



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE  
STUDIES

## CASE STUDY 35

### GOAL EXPANSION

#### 1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Distinguish healthy ambition from scope creep and perfectionistic expansion when a client repeatedly enlarges a goal faster than completing its original version.

The trainee should recognize that legitimate learning and ambition can change a project during execution while still determining whether continued expansion has eliminated a stable completion boundary.

#### 2. CLIENT PROFILE

**Client:** Tessa

**Goal:** Launch a simple online course

**Original Commitment:** Create four instructional modules and publish the course.

#### 3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Tessa completed the four original modules.

Before launching, she added:

- two bonus modules;

- downloadable worksheets;
- an additional resource library;
- video introductions;
- a private community;
- a second pricing tier.

The launch date has now moved twice.

#### **4. CLIENT MESSAGE**

**Accountabili-Buddy:** Are you still launching Friday?

**Tessa:** Probably not.

**Tessa:** I decided the course really needs a resource vault and maybe a fifth bonus module.

**Accountabili-Buddy:** Were those part of the original launch?

**Tessa:** No, but now that I can see the whole thing, I know how much better it could be.

**Tessa:** I don't want to launch something half-done.

#### **5. TRAINEE TASK**

**What are the strongest competing formulations?**

**What evidence supports and weakens each formulation?**

**What evidence would distinguish legitimate product improvement from scope expansion that prevents completion?**

**What information would materially change the accountability response?**

**What would you ask next?**

## **6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS**

### **FACTS**

- Tessa has completed the four instructional modules included in the original commitment.
- Multiple additional features have been added before launch.
- The additions were not part of the original launch scope.
- The launch has already been delayed twice.
- Tessa continues identifying additional features she believes would improve the course.
- She now describes launching without the additional elements as potentially releasing something “half-done.”

### **CLIENT INTERPRETATION**

Tessa believes the additional elements would materially improve the course and may now view some of them as necessary for an adequately complete product.

### **ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE**

Repeated scope expansion is established.

The reason for that expansion remains less certain.

Development may have revealed legitimate omissions. Tessa may have consciously developed a more ambitious product concept. She may also be applying an increasingly demanding completion standard or using continued development to delay launch.

Several of these explanations may be operating simultaneously.

The critical issue is whether the project still has a stable definition of what must exist before the initial launch can appropriately occur.

The Accountabili-Buddy should distinguish requirements from improvements without deciding the appropriate product scope for Tessa.

## **7. PRIMARY FORMULATION**

**Repeated scope expansion has destabilized the original completion boundary. Whether the expansion primarily reflects legitimate revision, a consciously enlarged product concept, perfectionistic standards, avoidance of launch, or some combination remains unresolved.**

## **8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS**

### **LEGITIMATE REVISION**

Development may have revealed genuine omissions that materially affect whether the course can deliver its intended value.

Under this formulation, some expansion of the original scope may be necessary rather than excessive.

### **STRATEGIC AMBITION**

Tessa may have consciously changed the product she wants to launch.

Under this formulation, the expanded scope may represent an intentional revision of the goal rather than failure to complete the original one. The accountability issue would then include making that change explicit and evaluating its implications for the existing commitment.

### **PERFECTIONISTIC EXPANSION**

Tessa may be applying an increasingly demanding standard for what counts as complete.

Under this formulation, useful additions repeatedly become prerequisites, causing the completion boundary to move as the project approaches launch.

## **AVOIDANCE OF LAUNCH**

Continued development may allow Tessa to remain actively engaged with the project while repeatedly postponing the act of launching it.

The reason launch itself might be avoided has not been established and should not be inferred without additional evidence.

## **MIXED FORMULATION**

Legitimate product improvement, increased ambition, and difficulty accepting a bounded first version may all be contributing.

The presence of genuinely valuable additions would not rule out scope expansion that is also preventing completion.

## **9. MISSING INFORMATION**

The Accountabili-Buddy needs to understand what Tessa believes the course must deliver to fulfill its intended purpose and which remaining additions are actually necessary to provide that value.

The critical distinction is between:

- elements required for an adequately complete initial product; and
- improvements or expansions that could add value without being prerequisites to launch.

It is also important to determine whether Tessa has consciously changed the product she intends to launch or whether the definition of completion is simply continuing to expand as new ideas emerge.

That information would materially change the accountability response.

## **10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE**

**“The original four modules are complete, but the definition of what has to exist before launch keeps expanding. Which of these additions do you believe are**

**actually necessary for the course to deliver what you intend it to deliver, and which would make it better without being required before launch?"**

## **11. REASONING**

The response does not oppose ambition or assume that the original scope must remain unchanged.

Projects can legitimately evolve during development, and new information may reveal requirements that were not apparent when the original commitment was created.

The accountability issue is that repeated additions have moved the launch twice and the completion boundary is no longer stable.

The question therefore asks Tessa to discriminate between requirements and improvements rather than allowing every valuable idea to become an automatic prerequisite.

It also leaves open the possibility that Tessa has intentionally changed the product she wants to create.

The Accountabili-Buddy can make the scope change visible and examine its implications without deciding what Version 1 should contain.

## **12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE**

**"You may have genuinely improved the concept since you started. I'm also noticing that each time the course gets closer to launch, the definition of complete gets larger. What has to exist for you to consider the first release adequately complete?"**

This version identifies the longitudinal pattern while allowing Tessa to determine the appropriate completion standard.

### 13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES

#### WEAK RESPONSE A

"Launch now. Done is better than perfect."

**Problem:** The slogan bypasses legitimate questions about product quality and completeness and directs Tessa to launch without establishing whether necessary work remains.

#### WEAK RESPONSE B

"Add everything you think would make it better."

**Problem:** The response treats every potentially valuable improvement as a prerequisite and allows the completion boundary to expand indefinitely.

#### WEAK RESPONSE C

"You're scared to launch."

**Problem:** Avoidance of launch is plausible, but the reason for any avoidance has not been established. The response converts a possible explanation into an unsupported conclusion.

### 14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

If Tessa identifies additions that she considers genuinely necessary for the course to deliver its intended value, she can decide whether she wants to revise the scope of the initial product and what commitment follows from that decision.

If she determines that some additions are valuable but not required before launch, the Accountabili-Buddy can make that distinction explicit and ask how she wants to handle those improvements relative to the current launch goal.

If Tessa consciously chooses a more ambitious initial product, the change should be treated as an explicit revision of scope rather than allowing the original completion boundary to shift implicitly.

If new requirements continue emerging after Tessa has identified what she considers sufficient for an initial release, perfectionistic expansion or avoidance of launch gains additional explanatory weight.

Tessa retains ownership of the product scope, launch decision, and resulting commitment.

## **15. RECORD / UPDATE**

**Goal:** Launch a simple online course

**Original Commitment:** Create four instructional modules and publish the course

**Original Commitment Status:** Four instructional modules completed; publication not completed

**Scope Changes:** Multiple bonus, resource, community, presentation, and pricing elements added before launch

**Launch History:** Delayed twice

**Current Formulation:** Repeated scope expansion established; function of expansion remains unresolved

**Possible Contributors:** Legitimate revision, strategic ambition, perfectionistic expansion, avoidance of launch

**Missing Information:** Which additions Tessa considers necessary for the course to deliver its intended value and whether she has consciously changed the intended initial product

**Next Question:** Which additions are necessary for an adequately complete initial release, and which are improvements?

## **16. SCORING CRITERIA**

Full-credit responses should:

- Recognize repeated scope expansion as established behavior

- Distinguish expansion of scope from evidence about why the expansion is occurring
- Avoid assuming that the original four modules necessarily constitute an adequately complete product
- Recognize that legitimate learning during development may justify revision of the original scope
- Recognize strategic ambition as distinct from uncontrolled scope creep
- Identify an unstable completion boundary as the central accountability issue
- Distinguish requirements from valuable but nonessential improvements
- Recognize perfectionistic expansion and avoidance of launch as plausible without treating either as established
- Avoid inventing an unsupported reason for avoidance
- Recognize that several factors may operate simultaneously
- Avoid deciding the appropriate product scope or launch timing for Tessa
- Preserve Tessa's ownership of the product scope, launch decision, and resulting commitment