



# Community & Accountability

By [Charles Vogl](#)



This month, I worked with someone who works for an elected official in a major US city.

In the most noble way, she wants to make a real difference, not only in her city, but, if possible, in the whole world. She's always convinced she's not doing enough.

There's nothing wrong with this.

But the problem is she's constantly worried that she is "behind." Maybe she is. Whether it's true or not, it's emotionally exhausting which is not an ideal state to be in when taking on real challenges.

The journey toward achieving really big accomplishments almost always looks like a series of terribly mundane actions. When hiking the Inca Trail, it looks like

putting one boot in front of the other for hours . . . and hours and hours. For her, results that may someday be considered great will come from what look like just another conversation, another phone call, another note, and another email chain. Simplicity and banality does not mean that the actions are unimportant. In fact, many of the most important actions seem banal. Alone we exhaust ourselves swimming in the sea of doubt and rumination.

***Community can remind us of our commitments and the value of our work, keeping us from burning out.***

These friends can remind us why we sit down and write apparently useless words for hours at a time. They care if we keep making the phone calls. They acknowledge us when we complete another round of long meetings.

My friend Jason is my accountability partner. He's a lot smarter than I am. We talk every week at an appointed time about what I've done, not done, and still need to do as I work toward my goals. His job is not to judge me or to solve my problems. He is there to listen for what matters - what I'm doing and what I'm not doing. Most importantly, he reminds me that there is a bigger plan that I'm fulfilling, no matter how slowly I seem to progress. Jason cares deeply about my eventual success. He is a part of my community as I try to create something new in the world.

Funny things happen when I talk to Jason. The first is that when I list out loud all the things that I've done, I notice them too. I'm often surprised by how much I have accomplished in the previous week. Without talking to him, I would overlook some of my own success. The second thing is that he points out macro changes that I don't notice because I'm often stuck in the weeds.

A few months ago, some old friends approached me at a church rector installation event. One told me that she had pre-ordered my new book on Amazon. Minutes later, another friend told me that she wanted to share the book widely in her field

so that all of the parish leaders in her diocese could learn more about what I'm teaching.

As I was telling Jason about this, he stopped me. He pointed out that this was a big shift for me: I learned that my work was being shared even when I wasn't present. After investing years in writing and publishing, the book had, in a small way, gone viral.

His insight gave me chills. I had missed overlooked that milestone. Jason gave me an opportunity to acknowledge that I was progressing. I often tell my own clients that

***no one outcome matters so much as the pattern.***

Jason helped me recognize this in my own work.

For those of us working on something that will take a long time to bear fruit it's critically important to develop accountability through our community to get us through the slow, hard, boring, and totally mundane years it will take to get to those results. I hope you have other people holding you up, as your boots keep taking one step forward at a time. If you don't, may this note inspire you to invest in an accountability partner. My guess is that someone in your community will be thrilled that you asked.

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