

A Better Board for the Greater Good

The ADEPT Board Effectiveness Framework

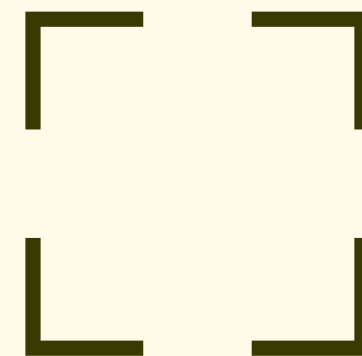
Erin R. Hastey, PhD

May 21st, 2025

Wyoming Nonprofit Network Conference

Wind River Room

PDF of these Slides:



Think about a nonprofit you represent this week.

Why do you serve this nonprofit?

Why do you serve this nonprofit
in the way that you do?

Why do you serve this nonprofit
in the way that you do
at this time in your life?

Congratulations!

You just conducted a self-evaluation.

How did it feel?

EVALUATION

ADEPT

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK

I'm Erin. I help boards of directors build the relational strength they need to serve the organizations they steward.



Fast Facts

- Over a decade of experience working with nonprofit and publicly elected boards
- PhD in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from UW-Madison
 - Award-winning dissertation on board effectiveness in community colleges
- If you're a board member, I am wearing your shoes
 - Currently serving on five nonprofit boards, and chairing two
 - (Yes, it's too many)

Plan for This Session



01

The Research behind ADEPT

02

Dimensions of Whole-Board Effectiveness

03

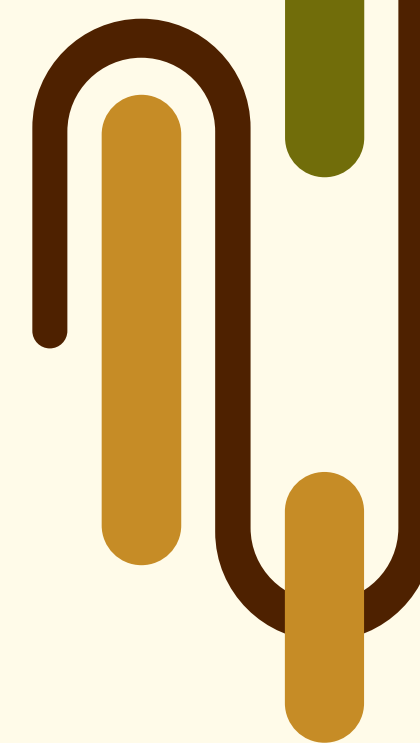
Dimensions of Board Member Effectiveness

04

Putting it all together: The ADEPT Framework

05

Next steps: How to evaluate how to evaluate



The Research

A mixed-methods research study that included analysis of board evaluation reports, interviews with board members, and regression analyses of college outcomes and completion of a board member development program.

Read the study:



Meta-inference

Highly effective boards are more than the sum of their members. The collective, relational skill of a board is foundational to its effectiveness.

Whole-Board Dimensions:
ACCOUNTABILITY and DEDICATION

Individual Board Member Dimensions:
POWER and TEACHABILITY

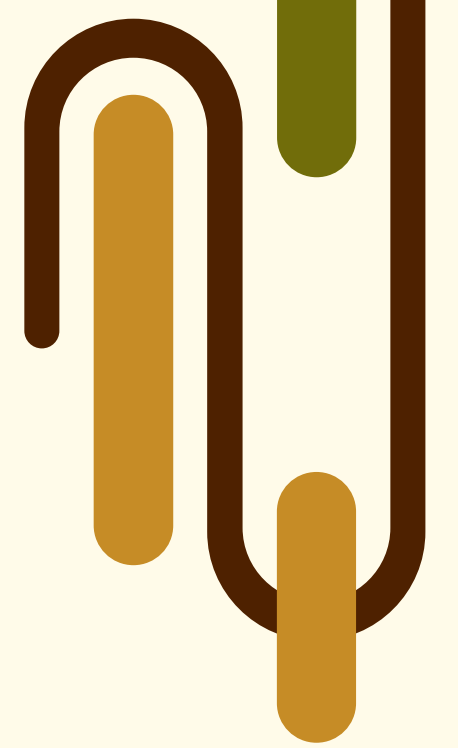


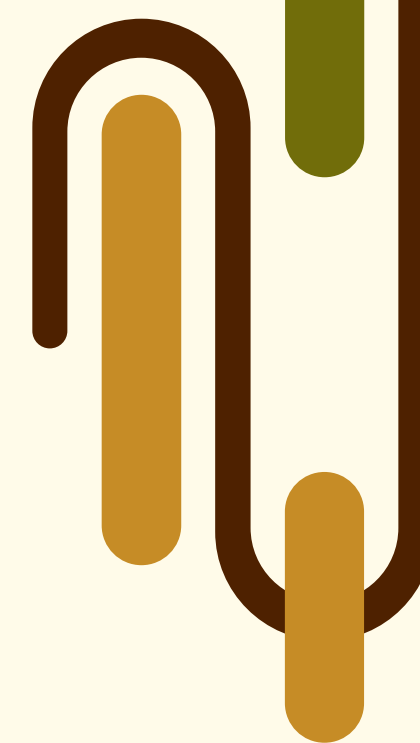
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BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK

Dimensions of Whole- Board Effectiveness

*Accountability
&
Dedication*

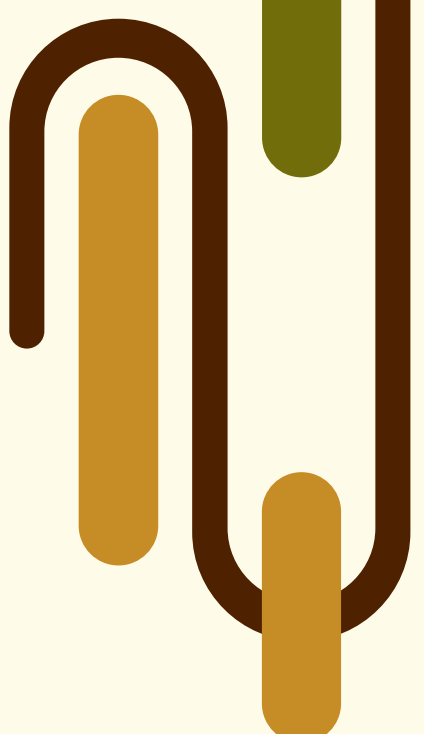




Accountability

Accountable boards know their role, and together make consistent, strong efforts to execute that role.

Accountability



They foster a culture of accountability among themselves, their executive director, and their organizations. They recognize their responsibilities to different stakeholder groups, and they create processes to ensure they fulfill those responsibilities.

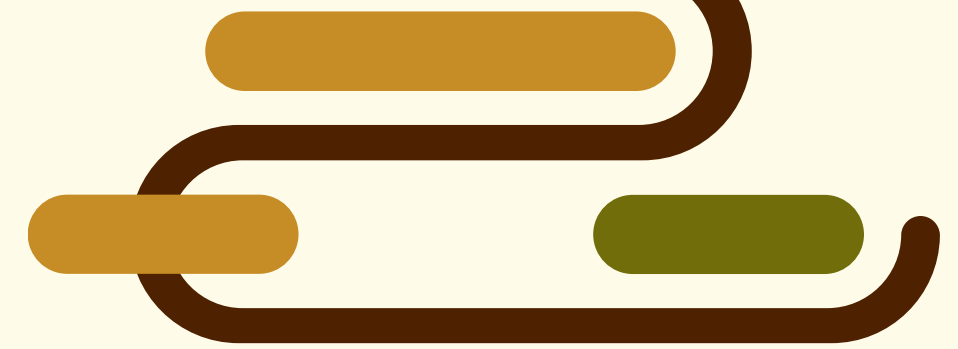
Board Role

Per the Wyoming Nonprofit Network

Learn more in the
WNN Learning
Library



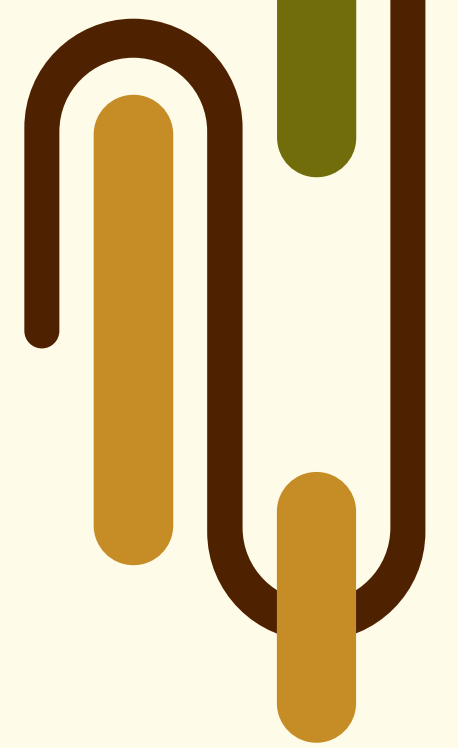
- Set mission and ensure effective planning.
- Ensure adequate financial resources and protect assets.
- Ensure compliance with legal and ethical obligations.
- Monitor program performance.
- Select, support, and evaluate the chief executive.
- Serve as an advocate and ambassador.
- Ensure the board operates effectively and efficiently.
- Fulfill fiduciary responsibilities.



Accountability can look like...



- Preparing for meetings
- Following through on commitments
- Disagreeing well
- Conducting regular planning and evaluation
- Approving a budget that reflects good stewardship of resources
- Stewarding documents appropriate to the organization's needs
- Holding each other accountable to bylaws and board practices



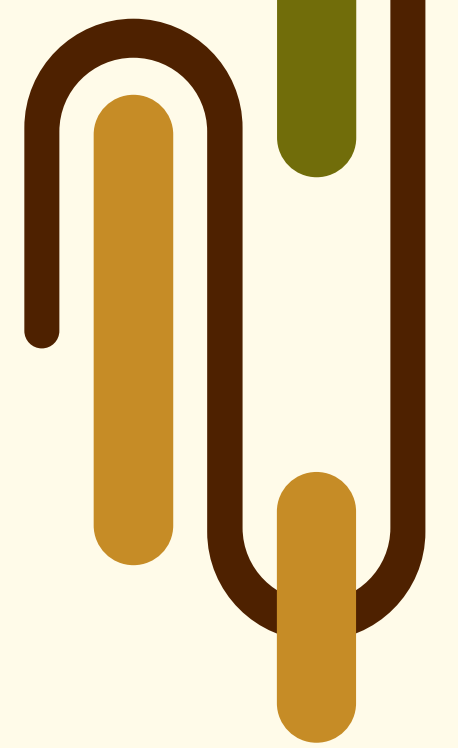
Hyperextended Accountability can look like...

- Unreasonable demands on an executive director
- Perfectionism around organizational documents (not recognizing that done is better than perfect)
- Evaluation and planning processes that are not constructive
- A board culture no sane person wants to be a part of

Dedication

Dedicated boards have a shared enthusiasm for the missions of their organization, and they show their dedication to that mission in formal and informal ways.

Dedication



This is the gushy stuff. Dedicated boards do and say things that make it clear they love their organizations.

Dedication can look like...

- Regularly affirming (and revising, if necessary) the organization's mission
- Empowering the executive director to do their job
- Supporting professional development for the board and staff
- Valuing and utilizing the gifts and expertise each board member brings
- Helping ensure the organization has financial resources adequate to its mission
- Assuming positive intent
- Supporting board decisions after votes

Hyperextended Dedication can look like...

- Avoidance of conflicts in appropriate settings
- Reticence to evaluate and plan honestly
- Delayed transition planning for the board and the executive director
- A board culture no sane person wants to be a part of (but it takes longer to recognize)

Whole-Board Dimensions:
ACCOUNTABILITY and DEDICATION



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BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK

Allow me to generalize.

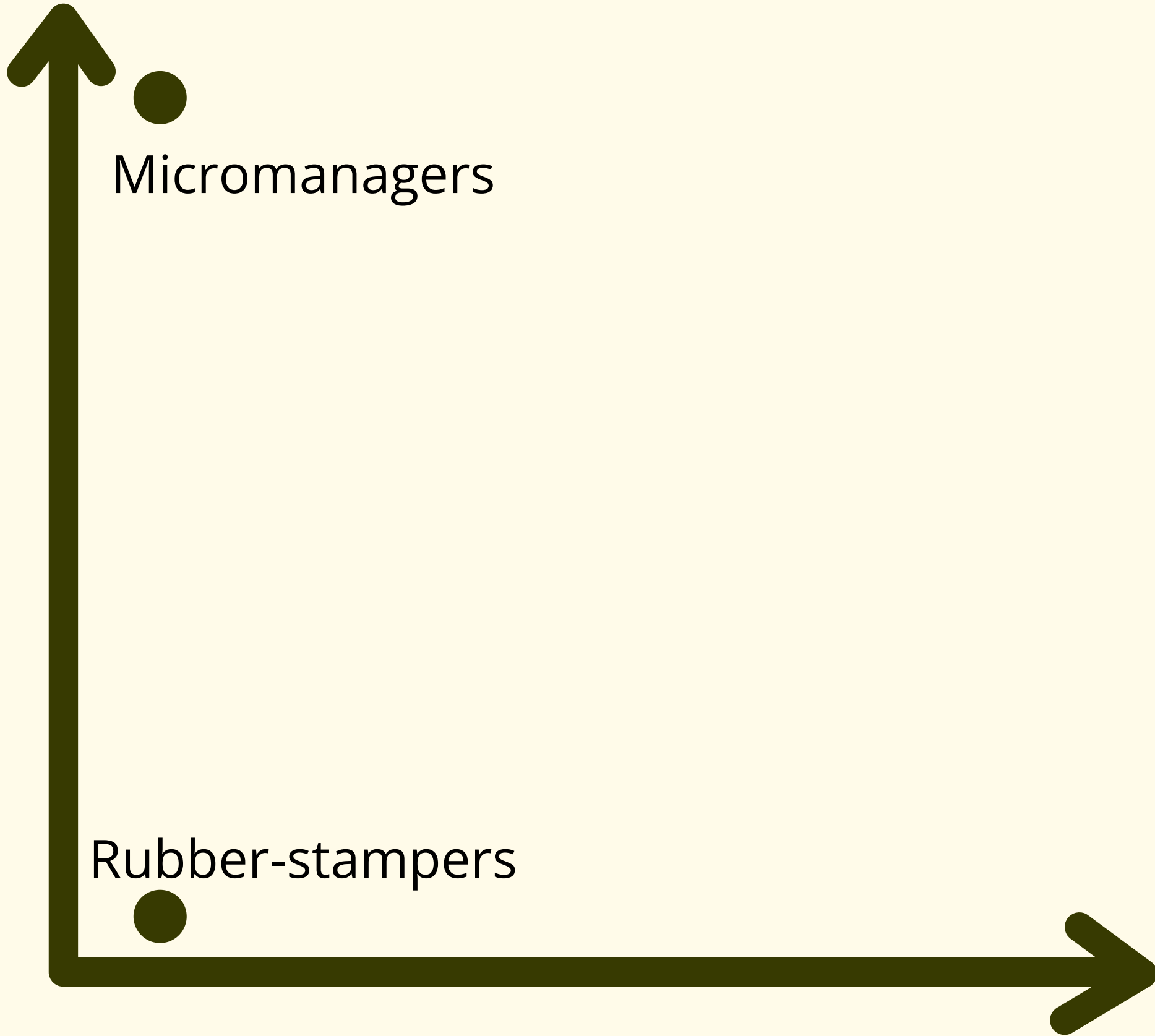
ACCOUNTABILITY



Inactive or Rubber-stampers

DEDICATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

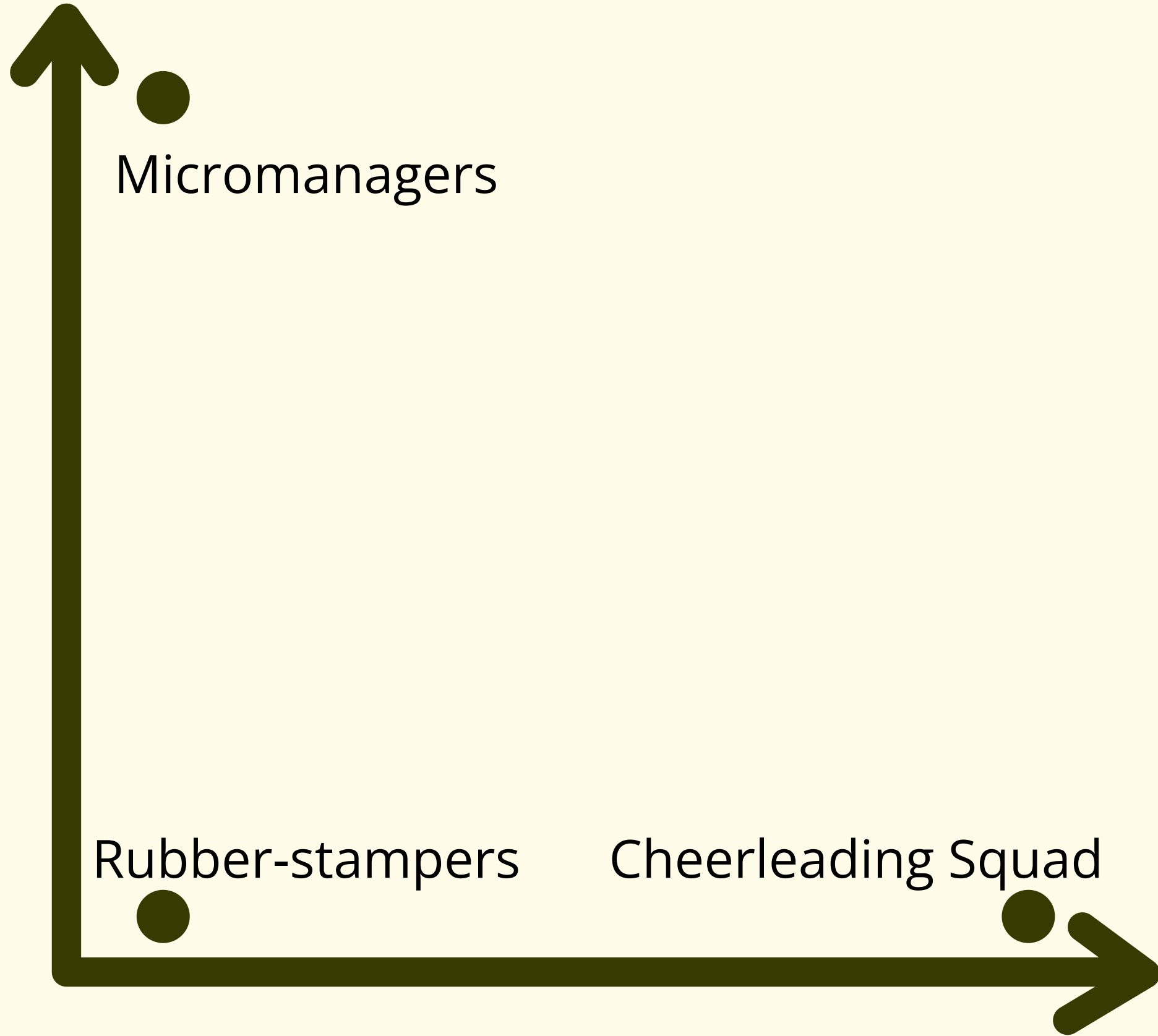


Micromanagers

Rubber-stampers

DEDICATION

ACCOUNTABILITY

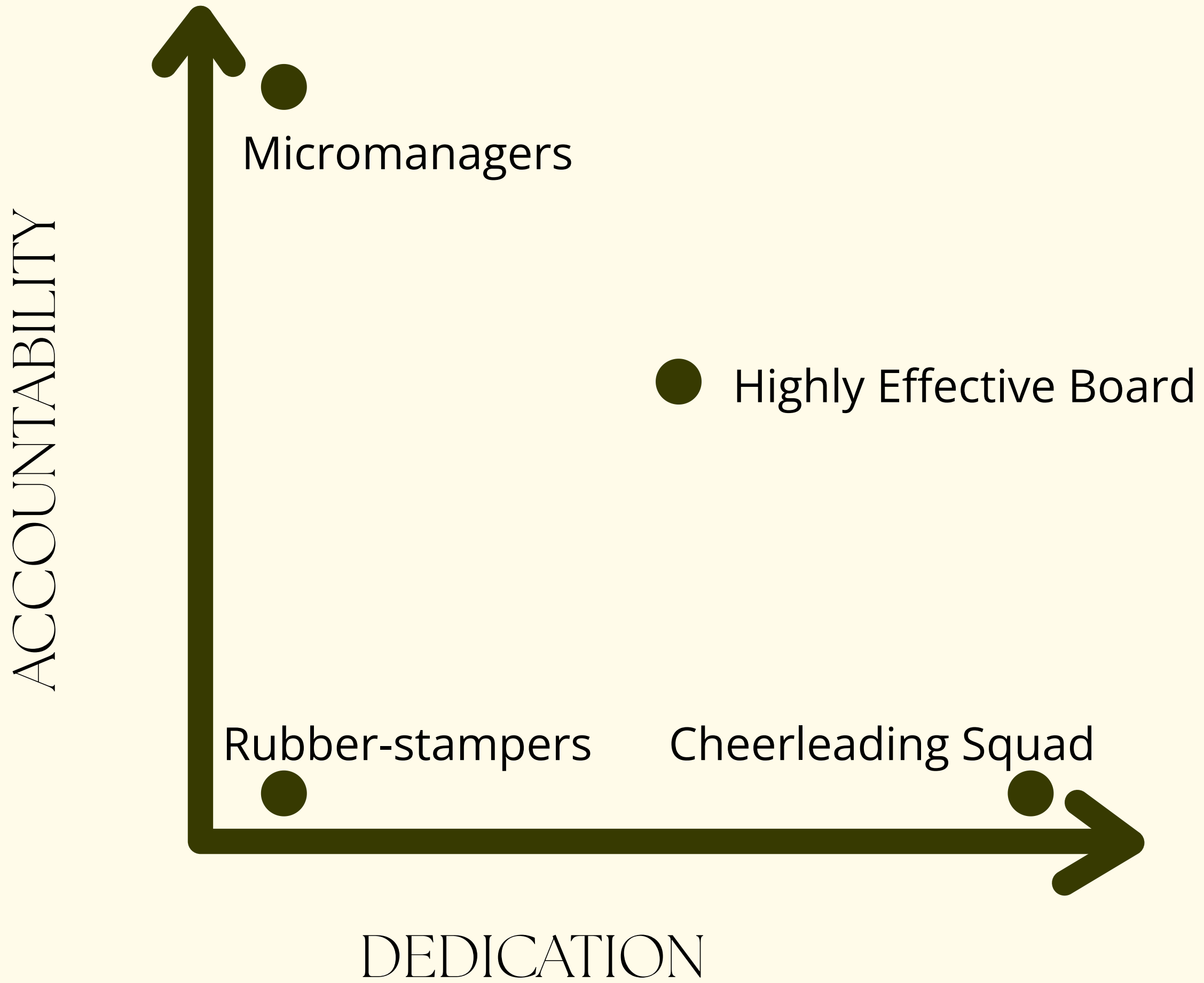


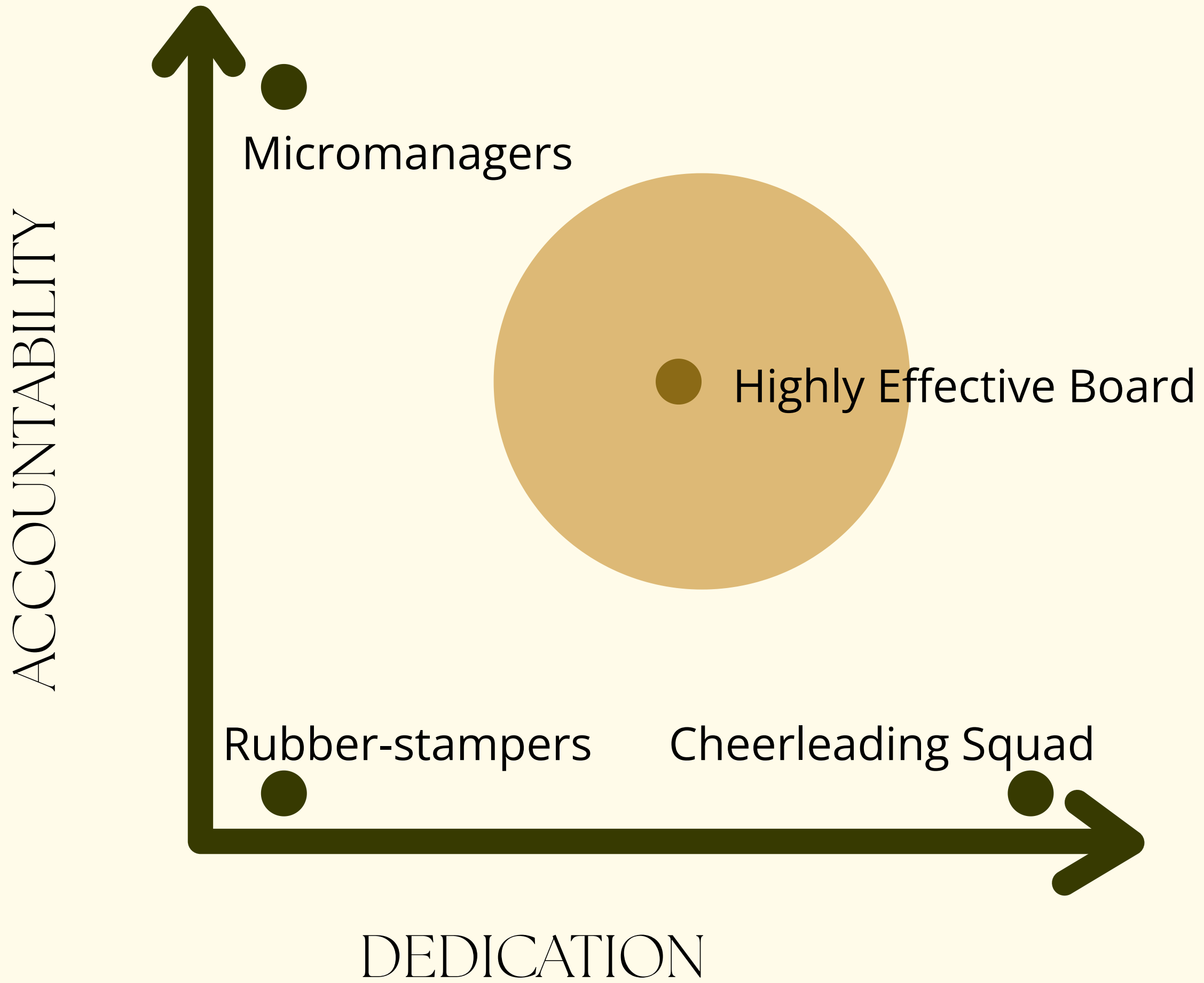
Micromanagers

Rubber-stampers

Cheerleading Squad

DEDICATION





Whole-Board Dimensions:
ACCOUNTABILITY and DEDICATION

Individual Board Member Dimensions:
POWER and TEACHABILITY

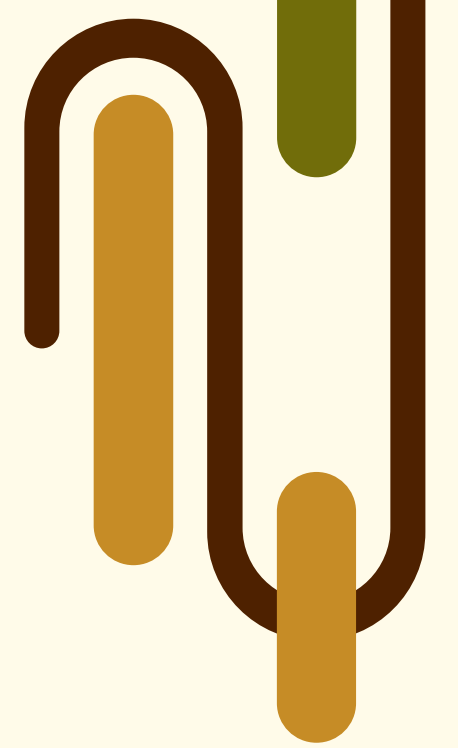


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BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK

Dimensions of Individual Board Member Effectiveness

*Power
&
Teachability*



Power

True or false: We want “Yes People” as board members.

Power

Effective board members understand the power that comes with their role and are willing to leverage it for what they view as the organization's best interests.

Power can look like...

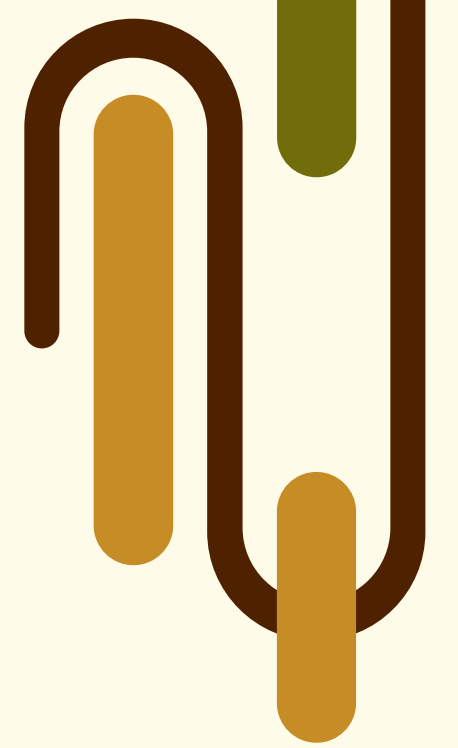
- Having the courage to make donor asks in their networks
- Participating in advocacy on the organization's behalf
- Reaching out to the board chair or other appropriate individual promptly and directly with a serious concern
- "I get my say."

Hyperextended Power can look like...

- Taking board-level concerns to staff directly
- Making promises to stakeholders the organization can't keep
- Speaking out of turn on behalf of the whole board or organization
- "I get my way."

Teachability

Effective board members know there is lots to learn! They approach their role with a desire to learn and grow.



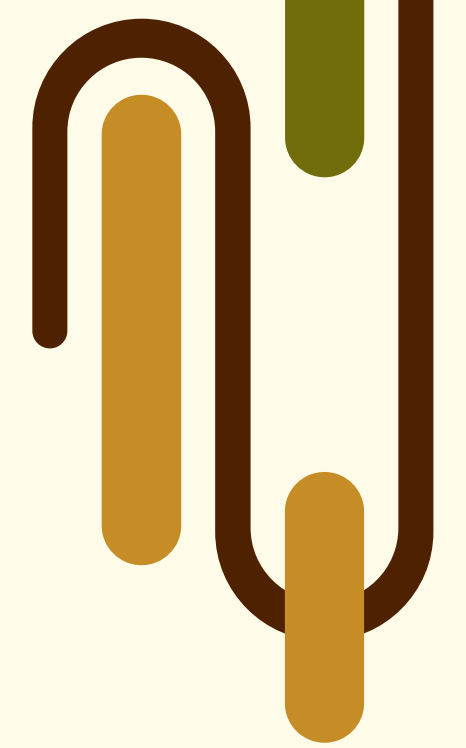
Teachability can look like...

- Participating individually in board training opportunities
- Coming to the Wyoming Nonprofit Conference!
- Learning about similar organizations
- Reading industry publications

Hyperextended Teachability can look like...



BOARD
LEADING
Dr. Erin Hastey



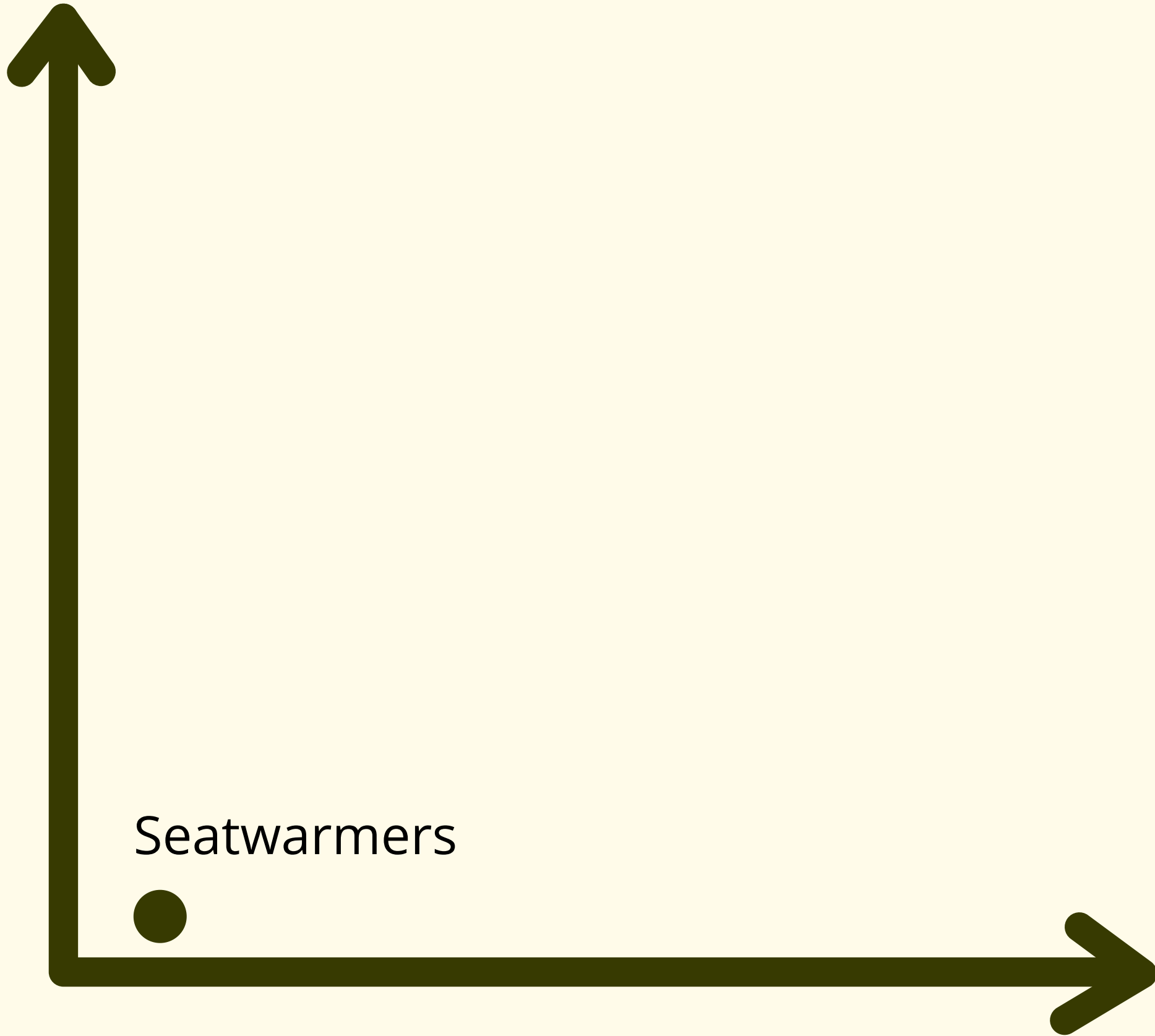
- Becoming the eternal student.
- Not seeing the fruits from investment in learning.
- Forgetting that what is obvious to you is...obvious to you.
- Getting frustrated with the limits of the board role.
- Perhaps needing to transition into a staff role or different volunteer role.

Individual Board Member Dimensions:
POWER and TEACHABILITY

ADEPT

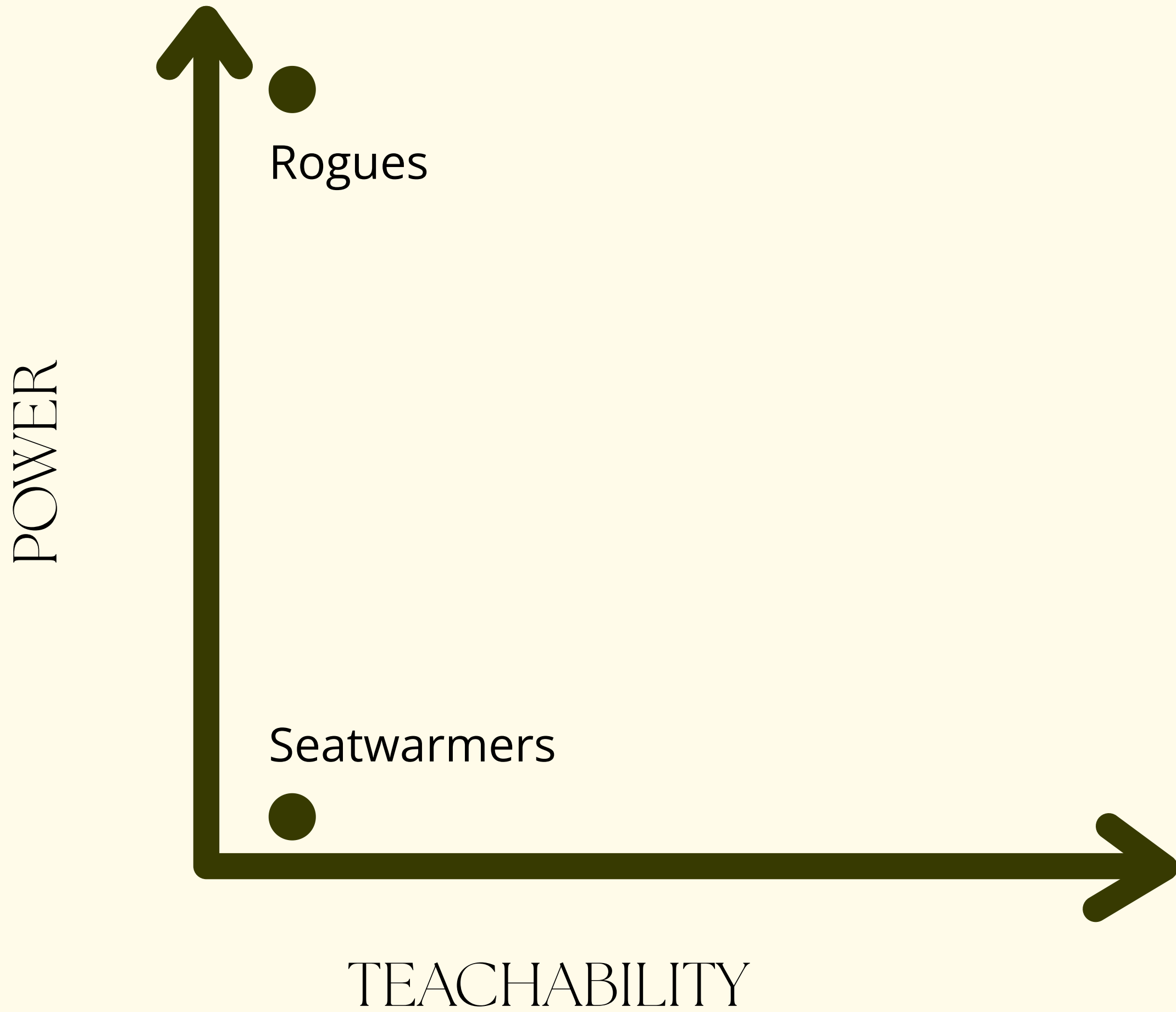
BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
FRAMEWORK

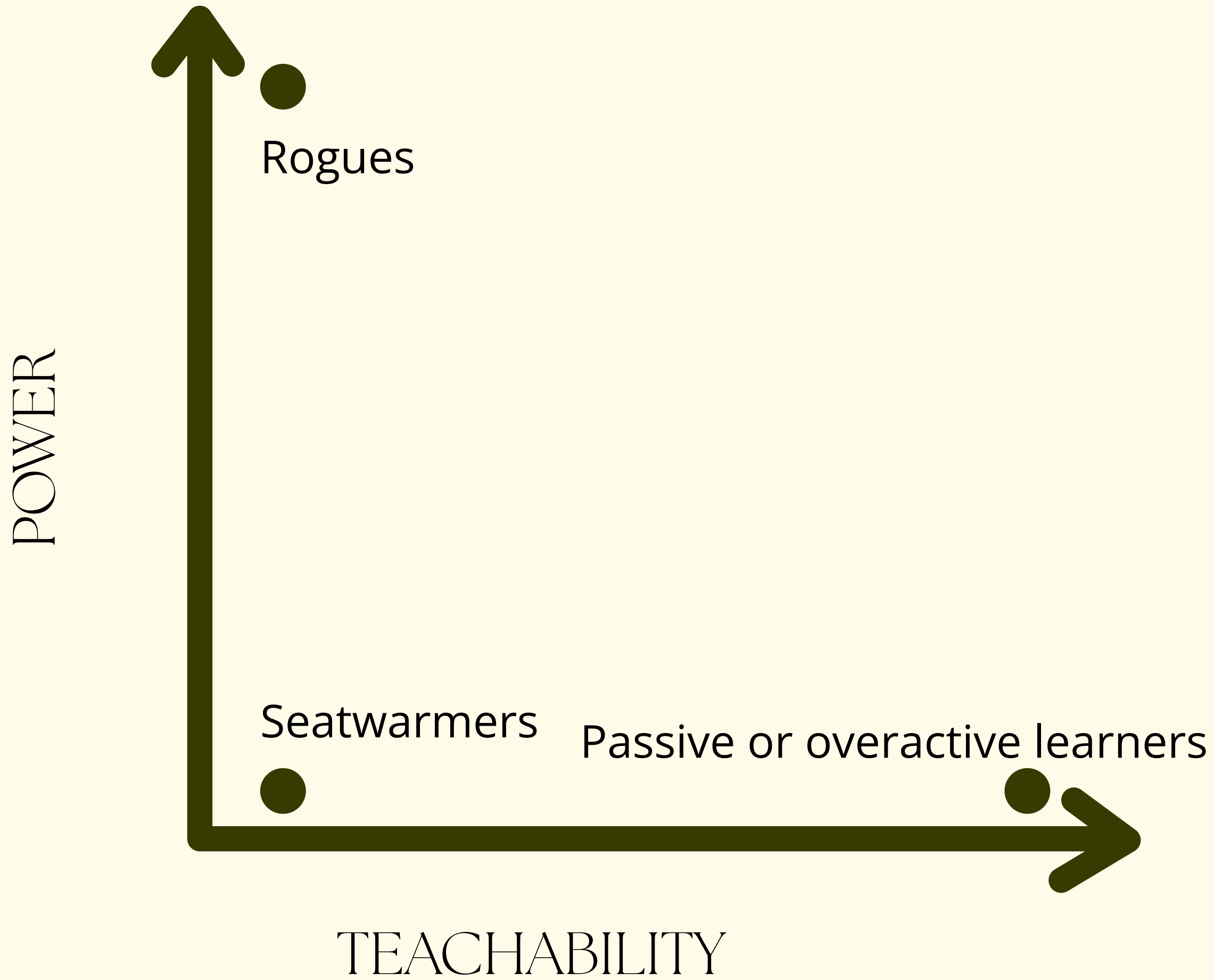
POWER

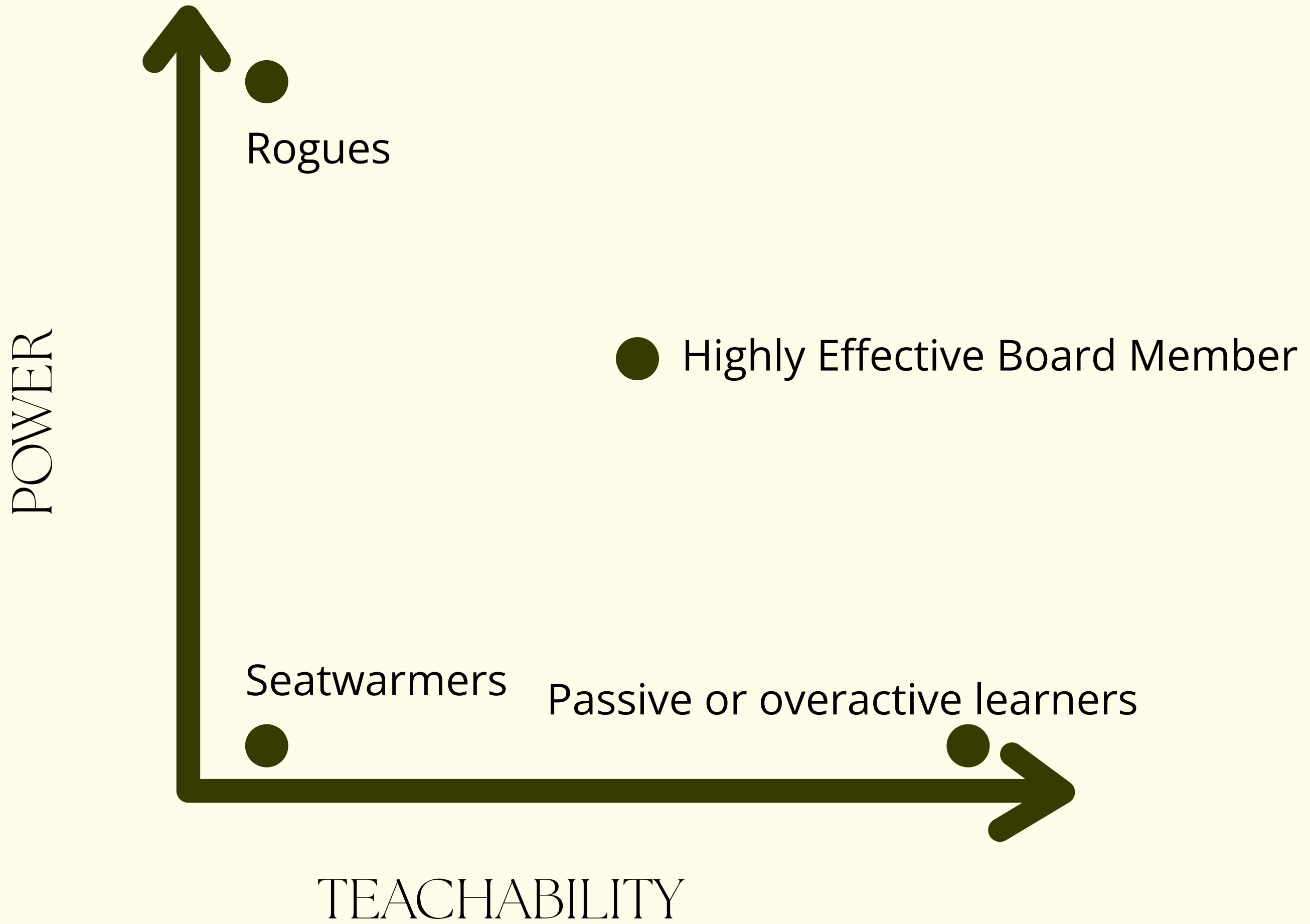


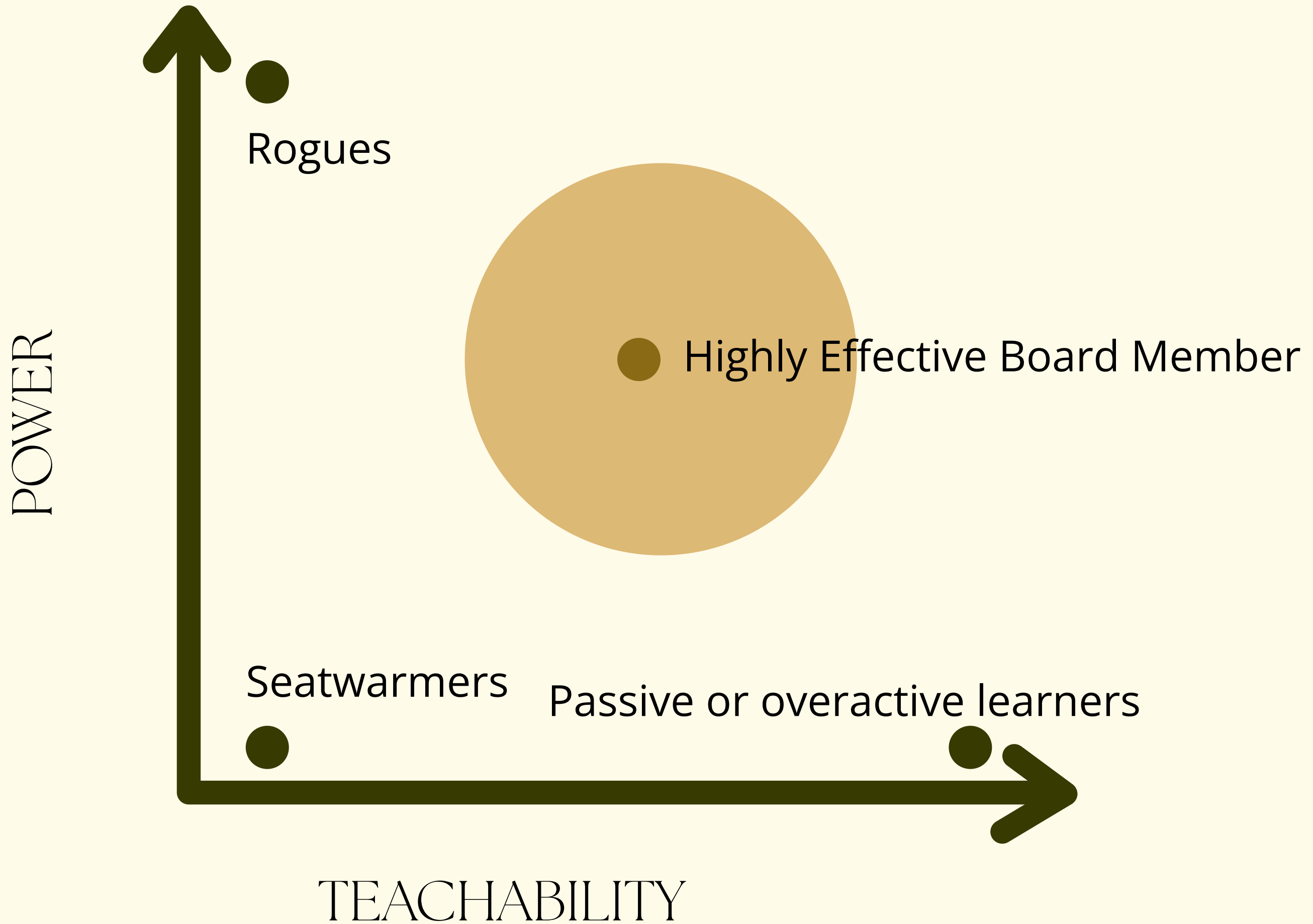
Seatwarmers

TEACHABILITY









EVALUATION

ADEPT

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS
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ADEPT

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

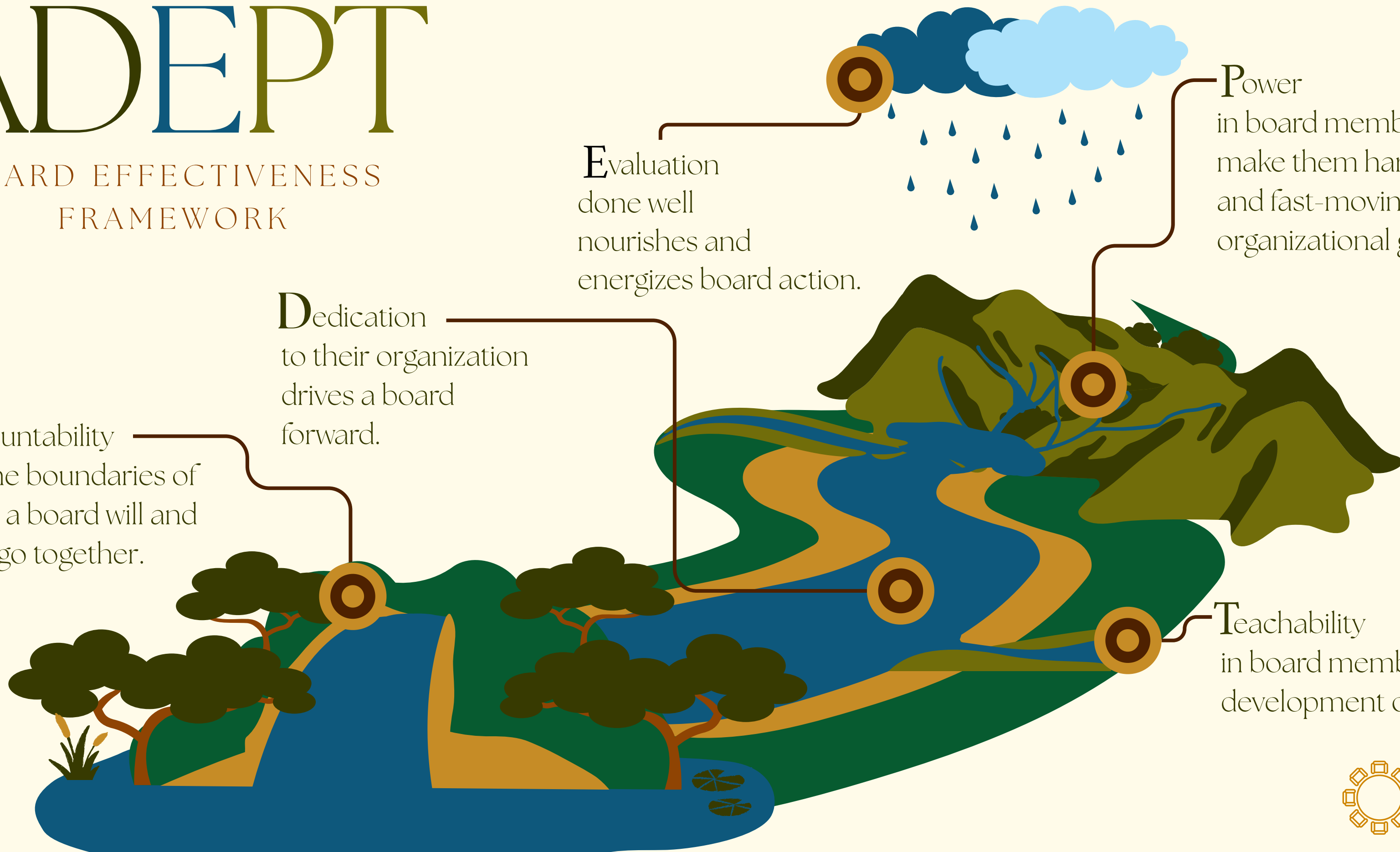
Evaluation
done well
nourishes and
energizes board action.

Power
in board members can
make them hard-driving
and fast-moving assets for
organizational growth.

Dedication
to their organization
drives a board
forward.

Accountability
sets the boundaries of
where a board will and
won't go together.

Teachability
in board members brings
development of expertise.



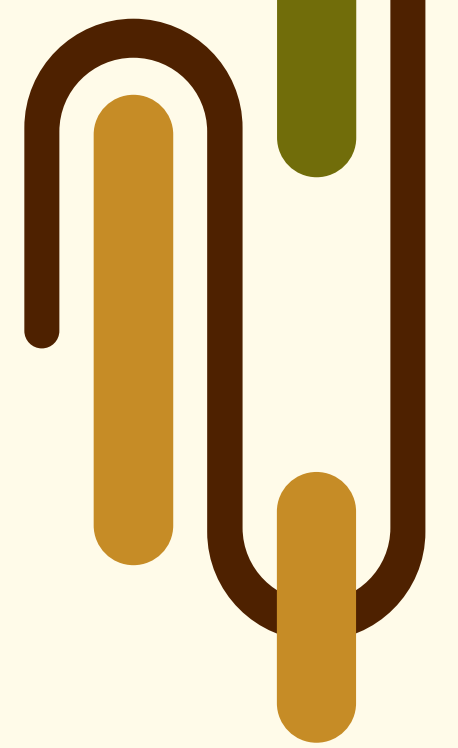
Evaluation
must be, on
the whole, a
positive
experience.



*Because we want boards to be
willing to do it again, and again,
and again.*

Evaluation Approaches

- Conversational
- Survey-Based
- Organizational Metrics-Based



How to evaluate how to evaluate

- What organizational data are available to you?
- How much organizational history does the board have?
- What relational prep work needs to be done to ensure people feel safe to have honest conversations?
- What has worked well in the past?
- What hasn't?



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Putting it all together: The ADEPT Framework

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Next steps: How to evaluate how to evaluate

Thank you!

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