



accountabili-buddy

CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH.



REFERENCE
SHEETS

REFERENCE SHEET 8

GOAL VS. COMMITMENT

A goal and a commitment are related.

They are not the same thing.

Confusing them creates poor accountability decisions.

There is also an important sequence:

First establish what the client is trying to accomplish.

Then establish what the client will do next in pursuit of it.

The first is **goal formation**.

The second is **commitment design**.

ESTABLISHING A WORKABLE GOAL

Clients do not always begin with a clearly formed goal.

They may begin with a broad intention:

"I want to get healthier."

"I need to get my finances under control."

"I want to do something different with my career."

"I need to finally get my business going."

The Accountability-Buddy does not need to turn every broad intention into a perfectly quantified goal.

The task is to help the client establish enough clarity for useful accountability.

A workable accountability goal should be sufficiently clear that:

- The client can identify what they are trying to accomplish or change
- The client actually wants to pursue it now
- Meaningful progress can be recognized
- Relevant commitments can be designed in pursuit of it
- Obvious problems involving scope, timeframe, capacity, dependencies, or required expertise can be identified
- The client retains ownership of the goal

The standard is:

sufficient clarity, not perfect specification.

GOAL-FORMATION QUESTIONS

Useful questions may include:

What do you want to be different?

What are you actually trying to accomplish?

What would meaningful progress look like?

Is this something you want to actively work on now?

Is there a timeframe that matters?

What constraints or competing priorities matter?

Is this the outcome you want, or one way you are thinking about pursuing it?

Not every question should be asked.

Ask only what is necessary to establish a workable goal.

THE STOPPING RULE

Goal clarification can become overanalysis.

Once the practitioner understands enough to:

- Identify the client's desired direction or outcome
- Recognize what meaningful progress would represent
- Determine that the client wants to pursue it now
- Identify any immediately relevant workability or role issues
- Begin designing a relevant commitment

stop clarifying the goal.

Move to commitment design.

Do not keep asking questions merely because more information could be obtained.

CLIENT OWNERSHIP

The Accountabili-Buddy helps clarify the goal.

The client owns the goal.

The practitioner may:

- Identify ambiguity
- Ask discriminating questions
- Point out contradictions
- Identify apparent workability problems
- Distinguish a goal from a method
- Identify relevant constraints
- Recommend that specialized guidance be obtained when necessary

The practitioner does not decide what the client's major life goals should be.

Example:**Client:**

"I need to get my finances together. Just tell me what my goal should be."

Appropriate Function:

Help the client determine what they actually want to change.

Not:

"Your goal should be to pay off all your debt."

Useful professional input does not require taking ownership of the decision.

WORKABILITY IS NOT THE SAME AS APPROVAL

The practitioner does not need to approve a client's goal.

But obvious workability issues should not be ignored.

Consider:

- Scope
- Timeframe
- Available capacity
- Competing priorities
- Required resources
- External dependencies
- Necessary expertise

Example:

A client wants to launch an entire consulting business in four weeks while working full-time and has approximately three hours per week available.

The Accountabili-Buddy should not automatically say:

"That goal is unrealistic."

The Accountability-Buddy also should not ignore the discrepancy.

A stronger response makes it visible:

“You want the full launch completed in four weeks, and you currently have about three hours a week available for it. Does that still look workable to you, or does something need to change?”

Surface the discrepancy.

Preserve the client’s decision.

GOAL

A goal identifies:

the outcome, direction, or area of change the client values.

Examples:

- Improve fitness
- Find a new job
- Finish a book
- Build a business
- Learn Spanish
- Reduce debt

Goals can remain stable for months or years.

COMMITMENT

A commitment identifies:

what the client agrees to do within a defined accountability period.

Examples:

- Walk Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday
- Submit two applications by Friday

- Draft 1,000 words this week
- Contact five prospects
- Complete three Spanish lessons

Commitments usually change more frequently than goals.

WHY THE DISTINCTION MATTERS

A client may still want the goal even when a particular commitment fails.

Example:

Goal: Learn Spanish.

Commitment: Complete five lessons this week.

The client completes two.

This does not automatically mean:

“Spanish is the wrong goal.”

It may mean:

- Five was unrealistic
- The week was unusual
- The method is poor
- Follow-through failed
- Another barrier is operating

A COMMITMENT CAN CHANGE WHILE THE GOAL STAYS THE SAME

Example:

Goal

Improve cardiovascular fitness.

Commitment 1

Run three times weekly.

This produces repeated knee discomfort.

Commitment 2

Walk three times weekly while seeking appropriate medical guidance.

The goal remains.

The method changes.

A GOAL CAN CHANGE EVEN WHEN THE CLIENT COULD CONTINUE THE COMMITMENT

Example:

The client is capable of completing an online certification.

But says:

"If I were deciding today, I would not choose this certification."

The execution problem may no longer matter.

The goal itself needs reassessment.

OUTCOME GOAL VS. BEHAVIORAL COMMITMENT

Outcome Goal

Receive a job offer.

Behavioral Commitment

Submit three qualified applications.

The client can influence the outcome.

The client can directly perform the behavior.

A goal does not need to be completely controllable to be legitimate.

The final outcome may depend partly on:

- Employers
- Customers
- Other people
- Market conditions
- Institutional decisions
- Other external factors

Accountability should focus most directly on the client's controllable contribution toward that outcome.

Do not turn every outcome goal into a behavioral commitment merely because the final result is not completely controllable.

ACTIVE GOAL VS. FUTURE ASPIRATION

A client can genuinely want something someday without actively prioritizing it now.

Example:

"I absolutely want to learn French eventually, but I am not willing to devote regular time to it this year."

French may remain a valid aspiration.

It does not need to remain an active accountability goal.

QUESTIONS TO DISTINGUISH THEM

Ask:

Do you still want the outcome?

and separately:

Do you want to actively work on it now?

These questions can have different answers.

ENGAGEMENT COMMITMENT VS. COMPLETION COMMITMENT

Completion

“Finish the chapter.”

Useful when completion can reasonably be predicted.

Engagement

“Work on the chapter for three one-hour sessions.”

Useful when the amount of work required is uncertain.

Neither is inherently better.

Use the form that generates useful accountability information.

INSTRUMENTAL ACTION VS. ACTUAL GOAL

Sometimes the client mistakes one strategy for the goal itself.

Example:

“Attend two networking events every month.”

Why?

“To develop professional relationships.”

Networking events are one possible method.

If they prove ineffective, the client may replace them without abandoning the underlying goal.

Ask:

“Is this activity itself important, or is it one way of pursuing something larger?”

Do not assume that every behavioral statement must conceal a deeper goal.

Sometimes the activity itself is legitimately what the client wants to accomplish.

Clarify the distinction when it matters to accountability.

SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE

Clarifying a goal does not authorize the Accountabili-Buddy to provide expertise outside the accountability role.

Example:

Goal:

Lose 35 pounds.

Client:

"Tell me exactly how many calories I should eat."

The weight-related goal may be within the scope of accountability.

Prescribing an appropriate nutritional plan requires different expertise.

The Accountabili-Buddy can support accountability to an appropriately established plan without becoming the professional responsible for creating that plan.

The same principle applies when a goal requires medical, legal, financial, psychological, fitness, nutritional, or other specialized professional guidance.

GOAL CLOSURE

A goal should be closed when:

- Completed
- Intentionally abandoned
- Replaced
- Paused for an extended period
- No longer endorsed

Closing a goal does not mean it was a failure.

It means its status has been made explicit.

DO NOT KEEP EVERY GOAL ACTIVE

Clients may have many legitimate aspirations.

Not all should receive simultaneous accountability.

Useful categories:

Active

Currently receiving effort and accountability.

Deferred

Important, but not currently being pursued.

Paused

Temporarily suspended deliberately.

Completed

Outcome achieved.

Closed

No longer being pursued.

When a client presents many goals at once, the Accountabili-Buddy may help clarify priorities.

The practitioner should not choose those priorities for the client.

COMMON ERRORS

- Moving directly from a broad intention to a commitment
- Requiring unnecessary precision before accountability can begin

- Continuing goal clarification after sufficient clarity exists
- Confusing a method with the actual goal
- Turning every outcome goal into a behavioral goal
- Ignoring obvious scope, timeframe, capacity, or dependency problems
- Deciding what the client's goal should be
- Providing specialized guidance outside the accountability role
- Treating every missed commitment as a goal problem
- Treating every goal change as quitting
- Treating one method as inseparable from the goal
- Keeping future aspirations permanently active
- Creating a new goal immediately after every completion
- Continuing accountability around a goal the client no longer wants

THE GOAL QUALITY CHECK

Before moving into commitment design, ask:

- 1. What is the client actually trying to accomplish or change?**
- 2. Is this an active goal now?**
- 3. Is the stated goal actually a method or proposed commitment that needs clarification?**
- 4. Is there enough clarity to recognize meaningful progress?**
- 5. Are there material scope, timeframe, capacity, dependency, or resource issues that should be surfaced?**
- 6. Does any part require qualified expertise outside the accountability role?**
- 7. Does the client still own the goal and the major decisions surrounding it?**
- 8. Is there enough information to design a meaningful first commitment?**

If the answer to Question 8 is yes:

move forward.

Do not keep clarifying merely because you can.

THE TWO QUESTIONS

When accountability becomes difficult, ask separately:

Does the goal still make sense?

Does this commitment still make sense as a way of pursuing it?

Do not collapse them into one question.

These are reassessment questions.

They should not be confused with the initial task of helping the client establish a workable goal in the first place.

THE CENTRAL PRINCIPLE

The goal gives direction.

The commitment creates the next accountable behavior.

At the beginning of accountability:

clarify the goal enough to act.

Then:

design the commitment.

During ongoing accountability:

evaluate the commitment without automatically questioning the goal.

When the evidence warrants it:

reassess the goal separately.

Good accountability knows when to clarify the goal, when to stop clarifying it, when to change the commitment without abandoning the goal, and when the goal itself should be reconsidered.