

@RobertActon

#BLF2017



IGNITING
LEADERSHIP
FOR POWER
PURPOSE
& IMPACT

6 Things You Can Do *Right Now* to Boost Your Board's Performance

Robert Acton, Principal & Founder of Cause Strategy Partners & BoardLead



Cause Strategy Partners helps social good organizations achieve their missions fueled by great leadership, great strategy and, most importantly, great results.



Our Services:



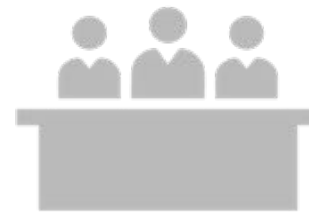
BoardLead
Our Signature
Program



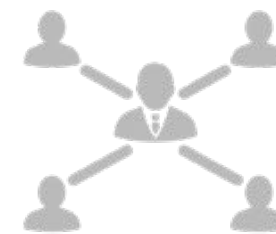
CSR &
Corporate
Foundations



HR / Talent:
Leadership
Development



Board
Governance



Board
Placement,
Training &
Support



Board - CEO
Coaching

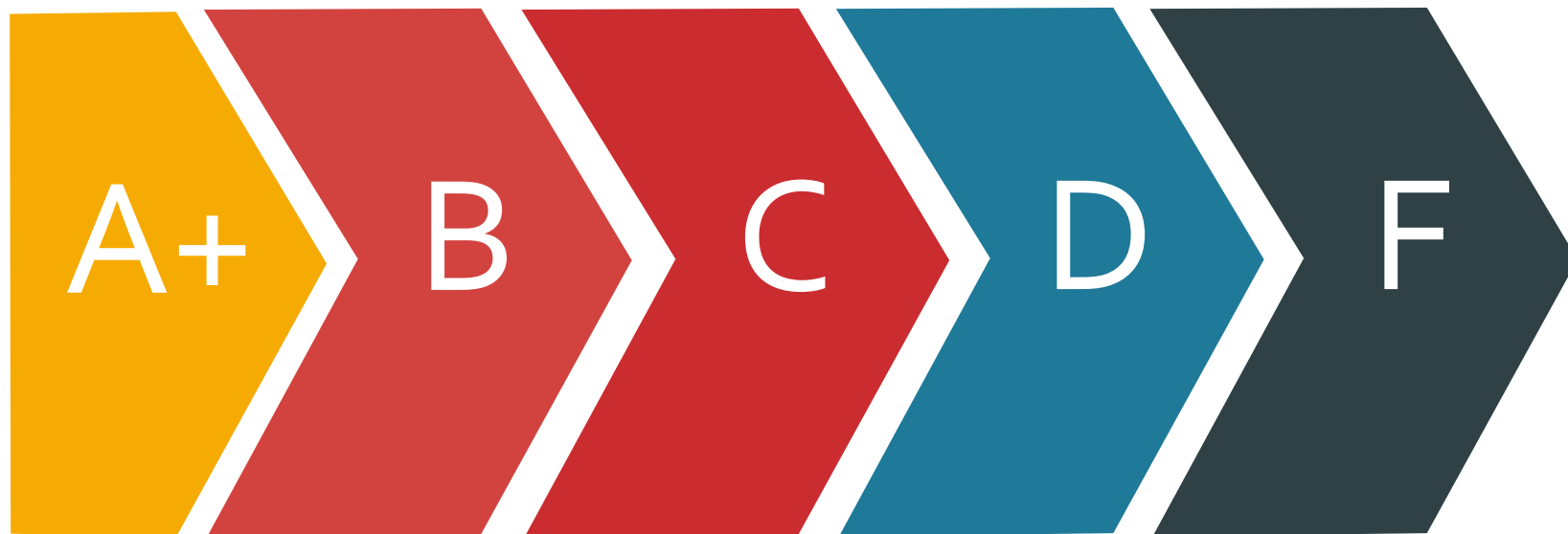


#BLF2017

Board Performance Continuum

How do you grade your board?

Well-oiled,
miracle-working,
resource-driving
machine!



Board?
What Board?



PASSION LED US HERE

Why Do So Many Boards Underperform?

Low Expectations

Wrong Expectations

Lack of Opportunity to Engage

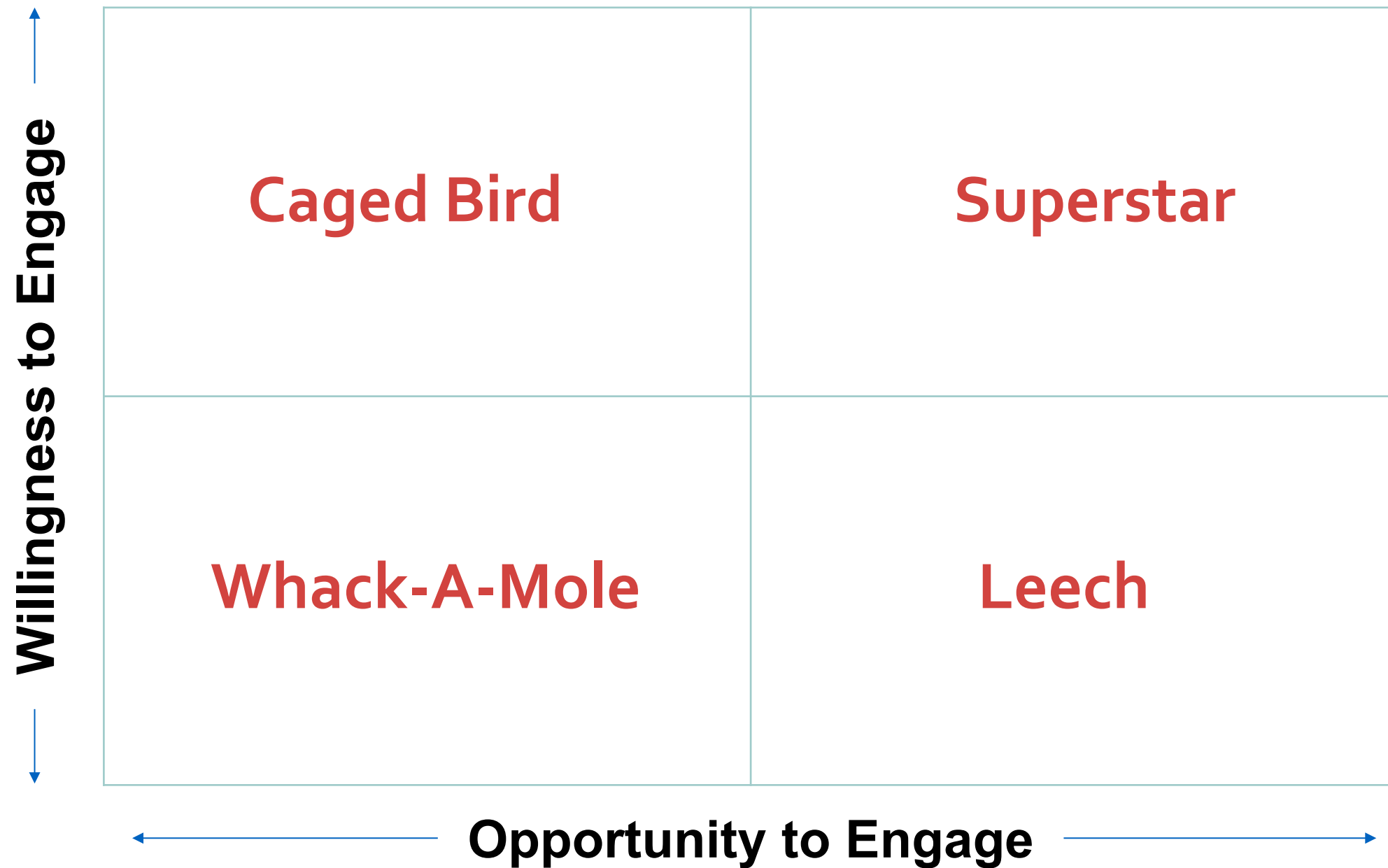
Tolerance for Underperformance



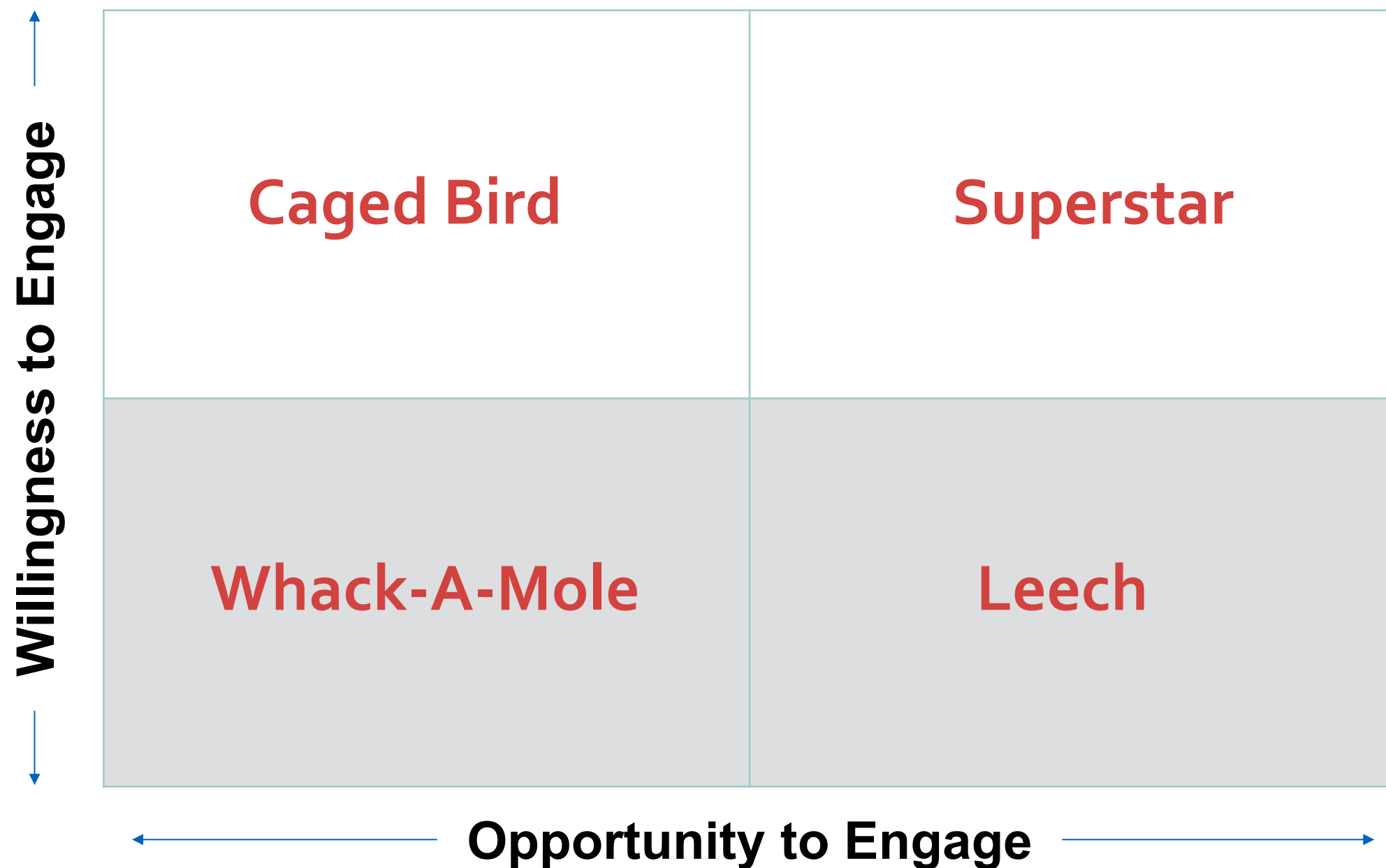
Wrong Expectations



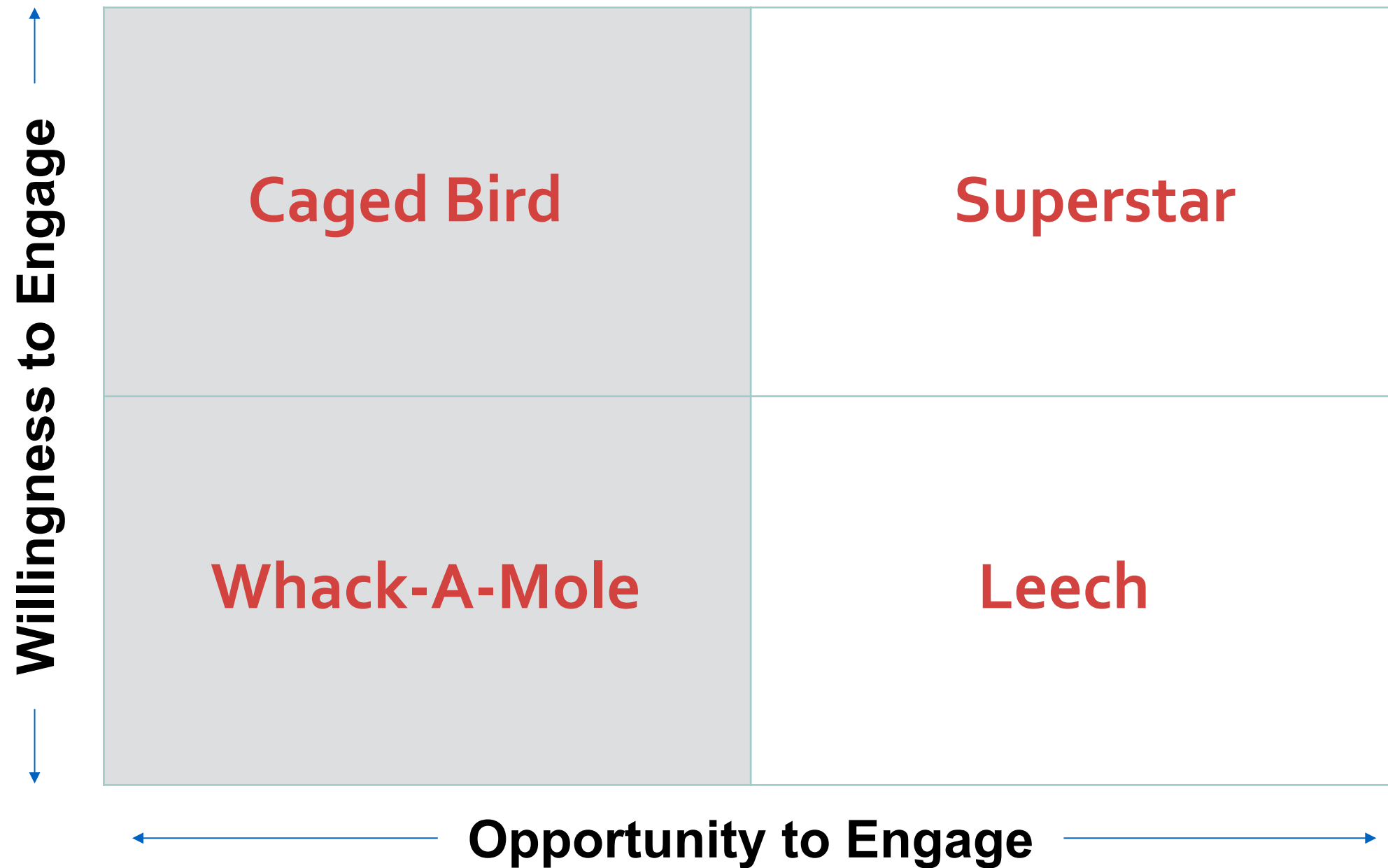
Lack of Opportunity to Engage



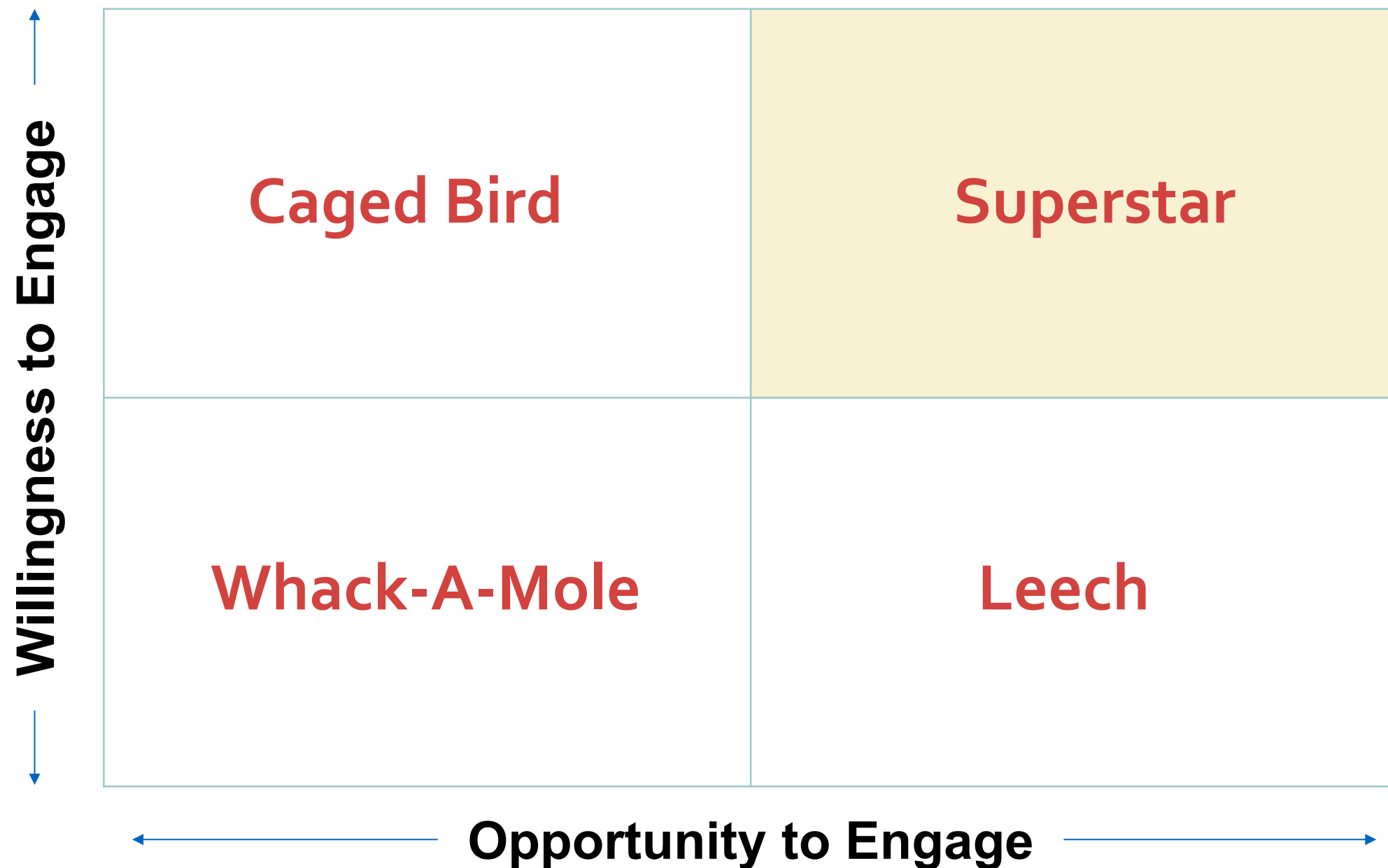
Tolerance for Underperformance



Board Structure Has To Change



Willingness + Opportunity = Full Engagement



6 Things You Can Do Right Now

Make better use of
Board Meetings

Treat Board Members as
individuals, not just 'the
Board'

Reshape Board Culture,
starting today

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BoardSource®
Empowering Boards. Inspiring Leadership.

**We Want
Board Members to Be:**

**ENGAGED
WELL-INFORMED
STRATEGIC
ENERGIZED**

Create Engaging Board Meetings

If We Want
Board Members to Be:

ENGAGED
WELL-INFORMED
STRATEGIC
ENERGIZED

Board Meetings
Must Be:

ENGAGING
INFORMATIVE
FOCUSED ON STRATEGY
ENERGIZING

Booster #1: Reimagine the Agenda

Make Generative and Strategic Questions the Backbone of the Agenda

Generative	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Deeper-level thinking on topics of particular importance to the organization● Often focus on topics related to vision, mission or values● Framing, exploring why● Often no decision is required; there is value in simply discussing as a board● First in the agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Board discussion and planning around a central responsibility: shaping an effective strategy for the future● Focuses on internal/external scans, priority setting, programmatic direction● Questions related to developing, reviewing, modifying or monitoring the strategic plan● Decisions often required● Backbone of the agenda

Source: Chait, Richard, et al. Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards. John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

Booster #1: Reimagine the Agenda

Examples

Generative	Strategic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our mission statement refers to our clients as the 'poorest of the poor.' What does this say about our work to the outside world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why are membership renewals in decline? What are the environmental factors leading to this outcome?

Booster #1: Reimagine the Agenda

My Favorite Generative Questions

1. What word in our mission statement means the most to you? Why?
2. What word doesn't appear in our mission statement, but should?
3. On what list would we rank #1? On what list would we *want* to rank #1?
4. What three words best describe our organization?
5. What is the greatest opportunity you see for us to grab ahold of in the upcoming year?
6. If you heard someone talking about our organization a row behind you at a Cubs Game, what do you hope you'd hear?
7. If we were approached about a merger, what values would we need to see demonstrated by the organization before we'd even consider it?

Booster #1: Reimagine the Agenda

Facilitate Participation at Every Stage of the Meeting

1. Include go-around activities
2. Stop reading the report
3. Remake committee reports
4. Assign stakeholder roles
5. Assign a contrarian



It doesn't cost anything



You can begin today!



BoardSource®
Empowering Boards. Inspiring Leadership.

Booster #2: Develop a Board Dashboard
















Two Approaches

1. Quick and easy
2. Longer and more complex



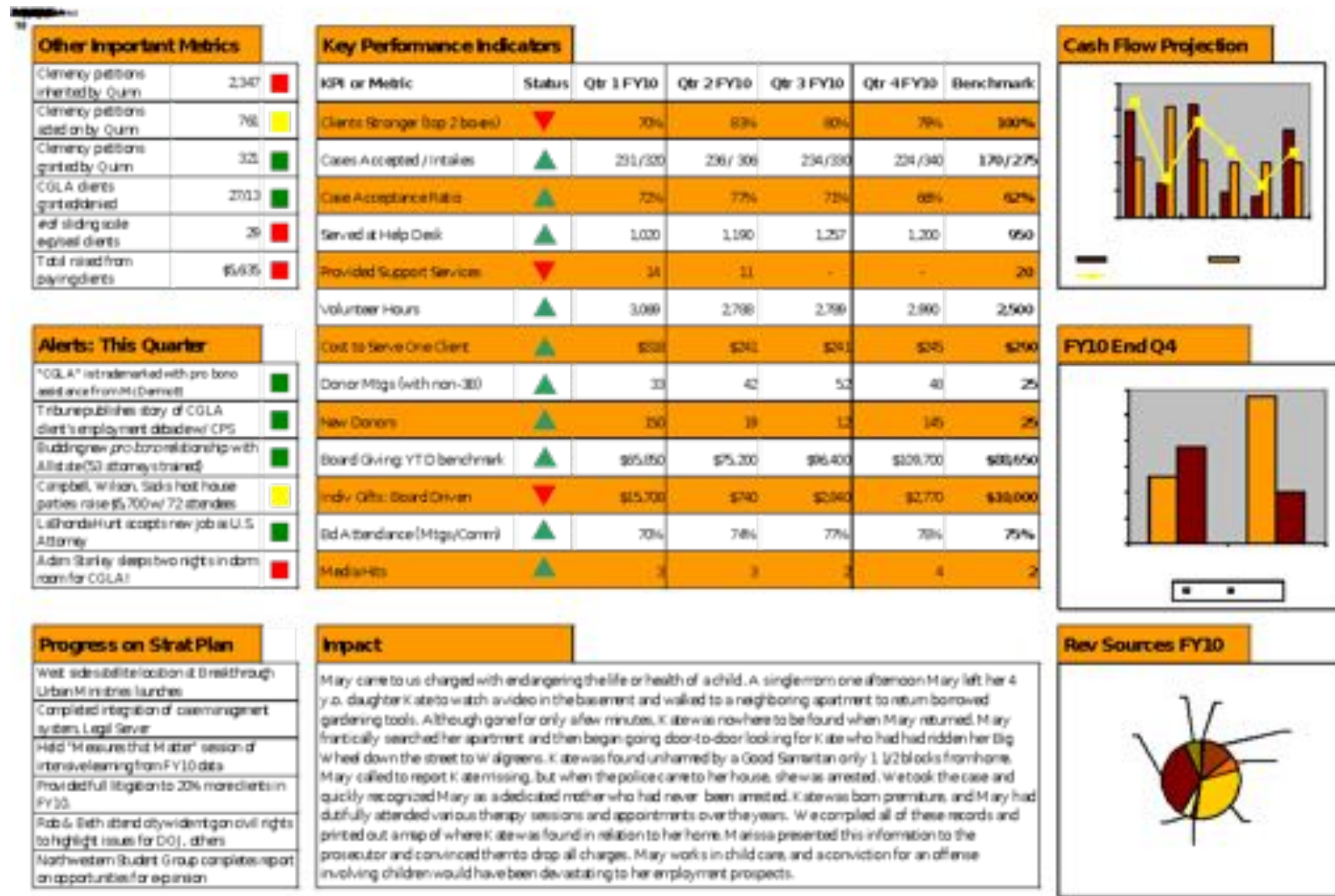
Booster #2: Develop a Board Dashboard

Quick and easy

CITY	BOARD LEADERSHIP	REVENUE	EVOLVING PROGRAMS	ADVISORY SERVICES	CATALYTIC EFFORTS
New York					
DC					
Chicago					
San Francisco					
Los Angeles					

Booster #2: Develop a Board Dashboard

Longer and more complex



It doesn't cost anything



You can begin today!

6 Things You Can Do Right Now

Make better use of
Board meetings

**Treat Board Members
as individuals,
not just 'the Board'**

Reshape Board Culture,
starting today

Booster #3: Hit Their Sweet Spot

Identify (and name) unique strengths

1. Explore during board member vetting process
2. Strengths Finder 2.0 (gallupstrengthcenter.com)
3. At My Best Strengths Cards (atmybest.com)



Booster #3: Hit Their Sweet Spot

Establish a Task Force Around a Board Member's Expertise

1. Based on skill sets, expand the number of board leadership opportunities
 - Task Forces
 - Committees
 - Working Groups
2. Don't get stuck by the traditional Standing Committee structure



Booster #3: Hit Their Sweet Spot

Make Big Asks

1. The more accomplished, the bigger the ask
2. Leaders are drawn to challenges



It doesn't cost anything



You can begin today!

Booster #4: Amp Up Communication

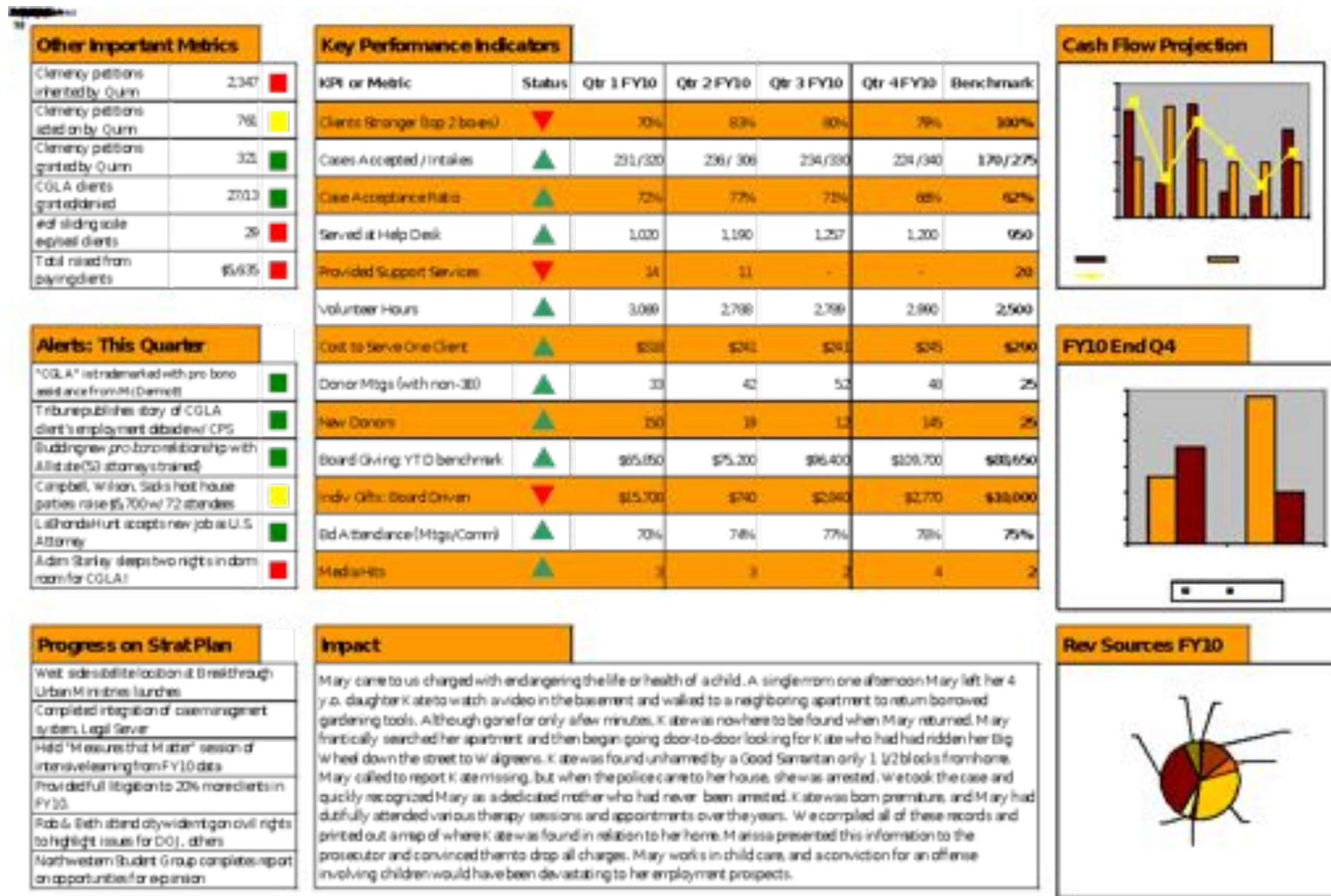
Celebrate Accomplishments

1. Have the Board Chair share the specific contributions of each Board Member, in detail, at the beginning of each meeting



Booster #4: Amp Up Communication

Arm Board Members with Stories of Impact



It doesn't cost anything



You can begin today!

6 Things You Can Do Right Now

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Reshape Board culture,
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Let's Be Creative

Board Culture Reflection

Describe your Board's
culture with the title of a
movie, song or TV show.

Share why.

Symptoms of an Unhealthy Board

Symptom	Conditions
The Silent Start	Board Members sit in awkward silence as they wait for the Chair to call the meeting to order. You can cut the air in the room with a knife.
The Frantic Beg	Less than half of the Board is present at meeting's start time. The Chief Executive begins frantically calling and texting board members, begging them to call in to achieve quorum.
The Dominator	The Board Chair or Chief Executive dominates the conversation.
The Great Escape	Board Members drift out of the meeting early....or drift off to sleep.
The Paper Chase	The Director of Development has to chase down the annual personal gifts of Board Members, numerous times, at end of the fiscal year.

Harvard Business Review: “What Makes Great Boards Great” by Jeffrey Sonnenfeld

The Importance of the Human Element

“So if following good-governance regulatory recipes doesn’t produce good boards, what does? **The key isn’t structural, it’s social.** The most involved, diligent, value-adding boards may or may not follow every recommendation in the good-governance handbook. **What distinguishes exemplary boards is that they are robust, effective social systems.”**

- Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld, Yale School of Management

Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

What Makes for a Healthy Individual?

1. Emotionally connected
2. Mentally focused
3. Physically energized
4. Spiritually aligned



Loehr, Jim, and Tony Schwartz. The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal. Free Press Paperbacks, 2005.

Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

A Healthy Board is Emotionally Connected

1. Structure board work so authentic relationships can develop
2. Never waste a good crisis



Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

A Healthy Board is Mentally Focused

“Board members who are asked to sit through mind-numbing, show-and-tell meetings with predetermined outcomes can’t be faulted for wondering how their presence makes any material difference....”

- Nancy R. Axelrod

Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

A Healthy Board is Mentally Focused

1. Engage the intellect and wisdom of your board
2. Ask them big questions
3. Ensure diversity of personal backgrounds and professional skills
4. Build better board meetings



Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

A Healthy Board is Physically Energized

1. Get them out of their seats
2. Bake movement into meetings and retreats
3. Take a walking tour of a neighborhood
4. Bring Board Members together for programs



Booster #5: Tap into the 4 Dimensions of Health

A Healthy Board is Spiritually Aligned

1. Keep Board Members close to the “Why are you here?” question
2. Expose them to the organization’s “holy discontent”



It doesn't cost anything



You can begin today!

Booster #6: Get Started Today



Robert B. Acton, Founder & Principal, Cause Strategy Partners

Email: rob@causestrategypartners.com

Twitter: [@RobertActon](https://twitter.com/RobertActon)

