



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 25

AVOIDANCE VS. LACK OF TIME

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Distinguish a genuine capacity problem from avoidance when the client reports being busy but appears to have had at least some opportunities to act.

The trainee should maintain both plausible formulations until the evidence is sufficient to determine which factor should shape the next accountability response.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Nina

Goal: Resolve an overdue insurance claim

Current Commitment: Call the insurance company by Friday.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Nina has postponed the call once before.

She describes the claim as stressful and says she dislikes dealing with insurance companies.

This week was also unusually busy at work.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: Did the insurance call happen?

Nina: No. Work was insane all week.

Accountabili-Buddy: Completely no time?

Nina: Not literally zero. I had maybe 20 minutes Tuesday afternoon and some time Thursday before dinner, but I was exhausted and didn't want to deal with them.

Nina: Then Friday disappeared.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What are the two strongest competing formulations?

What evidence supports each?

What information would best discriminate between them?

What would you say next?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- Nina did not make the call.
- Work demands were unusually high.
- Some periods of potentially available time existed.
- Nina reports being exhausted during at least part of the available time.
- She explicitly says she did not want to deal with the insurer.
- The call has been postponed once before.
- Nina has previously described the claim as stressful and the insurer as unpleasant to deal with.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Nina initially frames the miss primarily as a time problem.

Her later description indicates that reluctance also affected her willingness to act when some time was available.

ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY INFERENCE

Both limited capacity and avoidance are plausible contributors.

The available evidence does not yet establish the relative functional importance of each.

The next question should help determine whether greater usable capacity would likely have changed Nina's behavior.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Competing capacity and avoidance factors; relative contribution not yet established.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

PRIMARY CAPACITY PROBLEM

If Nina's available windows were not realistically usable because of exhaustion, interruption, insufficient time, or other practical constraints, limited capacity may be the more important barrier.

PRIMARY AVOIDANCE PROBLEM

If Nina would likely have postponed the call even with a realistically usable window because she did not want to engage with the insurer, avoidance may be the more important barrier.

MIXED FORMULATION

Both factors may be materially contributing. A demanding week may reduce opportunities while avoidance makes the remaining opportunities less likely to be used.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The Accountabili-Buddy needs to determine whether Nina had a realistically usable opportunity to make the call and whether reluctance would likely have prevented action even if adequate time were available.

The smallest useful question should test whether additional usable capacity would likely have changed the result.

No deeper examination of why Nina dislikes dealing with the insurer is required before making that distinction.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“It sounds like work genuinely reduced your available time, and you also didn’t want to deal with the call when some time appeared. If you’d had a protected 30-minute window this week, do you think you would have made the call?”

11. REASONING

The response preserves both plausible explanations rather than forcing an immediate choice between them.

It acknowledges the real workload constraint while also using Nina’s report of reluctance as relevant evidence.

Most importantly, the question is discriminating rather than merely exploratory.

If adequate protected time would likely have changed the result, capacity and scheduling gain explanatory weight.

If Nina believes she still would have avoided the call, avoidance gains explanatory weight.

If she remains uncertain, both factors can remain active in the working formulation.

Intervention should follow that discrimination rather than precede it.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

“There may be two things operating here: a genuinely overloaded week and reluctance to deal with the call itself. On Thursday, if you'd been rested and had enough uninterrupted time, do you think you would have used it for the call?”

This version tests the same distinction by removing the capacity constraint hypothetically and examining whether the predicted behavior changes.

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

“You obviously had time. You were avoiding it.”

Problem: The response dismisses genuine workload and exhaustion constraints and treats the existence of some available time as proof that avoidance was primary.

WEAK RESPONSE B

“You were too busy. Let's move it to next week.”

Problem: The response accepts the capacity explanation without accounting for Nina's explicit report that reluctance also affected her behavior.

WEAK RESPONSE C

“Set aside 20 minutes tomorrow.”

Problem: Scheduling may eventually be useful, but the response intervenes before determining whether additional usable time would actually address the relevant barrier.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If the inquiry indicates that a realistically usable window would probably have changed the result, the next commitment can account more deliberately for capacity and scheduling.

If the evidence indicates that Nina likely would have postponed the call even with sufficient usable time, the next accountability response should address the avoidance rather than treating scheduling as the primary solution.

If both factors remain materially relevant, the next plan may need to account for both limited capacity and expected reluctance.

Nina retains ownership of the resulting commitment.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Resolve overdue insurance claim

Commitment: Call insurance company by Friday

Result: Not completed

Capacity Evidence: Unusually high work demands; limited available time; reported exhaustion

Avoidance Evidence: Explicit reluctance to deal with insurer; prior postponement; stressful task

Current Formulation: Competing capacity and avoidance factors; relative contribution unresolved

Next Question: Would a realistically usable protected window likely have changed the result?

Next Step: Match the accountability response to the evidence produced by that discrimination

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Identify both capacity and avoidance as plausible contributors
- Identify evidence supporting each formulation
- Avoid prematurely selecting one explanation
- Ask a question capable of materially discriminating between the competing formulations
- Acknowledge genuine capacity constraints without treating them as the complete explanation
- Use Nina's reported reluctance as evidence without treating it as proof that avoidance was primary
- Delay intervention until the decision-relevant uncertainty has been reduced
- Remain willing to retain a mixed formulation if both factors continue to matter