

# Want a Better Sales Culture?

Great advice from YOUR SALES CULTURE EXPERTS

*By Duane Sparks, Chairman, The Sales Board, Inc.*



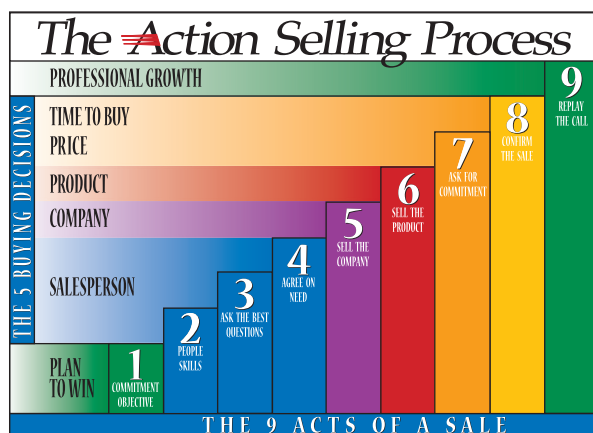
## What is sales culture?

In a nutshell, “culture” refers to the way that a group of people customarily think, talk, and behave. When it comes to sales, your culture is the sum total of the way your people think about the sales process, how they communicate about the sales process, and the actions they take during the execution of the sales process. Outside the Action Selling world, everyone means something different by the term “sales process.” This lack of clarity about the sales process is clearly part of the reason why so many companies have lousy sales cultures.

Let’s clear up what sales process means. The term “sales process” can be used either generally or specifically to describe multiple elements of the sales function. In general terms, “sales process” can refer either to the process that sellers use as they orchestrate their sales calls or to the milestones within a company’s sales cycle – the steps or stages through which any sale typically must pass. Inside the Action Selling world, we use the terms Sales Call Process and Sales Cycle Process to describe these critical functions. Here’s how we view the sales process:

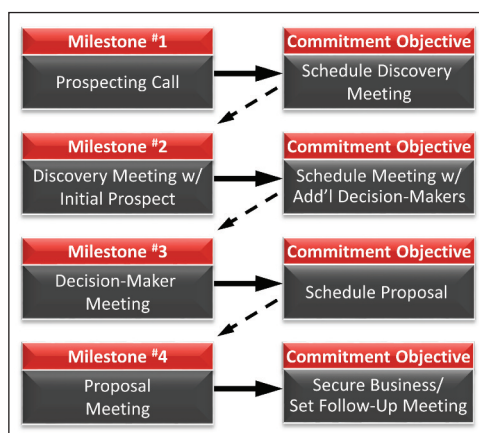
### Sales Call Process:

The sequential actions salespeople use to manage interactions with customers. We use the 9-Act Action Selling process to manage the sales call process.



### Sales Cycle Process:

The progressive Milestones (activities) and associated customer Commitments that lead to a sale. The following is an example of a Sales Cycle process.



The Action Selling **Sales Call Process** is used by salespeople to gain commitment from the customer to move to the next milestone in the **Sales Cycle Process**.

Together, they define your sales process. Sales Culture is how your team thinks, talks and behaves regarding your sales process.

In a strong sales culture, everyone who comes into contact with a customer thinks, communicates, and acts in a way that optimizes and reinforces every act of the Sales Call Process or milestone of the Sales Cycle Process.

If you are the sales leader, you are 100% responsible for the sales culture of your company. It is your job to create it. Nothing you do is more important.

You must be intentional about sales culture or you'll never get the results you want. Sales leadership must communicate its expectations with absolute clarity. Why is this so critical? Simply put, sales leaders create culture. Culture drives behavior. And, behavior produces results.

***Sales leader, you are 100% responsible for the sales culture of your company.***

## GREAT SALES LEADERSHIP



### Why is a great sales culture vital to performance?

A strong sales culture is a competitive advantage for a company. It builds a level of confidence that affects everyone involved in the sales process. It encourages positive attitudes, shared values, and common goals. It allows everyone to agree upon best practices and to understand why those practices are the best. Sales culture spills over into the field, impacting prospects and customers. For these reasons, a positive sales culture can supercharge a company. A negative sales culture can kill it.

***A positive sales culture can supercharge a company. A negative sales culture can kill it.***

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A GREAT SALES CULTURE





## How do you know if you have a good sales culture?

Let's begin with a different question: How good is your sales force? It makes sense that if you have a good sales force, you most likely have the makings of a good sales culture. But, how can you measure "goodness"? Is a sales force that achieves quota always good? Can a sales force that doesn't hit quota be good?

The questions just keep coming, because quota isn't the only or even the best measure of the goodness of a sales force. For example, your sales team may have hit its goal due to a short-term product or service advantage. Or, they may have missed the goal due to a situation outside their control. While we're on the subject, was the goal set correctly in the first place?

If it's hard to assess the true ability of a sales force, how do you know what kind of raw material you're working with when you set out to create a sales culture? Here's a quick checklist to give you a starting point for measuring how good your sales force really is:

<u>Goodness Measure</u>	<u>The Best</u>	<u>Average</u>		<u>Needs Improvement</u>	
My team revenue goals are consistently met.	5	4	3	2	1
The revenue we generate is the “right” revenue.	5	4	3	2	1
They always sell the best solution to customers.	5	4	3	2	1
My team always sells to the “right” customers.	5	4	3	2	1
They always sell the way we expect them to sell.	5	4	3	2	1
I’m confident they can sell new products.	5	4	3	2	1
They are capable of attacking new markets.	5	4	3	2	1
I’m confident they can call on a different customer set.	5	4	3	2	1
My team is adaptable to making changes in how they sell.	5	4	3	2	1
My sales team is a competitive advantage for my company.	5	4	3	2	1
They are excellent at differentiating our products.	5	4	3	2	1
My sales force truly adds value to our products/services.	5	4	3	2	1
My Team’s Total = _____					

Now add your scores and evaluate your sales force as follows:

### **Sales Team Goodness Score Range Description**

50 – 60	Your team is top notch and you must be too!
40 – 49	You have a very good team but there might be a few opportunities for improvement.
30 – 39	Your team is average and has several areas to improve.
12 – 29	Lots of work to do. Glad you are reading this white paper!

Of course, this checklist doesn't give a full and accurate measurement of your sales team's ability and value to the company. For one thing, The Goodness Survey doesn't place a weight on each of these measures. Nor does it include every possible criterion that might constitute "good." What the survey does do, however, is give you the opportunity to look at key factors that, when improved, have a substantial impact on sales culture.

Now that we have looked at your sales force, let's take a look at your current sales culture. Rank your team in the following areas:

<u>Sales Culture Question</u>	<u>The Best</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Needs Improvement</u>		
How engaged is your sales team in your company's mission?	5	4	3	2	1
Does your compensation plan drive the right results?	5	4	3	2	1
Are your salespeople proud to be members of the team?	5	4	3	2	1
Is your team held accountable for delivering results?	5	4	3	2	1
How often do you celebrate sales success?	5	4	3	2	1
How "meaty" are your sales meetings?	5	4	3	2	1
Are your salespeople appropriately focused on goals?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you spend too much time on non-sales activities?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you call your sales team "high performance?"	5	4	3	2	1
Are you somewhat reactive or completely proactive?	5	4	3	2	1
Does your team feel valued and appreciated?	5	4	3	2	1
How difficult is hiring, and is employee turnover a problem?	5	4	3	2	1

Now add your scores and evaluate your sales force as follows:

#### **Sales Culture Score Range Description**

50 – 60	Your sales culture is top notch and you must be too!
40 – 49	You have a very good sales culture, but there might be a few opportunities for improvement.
30 – 39	Your sales culture is average and has several areas to improve.
12 – 29	Lots of work to do. Glad you are reading this white paper!

## Sales culture isn't only about your sales force

To create a better sales culture in your company, you have to do more than improve your sales team. You also must improve your sales leadership. And, last but not least, you must improve *everyone around your sales team who has customer contact*. Graphically, it looks like this:

**To create a better sales culture, you must improve your sales leadership.**



- Processes for continuous improvement in sales culture
- Company-wide common sales language
- Better hiring and reduced turnover
- Maximize sales growth and customer loyalty
- Sales culture becomes a competitive advantage

To get the full benefit of a sales-culture improvement plan, each of these groups needs training, reinforcement, and certification on a particular set of skills that improve their ability to generate sales and drive customer loyalty. When the training process is implemented properly and with the right content, you'll be on your way to achieving The Best Sales Culture.

**To create a better sales culture, you must improve everyone around your sales team.**

## The Sales Board makes sales culture happen

The best sales cultures have a common language and common processes that are used by everyone who come into contact with customers. Every customer-facing employee can engage the customer in a conversation that enables them to identify the customer's needs, recommend solutions, and gain commitments. When this communication process is consistently practiced, sales goals are achieved, customers become genuinely loyal, and an unbeatable sales culture grows.

The process works for sales leaders too. Since salespeople and customer-contact employees are essentially the customers of sales leadership, the goal of most communication we have with our sales and service teams is to understand an employee's situation, present a solution, and gain agreement to implement the solution. A systematic communication process that helps us do that consistently is worth its weight in gold.

Here, in a snapshot view, is how The Sales Board builds sales cultures in client companies:

## HOW TO CREATE THE BEST SALES CULTURE

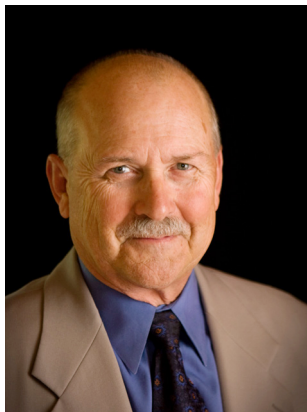


## What's in it for you?

When you get sales culture right, you are able to build and retain a cohesive team of sales and service professionals. You'll set better goals and accomplish them more frequently. Any performance issues that arise will be far easier to discuss and resolve. It becomes simpler to forecast results and stay on plan. Sales grow. Margins grow. Profits grow.

Does this sound implausible? It certainly is when your sales culture isn't right. Ah, but when you do get it right, wonders become real.

## 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 Work Force Into A Loyalty Force*

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

## Newsletters

Sparks is the author of the free, monthly online newsletter eCoach, which provides sales training advice based on the principles of Action Selling.

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