. While, ethically, heuristic persuasion is less desirable than elaborative, it may be necessary to obtain the cooperation of people without the knowledge or motivation to process detailed, data-based arguments.

Another type of less cognitively demanding persuasion depends on group support. One may "bootstrap" support for the CAR system by first engaging respected experts and members of the elite units, people who will respond to persuasion based on the advantages of the CAR system. To the extent that the less knowledgeable admire and wish to associate with these people, or simply follow their lead because it is easier than deciding for themselves, agreement and continuing support are obtained. Another potential benefit is that at least some of these people may become more knowledgeable and thoughtful in the process.

### **Affective sources :**

Affect or emotion is the second broad source of persuasion. Here I am simply referring to positive or negative feelings, which operate directly on attitudes. Affect is often experienced without conscious awareness of its source. In fact, when people are questioned about "why" they feel a particular way, they often generate "reasons" which sound plausible but in fact are unrelated to their attitudes. Furthermore, feelings can be generated in a variety of ways, and if this is done subtly, they can be misattributed to another object, for instance a consumer product. This is widely practiced in marketing both inexpensive products, such as fast food or beer, and expensive goods like automobiles.

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Affect can be elaborated by encouraging people to experience the feelings associated with some object; research shows that when judgments are repeatedly rehearsed they become more extreme. This, too, is widely used by demagogues, evangelicals, politicians, coaches and others to create extremes of emotion. The process itself is ethically neutral. Simple affective responses can guide behavior, as when impulse purchases are made. These are not necessarily bad decisions if the object purchased in fact delivers satisfaction. Affective responses can also guide cognitive processes, by promoting attention to features of objects consistent with overall positive or negative affect, and by guiding memory when making judgments. We are more likely to notice and remember positive aspects of things we like, and negatives about things we dislike.

**In marketing the CAR system, affects matters in four ways :**

1. First, initial presentations, meetings, sales materials, etc. should either generate positive or reduce negative affect; ideally both. Beyond the standard aspects of self-presentation and design, approaches and programs need to be tailored to the prospective audience. Knowing the motives and situation of participants helps. Furthermore, research shows that a positive mood enhances creative thought, which can help clients appreciate the benefits of the CAR system and elaborate their own.
2. Second, initial demonstrations of the CAR system should be designed to produce success experiences, for instance when basic gun-handling techniques and pistol marksmanship are introduced. Feelings of pride and success will be associated with the system.
3. Third, instructional materials should be attractive and user-friendly. Not only cognitive elaboration but feelings of enjoyment and accomplishment will be enhanced and associated with the system.
4. Fourth, Instructors and class members should encourage a "mastery" goal, in which attention is focused on steady progress rather than on specific objectives. The content and pace of training should be adjusted so the students can experience progress and group support. Positive feelings will transfer to the system and be communicated to others, increasing overall support and, most importantly, real success in training as well as on the job.

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### **A. Materials :**

All training materials and instructional techniques should be reviewed in light of: 1. User-friendliness. Can students easily locate text for each lesson? Are the graphics, diagrams, illustrations, etc. transparent as to meaning and application?

2. Motivation/persuasion. Do text, illustrations, graphs, lectures, demonstrations produce positive, supportive thoughts and feelings? Are the lessons easily understood and applied to new situations not covered in the text or lecture / demonstration / practice?

3. Attractiveness. Do the materials, presentation style, etc. promote positive affect? Do they prompt the student to read on his / her own? A great deal of modern textbook design stresses this aspect (unfortunately, often to the detriment of content, but there is no reason one can't have both).

### **B. Organizational factors :**

Past successes and failures to introduce the CAR system should be examined in light of organizational and situational factors that differ between those who adopted the system, those who considered it but did not adopt it, and those who did not consider it.

These might include recent events that prompted a change, recent turnover in command, characteristics of the organization (e.g., military / police; federal / state / regional / local), culture of the organization (e.g. elite vs. others; progressive vs. conservative).

### **C. Individual factors :**

Consulting is usually "sold" via word of mouth. People recommend consultants to one another informally. Also, "networking" creates informal contacts that may pay off later. I would recommend using venues like law-enforcement training conferences to present the CAR system and to meet potential clients. If there is discussion and controversy, so be it. This provides a chance to propose direct tests of one system against another, which would improve training generally. Despite sometimes-serious disagreements, many trainers act as colleagues with common goals.

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**D. Research :**

There are a number of agencies that have adopted the CAR system. I would follow up on these, using publicly available data on police shootings and other relevant incidents as a basis for comparing the adopting agencies to others. These data can be plotted pre- and post-training. A valuable comparison would be with agencies and units of the same type who have completed other forms of training, as well as agencies that have kept whatever training they have historically used.

Other important variables might be qualification rates of women and smaller-statured men (e.g. Asians, Hispanics) in contrast to "traditional" (i.e. large male) officers, making the same comparisons as above.

**E. "Branding." :**

In marketing, there is a great deal of discussion about branding and "brand identity," establishing an image of a product and associated beliefs and positive affect. In the world of firearms training, "branding" seems to focus on the instructor and his / her personality or history. The result is a great deal of "brand loyalty" in which instructors develop followings that sometimes operate like fan clubs.

My personal feeling is that firearms training is too serious for this. My preference would be that the CAR system stand on its own, both as a method for the use of force and as a way of thinking about training for violent encounters. Thus, it should be evolving as experience and analysis dictate, and should constantly be tested against the demands of the real world. My impression is that this is how it was developed, and rather than stay a fixed "product" identified exclusively with its author, it should be open to innovation and change. That, more than anything else, is what will make it effective.

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