GRASP:
Graduate Resources, Accountability and Structured Partnerships

Eric Tymstra
Graduate Group in Ecology
UC Davis.
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Background:

Graduate school is, for many reasons, a challenge that requires its intrepid students to adapt to new situations, learn complex skills or adopt new habits. Though our advisors and programs are great at supporting us academically through our journeys, there are some skills that are not taught in a classroom. Time management and accountability are extremely important parts of graduate school, but few resources exist to build these skills.

My PFTF project, Graduate Resources, Accountability and Structured Partnerships (GRASP) aims to address graduate student needs when it comes to learning time management skills through a virtual workshop and then put time management skills to the test through weekly accountability working groups.

Project Objective

Build a **toolkit** for effective time management techniques and tools and establish **accountability working groups** for graduate students and postdocs in the later stages of their careers.

What prevents you from being effective with your time?

procrastination · focus · organization · motivation · track · distraction · research · sleep · ideas generation · accountability · social media · home · depression · mental health · time · avoidance

Participants cited several reasons for using time ineffectively, the most common of which included **being easily distracted by time wasters such as social media**

What makes a good accountability group?

methods · experience · update · identity · reliability · coworkers · accountability · research · goal
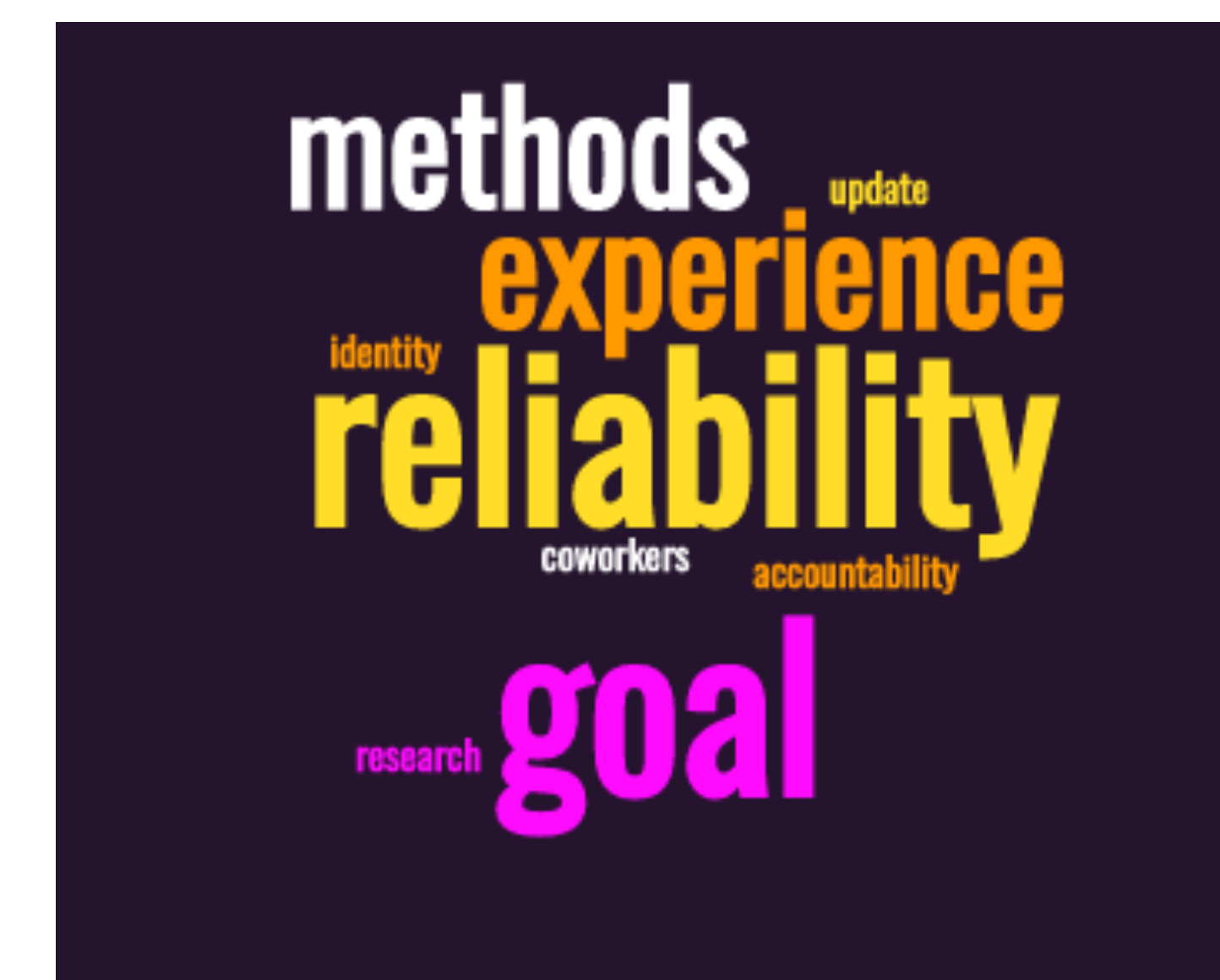
Workshop participants reported what qualities they look for in forming an effective accountability group. The most important qualities were **reliability** and **shared life experiences.**

Key Toolkit Resources

Time management

An important part of time management is structuring time. Our toolkit focused on tools designed to guide time use throughout the day. Key tools include **pomodoro time counters, productivity planners, and time triage techniques.**

Distraction Minimizers

During our workshop, many participants cited social media and home life as big distractors to productivity. So, we highlighted tools to minimize distractions, including **website blockers, and physical phone cages** as well as **accountability group techniques.**

Time Management Matrix

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	**Quadrant I** • Crisis • Pressing problems • Deadline driven projects	**Quadrant II** • Relationship building • Finding new opportunities • Long-term planning • Preventive activities • Personal growth • Recreation
Not Important	**Quadrant III** • Interruptions • Emails, calls, meetings • Popular activities • Proximate, pressing matters	**Quadrant IV** • Trivia, busy work • Time wasters • Some calls and emails • Pleasant activities

Working Groups:

Participants from the Fall 2021 workshop formed three working groups that met weekly throughout the Fall, Winter and Spring quarters. All groups eventually moved to an online format (Zoom and Slack Huddle). A few practices emerged as essential to an effective group:

- Establishing work-time goals
- Checking in half-way through working group time
- Time to catch-up with group mates and share personal and professional accomplishments

Acknowledgements: