

Reversing the Dominoes Awareness Exercise

When something big catches you by surprise in your advisory relationships, how do you react? Reach outside your perspective and anticipate what other people were thinking, or doing, and why. Seek revelation before judgment. For this exercise, imagine a complex domino formation, and imagine

you are viewing the matrix from above. Notice the last domino that fell hard, and identify the dominos that preceded it, yet are less visible in the heat of the moment. To do so, ask yourself the following questions and record your insights in your notebook.

- Was it an innocent mistake that is unlikely to recur?
- Were there external influences outside of your collective control (the markets, economy, change in laws)?
- Was there a missing skillset that could have prevented the surprise?
- Was there a misalignment of expectations around the topic or project?
- Was there poor behavior from one or more parties? If so, what were they trying to advance or protect? What did they stand to lose or gain?
- Was I asleep at the wheel?

Take your notes from the above questions and parse them into the chronology that led to the last falling domino. Importantly, work from the right side of the grid backward, as below, starting with domino number 5. Record your observations in the *What happened?* row, as below.

Next, resketch the scenario from a positive perspective. Working from left to right, design domino 1 to your ideal, then 2, and so forth. Consider the questions below as support for your brainstorming, and record your observations in the *How could it be better?* row, as below.

- How fixable is the relationship dynamic?
- How interested are you in fixing it?
- Who can help?
- Are the technical talents present?



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What
happened?

Domino 1

Domino 2

Domino 3

Domino 4

Domino 5

How could
it be better?

Domino 1

Domino 2

Domino 3

Domino 4

Domino 5