



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 33

REPEATED DEADLINE MOVEMENT

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Distinguish among avoidance, inaccurate time estimation, and legitimate changing circumstances when a client repeatedly moves the same deadline.

The trainee should recognize that repeated deadline movement does not necessarily have a single cause and that the meaning of another extension may change as longitudinal evidence accumulates.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Julia

Goal: Complete and send a business partnership proposal

Current Commitment: Send the proposal by Friday.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

The proposal deadline has now been moved three times.

Original Deadline: Monday

Julia moved it to Wednesday because a client issue consumed most of Monday.

Second Deadline: Wednesday

Julia moved it to Friday because she discovered that the pricing section needed revision.

Third Deadline: Friday

The proposal is still unsent.

Julia has continued working on it throughout the week.

4. CLIENT MESSAGE

Accountabili-Buddy: Is the proposal going out today?

Julia: I don't think so.

Accountabili-Buddy: What's still unfinished?

Julia: The proposal is basically done, but I want to redo the timeline because I think the current one is too aggressive.

Julia: And one of the examples doesn't feel strong enough.

Julia: I could probably send it today if I had to, but Monday would be better.

5. TRAINEE TASK

What are the strongest competing formulations?

What evidence supports and weakens each formulation?

What has changed about the significance of another deadline extension?

What information would materially change the accountability response?

What would you say next?

6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

FACTS

- The proposal deadline has moved three times.
- The first extension followed a specific external disruption.
- The second extension involved substantive work Julia believed was necessary.
- Julia has continued working on the proposal rather than abandoning it.
- Julia now describes the proposal as “basically done.”
- She identifies two remaining areas she would prefer to revise.
- She says she could probably send the proposal today if necessary.
- She proposes another short extension to Monday.

CLIENT INTERPRETATION

Julia appears to believe the proposal would benefit from additional refinement before submission.

She does not clearly state whether the remaining changes are necessary for an acceptable proposal or simply improvements she would prefer.

ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE

Several formulations remain plausible.

The original timeline may have underestimated the total work required.

Earlier extensions may have been justified by changing circumstances and substantive revisions.

The current extension carries different evidence because Julia now describes the proposal as basically complete and says submission is possible today.

Perfectionistic refinement or avoidance of submission therefore deserves greater consideration than it did during the earlier extensions.

However, the remaining changes may still be materially necessary.

The Accountabili-Buddy should not assume that all deadline movement has had the same cause simply because the observable outcome has repeated.

7. PRIMARY FORMULATION

Earlier deadline movement may have reflected legitimate disruption and underestimated work requirements; the current proposed extension raises stronger concern about unnecessary refinement or avoidance of submission, but the necessity of the remaining work remains unresolved.

8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS

INACCURATE ORIGINAL TIME ESTIMATION

Julia may have underestimated the amount of substantive work required to produce an acceptable proposal.

Under this formulation, Monday may be the first deadline that realistically accommodates the work that emerged during completion.

LEGITIMATE QUALITY REQUIREMENT

The proposed timeline and example may materially affect the quality or accuracy of the proposal.

If those changes are necessary for an acceptable submission, additional work may be justified despite the previous extensions.

PERFECTIONISTIC REFINEMENT OR SUBMISSION AVOIDANCE

The proposal may already meet its functional requirements, while continued refinement delays submission.

Under this formulation, another extension would not primarily solve a completion problem.

MIXED FORMULATION

The earlier delays may have been legitimate while the function of continued revision has changed as the proposal has approached completion.

Different instances of the same observable behavior can have different explanations.

9. MISSING INFORMATION

The critical distinction is whether the remaining changes are necessary for the proposal to meet an appropriate submission standard or are improvements Julia would prefer but does not actually need before sending.

That information would materially change the accountability response.

If the changes are necessary, additional completion work remains.

If they are optional, the current barrier shifts toward continued refinement or reluctance to submit.

10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

“The earlier extensions had specific reasons. This one looks different because you're saying the proposal is basically complete and could go today. Are the remaining changes necessary for it to be ready, or are they things you'd prefer to improve before sending it?”

11. REASONING

The response uses longitudinal evidence without assuming that repeated behavior has had a single stable cause.

The earlier extensions had distinct explanations. The current situation contains new evidence: Julia describes the proposal as basically complete and says she could probably submit it today.

That changes the significance of another proposed extension.

At the same time, the Accountabili-Buddy does not treat continued refinement as automatically perfectionistic or avoidant.

The question isolates the information that would change the next response: whether substantive completion work remains.

This is why repeated behavior must be interpreted in context rather than classified from frequency alone.

12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE

“We’ve moved the deadline three times, but the reason has not been the same each time. Before you decide whether to move it again, does Monday solve a real completion problem, or mostly give you more time to improve something that is already sendable?”

This version directly tests whether another extension serves task completion or continued refinement while leaving the deadline decision with Julia.

13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

WEAK RESPONSE A

“You’ve already moved it three times. Send it now.”

Problem: The historical pattern increases the importance of examining another extension, but repetition alone does not establish that substantive work no longer remains. The Accountabili-Buddy also takes over the submission decision.

WEAK RESPONSE B

“Monday sounds fine.”

Problem: Another extension is accepted without examining whether the reason for the current delay differs from the reasons supporting earlier extensions.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"This is obviously perfectionism."

Problem: Perfectionistic refinement is increasingly plausible, but the remaining changes may still be substantively necessary. The response converts a strengthened hypothesis into an unsupported conclusion.

14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If Julia determines that the remaining changes are necessary for an acceptable proposal, she can decide whether the existing commitment remains workable or whether another deadline is justified.

If she determines that the remaining changes are optional refinements, the Accountabili-Buddy can make that distinction explicit and ask what commitment Julia wants to make regarding submission.

If deadline movement continues after Julia identifies the proposal as adequately ready for submission, avoidance or perfectionistic refinement gains additional explanatory weight.

The formulation should continue to update as the function of the repeated behavior becomes clearer.

Julia retains ownership of the submission decision and any revised commitment.

15. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Complete and send business partnership proposal

Deadline History: Monday → Wednesday → Friday

Earlier Extension Evidence: External client disruption; substantive pricing revision

Current Status: Julia describes proposal as basically complete and says it could probably be sent today

Remaining Work: Timeline revision and stronger example

Current Formulation: Earlier delays may have been legitimate; current proposed extension raises stronger concern about unnecessary refinement or submission avoidance

Missing Information: Whether remaining changes are necessary for acceptable submission or optional improvements

Next Question: Necessary revision or preferred refinement?

16. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- Distinguish among the different reasons supporting prior deadline extensions
- Avoid assuming that repeated deadline movement necessarily has one stable cause
- Recognize that longitudinal context changes the evidentiary significance of the current extension
- Use Julia's statement that the proposal is basically complete and could probably be sent today as meaningful evidence
- Maintain inaccurate time estimation, legitimate quality requirements, and unnecessary refinement or avoidance as plausible formulations
- Identify the necessity of the remaining work as the information most likely to change the accountability response
- Avoid inventing an unreported psychological reason for submission avoidance
- Avoid either rigid deadline enforcement or automatic extension
- Update the formulation if later evidence shows that the function of deadline movement has changed
- Preserve Julia's authority over submission and any resulting commitment