



accountabili-buddy

CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH.



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 11

VAGUE COMMITMENT

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize when accountability is weakened because the commitment is too ambiguous to evaluate.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Aisha

Goal: Improve her small-business website

Current Commitment: "Work on the website this week."

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Aisha has several possible website tasks:

- Rewrite the homepage
- Update pricing
- Replace photographs
- Fix the contact form

No specific task was selected.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: How did the website work go?

Aisha: Kind of.

Accountabili-Buddy: What does kind of mean?

Aisha: I looked at the homepage a few times and changed two sentences. I also researched some new photos.

Aisha: I do not really feel like I accomplished anything, but technically I worked on it.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What failed here?

What should the Accountabili-Buddy change before the next accountability period?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- The original commitment was “work on the website.”
- Aisha did perform activities related to the website.
- There was no agreed standard for quantity, completion, or task.
- The Accountabili-Buddy accepted the vague commitment without clarifying what would count as completion or meaningful progress.
- Both parties now lack a clear basis for determining whether the commitment was meaningfully met.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Aisha recognizes that activity occurred but is uncertain whether it constituted useful progress.

ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE

The accountability problem began during commitment formation, when an insufficiently defined commitment was allowed to stand.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Commitment ambiguity.

The result cannot be evaluated cleanly because the original commitment was insufficiently defined.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

Other execution problems may eventually become visible once a usable commitment exists.

The current commitment is too vague to determine whether Aisha's limited progress reflects non-follow-through, poor planning, avoidance, or another factor.

The first correction should therefore be improved commitment structure.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The Accountabili-Buddy needs to know which website outcome Aisha actually wants to advance next.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“We left ‘work on the website’ too vague to give us a real standard to check. What specific piece do you want finished or meaningfully advanced this week?”

11. REASONING

The response correctly identifies the accountability design error and acknowledges the Accountabili-Buddy's role in allowing the vague commitment to stand.

It does not retroactively declare success or failure under a standard that never existed.

The next accountability period should begin with a commitment clear enough to evaluate.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

"You did website-related activity, but we never defined what this week was supposed to produce. Let's make the next commitment specific enough that we can actually evaluate it."

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

"At least you made progress."

Problem: The amount and relevance of progress are not clear. Calling the result progress imposes an evaluative standard that was never established.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"You failed because the homepage is not done."

Problem: Completion of the homepage was never the actual commitment. The Accountabili-Buddy cannot impose a completion standard after the accountability period has ended.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"You need to be more focused."

Problem: This turns a commitment-design failure into a judgment about Aisha. The Accountabili-Buddy also contributed to the problem by accepting a commitment that was too vague to evaluate.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Aisha should identify the website outcome she wants to advance next.

Depending on what she identifies as the next useful priority, a clearer commitment might take a form such as:

“Finish the pricing page by Friday.”

or:

“Complete two one-hour sessions rewriting the homepage.”

The form should match the nature of the task.

The Accountabili-Buddy should ensure that the resulting commitment is clear enough that both parties will know what happened at the next check-in.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Improve business website

Prior Commitment: “Work on the website”

Result: Website-related activity occurred; meaningful completion indeterminate

Current Formulation: Commitment too vague for useful accountability

Accountability-Process Issue: Vague commitment accepted without sufficient clarification

Next Step: Establish a specific outcome or engagement commitment

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Identify commitment ambiguity as the primary defect
- Avoid imposing retroactive standards
- Recognize the Accountabili-Buddy's role in commitment quality
- Avoid interpreting behavior that the vague commitment cannot adequately distinguish
- Establish a clearer next commitment
- Preserve Aisha's ownership of what she chooses to advance
- Avoid unnecessary character judgments

