AN EXECUTIVE BRIEFING FROM SQUARE PARALLEL

Enterprise Discovery™

A Framework for Winning Complex, High-Stakes Technical Sales

SQUARE PARALLEL

Technical Revenue & GTM Leadership for Startups

A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Before We Talk Business

Dear Colleague,

In more than four decades building, leading, and selling for technology companies — from early-stage startups to sales leadership roles at companies including Cisco, Dell, HashiCorp, and VMware — I've watched thousands of enterprise deals move through pipeline. The ones that closed cleanly almost never won because of a better feature set or a lower price. They won because someone on the selling side understood the buyer's business, technical, financial, political, and human reality better than the buyer's own internal team did.

The ones that stalled — and most enterprise deals stall, they rarely die outright — nearly always shared the same root cause. A champion who couldn't sell internally. A budget nobody confirmed. A skeptical VP who was never brought into the room. A technical risk that surfaced in week ten instead of week two.

We built Enterprise Discovery™ because "ask good questions" isn't a system, and founders scaling into enterprise sales don't have the luxury of learning this the slow way, deal by deal, over a decade. This framework is the closest thing we have to a repeatable answer for how the best enterprise sellers actually operate.

What follows isn't theoretical — it's the discipline we bring into every engagement with our clients. I hope it's useful before we ever talk business. And if it raises more questions than it answers, that probably means it's working. That's the whole point of discovery.

Albert

Founder & Principal, Square Parallel

THE PROBLEM

Why Enterprise Deals Stall

Enterprise deals rarely die in one dramatic loss. In our experience, they stall — quietly, three or four months in, with a champion who's gone quiet and a forecast that keeps slipping a quarter at a time. By the time the deal is formally marked closed-lost, the real cause is usually months old.

Across engagements, we see the same five stall points recur, almost regardless of product, industry, or deal size:

1. **The business case never left the room.** It lived in the champion's head, never translated into language the economic buyer's boss would fund.
2. **Technical risk surfaced too late.** Security or architecture concerns showed up after a verbal yes, when they're expensive and slow to resolve.
3. **Nobody confirmed the budget was real.** “We'll figure out budget” turned out to mean no budget existed at all.
4. **Internal resistance never got addressed.** A skeptical stakeholder was left to raise objections in a room the vendor was never invited into.
5. **The champion lacked personal cover.** They believed in the solution but weren't equipped to defend the decision to their own peers.

> *Deals don't stall because buyers say no. They stall because nobody in the deal ever forced the five hard conversations to happen.*

Each of these failure points maps to a discipline most sales processes treat as optional. Enterprise Discovery™ treats them as five parallel, mandatory tracks — covered in the chapters that follow.

THE SHIFT

Traditional Discovery vs. Enterprise Discovery™

Most discovery training still optimizes for a single call with a single champion. Enterprise deals are decided by committees, not individuals — which means discovery has to run wider, longer, and more honestly than a standard qualification framework was ever built for.

	Traditional Discovery	Enterprise Discovery™
Primary Question	“What features do you need?”	**“What has to be true across five domains for this to close?”**
Stakeholders Engaged	One or two, usually the champion	**Business, technical, financial, political, and human**
Timing	Front-loaded into a single call	**Continuous, from first call through rollout**
Artifact Produced	Notes in a CRM field	**A scored Discovery Scorecard™ shared with the buying team**
Risk Surfaced	Late, often after a verbal yes	**Early, while it's still cheap to fix**
Outcome	A rep who hopes it closes	**A buying team that can defend the decision internally**

The right column isn't a nicer way of asking the same questions. It's a different process, with a different artifact, aimed at a different outcome — a buying committee that can sell the deal to itself after we've left the room.

DOMAIN 1 OF 5

Business Discovery

Business Discovery establishes whether this initiative connects to something the enterprise actually has to accomplish this year. A technically excellent solution to a problem nobody's being measured on will lose to a mediocre solution tied to a real strategic priority — every time.

What We're Listening For

- Whether the initiative ladders up to a named company or business-unit priority
- Who owns the business outcome, versus who owns the technical evaluation
- Whether the cost of the status quo has ever been stated in strategic, not just operational, terms

Discovery Questions

- What are your top three strategic priorities this year, and where does this sit among them?
- How does solving this problem move a metric your leadership team already tracks?
- What's the strategic — not just operational — cost of doing nothing?
- Who ultimately owns this business outcome if it succeeds, or fails?

RED FLAG — The champion can't articulate how this maps to a company-level priority, in language their own CEO would recognize.

DOMAIN 2 OF 5

Technical Discovery

Technical Discovery surfaces architecture, security, and integration risk while it's still cheap to resolve. Most stalled technical deals didn't fail a review — they never got scheduled for one, because nobody asked who owned it until the deal was already deep into legal.

What We're Listening For

- What the current architecture and data flows look like around this workflow
- Which security, compliance, or infrastructure reviews this will need to pass
- Who owns technical sign-off, and what's historically slowed approvals down

Discovery Questions

- What does your current architecture look like around this workflow today?
- What security and compliance reviews will this need to pass before go-live?
- Who owns technical sign-off, and what's stalled approvals like this before?
- Which integration points are non-negotiable for your team?

RED FLAG — No technical stakeholder — security, infrastructure, or engineering — has been looped in by the second call.

DOMAIN 3 OF 5

Financial Discovery

Financial Discovery confirms that budget is real, owned, and reachable — not assumed. “We'll find the money” is one of the most common phrases in a stalled enterprise deal, and one of the least reliable signals a seller can act on.

What We're Listening For

- Whether budget is already allocated or requires new approval this cycle
- The procurement, legal, and security review process for a vendor at this size
- What ROI or payback period this needs to clear internally, and who sets that bar

Discovery Questions

- Is budget already allocated for this, or does it require a new approval?
- What does your procurement and legal review process look like for a vendor our size?
- What ROI or payback period would this need to clear to get funded?
- Whose signature is required above what dollar threshold?

RED FLAG — Nobody on the buying side can confirm — in specific terms — whether budget currently exists.

DOMAIN 4 OF 5

Political Discovery

Political Discovery maps who wins, who loses, and who has quietly killed something like this before. Enterprise organizations are coalitions with competing incentives — ignoring that reality doesn't make it disappear, it just means you find out about it after the deal is already dead.

What We're Listening For

- Who benefits most if this succeeds, and who might feel threatened by it
- What happened the last time a change like this was proposed internally
- Which competing initiatives are fighting for the same budget or attention

Discovery Questions

- Who benefits most if this succeeds — and who might feel threatened by it?
- What happened the last time your organization tried something like this?
- Whose informal support is required, even if they're not a named approver?
- What else is competing for this same budget or executive attention right now?

RED FLAG — There's a known skeptic in the room whose objections are never addressed directly.

DOMAIN 5 OF 5

Human Discovery

Human Discovery addresses the reality that organizations don't buy anything — people do, on behalf of organizations, while weighing their own career risk. The best business case in the world won't move if the person championing it internally doesn't feel safe doing so.

What We're Listening For

- What success on this project means for each stakeholder personally, not just professionally
- Each stakeholder's biggest private concern about making this change
- Who each stakeholder trusts most on a decision like this, and why

Discovery Questions

- What does success on this project mean for you, personally?
- What's your biggest personal concern about making this change?
- Who do you trust most on a decision like this — and why them?
- What would make you genuinely comfortable being the one who championed this?

RED FLAG — You know everyone's title on the buying committee, but nobody's personal stake in the outcome.

THE PROCESS

Enterprise Discovery Flow™

Enterprise Discovery™ doesn't happen in a single call — it runs as five connected stages across the life of the deal, from first conversation through mutual close plan.

STAGE 1 **Executive Alignment**
Confirm the business priority and secure an executive sponsor before deep discovery begins.

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STAGE 2 **Five-Domain Discovery**
Run Business, Technical, Financial, Political, and Human discovery in parallel, not sequentially.

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STAGE 3 **Synthesis & Scorecard**
Score the deal honestly across all five domains and identify the highest-risk open gaps.

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STAGE 4 **Executive Workshop**
Bring findings back to the full buying committee together, in one room, not five separate calls.

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STAGE 5 **Mutual Action Plan**
Build a jointly-owned path to close with named owners, dates, and success criteria on both sides.

THE TOOL

Discovery Scorecard™

The Scorecard turns five domains of discovery into one shared, honest artifact — reviewed with the buying team, not just filed away internally. A low score isn't a failure; it's a flagged risk with an owner and a date attached to it.

Domain	Score	Key Open Risk	Owner	Next Action
Business	___ / 5	*e.g., no confirmed exec sponsor*		
Technical	___ / 5	*e.g., security review not scheduled*		
Financial	___ / 5	*e.g., budget source unconfirmed*		
Political	___ / 5	*e.g., internal-build option unaddressed*		
Human	___ / 5	*e.g., champion's personal risk unclear*		

Scoring guide: 1 = unknown or unaddressed • 3 = partially confirmed, meaningful gaps remain • 5 = fully confirmed and documented, agreed by the buying team.

THE WORKSHEET

Executive Workshop Worksheet

A short pre-work worksheet for the executive sponsor to complete ahead of the Executive Workshop (Stage 4 of the Enterprise Discovery Flow™). Fifteen honest minutes here saves hours of misaligned discussion later.

1. **Our top three strategic priorities this year are:**

   a.

   b.

   c.

2. **The measurable cost of the status quo is approximately:**

3. **If this initiative doesn't get funded, what happens instead?**

4. **Beyond you, who has to say yes before this moves forward?**

5. **What would make this an easy internal “yes” versus a hard one?**

6. **On a scale of 1–5, how confident are you this gets funded this fiscal year — and why?**

ENTERPRISE DISCOVERY™ IN PRACTICE

Case Study: A Stalled Enterprise Pipeline

The following is an illustrative composite drawn from patterns we've seen across engagements, not a single client account.

Situation

A Series B infrastructure software company had an $1.8M enterprise deal sitting at “90% closed” for two consecutive quarters. The champion, a VP of Engineering, kept promising a signature that never arrived — and the seller had no clear picture of why.

Approach

Running Enterprise Discovery™ revealed two gaps at once. Technical Discovery showed the security team had never been looped in — the review hadn't even been scheduled. Political Discovery surfaced a rival VP quietly steering budget toward an internal build instead. The Discovery Scorecard™ put Financial at 2 out of 5: budget had been assumed, never confirmed.

Result

The team re-engaged the CISO directly instead of routing through the champion, got budget confirmed from the CFO's office in writing, and addressed the internal-build option head-on by quantifying build-versus-buy cost for the economic buyer. The deal closed six weeks later, at a slightly larger scope than originally proposed — after sitting stalled for two quarters.

> *The deal didn't need a better pitch. It needed someone to ask the security team, the CFO's office, and the internal skeptic what they actually needed to say yes.*

WHO WE ARE

About Square Parallel

Square Parallel helps venture-backed software companies build scalable technical revenue organizations — from a founder's first Sales Engineer hire through a repeatable enterprise sales motion. We work with companies and investors building the future who need a partner who has done this before.

Our team brings more than 40 years of experience building, leading, and selling at the highest level — from early-stage startups through sales leadership roles at companies including Cisco, Dell, HashiCorp, and VMware. Most technical founders are experts in their product; few have built an enterprise technical sales organization. We help close that gap before it becomes an expensive, growth-limiting mistake.

How We Work

- **Assess** — Audit your current sales motion and identify the gaps.
- **Build** — Design the process, tooling, and org structure to fix them.
- **Hire** — Recruit the technical sales talent who can execute it.
- **Scale** — Hand off a repeatable revenue engine your team owns.

What We Offer

- **Fractional VP of Sales Engineering** — Interim GTM leadership to set strategy, process, and pipeline discipline.
- **Technical Sales Recruiting** — Sourcing and vetting Sales Engineers and enterprise AEs who fit your product.
- **Enterprise Sales Playbook** — A repeatable process for selling complex technical products to enterprise buyers, including Enterprise Discovery™.
- **Founder Sales Training** — Executive workshops that turn technical founders into confident closers.

NEXT STEP

Let's Run Your Discovery Scorecard™

If a deal on your current pipeline has gone quiet, or you're building your first enterprise motion from scratch, the fastest way to see this framework in action is to run it against a real opportunity.

> *Take the free Enterprise Revenue Index — a 5-minute assessment of how prepared your company is to win enterprise customers — or book time directly with our team.*

Get In Touch

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We'd rather ask good questions than give a good pitch. Let's start there.

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