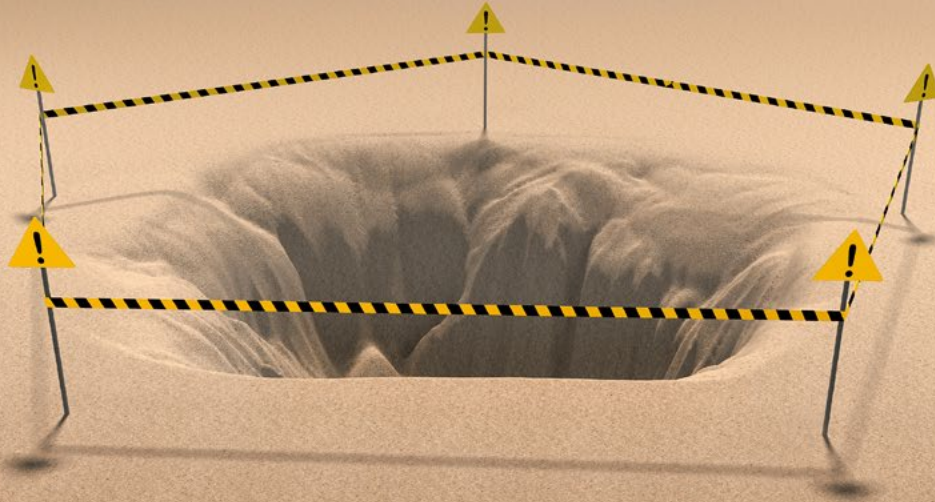


Building The Will

Pro Tips for Strategic CaseMakers™



Q:

We're trying to change the conversation in our community, but we keep getting stuck arguing with folks who are spreading inaccurate information. **What should we do?**

A:

We know it's frustrating to be out in your community making a case for a brighter future and to be challenged by people who don't seem to have the facts.

Whether intentional or not, people who repeat misinformation create a distraction that only serves to slow down or completely derail your progress. Allowing yourself to get sucked into that distraction is like falling into quicksand – the more you struggle, the more you sink. That's why the best response to misinformation is to side-step around it and return immediately to the path that you were on. The good news is that quicksand is pretty easy to spot and routing around it just takes some practice.

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Here's how you do it:

Step One

Start a running list of the disruptive comments you encounter when you are out making a case for your work. For example: Some people just want to be homeless. More apartments are going to make our schools too crowded. Taxes are too high already.

Step Two

Find something you can agree with. Agreeing with someone is the single best way to diffuse tension and opposition. Rather than repeating opposing viewpoints, though, relabel them in a positive way through a bridging statement.

Step Three

Confidently return to your message about the better future we'll all achieve by investing in your solution. Even though you may not convince your opponents, **remember that your real audience is often the bystanders who are quietly sizing up how you respond.**



Did You Know?

- **Disruptive comments can also come from your allies and partners.** We are all susceptible to fear and resignation about the possibility of change, and we all need to be reminded sometimes about the better future ahead!
- Misinformation and other disruptive comments are rooted in **fear, fatalism, and deep-seated biases** we may not even know we have. Talking people out of that stuff is a losing proposition. Better to navigate them around it.
- **Never, ever repeat false or disruptive information**, even to refute it. That reinforces the false information in people's minds and puts you even further back than where you started from.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here's an example of how your pivot planning could take shape for affordable housing development:

CONCERN	SAMPLE RESPONSE
Property values will go down.	The value of my home is important to me, too. What I've learned is that communities with a diversity of housing are more innovative, entrepreneurial and productive, and ultimately more desirable to home buyers and employers.
Schools will be overcrowded. Learning will be affected.	I've got kids in our schools, too, and I totally agree that giving them strong preparation to succeed in the world is important. I'm worried about how much harder it will be to recruit quality teachers as they get priced out of our community.
Development hurts the environment.	I agree that we need to be thoughtful about how the growth that's coming affects the amazing green spaces we have here. That's why we need to have every tool available to us as a community as we negotiate the future we want with our development and building partners.
Lower-cost housing doesn't fit the character of our community.	I agree that the character of our community counts, especially the way that young families like mine have always had opportunities here to plant roots and grow. That's what I love about this place, and the character that I want my kids to experience. That comes with homes that young families can afford.
The traffic will get worse.	I agree that we need to be thoughtful about how the growth that's coming affects our and our kids' ability to get around safely. Let's reduce the number of folks who blast down main street at 5pm on the way back to the house they can afford an hour away. Instead, let's make sure that the people who work here can live here.



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