

Building The Will

Pro Tips for Strategic CaseMakers™



Listening Differently to Build Broader Support

Q:

Listening to what our community thinks is important to us, and we spend a lot of time gathering information about their needs and opinions, but it doesn't seem to add up to more support. What should we be doing differently?

A:

Understanding people's needs and opinions is important, but that's not what usually moves them to do the tough work of systems change. People lean into the hard stuff when they see that it lines up with their aspirations for their own lives and the future they want to create for the next generation. To tap into those aspirations — Principle 1 of Strategic CaseMaking™ — we as leaders need to start asking different questions and listening differently.

Visit our [website](#) to join the wider community of Strategic CaseMakers and help lead the charge for justice.

Who to listen to

In order to build broad support for systems change in our communities, we have to listen to the **WHOLE** community. We need to be radically inclusive. That means finding ways to hear from all the folks you may not normally talk to: Young people and older adults. Supporters and opponents. People of all backgrounds, education, and income levels. Take special care to include those whose voices have been historically excluded and those who have lived through the issues you're tackling.

Where to listen

At TheCaseMade, we listen by pulling together what we call "community voice sessions." In these moderated conversations, diverse groups of community members can talk candidly about their hopes for and concerns about the place they call home. At community voice sessions across the nation, we listen for a lot of things that can help us build strong, durable narratives, but we always start by asking what people want for their own lives.

If you have the resources, you can organize listening sessions in your community, or repurpose community gatherings that you already host. But listening can happen anywhere! On social media and in online community forums. On the sidelines of sports games and practices. In beauty and barber shops. At school board and town hall meetings. Anyplace that people meet is a place to listen differently.

6 QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

In order to connect your work to people's aspirations, ask these kinds of questions:

1. What makes you proudest about the work you are doing?
2. What do you want to be different about your life five years from now?
3. What do you love about this community?
4. What could we do to make this an even better place to live?
5. What are you most worried about right now?
6. What do you think we'll lose if we don't get that figured out?



Putting It Into Practice

Getting long-term support for the difficult work of systems change means building an authentic connection based on what people in your community actually want. Once you've started gathering answers:

- **Reflect back people's aspirations for the future to build optimism and energy.** Reminding people of the future they want helps overcome the negativity and resignation that paralyzes action.
- **Reflect back people's pride of place to create a shared identity.** Encouraging people to remember and connect with what they most love about their community helps them want to come together and see it flourish.
- **Reflect back people's most pressing concerns to build urgency for action.** Help people understand that solving for your issue is also solving for the issue that keeps them up at night.

