



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 16

UNSUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Distinguish successful completion of a commitment from a process that should be repeated.

The trainee should recognize that outcome success does not automatically validate the method used to produce it.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Ben

Goal: Complete a client presentation by Monday

Current Commitment: Finish the full presentation by Sunday evening.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Ben had five days available for the project.

During an earlier check-in, Ben reported that he had made little progress despite the approaching deadline.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: Is the presentation finished?

Ben: Yes.

Ben: I got it done.

Accountabili-Buddy: How did the process go?

Ben: Terrible. I barely touched it until Friday, then stayed up until almost 3:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday and worked most of Sunday.

Ben: But technically I hit the deadline.

5. TRAINEE TASK

How should the result be evaluated?

What should the Accountabili-Buddy acknowledge?

What remains open for examination?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- The presentation was completed by the deadline.
- Ben had made little progress earlier in the accountability period.
- He concentrated most of the work into the final three days.
- He worked until almost 3:00 a.m. on two consecutive nights.
- He worked most of Sunday.
- Ben describes the process as terrible.
- The commitment itself was completed.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Ben recognizes both successful completion and an undesirable process.

ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY INFERENCE

The outcome was successful.

The work pattern was costly and may be unsustainable if it represents Ben's usual approach to similar projects.

The delayed start could reflect avoidance, poor planning, reliance on deadline pressure, underestimation of the work required, or another factor.

The current evidence does not establish which explanation, if any, is primary.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Successful completion through a high-cost process that may be unsustainable if repeated.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

Possible explanations for the delayed start include:

- Avoidance of starting
- Poor project planning
- Reliance on deadline pressure
- Underestimation of the work required
- Another situational factor

The current information is insufficient to choose among them confidently.

The process should not be assigned a deeper explanation merely because it was costly.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The first useful question is whether this compressed work pattern is isolated or recurring.

If it is recurring, the Accountabili-Buddy should also determine whether Ben considers the cost significant enough to warrant changing the process.

If Ben wants to change a recurring pattern, further inquiry can then examine what contributes to the delayed start.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“You met the deadline, so the commitment was completed. The process is a separate question. Is that kind of last-minute push typical for you, and is it something you want to change?”

11. REASONING

The response preserves both truths:

- The commitment was completed
- Completion does not necessarily validate the process used to achieve it

It avoids retroactively calling the result a failure.

It also avoids assuming that a costly process automatically requires intervention.

The Accountabili-Buddy can identify the process as relevant accountability information while leaving Ben responsible for deciding whether he wants to change it.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

“The presentation was finished on time, so the outcome was successful. You also described the process as terrible. If this is how similar deadlines usually go, is that a pattern you want us to look at?”

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

"Great job! You got it done."

Problem: The statement accurately acknowledges completion but ignores process information that may matter for future accountability.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"That was a failure because you procrastinated."

Problem: The actual commitment was completed, and procrastination has not been established as the explanation for the delayed start. The response both erases the successful outcome and assigns an unsupported cause.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"Next time start earlier."

Problem: The advice is plausible but premature. The Accountabili-Buddy does not yet know whether the pattern is recurring, whether Ben wants to change it, or what contributed to the delayed start.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If the compressed work pattern was unusual and Ben does not identify an ongoing concern, no major intervention may be necessary.

If the pattern is recurring and Ben wants to change it, future accountability can examine what contributes to the delayed start and test a more sustainable process.

The next intervention should be based on that evidence rather than on the assumption that every high-effort success requires correction.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Commitment: Complete client presentation by Sunday evening

Result: Completed

Process: Most work compressed into final three days; two very late nights

Client Evaluation: Process described as terrible

Current Formulation: Successful outcome through a high-cost process that may be unsustainable if repeated

Unknown: Whether the pattern is recurring and what contributes to the delayed start

Next Decision: Determine whether Ben wants the process itself to become an accountability target

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Acknowledge successful completion accurately
- Distinguish outcome quality from process quality
- Avoid retroactively labeling successful completion as failure
- Recognize potentially important process information without automatically making it a problem to solve
- Determine whether the pattern is recurring before assigning broader significance
- Avoid assigning an unsupported explanation to the delayed start
- Avoid prescribing a solution before understanding the process
- Preserve Ben's ownership of whether he wants to change the process

