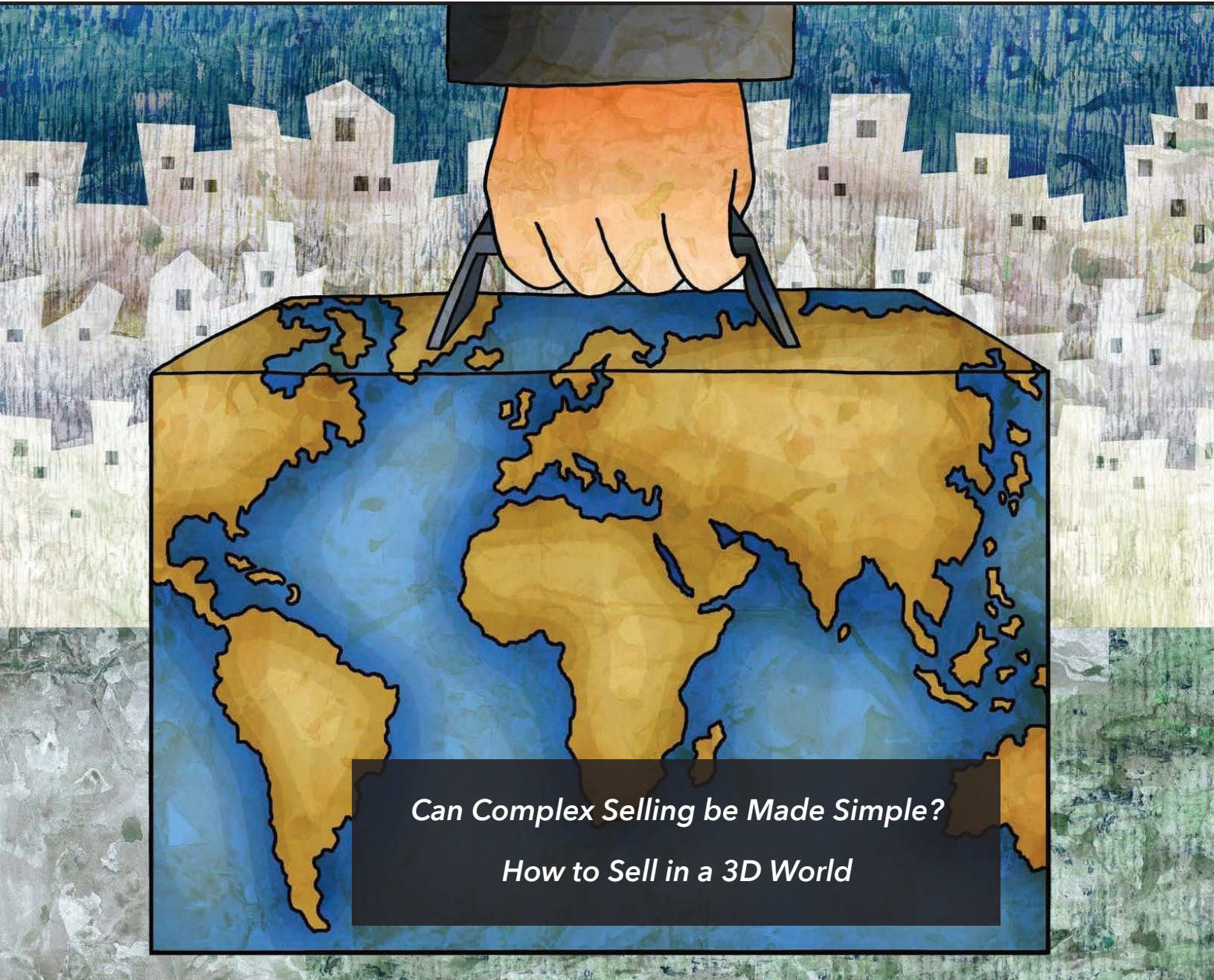


When the **Selling** World Isn't Flat



Can Complex Selling be Made Simple?
How to Sell in a 3D World



When the **Selling** World Isn't Flat

Traditional sales training programs make the assumption that you need to arm your sales force with a bunch of questions, a great company story to tell, and a slew of features and benefits that show the customer why your product or service is a great solution to the customer's needs. That's all well and good.

Here's the dilemma: 85 percent of the selling situations we face are "complex." That is, we have multiple buyer types to deal with and a selling process that involves several steps or milestones. So, at what points in our sales process do all those questions get asked and all those features and benefits get presented? How do we tailor them to the buyer types we are calling on? And, if our commitment objective for a sales call is something like *"gain agreement for a meeting with other decision makers,"* how do we structure the questions, features, and benefits so that we are effective at selling a meeting instead of our product?

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Do the math. Let's say that there are three different buyer types in your selling environment: End User, Specialist, and Ultimate Decision Maker. Now suppose that you typically have six key Milestones in your sales process (things like an initial call, needs-assessment meeting, demo, pre-proposal meeting, additional-decision-maker meeting, and final-proposal meeting).



That gives you at least 18 (3 X 6) potential iterations of your sales process. But wait. If there are multiple decision makers in any or all of your sales calls, that gives you more potential combinations.

Because you must present differently based on the Milestone of your sales process and the type of buyer you are calling on, significant challenges arise to prevent you from making sales calls that are perfectly tailored to your selling situation.

Sales training companies are certainly aware of the complexity of selling in a world that isn't flat. But none have provided a solution that is easily taught, learned, and used in the field. With one exception: The New Action Selling 3D.



Sales Training that Isn't Flat

Plenty of sales trainers talk about "Complex Selling" and give you some information about various buyer types. Many more provide training on how to ask questions and make "solution oriented" sales calls. But, none pull it together into a usable system for dealing with all of the potential combinations of selling situations that might occur.

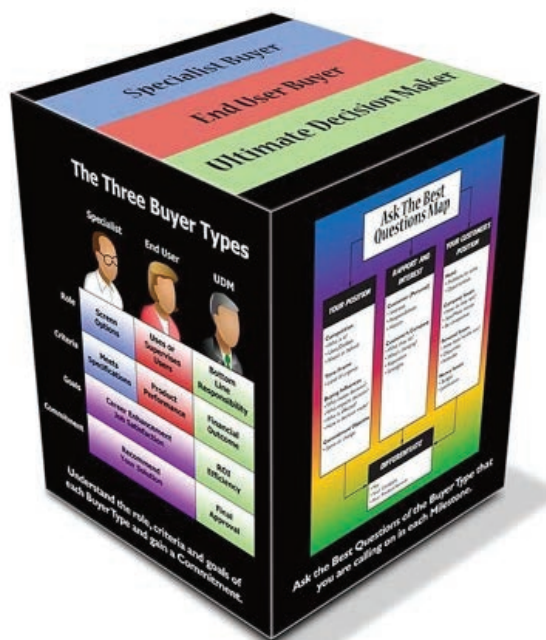
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That spells trouble, because when salespeople are not given training that deals precisely with their real world, they reject what's being taught. Or, if they try to use the newly taught concepts in the wrong situation, their customers resist. When this happens, either the salespeople relapse to old, ineffective behavior or they keep trying to use the skills but with iffy results. In today's business environment, we can't afford to be less than perfect. We can't leave anything to chance and expect to accomplish our revenue and profit objectives.

Action Selling 3D uses a three-dimensional cube to demonstrate to salespeople how to plan and conduct sales calls that are tailored specifically to the selling situation that they are operating within.

3D View #1: Every complex selling situation contains combinations of these three types of buyers. A **Specialist Buyer** has expertise in evaluating your kind of product or service. Specialists will want to see if your product meets certain technical specifications. They screen out unqualified companies and products.

The **End User Buyer** has experience using your type of product or managing people who use the product. The End User Buyer will be concerned about how your product performs and its impact on the successful performance of people who will use it on the job.



3D View #1



The Ultimate Decision Maker is the person who controls the money. The **UDM** wants to see how your product will save or make money for the company.

Since each of these buyers has different criteria, motivations, and needs, salespeople have to structure their questions to uncover the decisive factors that are unique to each buyer. If you exclude the needs of any of these buyer types, you won't be able to present a solution that satisfies everyone's unique needs. You'll have trouble gaining commitment from at least one key person to recommend or buy what you are selling.

One of the greatest mistakes that most salespeople make is to try to sell the capabilities of their product when the customer is really deciding whether there would be any value in meeting seriously with this person.

Sales training that doesn't consider the unique criteria of Buyer Types is flat.

3D View #2: In every company's selling environment there is a unique series of commitments that ultimately leads to a sale. In most selling situations, the "product decision" that is made during the initial sales call is about another meeting, not your actual product. The buyer makes a decision about whether getting together with you again is worthwhile. The "price decision" involves the currency of time: How much time am I willing to invest to talk with this salesperson?

One of the greatest mistakes that most salespeople make is to try to sell the capabilities of their product when the customer is really deciding whether there would be any value in meeting seriously with this person. That's not to mention the fact that the various buyer types perceive this value differently.

Action Selling 3D provides a clear distinction between the selling situations in each milestone and the buyer type being called upon. Every sales call should focus on satisfying the needs of the particular buyer types involved in the call with regard to the particular



3D View #2



commitment that you are attempting to gain. When that happens, success rates are significantly higher.

Sales training that teaches salespeople to ask the same set of questions to every buyer type in every milestone of the sales process is flat.

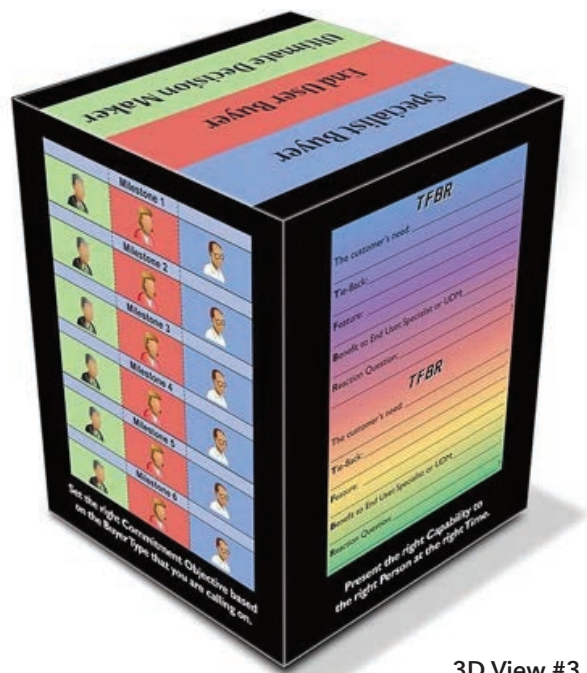
3D View #3: In every sales call, your goal is to gain a commitment from a particular buyer or group of buyers – a commitment that will move the sale forward to the next milestone in your sales process. To do that, you must present your capabilities in a way that allows the buyers to see how they will be better off.

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These capabilities are known as “benefits,” and every sales training program talks about them. The problem is that none of them—except Action Selling 3D, of course—explain how the different buyer types perceive benefits differently.

For example, suppose that a product will increase efficiency in some way. That's a benefit. But a UDM will look at increased efficiency in terms of cost savings to the company. An End User Buyer will want to know how this gain in efficiency will make his job easier. A Specialist Buyer might want to know how the recommendation of a product that impacts efficiency will allow her to look good to her employer. That's a totally different perception of the benefit!

Teaching salespeople to present features and benefits without considering whom they're calling upon is flat.



3D View #3



Can Complex **Selling** Be Made Simple?

Sales training that includes this 3D look at the sales process sounds daunting. That's probably why there's so much flat training around. The technology of Action Selling 3D makes it easy to teach, learn and implement. So, what does it take?

The Training Must be Documented on Video. The entire course is completely documented in high-definition 3D video. Two professional moderators teach the course in nine impactful modules. Each module is about 13 minutes in length. Eight role-play actors using 56 different selling scenarios demonstrate what can happen when the skills are applied incorrectly and what happens when they are done the Action Selling way.

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Most sales training is done without the advantage of video. This puts tremendous pressure on the facilitator to illustrate the skills clearly. If your sales force is large and requires multiple sessions and/or multiple facilitators, consistency will be compromised. Video-based training is completely consistent.

Without video-based training, reinforcement and refreshment of skills is very difficult to accomplish. Video makes training easy and efficient to reinforce. It can be delivered via a variety of media and included in any reinforcement strategy. If sales training is not documented on video, the chance of it having a long-term impact on sales performance is bleak.

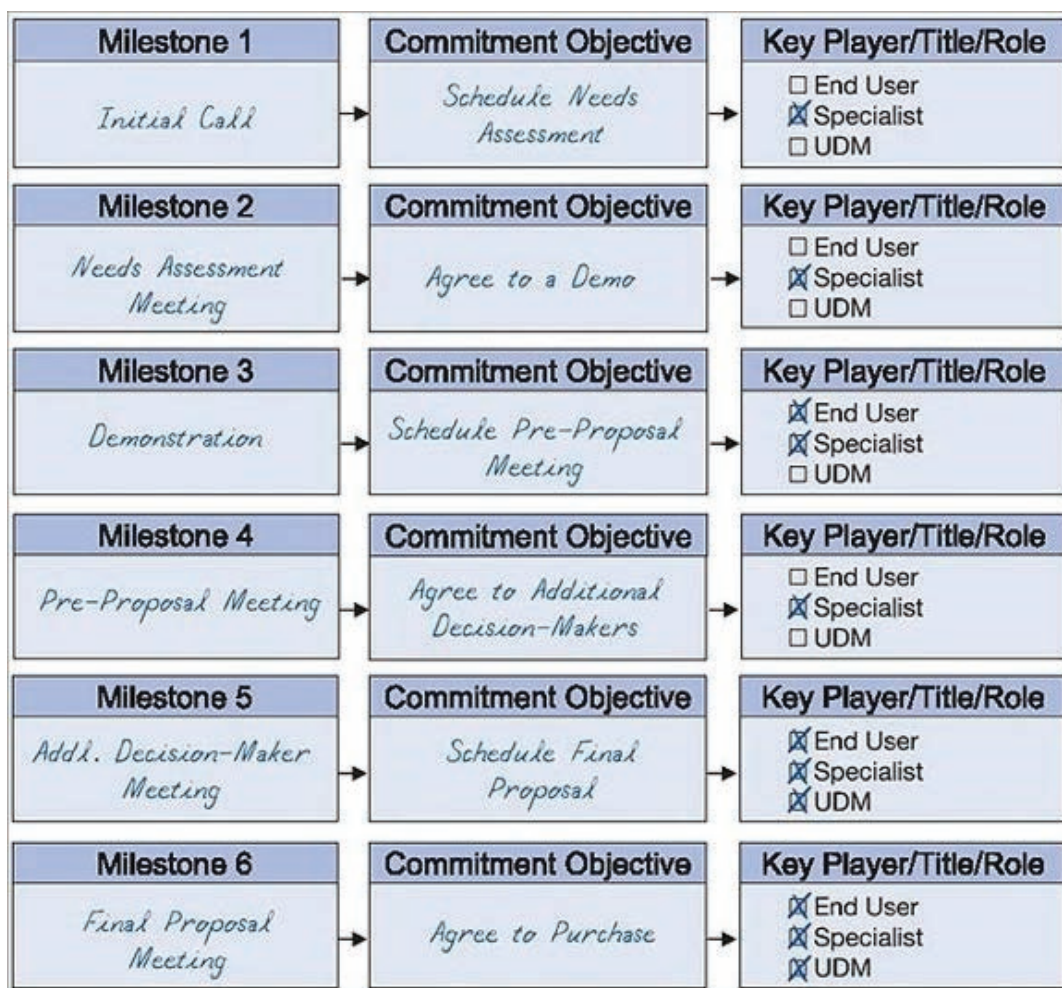


Video, like Action Selling 3D, can teach in 3D. Important concepts that are difficult to explain on flat paper are far more easily illustrated using the magic of full-motion video graphics.

Classroom Exercises, Role-Plays and Reinforcement Must be Tailored to Your Company, Product and Sales Process in 3D. Training materials need to reflect your selling environment, including all of the dimensions that your sales force faces in the real world. Action Selling 3D uses an "open architecture" approach to tailoring the application to any sales environment. Customers of Action Selling receive custom-tailored training at the price of off-the-shelf training products.

Here is an example of an exercise that allows companies to imbed their situation into the sales training:

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Every exercise that is used during the training workshop, the Skill Drills™ reinforcement sessions, and the Certification process is tailored to the dimensions of your selling environment. If training isn't tailored to you, it will be difficult for your sales force to see the relevance of the concepts being taught. They'll reject the training and fail to transfer it to the field. You'll waste their time and your money. Nothing like the 3D open-architecture of Action Selling 3D exists in flat sales training programs.

Transfer Tools Must Provide Easy-to-Complete Reinforcement, Practice and Application.

I think that most sales training has some element of structured reinforcement today. Action Selling 3D uses our proprietary LearningLink™ system to provide the tools needed to transfer learning into the field. LearningLink allows users to access key tools that continue the learning, diagnose and solve selling problems, and help prepare sales call plans using 3D. It's "In the Cloud" so users can access and use the software anywhere in the world using laptops, phones or iPads.

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Action Selling 3D customers set up their Best Sales Practices (BSP) on the LearningLink, allowing their salespeople to create a 3D sales plan with a couple of clicks. Drop-down boxes are used to choose the Milestone and Buyer Type(s) for an upcoming call, and boom...the BSP Plan is there. Call Objective, Questions,

Best Plan to Win - Milestone Set Up						
BPW Admin ► Edit Sales Cycles						
Milestones for New Account Sales Cycle Add Milestone						
Milestone	Commitment Objective	UDM	Specialist	End User	Keys	
1 Initial Call	Set Up SPA Meeting.		✓	✓	Modify	
2 Initial SPA Meeting	Set Meeting to Present Draft Certification Plan & Demo		✓	✓	Add	
3 Present Draft Certification Plan and Demo	Set Meeting with Additional Decision Makers.		✓	✓	Add	
4 SPA Meeting with All DMs	Schedule Proposal Meeting with All DMs	✓	✓	✓	Add	

Partial View of Best Sales Practices Plan



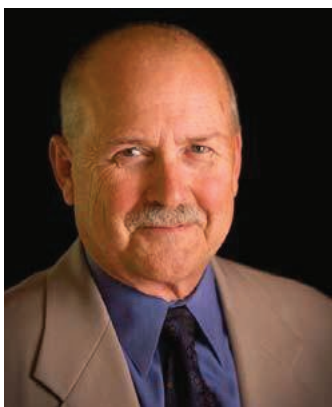
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Part of the Action Selling Series by **Duane Sparks**

Needs, Company Story, Features/Benefits, and Buying Signals are all tailored to the Milestone and Buyer Type. Think of it as 3D in the Cloud—for every sales call.

Summary: When the selling world isn't flat, you need sales training that isn't flat. You need Action Selling 3D. With a selling world that is multi-dimensional, flat training for your sales force doesn't make much sense. Does it?

About the Author



Duane Sparks is chairman and founder of The Sales Board, a Minneapolis-based strategic sales training company that has trained and certified more than 400,000 salespeople in more than 3,500 groups in the system and skills of Action Selling™. Sparks has guided companies through every phase of business development, from start-up, turnaround, survival and rapid growth. He has also written five sales books, personally facilitated more than 300 Action Selling™ training sessions and continues to engage in the business and art of the strategic sales process.

Duane Sparks is the author of Five **Sales Books**:



Action Selling: *How To Sell Like A Professional, Even If You Think You Are One*

Selling Your Price: *How To Escape The Race To The Bargain Basement*

Questions: *The Answer To Sales*

Masters of Loyalty: *How To Turn Your Sales Force Into A Loyalty Force*

Sales Strategy From The Inside Out: *How Complex Selling Really Works*

For more information on sales training and other sales related resources, please visit www.actionselling.com or call 1-800-232-3485.