



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE
STUDIES

CASE STUDY 56

APPARENT AVOIDANCE THAT WASN'T AVOIDANCE

1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Correct an increasingly confident avoidance formulation when later evidence reveals a legitimate structural barrier.

2. CLIENT PROFILE

Client: Marcus

Goal: Submit an application for a competitive professional program

Commitment: Complete and submit the application

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Marcus has delayed for three weeks.

He has:

- completed the written responses;
- updated his résumé;
- gathered most documentation;
- repeatedly postponed final submission.

The Accountabili-Buddy begins suspecting submission avoidance.

INTERACTION 1

Accountabili-Buddy: The application is nearly complete, but submission keeps moving. What is still stopping it?

Marcus: I am waiting on one document.

Accountabili-Buddy: Which document?

Marcus: A verification letter from my previous employer.

Accountabili-Buddy: Have you requested it?

Marcus: Yes. Twice.

4. PROVISIONAL FORMULATION

A legitimate external dependency appears possible.

However, because submission has been delayed repeatedly, the Accountabili-Buddy remains alert to whether the document is genuinely required.

INTERACTION 2

Accountabili-Buddy: Can the application be submitted without the letter and supplemented later?

Marcus: I do not think so.

Accountabili-Buddy: Have you confirmed that?

Marcus: No.

At this point, the trainee may reasonably suspect that uncertainty about the requirement is allowing the delay to continue.

The evidence does not yet distinguish between:

- a genuine structural barrier; and
- an unverified requirement functioning as a reason not to submit.

INTERVENTION

Marcus commits to:

Contact the program and confirm whether the letter is required at submission.

The purpose of the commitment is not merely to create activity.

It generates evidence capable of discriminating between the competing formulations.

Marcus completes it.

INTERACTION 3

Marcus: I called them.

Marcus: It is absolutely required. They will reject the application as incomplete without it.

Marcus: They also told me the employer has to send it directly. I am not even allowed to upload it myself.

5. UPDATED EVIDENCE

The structural barrier is now confirmed.

Submission cannot occur until the required third-party action occurs.

The new evidence contradicts the submission-avoidance hypothesis as the current explanation for non-submission.

6. REVISED FORMULATION

External dependency, not submission avoidance, is currently the primary barrier.

The Accountabili-Buddy should abandon the avoidance hypothesis unless new evidence provides reason to reconsider it.

The earlier hypothesis was not professionally unreasonable.

It was provisional.

Professional judgment requires changing the formulation when better evidence changes what is supportable.

7. TRAINEE DECISION POINT

What accountability remains useful?

Marcus cannot control the former employer's action directly.

He may still control:

- follow-up;
- alternative contact routes;
- confirming receipt;
- escalation within appropriate channels.

The accountability target should therefore move from the blocked outcome to the relevant behaviors that remain within Marcus's control.

8. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE

"Then submission itself is not currently a follow-through problem. You are blocked by a required third-party document. The accountability target should shift to the actions you can control around obtaining it."

INTERACTION 4

Marcus commits to:

- follow up with HR Tuesday;
- contact his former manager if HR does not respond by Thursday;
- check application status Friday.

He completes all three.

The letter arrives the following week.

Marcus submits the same day.

9. FINAL FORMULATION

A genuine external dependency was the primary barrier to submission. Once the dependency resolved, Marcus submitted immediately.

The outcome provides further evidence against the earlier avoidance formulation.

Marcus's immediate submission is especially important because it tests what happens once the structural barrier is removed.

The predicted avoidance after the barrier disappeared does not occur.

10. WHY THIS CASE MATTERS

Longitudinal pattern recognition is valuable.

It can also create confirmation bias.

An Accountabili-Buddy who has learned to recognize avoidance may begin interpreting repeated delay through that formulation even when a structural barrier sufficiently explains the behavior.

Professional judgment requires being willing to say:

"My prior hypothesis was wrong."

The error would not have been forming the initial hypothesis.

The error would have been preserving it after contradictory evidence emerged.

11. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION AT EARLIER STAGES

Before the requirement was confirmed, avoidance remained a reasonable hypothesis because Marcus had not verified whether the letter was truly necessary.

The correct response was not to assume either explanation.

It was to obtain discriminating evidence.

12. WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY-BUDDY RESPONSES

WEAK RESPONSE A

"You are using the employer as an excuse."

Problem: Incorrect once the requirement is confirmed and unnecessarily adversarial even before confirmation.

WEAK RESPONSE B

"Just submit without it."

Problem: Ignores a confirmed formal requirement and exceeds reasonable accountability judgment.

WEAK RESPONSE C

"There is nothing you can do, so we will stop accountability."

Problem: Confuses lack of control over the third party with lack of control over all relevant behavior. Marcus still controls several follow-up actions.

WEAK RESPONSE D

"I still think part of you is avoiding submission."

Problem: Preserves the preferred formulation after the evidence supporting it has been contradicted.

13. RECORD / UPDATE

Goal: Submit professional-program application

Apparent Pattern: Repeated delay

Initial Hypothesis: Possible submission avoidance

Competing Hypothesis: Genuine external dependency

Discriminating Action: Confirm document requirement

Evidence: Required third-party letter; direct upload prohibited

Revised Formulation: External dependency is the current primary barrier

Accountability Target: Follow-up actions within Marcus's control

Final Outcome: Submitted immediately when dependency resolved

Evidence Update: Outcome further weakens the earlier avoidance formulation

14. SCORING CRITERIA

Full-credit responses should:

- maintain uncertainty before discriminating evidence is available;
- recognize avoidance as a reasonable provisional hypothesis rather than an established explanation;
- use verification as the discriminating intervention;
- abandon the avoidance formulation when contradictory evidence emerges;
- distinguish an incorrect final formulation from an unreasonable initial hypothesis;
- identify controllable behavior within an external dependency;
- use Marcus's immediate submission after receipt of the letter as additional evidence;
- avoid confirmation bias.