

4 LAYERS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

From Chapter 12 of
Winning The Week: How To Plan A Successful Week, Every Week

The Four Layers of Accountability



Think about a time when you accomplished something extraordinary in your life—a time when you amazed yourself and exceeded what you thought was possible. You probably had two or more of these layers in your life, reinforcing your willpower and preventing you from wiggling out.

As you look to win your week, I want you to **layer accountability into your life** to amplify your discipline and motivation. While you don't need all four layers to achieve results, I encourage you to build in as many as possible. Like a fabric, **more layers make for stronger, more durable accountability.**



THE BAR RAISER

The first layer of accountability is a *Bar Raiser*. This is a person who sets the bar high for you; much higher than you would set it yourself. Together with you, they create a space of **elevated expectations**. They often take the form of a **coach**, a **boss**, a **teacher**, a **mentor**, or a **leader**—someone close enough to you to see your potential and really care, but far enough to have a balanced perspective. That distance also allows us to accept their **honest feedback** in a way we never could with someone very close to us. In your moments of doubt (when other people might quit), your Bar Raiser tells you to keep going and assures you that the voices of doubt in your head are wrong.

This trusting dynamic plays out over time as a loop:

- You **doubt yourself** and think about quitting.
- Your Bar Raiser intervenes to **bridge you past self-doubt**.
- You **succeed** and are **thrilled** by the result.
- You **trust** your Bar Raiser even more and become willing to take **bigger risks** with them.
- Over time you **internalize** the voice of your Bar Raiser.



THE BUDDY

The second layer of accountability is a **buddy**. Broadly defined, this is a dyad, or a small group of **just two people**. Buddies are one of the most fundamentally misunderstood types of accountability. Buddy relationships often fail because they use their buddy check-ins as *bad therapy sessions*, complaining to each other and justifying each other's excuses. Sadly, this is why a buddy relationship done wrong can hurt far more than it helps.

A successful form of buddy relationship is a "**mirror buddy**." A mirror buddy helps you **strip away the emotion** and see yourself through another person's eyes. When you report your progress to your buddy, they act as a mirror to reflect what you're saying back to you. That gives you a space to externalize your thoughts and see your life through a neutral lens. Ideally, your buddy **doesn't inject any emotion or opinion** into the dialogue—they simply repeat back to you what they're hearing and seeing.

The number one mistake people make in a buddy dynamic is **overcomplicating** it. People try to be cheerleaders for their buddies, injecting forced positivity into the dynamic. Or they try to be coaches, injecting judgments and advice. Or worse, they cosign on their buddies' excuses, giving them tacit permission to underperform.

You can find a great buddy by reaching out to your **professional network** or any community where you're an established member. In my Lifehack Tribe membership community, we host a monthly event called *Accountability Buddy Speed Dating*. It's essentially a networking event where members of the Lifehack Tribe can quickly meet dozens of potential buddies all at once. But even if you're not part of a group that makes it frictionless to find a buddy, I guarantee that there's someone in your network who would be thrilled by the idea of having you as an accountability buddy.



THE TEAM

The third layer is a **team of people you respect**. These are like-minded individuals in the same boat as you are, pushing towards similar goals. They are preferably **at your level or higher** in whatever game you're playing, because team accountability works best when you respect the people around you. That means that when they offer you support or feedback, it means something to you because **you value their opinion highly**.

But the best part of being on a team is the **competition!** If you're reading this book, the chances are that you're a highly competitive person. Groups effortlessly amplify that competitive instinct. This friendly competition is extremely helpful in getting you to take action when you have **fear** or **resistance** because competition can mask or outweigh fear.

Teams help us **stop feeling sorry for ourselves** and get in the game. Friendly competition is good, and there is enormous power if you can leverage it in the right way. You'll find an endless supply of motivation and discipline when you're on a team that pushes you.



PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The fourth layer is **public accountability**. Public accountability is when you have **committed to a result *publicly***, and you know that you will be **held accountable** in a public forum.

Sadly, most people lack opportunities for public accountability in their day-to-day life. If you don't write that book you've been wanting to write, usually no one finds out. We just **quietly bury the bodies of our failures** (I'll be the first to raise my hand and say I've been guilty of that one!). That's why I would advise you to **create opportunities for public accountability**.

Whenever we launch a new course, Carey and I advertise it before we've even created it and start taking people's money in pre-sales. That provides **inescapable public accountability**. People have paid for the course, and they expect it to be ready on the date we promised. The consequence of missing that date is unthinkable for us. People would say, "*You are ripping us off! You promised it by this date and didn't deliver!*" There's no better accountability for us, and we've performed minor miracles to launch on time.

My client Ash is a web designer. He beat out his competition on a big deal by guaranteeing the client that they would launch on a specific date—or they wouldn't pay a dime. In place of the future website, he had a countdown timer to the launch date. He told me, "*I've never been more productive in my life!*"

This technique can even work for **personal goals**. My client Dita committed to a weight loss challenge that asked her to post photos of herself in just a sports bra every week for two months. She said, "*You better believe I stuck to my diet... I knew I had that photo coming up on Sunday!*"