



MAKING GOOD POLICY HAPPEN

A primer on C2™

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THE POWER OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS — MOBILIZED PUBLIC OPINION — IS UNDENIABLE. Just ask lobbyists who have recently fallen short of their clients' objectives at the hands of the opposition's superior grassroots engine.

According to the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, "policy change follows political change, which itself follows social change. The most durable policy changes are those that are undergirded by strong social movements." For those entrenched in traditional lobbying strategies, this realization creates considerable angst.

Successful policy change begins with aligning your approach to the reality all politicians understand: To govern, you must get (and stay) elected.

There is admittedly discomfort in having it put so bluntly. Yet no matter how well-intentioned or principled the politician, few will support a policy option on merit alone and without considering risk and repercussion. Most, in fact, will support what they can as long as doing so doesn't create too much threat of electoral defeat. In the inner circles of politics, what elected officials need most is "cover"—defined as sufficient public support to prevent the wrath of constituents at the next town hall meeting, but more critically, to avoid blow back at the ballot box.

As a result, smart policy advocates seeking substantial changes will both assess the state of public opinion, and then get to work informing and swaying that opinion to provide the cover legislators need. There's nothing devious about connecting public opinion to politics; there is no need to hide or apologize for these tactics.

In fact, everyone wins if an advocacy process replaces smash-mouth, old school lobbying with a transparent, inclusive process designed to incorporate broad stakeholder collaboration.

Creating grassroots support from diverse groups, including those previously viewed as opponents, is the noble—and most powerful—form of issues advocacy.

How can leaders navigate successfully from contention and opposition to consensus? Thinkspot's Community Coalition™ (C2™) process is a peerless and proven method. Our staff experts and consultants have tested and applied these concepts for Fortune 500s, governments, and global

foundations. We win success for our clients on a range of critical issues using expert analysis, real-time data and market intelligence, and a unique approach to outreach and grassroots network cultivation in markets ranging from rural communities to booming and diverse metros.

Thinkspot's C2™ is built on the premise that policy change can be achieved through shared understanding and support for mutually valued solutions. This requires engaging the public and the full spectrum of stakeholders to create a shared understanding and support for change. Case studies in fields, such as land use planning, community justice, and public health have documented the effectiveness of grassroots campaigns built on a foundation of community-based engagement.

The decision to pursue public involvement and to welcome collaboration represents a bold move. As we know, a shift in policy follows a shift in public sentiment and culture. Good leaders understand the value in transparency and inclusion, and want to help the efforts they care about succeed in ways that will last. They want stakeholders and partners informing their strategies and policy plans.

Leaders can and should move beyond ineffective or stale approaches to policy challenges. The proper strategy, expertise, rigorous project disciplines, and strategic deployment can surpass transactional customers of old-school lobbying tactics to stewards of systemic change for their communities and organizations.

The outcomes of an intelligent approach to community-driven policy change translate to true buy-in from community partners and stakeholders, and ultimately from elected officials who serve within the sphere of public sentiment.



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WHAT 10 ATTRIBUTES DO SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY-BASED POLICY PLAYS HAVE IN COMMON?

For many leaders and communities, the benefits are tempting, but the risk of opening an uncontrolled floodgate of public opinion and misinformation is frightening. The right approach can control and manage these threats. Leaders should look for the following 10 attributes when considering a policy effort.

1. **Context Assessment.** Understand the playing field: the issues, the people, the numbers, the motivators.
2. **Project Timeline.** Understand the milestones that matter, and set out achievable goals. Coordinate with partners and stakeholders to schedule critical, consensus-building milestone events.
3. **Economic and Jobs Assessment.** Be informed by the numbers that matter, and know how to connect them to the story you are championing.
4. **Value Proposition.** What motivates and distinguishes must be front and center. Every partner and stakeholder needs to be consistently on-message. In fact, partners and stakeholders can help define what your value proposition is, and will feel a greater sense of ownership once they have.
5. **Policy and Pathways Analysis.** Move beyond old school smash-mouth lobbying to anticipate and shift ahead of fears and challenges raised by elected officials.
6. **Media Monitoring, Positioning, and Engagement.** Stay informed of who is positioning what messages, driven by which strategies, and using which weighted language. Don't ignore industry and trade media, social media platforms, and powerful internal communications channels of partners like chambers of commerce and industry associations.
7. **Coalition Design, Branding, Management, and Moderation.** Don't be fooled by simple "grassroots" solutions that offer a third-party branded web site funneling favorable messages. A careful level of project discipline,

expert moderation and agenda planning, and coordinated strategy can create a unique climate for authentic, well-informed, tightly managed (but inclusive) public discourse that opens eyes and changes minds.

8. **Regular Visits to Town Square.** A single day of discussion may be a great opportunity to test approaches and introduce new ideas, but a solitary workshop is not acceptable. Be wary of approaches that offer a world of consensus in a single meeting. Watch out for agendas built without transparency. At least three opportunities for feedback should be built into the community conversation platform. Don't settle for adjourning without a tangible plan of action and a clear, consensus understanding of next steps. Careful agenda planning to ensure the discussion is driven by data, local champions, and expertise can create the right climate. A smart approach to moderation and documentation gets voices heard and placed into context, while keeping the discussion on-track.
9. **Local Champions.** Locals know best. Leaders within the community can bring a sense of ownership and credibility that is unparalleled. When opposition or misinformation is based in sources from outside the community, there can be no greater ally than the engaged and focused local champion.
10. **Community Leadership Partners.** No one can win alone. Activation of the partners in your community can bring increased reach, power, clout, and buy-in. Make sure you are navigating your community's leadership ecosystem right. Pay attention to leadership and industry groups, and build them into your broader community-driven efforts. The tactics above become a shared toolkit that helps you find a unified front, consistent messages, and exponentially greater clout and momentum.



Thinkspot Inc. is committed to lifting companies and communities into positions of market leadership through strategic thinking, data and policy analysis, structural economic development, and smart policy and issues management.

To learn more, contact Teresa Barber, our Strategic Thinker:

Email: teresa@thinkspot.co | Phone: 850.692.9879