



accountabili-buddy

— CLARITY. COMMITMENT. FOLLOW THROUGH. —



CASE  
STUDIES

## CASE STUDY 7

### PERFECTIONISM

#### 1. TRAINING OBJECTIVE

Recognize when an unnecessarily high performance standard is interfering with completion despite substantial effort.

#### 2. CLIENT PROFILE

**Client:** Elena

**Goal:** Complete a presentation for an internal leadership meeting

**Current Commitment:** Finish the first draft of the 12-slide deck by Friday.

#### 3. RELEVANT HISTORY

Elena has already gathered the required data and knows the subject well.

The first draft is intended for internal review before final design.

#### 4. CLIENT MESSAGE

**Accountabili-Buddy:** Is the first draft finished?

**Elena:** Not even close.

**Accountabili-Buddy:** What happened?

**Elena:** I spent almost four hours on it yesterday.

**Elena:** I have two slides.

**Accountabili-Buddy:** What took four hours?

**Elena:** I kept changing the wording and moving things around. Then the chart on slide two looked amateur, so I rebuilt it three times. I know it's only the first draft, but I hate sending something that looks unfinished.

## **5. TRAINEE TASK**

**What is the most likely formulation?**

**What should the next intervention address?**

## **6. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS**

### **FACTS**

- Elena invested substantial time.
- Output remained low relative to the intended first-draft task.
- She repeatedly revised material already produced.
- She rebuilt a nonfinal chart multiple times.
- She explicitly dislikes allowing others to see unfinished work.
- The deliverable is currently a draft for internal review.

### **CLIENT INTERPRETATION**

Elena identifies discomfort with submitting work that appears unfinished.

### **ACCOUNTABILI-BUDDY INFERENCE**

The standard being applied to the draft appears closer to a final-product standard.

That standard is interfering with completion.

## **7. PRIMARY FORMULATION**

**Perfectionistic performance standard interfering with completion.**

The issue is not lack of effort.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE FORMULATIONS**

Discomfort with showing unfinished work may also be contributing.

The current evidence does not establish whether that discomfort reflects concern about evaluation or another factor.

At this stage, the most directly supported intervention concerns the standard being applied to the draft.

## **9. MISSING INFORMATION**

The key practical question is:

**What level of quality is actually required for the first review?**

If Elena is imposing a higher standard than the task requires, the next commitment should explicitly define an adequate draft.

## **10. RECOMMENDED RESPONSE**

**“You're putting final-version standards onto a first draft. What does this deck actually need to contain for the internal review, before any of the polishing happens?”**

## **11. REASONING**

The intervention addresses the mechanism producing the delay.

More time or a smaller slide count would not necessarily solve the problem if Elena continues applying the same standard to each slide.

The accountability task is to help establish a fit-for-purpose completion standard based on what the first review actually requires.

## **12. PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE**

**“Four hours of work produced two heavily revised slides, so effort isn't the problem. Let's define what ‘complete enough for first review’ actually means.”**

## **13. WEAK RESPONSE EXAMPLES**

### **WEAK RESPONSE A**

“Maybe you need to block another four hours this weekend.”

**Problem:** Additional time may simply produce additional polishing.

### **WEAK RESPONSE B**

“Let's reduce the goal to four slides.”

**Problem:** The same standard could produce four excessively polished slides without moving the draft toward completion.

### **WEAK RESPONSE C**

“You need to stop being such a perfectionist.”

**Problem:** The label is global and provides no usable accountability intervention.

## **14. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

Elena should identify what the first internal review actually requires, with the Accountabili-Buddy helping translate those requirements into an observable completion standard.

Depending on the actual review requirements, that standard might include:

- A working title for each slide
- Core content

- Necessary data
- Placeholder formatting where appropriate

Final wording and design can then become a separate stage.

The next interaction should test whether changing the standard changes completion behavior.

## **15. RECORD / UPDATE**

**Commitment:** 12-slide first draft

**Result:** Two slides after approximately four hours

**Observed Behavior:** Repeated revision and design polishing

**Client Concern:** Discomfort showing unfinished work

**Current Formulation:** Perfectionistic performance standard interfering with completion

**Intervention:** Define a first-draft completion standard based on actual review requirements

**Pattern Status:** To be tested

## **16. SCORING CRITERIA**

Full-credit responses should:

- Recognize that effort is not the limiting factor
- Identify the applied performance standard as relevant
- Avoid solving the problem by simply adding time
- Avoid global labeling
- Establish a task-appropriate definition of completion
- Base the completion standard on the actual requirements of the task rather than the Accountabili-Buddy's assumptions



