

# Reflecting on non-profit governance

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Wellesley Institute, Board Director

PACE Seminar

*Non-profit Boards  
and the Non-profit Sector*

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# 4 Questions

What is the role of a non-profit board?

What qualities will help you be an effective Board member?

What does a well-functioning Board look like?

What lessons have I learned?



What is the role  
of a non-profit Board?

## Hiring (and firing) the Executive Director or CEO

Generative Discussions



Strategic Planning

Fiduciary Oversight & Risk Management

What attributes will help you be an effective Board member?

# Be an Active Listener



“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

Winston Churchill

# Contribute



“It is the responsibility of leadership to provide opportunity, and the responsibility of individuals to contribute.”

William Pollard



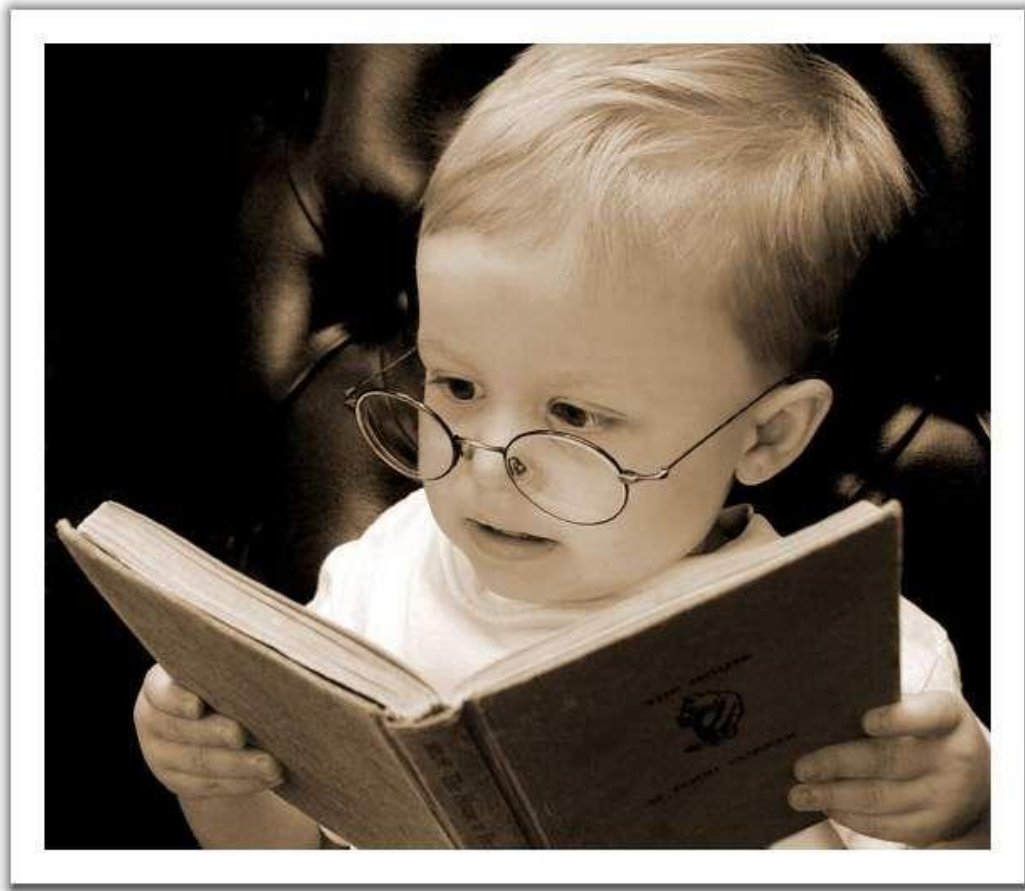
KEEP  
CALM  
AND

ASK  
QUESTIONS

“Millions  
saw the  
apple fall,  
but Newton  
was the  
one who  
asked why.”

Bernard  
Baruch





“Not all readers are  
leaders, but all  
leaders are readers.”

Harry S. Truman

Read

# You can be an effective board member by...

Listening

Reading



Contributing

Asking Questions

What does a well-functioning  
Board look like?



# Strong Culture



“The problem is, most board cultures are developed by default, not design”

– Jim Brown

Do you have...

Team Agreements (ie Ground Rules)?

Robust Orientation for new members?

Good Meeting Management?

Self-Evaluation survey?

Board Retreat and/or a Board Social?



# Intentional Recruitment



“Recognizing an organization’s purpose-centered ownership clarifies how people would have an ownership stake in non-profit”

– Jim Brown

What does your Board look like – literally?

Do you use a skills matrix?

How and where do you advertise vacancies?

What questions do you ask during the interview? How do you ensure candidates subscribe to your mission and vision?

It's easy to put a square  
peg in a round hole.



All you have to do is cut every single  
corner and cram it in as hard as you can.



# Helpful Governance



“The only way a board can responsibly do its job without meddling is by monitoring very well”

– Jim Brown

What is your strategic planning process?

Is your governance form aligned with your org’s function?

Are your policies reviewed and updated regularly?

How often do you meet?

Are your key governance documents easy to find?

How do you monitor the organization and the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer’s performance?



# Trust-Based Relationships



“When the single straight lines  
of communication, authority  
and accountability get broken,  
confusion and chaos result”

– Jim Brown

Board Member to Board Member

Board Member to Executive Director/CEO

Board Member to Staff

Board Member to Clients/Users

Board Member to External Stakeholders

# A well-functioning board has...

Trust-Based Relationships

Helpful Governance



Strong Culture

Intentional Recruitment



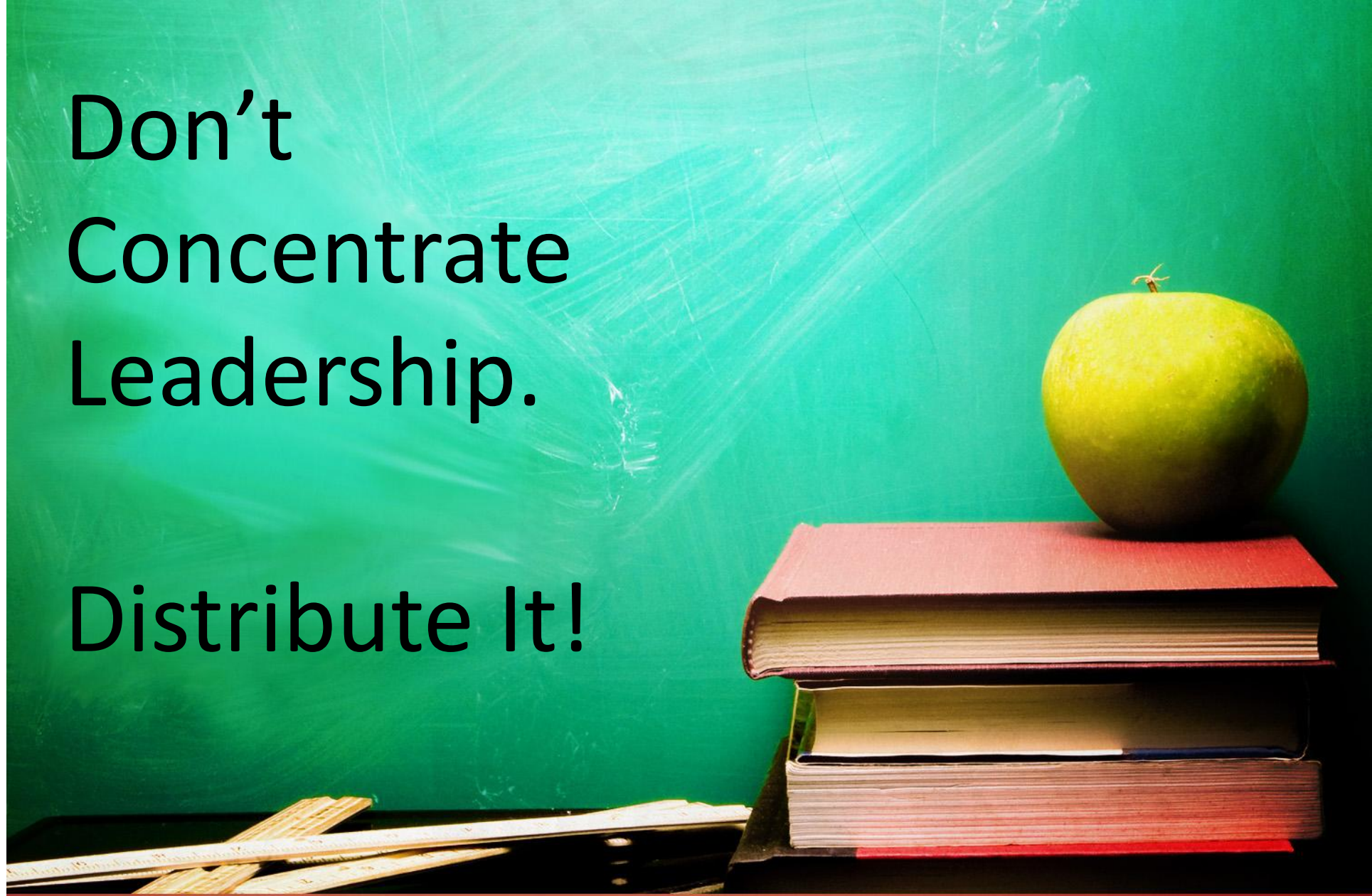
Lessons  
Learned

# Manage Expectations



Don't  
Concentrate  
Leadership.

Distribute It!



Aim for being  
effective,  
not perfect\*

\*Unless you're on the audit  
committee





Attend your  
organization's  
events

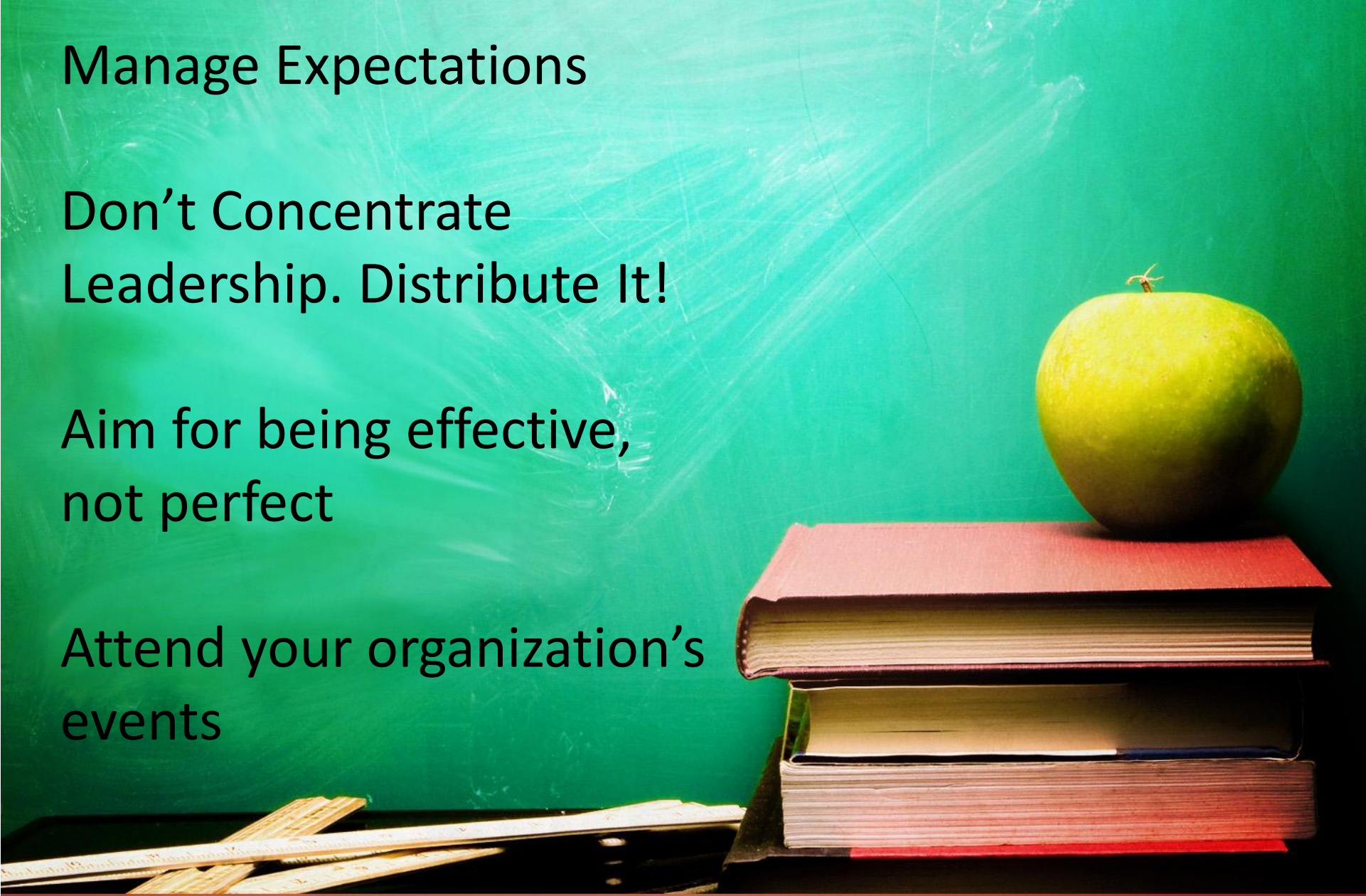


Manage Expectations

Don't Concentrate  
Leadership. Distribute It!

Aim for being effective,  
not perfect

Attend your organization's  
events



# Thank you



“Apparently the chair made a list of those that could benefit from governance classes, and it turned out to be everyone.”

[www.healthcaregovernancereview.org](http://www.healthcaregovernancereview.org)

## My Mentors:

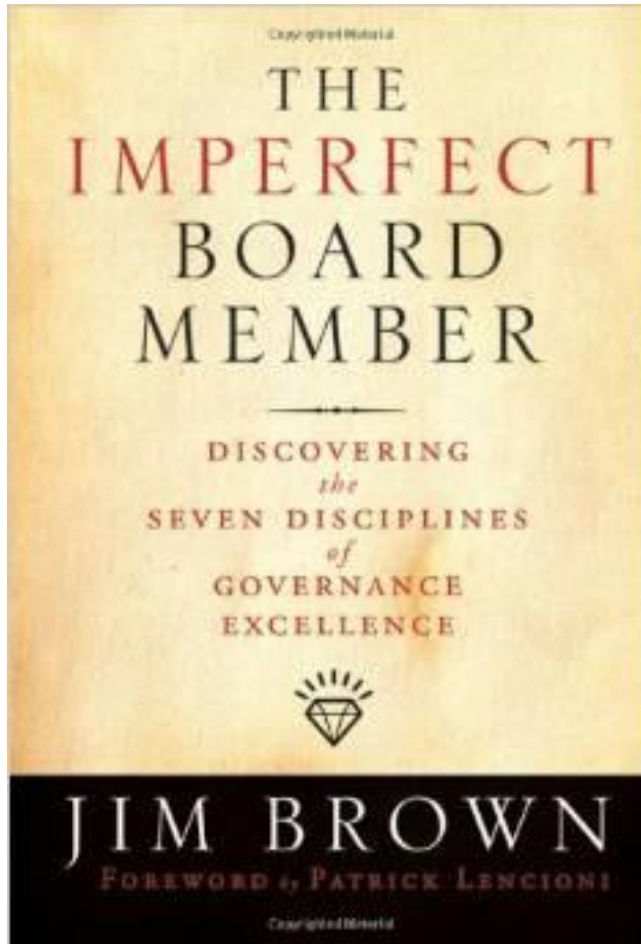
**Mr. Louis Charpentier**  
Secretary  
Governing Council  
University of Toronto

**Mr. Brendan Wong**  
Former Chair  
Board of Directors  
Access Alliance

**Ms Jodi Butts**  
Chair, Governance Committee  
Board of Directors  
Wellesley Institute

BONUS!

# The Seven Disciplines of Governance Excellence



1. DIRECT...Organizational Performance
2. PROTECT...Organizational Performance
3. RESPECT...Owner Expectations
4. REFLECT...on Organizational Results
5. SELECT...Your Prominent Leadership
6. EXPECT...Great Board-Management Interaction
7. CONNECT...for healthy Board Relations