
THE CAR MODEL

The **CAR** model is a useful tool in helping people realize which organizational principle is giving direction to or controlling the life of a church. It is also a helpful in determining which stage a church finds itself on the 'church life cycle.'

This tool explains there are four organizational principles always present, to different degrees, in the functioning of every church. Understanding the relationship between these four organizational principles provides a lens through which we understand how and why the church functions the way it does.

The four organizational principles are:

VISION (V)

The principle of Vision refers to the presence of Vision/Leadership/Mission/ Purpose/Core Values in the church. It has been said that many churches have vision statements but few churches truly have vision. The key to understanding this organizational principle is in realizing 'vision' is not a statement but a 'focused forward movement.'

RELATIONSHIPS (R)

Relationships focus on the bonds between people that create not only a sense of community but an environment where growth in discipleship can take place. This principle relates to the living 'organism' of the church.

PROGRAMS (P)

Programs relate to the visible/tangible side to the relational dimension. It includes all events/ministries/services/activities in the church. This principle refers to the logistical 'organization' of the church; what a church does in meeting the needs of its members and community.

MANAGEMENT (M)

Management refers to activities in the church that hold people accountable; maintain systems, and keep track of resources. Someone has described this organizational principle as focusing on "bodies, bucks, boards & buildings"

Understand how the model works:

Imagine a car with four seats; two seats in the front, one of which is the driver's seat, and two seats in the back. Each seat is occupied by one of the organizational principles. (VRPM) The challenge of making this model meaningful is in our ability to understand where these organization principles are seated in the car.

Considering how things are going in the church will give you a 'gut reaction' as to the seating configuration of the organizational principles. A simply yet profound question you need to answer at this point is... **What is Driving The Church?** It is critical to church health & effectiveness to understand how these four elements are configured or emphasized in the life of your church.

Possible Seating Plans...

The ideal seating plan for an effective church would find Vision & Relationships in the front seat with Vision in the driver's seat. Vision is 'leading the way' and Relationships make the adventure of vision a meaningful adventure because they are taking the journey together. In this configuration meaningful Programs and Management provide the supportive environment that allow Vision and Relationships to thrive in the 'front seat'.

Another potential seating configuration will find Management driving accompanied by Programs in the front seat. If Vision is lacking in the church and there isn't a real sense of community, we substitute activity (doing) for the reality of being! Management & Programs are essential in the framework of the church but if they are driving, you end up with a bureaucratic organization, not a living organism! Emphasizing programs & management is walking by sight whereas vision & relationship is walking by faith.

Interacting with the CAR Model

Meet with a team of church leaders/members for the purpose of having an honest and healthy discussion in understanding 'what's driving your church.'

Have each person fill in a 'CAR seating plan' privately from others. Then have people compare their seating configuration - this leads to discussion and perhaps will expose differing seating plans. Allow people share why they placed the principles in the seats that they did.


Further Insight...

This model can be used in understanding the development stage a church is on as noted by the Church Life Cycle.(George Bullard) In this model it is noted for the first 20 years of a church's existence, **Vision** is always dominant in leading a church to healthy development. It is noted however that between 18-22 years into the life of a church, unless there is a continual 'reversioning' process (every 5-7 years), **Management** naturally moves into the drivers seat and provides a 'controlling element' to the nature of future development in the church.

Seating Plan Template....

Duplicate the following tool allowing each leader to personally consider and commit to paper the relationships between the four organizational principles present in their church.

What's Driving Your Church?



_____	_____
_____	_____

Place each organizational principle . . . V – R – P – M in one of the car seats to reflect the 'driving forces' in your church at this time.

The Lexus Sports Utility Vehicle
"Red Zone Congregations Framework"

<p>Visionary Leadership <i>Driving</i></p>	<p>Relationship Experiences <i>Navigating</i></p>
<p>Accountable Management <i>Supporting</i></p>	<p>Programmatic Emphases <i>Supporting</i></p>