STEP 1 · DISCOVERY

The Discovery Protocol

A Boardroom Dominatrix does not walk into a first meeting with a proposal. She walks in with questions.

Before you sell anything, present anything, or promise anything, you discover. What you learn here shapes every move that follows: who you sell to, what you offer, how you price it, and which customers are worth your time.

With clients, I run this as a 60 to 90 minute session where I ask the questions. For Step 1, you are the client. Use the Protocol as a framework rather than a script. The goal is to ask yourself the right questions, answer without an agenda, and surface what you haven't yet put into words about your own business.

Before You Begin

You are here to understand your business, not to defend it.

Block 90 minutes, alone, and answer every question in writing. If you'd rather have someone ask you, choose a trusted peer who will stay neutral and won't offer advice. Give answers, not anecdotes, so if an answer turns into a story, cut it down to the fact. If you don't know an answer, write "I don't know," because that is a finding too. If you catch yourself jumping to tactics before you've finished, that's a safeword: Yellow. Slow down.

The questions say "customers." If you sell to businesses, read it as clients. If you sell through partners to consumers, answer for both the partner and the end customer.

The Questions

Your landscape

- Who are your top three competitors, and what are they doing that you aren't?
- What share of your market do you own right now? What do you want it to be?
- Where does your business hold a genuine competitive advantage?
- What is the competition doing that you should be doing?

Your growth

- What has your growth looked like over the last three years?
- What has changed most about your business in the last three to five years?
- How quickly can you scale?
- If you sold the business today, what would it be worth, and would you take it?

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Your vision

- What is your vision for the next five years?
- What do you want to do that you aren't doing?
- What are the most exciting opportunities ahead of you?
- What would you like to accomplish, specifically, in the next 12 months?

Your pain

- What are the biggest challenges you're facing right now?
- How are those challenges affecting the business?
- What problems keep showing up?
- What is the biggest void you see in your company right now?
- What needs to change?

Your team and infrastructure

- Who are the primary players on your team, including contractors and partners?
- Do you have advisors, and who are they?
- Do you have a budget for business development?
- Do you have a CRM, a website you can update, and a dashboard showing the health of your business?
- Have you ever completed a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)?

Your pipeline and revenue

- What is your gross profit per customer per year?
- What is your current close rate or conversion rate?
- Which customers and prospects are pebbles, rocks, and boulders, meaning small, mid-sized, and large?
- Are you selling more to the customers you already have? Are you capturing low-hanging fruit?
- Are you reaching people who look like your best customers, including the customers of your competitors?
- Do you reward loyalty or referrals?

Your partnerships

- Do you have channel or referral partnerships? How effective are they?
- Do you have an entry offer, one that helps a buyer find their goals even if they work with someone else to reach them?
- What strategies are you currently pursuing?
- How do you measure success?

What You're Listening For

The questions get you talking. What you're actually looking for is the distance between where your business is and where you want it to be, because your 2027 plan gets to span that divide.

Also look for what you don't say: the challenge you dance around, the number you minimize, the vision you shrink before you finish writing it. When you notice it, ask yourself the follow-up and stay in discovery mode.

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Your impact

- Are you tracking anything beyond revenue and profit margin right now? If so, what?
- Have you looked into B Corp certification or any third-party verification of your social and environmental performance? If you haven't, what's stopped you?
- What do your employee retention and satisfaction numbers actually look like, and who owns that data?
- Where does your business put the most pressure on environmental resources, and has anyone measured it?
- If a customer or investor asked what your company does for its people or the planet beyond payroll and compliance, what would you show them?

Your market presence

- Who manages your SEO and AI visibility? Do you have tracking and analytics on your site?
- What marketing do you currently have in place?
- Do you have a PR strategy?
- Can you teach or host, through workshops, lunch-and-learns, or live sessions, to put your expertise in front of buyers?
- If you sell to companies or government, do you take advantage of women-owned, minority-owned, or diversity-focused RFPs?
- Where do you sell, and how do you deliver?
- Where are your dependencies, and how much risk do they carry?

After the Session

Before you move on, answer these three questions honestly:

1. **Do I know what I actually want, meaning what the business needs rather than what I keep saying?**
2. **Have the people this depends on consented to this direction, or am I assuming?**
3. **Is this the business I want to be running, and can I deliver what the journey requires?**

If you can't answer all three, you aren't done discovering.

Then write down three things: **what you want in 2027, the revenue number behind it, and what is really in the way.** These carry into every step that follows. Don't skip them.

A Note on the Questions

This list is a living document. Whenever an answer leaves you unclear, add a question. Whenever you notice you're doing work you don't enjoy, add the question that would have screened it out. The list you start with won't be the list you have in two years, and that is how it should work.

Knowing what you want comes first. Consent is ongoing, which means it starts here, before any plan is written and before anything is promised.

Submit to a new paradigm.

Retire outdated sales tactics, pair your revenue and growth tools with future-focused strategy, and join a community where we grow our companies together, with consent, negotiation, boundaries, and safewords as the foundation for growth that does right by your people, your customers, and the planet.

Join us at boardroomdominatrix.com

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