

The Third Field™

SPECIMEN & BRIEFING NOTE

A Relational Dossier

*For a leadership team carrying something none of them
can say first.*

Inside: what a Dossier is, a complete specimen, what it asks of the people in it, what it protects, and what it costs.

Prepared for circulation. The specimen inside is invented; no real team's Dossier is ever published.

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Most teams in difficulty already know what the problem is.

What they lack is a way to say it that does not cost someone their standing in the room.

A conventional review extracts the judgement and delivers it. *She micromanages. He does not listen.* The leader braces, the team retreats into careful language, and the room closes. Everyone leaves having confirmed what they already suspected about one another, and nothing structural has changed.

A complaint, though, is a structural wish held inside a judgement. A Relational Dossier extracts the wish and delivers *that*, with the mechanism it was trapped in. The truth is not softened. It is relocated — out of anyone's character and into the conditions the group is working under.

THE EFFECT THIS PRODUCES

When a leader reads *the room goes quiet not because they resent me, but because our speed makes dissent feel reckless*, there is nothing there to defend against. There is only a mechanism, and mechanisms invite engineering. The conversation that follows is about the machine, and everyone at the table can join it without armour.

What arrives

A written document of about four pages. The weather in the room, each friction returned to the field it came from, three questions for the centre of the table, and one protocol to run for thirty days.

What does not

No scores. No rankings. No personality types. No dashboard, no percentiles, and no sentence that can be read as a report on a colleague. Nobody receives a label they can hide behind or be filed under.

How it is made

1 Each person reflects privately

About twenty-two minutes, answered alone, at whatever hour suits them. Every question can be skipped. No question asks anyone to rate, describe or diagnose another person.

2 Each person previews their own material

Before anything is written, every participant sees exactly which of their lines could appear and decides again — use my words, paraphrase this, or keep it out entirely. Anything withdrawn is gone.

3 A Director signs it

A Director reads every Reflection, decides what the Dossier says and signs every word. The discernment about what to name, and what to leave unnamed, is the work you are buying, and it is the part no draft is allowed to do.

This document is invented. It describes a founder-led executive team that does not exist, and it was written to show the form. We do not publish a real team's Dossier, in whole or in part, with or without names. What your team writes stays yours. The pages that follow are complete and unabridged — this is the whole artifact, not an extract.

The Third Field™

RELATIONAL DOSSIER

For the four of you

A founder-led executive team of four, at a company at Series B · Prepared from four private Reflections, each previewed and released by its author · Reviewed and released by a Director

I The Atmospheric Baseline

The field in one room

WHAT HOLDS

High latent trust

WHAT IS THIN

Low transmission fidelity

WHAT IS COSTING YOU

High protective silence

The shared weather

All four Reflections express a real commitment to the work and a real affection for one another. None of that is in question, and it is worth saying first because what follows is easier to read if it is held alongside it.

The connective tissue between you, however, is running cold. There is relief in being alone. There is a particular tiredness after strategy reviews that three of you described without being asked about it. And there is a shared habit, visible in every account, of managing one another's reactions rather than speaking into the centre of the table. None of you invented this habit. All four of you are maintaining it.

II The Unspoken Archive

Each friction returned to the field it came from

A complaint is an unvoiced structural wish held inside a judgement. Below, what was felt privately across all four Reflections, translated out of personal attribution and into the conditions of the shared space.

Where ownership and oversight keep changing places

THE TEAM'S INTERIOR ACCOUNT

Decisions are not real until they have been blessed. Why spend three days on a proposal that gets redrawn on a whiteboard in five minutes?

THE LEADER'S INTERIOR ACCOUNT

Nobody takes full commercial stewardship. If I do not catch the edge cases, they fall through.

THE READING OF THE FIELD

This is not a question of control, and it is not a question of competence. It is an unmapped threshold of consequence. The field offers no agreed line between a decision that can be reversed on Thursday and a bet the company has to live with. Because that line has never been drawn, the leader steps in to protect the company and the team steps back to protect its effort. Each side's protective move guarantees the other side's worst reading of it.

Where caution became a tax

THE TEAM'S INTERIOR ACCOUNT

Speed is prized over rigour. Raise a caution and you are filed as resistant.

THE LEADER'S INTERIOR ACCOUNT

We are in a fight for survival. Continuous debate drains momentum and breeds hesitation.

THE READING OF THE FIELD

The room has quietly conflated loyalty with velocity. Voicing caution here now carries a social cost, because it arrives feeling like a hand on the brake of a moving train. The team has adapted by becoming polite, which means technical warnings surface after execution stumbles rather than before. Nothing in these Reflections suggests the leader is dismissive of what the team knows; the account reads as someone starved for momentum. Dissent has simply had no designated, safe place in the cadence, so it has been paying for its own airtime.

Where the pace stopped being a decision

UNANIMOUS, ACROSS ALL FOUR ACCOUNTS

The current sprint is not sustainable — and the other three appear to want to keep it going indefinitely.

WHAT NOBODY WROTE

Not one Reflection said the pace should continue. Not one said so out loud.

THE READING OF THE FIELD

You are holding a performative endurance pact. Each of you waits privately for someone else to call the cadence unsustainable, while signalling stamina publicly so as not to be the one who let the others down. The pace is no longer set by the plan. It is held in place by four people's assumptions about the other three, and it will hold until one of you tests the assumption.

III Catalytic Inquiries

For the centre of the table

Not performance questions — invitations to examine the machine together, and any of you could ask any of them first.

1. **On authority.** Where exactly is the line past which a decision belongs to you entirely, even when it is not the decision the leader would have made?
2. **On the cost of truth.** What was the most important thing you thought in last Tuesday's meeting and did not say, and what made not saying it feel like the safer move?
3. **On the pact.** If none of us can hold this pace another quarter, what are we each waiting to hear before we say so?

IV The Living Covenant

One rule of engagement, for thirty days

THIRTY DAYS

The Red Box

Ten minutes of every executive agenda are given to dissent, and they are not optional. One person, named in advance and rotating weekly, brings three systemic risks in the plan on the table. While they speak, the only response available to the leader is: tell me what else you see.

At the end of thirty days, one question, asked together: did this surface anything we would otherwise have found out late? Keep it, change it, or drop it. The protocol belongs to you, not to us.

Built from four private Reflections, each previewed and released by its author before this was written. Positions are named; people are not. Nothing is quoted that its author did not mark quotable, and two passages withdrawn at preview are not in this document. No score, no type and no verdict was produced at any stage.

The questions a Chief of Staff should ask.

Every one of these has a mechanism behind it, not a promise.

Who sees what someone writes?

A Director, and nobody else. Not the manager, not the organiser, not whoever paid. That sentence appears on the form before the first question, and there is no version of this product where it is untrue.

Can someone be identified by what appears?

Positions are named — *the leader's account*, *the team's account* — because a team already knows who is who, and pretending otherwise buys nothing. Individuals are never named. Nothing anyone reserved is paraphrased closely enough to return it to them, and every quoted line was marked quotable by the person who wrote it.

What if someone changes their mind?

Every participant previews their own material before synthesis and decides again, line by line. Anything withdrawn is gone, without discussion. After release, anyone may ask for anything they wrote to be removed and it is removed, and the Dossier is rewritten or withdrawn.

Could this be used in a performance review?

There is nothing in it that could be. No individual is assessed, scored, ranked or described. If a Dossier were handed to HR as evidence about a person, it would contain no such evidence, which is the design working rather than failing.

What if someone is not safe to answer honestly?

Six questions are asked before any others — whether the person feels free to decline, whether anyone is requiring them to show their answers, whether they are worried about another participant's reaction. If any answer falls outside the expected response, every permission on that Reflection drops to Director-only automatically, whatever was selected, and a Director speaks to them privately before anything is written. Sometimes the right outcome is that no Dossier is produced. That is a good outcome, not a failed engagement.

AND PLAINLY

This is not therapy, not counselling, not mediation, and not a clinical instrument. If something surfaces that needs a professional, a lawyer or HR, we say so directly and point toward proper help rather than writing around it.

Twenty-two minutes each, and about two weeks.

A Relational Dossier	\$2,500 for a team of four to six. Larger teams by arrangement. One price, inclusive — the instrument, the Director's reading and writing, the preview round, and the document itself.
From each person	About twenty-two minutes, answered privately and alone, plus a short preview round before synthesis. Nothing to schedule, no session to attend, no calendar to coordinate.
From the company	Nothing but the permission to do it. No system to procure, no integration, no seat licences, no data to hand over.
Timing	About two weeks end to end. The preview round is what makes it two weeks rather than three days, and it is the step that makes the rest of it safe.
Afterwards	The Covenant runs for thirty days and the team judges it themselves. A Director-led conversation at the table is available separately, and is not required — most teams do not need one.

WHERE THIS SITS

The Relational Map, at \$195, is the same discipline at a smaller scale — two people, one page.

A Dossier is the version for a team carrying something structural. If you are unsure which of the two your situation calls for, that is exactly the conversation to have with a Director, and it is free.

An honest note on how new this is

The practice is young and we are choosing the first teams deliberately rather than broadly. We would rather tell you your situation is not right for this than take the engagement and be the wrong instrument for it. If what you are carrying needs a mediator, an employment lawyer or a clinician, a twenty-minute conversation will establish that faster than a proposal will.

HOW IT STARTS

A twenty-minute conversation with a Director.

No deck, no discovery process, no procurement step. Write to hello@thethirdfield.com and say who is gathering and roughly what for. We reply personally within two business days.