

Building The Will

Pro Tips for Strategic CaseMakers™

The CaseMade
Reimagine How Justice Wins

The Future is Ours, If We Allow Ourselves to Envision It

Q: With so much changing around us, our community needs to start envisioning a better future. We can't stay stuck where we are now, but it feels particularly fraught in this moment to ask our community to turn their attention to “dreaming” about what comes next. How do we create space for people to dream about the future they want to build and still stay focused on the urgency of this moment?

A: When people feel stuck, anxious, or suffering, it is hard to ask them to step out of crisis response and imagine a better world years into the future. We hear from lots of leaders who may not feel equipped to shift the conversation away from what we need to do to help people right now and toward dreaming for something better. Here’s the thing: That may not be in your job description ... but you have to!

Join our Fierce CaseMaker community to connect to other good troublemakers working toward justice in our world.

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We will never rally enough people now to start making the big changes we need unless we show them what that different future looks like. Otherwise, fear of the unknown will keep them from joining us.



The good news: Visioning the future, like all will-building strategies, is a culture change practice. It doesn't happen in one meeting or conversation. It builds slowly over time through the way we engage people.

There are lots of ways to do it. Here are 5 ideas for building a culture of futurism into your coalition work and your community. Let's get started together!

1

Explain why futurism matters: It's common for people to think that visioning exercises are nice but not necessary. The science couldn't be further from the truth. We all need a clear, sustained vision of a better future to help us overcome all the ways our brains trick us into sticking with the status quo. Make sure people understand that visioning is a necessary practice for success.

2

Name the tension: There are many good reasons we struggle with visioning right now. Naming that tension – or any tension in the room, for that matter – is key to moving past it. Say: "I'm sure there are people in this room who are struggling between envisioning a better future and helping people today. I feel that tension, too. But here's why it matters…" And most importantly, tie the future visioning to a call to action that people can deploy right now. That helps people make sense of what they can do today to build the future you've asked them dream about.

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3

Identify and activate your futurists: There are people whose brains are naturally wired for futurism. For those who have taken Gallup's CliftonStrengths assessment, it shows up as the "futuristic" talent, for example. Keep an eye out for those folks who are excited to dream about what's possible and invite them to help others paint a picture of what the future could be. Many futurists are already sitting in rooms with you but haven't been activated to play that role.

4

Build a futurism culture: When we ask people to envision the community they want in the future, we often hear: "No one has asked me to think about my community in that way before." Use check-in questions and other discussion prompts to help people move beyond individual or family goals to their aspirations for their entire neighborhoods. Questions like: "What do you love about your community today that you hope is still around in 10 years?" Or "What exciting local things do you want to be talking to your neighbors about in 10 years?" Or "When the kindergarteners in your neighborhood graduate from high school, what do you want them to look around and be super excited about?"



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Lift up the common threads: Our job isn't to build a vision for our communities, it's to help them see the common threads in the vision they already have. When it comes down to it, most people share the same aspirations: More kids laughing on playgrounds. More schools that kids and teachers are excited to go to. More neighbors to call when you need a hand. More ways to stay healthy. More homes that feel like home.



By building and sustaining a future-focused vision of your community, you are catalyzing action now and in the future. Connecting the future to today is a powerful way to get your community on the fast track to justice.

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