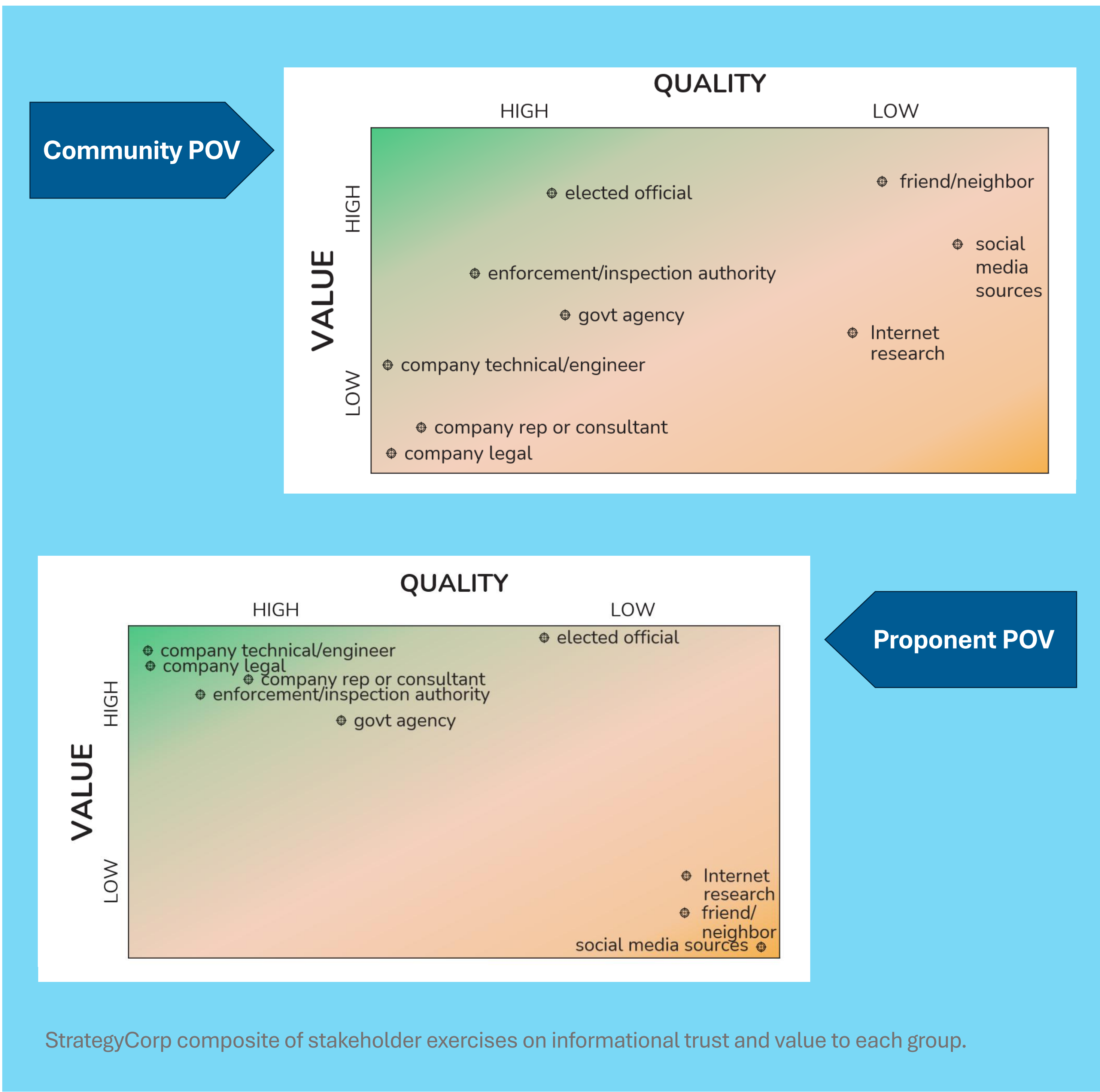


We are living in a period of low social trust—which breeds misinformation. But the solution is simpler than you think.

Where does trusted information come from?



Having experts on your side isn't enough to win hearts and minds

52% : 29%

Is the margin by which people report trusting the friend who shared the information over the reliable source itself

Source: American Press Institute, "Who shared it?" (2017)

61%

say they trust their peers more than experts when deciding on political support

Source: Best Company, "Experts vs. Friends, the definitive guide to who influences us" (2016)

26%

said they have confidence in major institutions like big business, newspapers, and the government

Source: Gallup, "Historically Low Faith in U.S. Institutions Continues" (2023)

The most important ingredient is trust.

Years of working with project proponents across North America in energy and other contentious projects has taught us some valuable lessons. We've created a composite from our stakeholder activities of what proponents value and find accurate—and then run the same exercise with community members. It establishes the gulf between proponents and their client communities.

How do you build trust with communities and electeds for permitting and approvals in challenging contexts?

- Do exactly what you say you're going to by explaining your process and telegraphing your outreach
- Limit reliance on procedure and avoid relying on the layering additional scientific studies to make your case.
- Map your stakeholders and make a master engagement plan
- Consider communicators vs. experts
- Media literacy leads to media accuracy
- Get the right start—early when you can, but not before you have helpful answers
- First-person experiences ("touch it for yourself")
- Bring champions in under the tent
- Remember you are building a reputation which will survive this moment and lead to long-term success

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