

The Engagement Framework

How we turn messy data into trusted decisions — the structured approach behind every Domain Methods engagement.

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Why This Framework Exists

Most data projects fail not because of technology — they fail because nobody aligned on the purpose, the right people weren't involved, and the end result was a deliverable nobody changed their behavior to use.

After years of building data foundations, attribution systems, and activation workflows for mid-size SaaS and ecommerce companies, I've distilled what separates successful engagements from expensive shelfware into a repeatable framework.

Every Domain Methods engagement follows this structure. It's how we consistently deliver outcomes — not just outputs — and hand off systems that teams actually own and use long after we're gone.

The Four Ingredients

Before any technical work begins, we validate that four conditions are present. If any are missing, we fix that first — because building on a weak foundation guarantees rework.

1. Purpose

Every engagement starts with a clear, specific business outcome — not a technology goal. "Implement dbt" is not a purpose. "Enable the marketing team to prove ROAS to the board within two weeks of campaign end" is a purpose. If we can't articulate why this project matters to your business in one sentence, we're not ready to start building.

2. Audience Buy-In

Analytics that nobody uses are a waste of money. Before we build anything, we identify every stakeholder who will use, interpret, or make decisions from what we create. We ensure they're aligned on what's being built, why it matters to them specifically, and what "success" looks like from their perspective. This prevents the most common failure mode: a technically excellent solution that nobody adopts.

3. Behavior Change

The goal is never a dashboard, a pipeline, or a model. The goal is changing how your team makes decisions. We design for adoption from day one — considering the daily workflow of every end user, reducing friction to access insights, and building habits around data-driven decision-making. If we deliver a system and your team's behavior doesn't change, we haven't succeeded.

4. Deliverables

Clear, scoped outputs that your team can own and maintain independently. Every deliverable ships with documentation, training, and a handoff plan. No black boxes. No proprietary tools. No consultant dependency. The measure of a good deliverable isn't how impressive it looks — it's whether your team can extend and maintain it six months after we leave.

The Engagement Lifecycle

Once the four ingredients are validated, every engagement moves through four phases. The specifics vary by project type, but the structure is constant.

1 Discovery

We assess your current state — data infrastructure, team capabilities, stakeholder needs, and existing pain points. We identify gaps, validate assumptions, and align on what success looks like. Discovery is typically a paid engagement with its own deliverable: a clear assessment and recommended path forward.

- Stakeholder interviews to understand needs, workflows, and trust issues
- Technical audit of existing data infrastructure and quality
- Gap analysis between current state and desired outcomes
- Written assessment with prioritized recommendations

2 Design

We architect the solution — data models, pipeline flows, reporting structure, activation workflows — and validate it with your team before building. Design decisions are documented and reviewed, not made in isolation.

- Solution architecture aligned to business outcomes from Phase 1
- Data model and pipeline design with stakeholder review
- Testing strategy and quality gates defined upfront
- Implementation plan with weekly milestones

3 Build

We implement, test, and document. You see progress every week, not just at the end. We ship iteratively — starting with the highest-impact component and expanding from there. Every build decision is visible and explained.

- Iterative delivery with weekly progress reviews
- Automated testing from the first model forward
- Documentation written alongside code, not after
- Stakeholder validation at each milestone

4 Enablement

We train your team to own what we built and change how they make decisions — not just hand over credentials. Enablement includes hands-on training, documentation review, and a transition period where your team operates the system with our support.

- Hands-on training for operators and end users
- Documentation walkthrough and knowledge transfer
- Supported transition period (typically 2-4 weeks)
- Post-engagement check-in to verify independence

Guiding Principles

80/20 Focus. We focus on the 20% of work that delivers 80% of the value. Every scope decision is filtered through this lens. We'd rather ship something useful in three weeks than something perfect in three months.

No Consultant Dependency. We build systems your team can own, maintain, and extend. We use open-source tools, standard patterns, and clear documentation. If you need us after handoff, something went wrong.

Fixed Scope, Fixed Price. Every engagement is scoped with clear deliverables and priced upfront. No hourly billing, no scope creep, no surprises. You know exactly what you're getting and what it costs before we start.

Senior Practitioners Only. The person who scopes your project is the person who builds it. No junior staff, no bait-and-switch, no learning on your dime. You get experienced practitioners from day one.

Truth Over Comfort. We'll tell you what we actually find, not what you want to hear. If your data isn't ready for what you're asking, we'll say so. If a simpler solution solves the problem, we'll recommend it — even if it means a smaller engagement for us.

When to Use This Framework

This framework applies whether you need marketing attribution, a data foundation overhaul, or activation workflows. The business outcome changes; the approach doesn't.

If you're evaluating whether to bring in outside help for a data project, here are the signals that suggest this framework would create value:

- **Your team is underwater.** They're spending more time maintaining what exists than building what's needed.
- **Stakeholders don't trust the numbers.** Different teams show different metrics, and nobody agrees on what's real.
- **You need to move fast.** A 6-month learning curve for best practices isn't an option — you need results in weeks.
- **You've been burned before.** A previous vendor or consultant left you with something your team can't maintain.
- **You know data matters but don't know where to start.** The gap between where you are and where you need to be feels overwhelming.

Ready to apply this framework to your data challenges? Book a discovery call — it's short, focused, and there's no obligation. We'll assess fit, scope the problem, and tell you honestly if we can help. domainmethods.com/contact-us