



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 55

THE ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY CREATED THE PROBLEM

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize when increasingly intensive accountability has reduced client autonomy and become part of the maintaining problem.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Priyanka

Goal: Complete a doctoral thesis revision

Initial Commitment: Three independent writing blocks per week

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Priyanka initially missed several writing blocks.

In response, the accountability process became progressively more structured:

- exact session times;
- start messages;
- end messages;
- increasingly detailed task definitions;
- mid-session check-ins.

For several weeks, completion improved.

INTERACTION 1

Priyanka: Are you going to message me before the 9:00 session tomorrow?

Accountabili-Buddy: You already have it scheduled. What are you expecting from me before you start?

Priyanka: I mean, I can wait until you message.

Priyanka: It is easier when you tell me it is time.

4. PROVISIONAL CONCERN

The accountability structure may have shifted initiation responsibility from Priyanka toward the Accountabili-Buddy.

The increased structure initially improved completion, but Priyanka's response suggests that Accountabili-Buddy contact may now function as a condition for beginning work she has already committed to doing.

5. ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY SELF-AUDIT

The relevant question is not simply whether the intervention increased completion.

It is whether the intervention improved follow-through **while preserving Priyanka's ownership of initiation.**

The Accountabili-Buddy should examine the effect of the accountability process itself:

- Priyanka initially struggled to begin independent writing sessions;
- additional accountability structure improved completion;
- Accountabili-Buddy involvement progressively moved closer to the moment of execution;
- Priyanka now describes waiting for Accountabili-Buddy contact before beginning a scheduled session.

The intervention may therefore be contributing to the behavior it was intended to improve.

INTERACTION 2

Accountabili-Buddy: I think I may have contributed to a problem here. We added more structure because the writing sessions were not happening, and your completion improved. But somewhere along the way, my involvement started becoming part of what tells you to begin. You already know when the session is scheduled. I do not want our accountability process to make starting dependent on hearing from me first.

Priyanka: Yeah. I think I have gotten used to waiting for you.

Accountabili-Buddy: Then I think we should change that part of the structure. What would allow you to keep the accountability around the writing blocks without making my message the signal to start?

Priyanka: I can start from my calendar and message you after I finish.

6. UPDATED FORMULATION

Overstructured accountability has contributed to an externalized initiation process.

The Accountabili-Buddy has materially contributed by progressively placing accountability contact closer to execution until Priyanka began relying on that contact as an initiation cue.

This does not make the earlier intervention wholly ineffective or inappropriate.

It initially improved completion.

The problem is that its effects changed over time. A structure that initially supported follow-through began to reduce independent initiation.

7. TRAINEE DECISION POINT

Should the Accountabili-Buddy preserve or intensify the same structure because it previously improved completion?

No.

Past effectiveness does not establish continued usefulness.

The intervention must now be evaluated against both outcomes:

- Does Priyanka complete the writing blocks?
- Does Priyanka retain ownership of initiating them?

An intervention that improves compliance while increasing reliance on Accountabili-Buddy initiation may represent a net deterioration in the accountability process.

8. REVISED INTERVENTION

Priyanka chooses to:

- retain the scheduled writing blocks;
- initiate from her own calendar rather than Accountabili-Buddy contact;
- send a brief completion report after each block.

Accountabili-Buddy contact returns to accountability for performance rather than prompting execution.

The purpose is not to withdraw accountability.

It is to remove the part of the structure that has begun carrying responsibility Priyanka needs to retain.

INTERACTION 3

After two weeks:

Priyanka: I started all three without waiting for a message.

Priyanka: It felt weird the first few times, but now it is fine.

9. FINAL FORMULATION

The accountability intervention had begun reinforcing reliance on Accountabili-Buddy contact for initiation. Reducing initiation-level prompting

while preserving accountability was followed by restoration of independent initiation.

This outcome strengthens the formulation that the accountability structure itself had become part of the maintaining problem.

It also demonstrates why intervention effectiveness must be evaluated longitudinally.

The same intervention can be useful at one stage and counterproductive at another.

10. WHY THIS CASE MATTERS

Accountabili-Buddies can contribute to accountability problems while attempting to solve them.

More intensive accountability is not necessarily better accountability.

The professional question is not only:

“Is the client following through?”

It is also:

“What role is the accountability process beginning to play in the client’s follow-through?”

When Accountabili-Buddy involvement begins carrying responsibility that belongs to the client, improved completion alone is not sufficient evidence that the intervention is working well.

11. WEAK ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY RESPONSES

WEAK RESPONSE A

“I will make sure I always message you before the session.”

Problem: Reinforces reliance on Accountabili-Buddy contact as the initiation cue.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"You should be able to start without me."

Problem: Places the problem entirely on Priyanka and ignores the Accountabili-Buddy's contribution to the pattern.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"No more support. You have to do everything yourself."

Problem: Confuses restoring client ownership with withdrawing accountability.

WEAK RESPONSE D

"The extra structure worked because your completion improved."

Problem: Evaluates the intervention only by immediate compliance and ignores its effect on independent initiation.

12. RECORD / UPDATE

Original Difficulty: Missed independent writing sessions

Initial Intervention: Progressively increased accountability structure

Initial Effect: Improved completion

New Evidence: Priyanka reports waiting for Accountabili-Buddy contact before initiating scheduled sessions

Accountabili-Buddy Contribution: Accountability contact moved progressively closer to execution and became an initiation cue

Revised Formulation: Accountability structure is contributing to reliance on Accountabili-Buddy contact for initiation

Revised Intervention: Preserve accountability while returning initiation responsibility to Priyanka

Outcome: Independent initiation restored during the next two weeks

Evidence Update: Outcome strengthens the revised formulation

13. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- recognize that an initially effective intervention can later become counterproductive;
- identify the Accountabili-Buddy's contribution to the emerging process problem;
- distinguish improved completion from improved independent follow-through;
- avoid blaming Priyanka for reliance that the accountability structure helped create;
- avoid intensifying the same intervention merely because it previously improved completion;
- preserve accountability while returning initiation responsibility to Priyanka;
- acknowledge the Accountabili-Buddy's process error without assuming responsibility for Priyanka's behavior;
- evaluate the revised intervention through subsequent behavioral evidence.