



By Richard Kay

Teaching UOF (use of force) is a responsibility, not a privilege, and requires commitment to excellence and a strong obligation to ensure people's safety. Officer and public safety is dependent on the information instructors provide in training. With many training providers offering UOF training for security, how can participants (and training providers) identify a truly professional instructor? The aim of this article is to present a 'checklist' for selecting a professional UOF instructor.

Qualifications and Experience

Most often, participants have no idea who the instructor is or what their background is with regard to the program they are teaching. A professional instructor is open and transparent about themselves as well as the training. Having an instructor certification in the field they are teaching sounds obvious, but many instructors do not have this, mainly because the industry does not require them to have it across the full spectrum of UOF options. Instructors who are not adequately qualified will not have the required depth and breadth of knowledge that is essential for teaching UOF. These instructors usually only teach what they were taught, and do not deviate from that... because they cannot.

Instructors who possess specific instructor certifications show the commitment to invest in knowledge relative to their field. Good credentials come from a reputable source, are transparent and can be validated. Australians seem to have this idea that everything overseas is better, yet there are many quality programs right here. Additionally, many international programs are aimed at specific operational niches and whilst broad knowledge is a good thing, they may not be transferrable or relevant to the security industry in Australia.

It is common for instructors to stake their qualifications on a martial arts background. Whilst this provides a basic grounding in technique, UOF training requires far more than martial arts knowledge. Instructors need to educate themselves properly by gaining a quality instructor certification that is appropriate to this industry and the participants they are teaching.

Coupled with qualifications is experience. Having operational experience on how UOF works in the real world is critical for helping officers understand the complexity of the operational environment. Reality is not black and white, as some instructors promote, but mostly shades

of grey, and continuously variable. There is very little in UOF training that is a 'must do'. Mostly, techniques and tactics involve pros and cons; some things work better than others for different people in different circumstances. With experience, instructors are better able to promote flexible options rather than concrete rules, and they can tell why something works, rather than just instruct how to do it.

Professionalism

Much of an instructor's image as a professional comes from proper dress for the training session. The professional image of an instructor lends credibility to the program that cannot be overstated. Instructors should reflect the standard they want to promote in officers. UOF is a dynamic activity and the instructor must reflect this in their appearance. How can an instructor expect to motivate participants in training if he or she does not already fit the model themselves?

A UOF program requires instructor vitality and enthusiasm. An instructor who asks for 100% from participants must give no less. A professional demeanour is an absolute necessity; it underscores the seriousness of the subject matter and fosters the discipline needed to prevent injuries during training. UOF responses are uniquely personal and, just as the instructor has found what works for them (hopefully, through training and experience), so they should encourage participants to develop what works for them. Officer safety in an operational setting is what counts.

Instructors should be participant-focused. It is important that interest be shown in each individual's progress. A professional instructor will be capable of demonstrating all the requisite skills and drills required of participants. They will use an attitude of shared professional interest when answering questions or discussing ideas, rather than the traditional student/teacher relationship. Participants will be encouraged to offer suggestions in the training process and note ideas in the evaluation. Passion for the subject, excellent knowledge and a high level of mastery are the best motivators.

Confidentiality is another important aspect. Instructors who joke about a participant's failures create not only a bad impression on others but are also damaging the sanctity of this confidentiality. Instructors should never joke about a participant's failures... but they should talk about their achievements. Instructors need to create an





Buyer Beware

Choosing a Professional Use of Force Instructor



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environment in which officers want to train. Talk about what went right, and when word gets out that this is the type of instructor they are, people will choose to attend because of the positive environment created.

Methodology

There are two key methods of teaching UOF and which method an instructor uses provides insight into their level of understanding of the subject as well as their commitment to officer safety.

Technique-based learning presents information as a series of technical solutions to particular situations. Usually, instructors teach this way because that is how they were taught and they are simply replicating this process to students. This method is quite limiting, as participants are expected to replicate the technique regardless of whether it suits them personally or not. It does not allow for personal expression or adaptation, which can result in participants finding little value in the training and may lead to fatal consequences in the real world of using techniques not suited to them or the circumstances.

Principle-based learning allows flexibility of technique or tactic based on the needs of the training. In principle-based learning, the focus is on presenting the principles involved, with the instructor facilitating the training. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and try different options to determine what works best for them. During the training period, instructors should encourage experimentation while providing feedback when needed. Participants should process it for a while without interfering with the learning, then ask questions, establish dialogue and practice some more. The interesting part is that it generally does not take very much longer to do it this way. It is how the learning is structured, the environment and freedom to ask questions, including the all important 'what if?'. A professional instructor is a neutral conduit of information, an example that motivates and inspires.

It is a common mistake for instructors to set training expectations at a level that suits

them, rather than to what is appropriate for the officers. For training to be useful, it has to be accessible to all officers, not just those who can easily adapt to the learning process. The focus of many UOF programs (and instructors) is to train participants to 'pass the course'. However, total survival (physical and legal) in an operational environment is what instructors should be teaching. The instructor's role is to guide participants to achieve competency to an objective standard, and to survive the reality of the workplace.

Continuous Improvement

An instructor's knowledge and skill needs to be of a very high standard. Instructor development is an ongoing process. Gaining initial instructor certification is only the starting point, not the end point as many view it. Instructors have an obligation, to participants, the community and to themselves, to constantly improve. This enables them to provide the best and most current information to participants. They should never be content with mediocrity.

Many instructors do not do any retraining. Ask the instructor when was the last time they invested in their own professional development by doing other courses or their own training. This does not mean teaching classes; instructors cannot teach others and do their own training at the same time. The onus is on instructors to maintain their skills to a high level, and that means the dedication to train in their own time. UOF theory, methodology and technology evolve rapidly and instructors need to stay abreast of these changes so they can provide the best information to participants, not just the same old tired curriculum.

Continuous improvement costs time and money and involves sacrifice. But that is the ethos required of a true professional instructor, and they owe it to participants to provide them with the most effective methods of controlling violence in a safe and lawful manner; to give them ALL the tools to enable them to do their job safely and effectively.

Relevance

How often do courses promote extreme, unrealistic and inappropriate content, using overly hyped marketing strategies to try and secure participants' money? People want easy and 'exciting' solutions, and many programs claim to offer this, using sensationalist hyperbole like 'ancient secrets, revealed for the first time', or 'as taught to special forces', or 'learn the secret death-touch', or 'fear no man with our devastatingly effective killing techniques', or 'master advanced techniques in just hours'. People forget that there are NO 'secrets'. The ONLY way to learn these skills involves continuous effort, and any good instructor will tell you that 'advanced' is just basics done well.

Security personnel are not special forces, police, military or martial artists, and these type of exaggerated techniques are inappropriate to their operational roles. Security requires simple yet effective strategies that can be learned, applied and maintained with minimum training, within legal parameters of appropriate force to ensure public safety. Simple is best, because simple works under stress in the operational environment (just ask anyone who has been there). Yet simple seems boring and plain. It lacks the excitement and glamorous impact of Hollywood-style choreographed techniques. However, reality is far different from fictitious movies, and officers must train for the reality of modern society.

Before parting with hard-earned money, every officer should think carefully about the training he is about to undertake and choose a program and instructor as if his life depended on it... because it may very well! ■

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