

Winning Edge #6 – Persuade with a Mystery Number

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *The Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.

We've talked about how to persuade with numbers and how not to be persuaded by numbers, but another way you can persuade with numbers is to create a mystery.

The challenge is that most data is boring, and it's hard to make it interesting.

But if you make it a mystery, you can get your listeners' attention and help them remember the facts long after you've spoken.

Here's how you do it.

Imagine you have an upcoming radio interview about Pennsylvania's education spending.

As you prepare, you think about all the information about education spending. There's so much data and facts you can talk about. Where do you even start?

To start, remember this simple phrase: **One person and one point.**

One Person - Imagine one person listening to your interview. Picture where they are and what they are doing.

For this example, you know it's a drive-time radio show. That means the person is probably driving to work, thinking about their day, and catching local news to stay informed. Likely, they didn't wake up that morning wanting to hear about education spending, and it is your job to make it interesting.

One Point - Now think about what's the one point you want the person to remember a week from now. People are busy and distracted, but by being persuasive, you can get them to remember one main point.

For example, you decide the one point to remember is that PA is generous in its education spending. In fact, it is ranked 8th in the country in education spending and spends \$4,000 more per student than the average state.

Now you have an idea of the **one person** and the **one point**; it's time to make it a mystery number.

To create mystery numbers:

1. Start with a bit of intrigue about a number.



2. Reveal a part of the answer.
3. Reveal a little more.
4. Wrap up by summarizing the mystery number and the one point.

In your radio interview, you could start by saying:

Whenever we talk about education spending in PA, it's critical to remember two numbers: the number 8 and the number 4.

Let's start with why 8 is important. I want you to hold up 8 fingers. I know a bunch of listeners are driving, but go ahead and hold the steering wheel with your thumbs and hold up 8 fingers.

Why is 8 important? Because out of every state in America, PA is the 8th highest in education spending per student. We are incredibly generous at the state and local levels in our education spending. In fact, there are only a few states in the whole nation that spend more than us.

Now close one of your hands and just leave four fingers up.

Why is 4 important? Because in PA, we spend \$4,000 more per student than the average state.

So whenever you hear anyone talk about education spending, remember 8 and 4. And remember, Pennsylvania has the 8th highest education spending in the country and spends \$4,000 more per student than the average state.

This short example would take only about a minute, and the audience would likely remember it weeks from now. It would also be extra memorable because you got the audience involved by holding up their fingers so they could see the numbers as well as hear them.

The next time you need to talk about numbers – create mystery numbers and make it memorable for your audience.

Start with thinking about **One Person** and the **One Point** you want them to remember a week from now. Then, make it a mystery number by starting with a bit of intrigue about the number. Then reveal a part of the answer. Next, reveal a little more. And end by wrapping it up and summarizing the mystery number and the one point.

The next time you want to persuade with numbers, create a mystery number, and give yourself the winning edge.