

Winning Edge #11 – Persuade with One Page – Part 1

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



Early in my career, a veteran campaign manager gave me this advice: “**Here’s a secret to meetings no one ever tells you: *The person with a piece of paper usually wins.***”

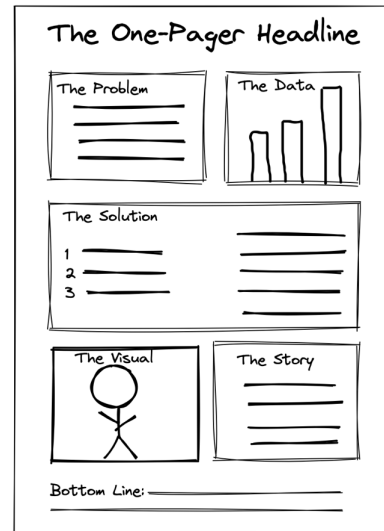
At first, I didn’t believe him. *People aren’t influenced that much by a piece of paper*, I thought. *They weigh the evidence and make the most rational decision.* But twenty years of experience have convinced me he was right. When you arrive at a meeting with a persuasive one-pager, you frame the conversation for the decision-makers—and, usually, you win.

When I started creating one-pagers, I was a twenty-six-year-old policy director at a statehouse with seventy-eight lawmakers. Hundreds of bills were proposed, and we needed our lawmakers to understand each bill’s key points to help them decide how to vote. The sheer volume provided a laboratory to develop, experiment, test, and repeat. In short, we learned what persuaded.

Now a one-pager doesn’t replace research and white papers. But it can take these longer documents and create an easy way to discuss them.

I have discovered there are six questions to help you create a persuasive one-pager. We are going to cover half in this episode and finish in the next.

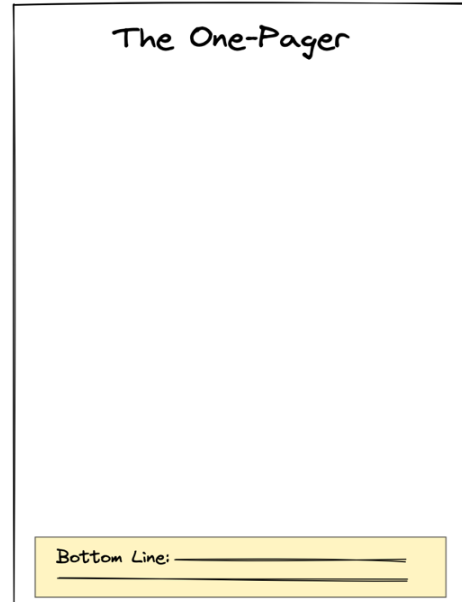
1. What’s the **Bottom Line**?
2. What’s the **Problem**?
3. What’s the **Solution**?



#1 – What’s the Bottom Line?

Your first question to answer is, “What do I want decision-makers to do after reading my document?” Clarity on the action you want your readers to take should shape every aspect of your one-pager’s copy and design.

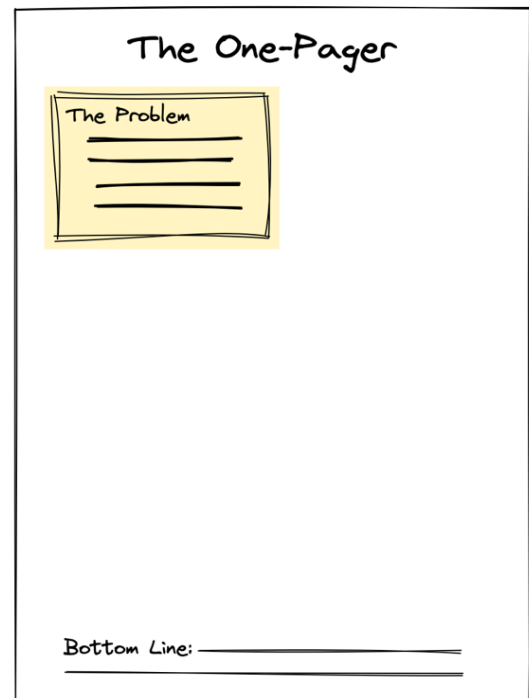
A Bottom Line is just that: a clear action statement *visually placed at the bottom of your one-pager* to engage readers who scan, skim, or study. It should be a one- or two sentence summary of the content *and* the action you want the reader to take.



#2 – What’s the Problem?

It is easy to become solution-focused when trying to persuade. You know the solution to the problem you perceive—but keep in mind that the problem may look different to the decision-makers. If you can describe the problem in a way that resonates with them, you are halfway to successful persuasion. This is why, “What’s the problem?” or “How do decision-makers perceive this problem?” is the most important of all the questions.

Define the problem from the decision-makers’ perspective. When they read a description that clarifies a problem exactly how they would, decision-makers are inclined to believe they will agree with your solution. Get this problem statement right, and the rest of the one-pager will be easier to write; you have clearly identified the problem you need the decision-makers to help you solve.



#3 – What’s the Solution?

Decision-makers often know the problem but need to learn how to solve it. (They would have already solved the problem if they knew the solution.) Your job is to communicate the solution you’ve found.

Communicating the Solution begins with figuring out how to present *your* solution to *their* problem. Remember, all the easy problems have been solved. Only the hard ones are left.

There are two steps to crafting your solution: 1) decide on the framing, then 2) make it seem easy.

First the framing. Framing, simply put, is the angle you use to describe your solution.

The challenge is humans have competing desires. We want things to be safe and predictable, but we also want things to be new and unique. Consider how your audience views your solution - do they think it’s a new idea, or a familiar idea? For new solutions, you need to think about how to make them feel safe. And for known or familiar solutions, you need to think about how to make them seem new or unique.

Once you decide on the framing, make your solution seem *easy* by presenting it in a series of steps. Ideally, having three steps (or phases) works best. This allows the solution section to be high-level enough to reveal the concepts but not so granular that it takes up more than one page.

Wrap-Up

In the next episode, we’ll cover the other 3 questions you need to answer. In the meantime, remember the next time you have an important meeting or high-stakes presentation, *the person with a piece of paper usually wins*. Take the time to answer these questions to create a persuasive one-pager, and you’ll win!

