

## Winning Edge #58 – Mini Golf for Email: Fun, Fast, & Memorable



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

In the last Winning Edge, we talked about how Garnet Carter put his roadside attraction, Rock City, on the map by painting “See Rock City” on hundreds of barns.

But that wasn’t Carter’s first success. A few years earlier, while building Rock City and its theme park, he had big plans for a golf course. But the project fell behind schedule and his customers complained. To keep his customers happy, Carter quickly built a small putting green...but with a twist.

Instead of simple holes in the grass, he added obstacles: logs, rocks, things people had to shoot around. That was the first Tom Thumb Golf course, and it was a huge hit. Soon, more people played the mini golf than his full-size course when it finally opened.

Business owners on vacation asked if they could build a mini golf course at their gas station, ice cream stand, or restaurant. Carter quickly franchised Tom Thumb Golf, selling thousands of courses across the country.

Why did it work?

It was simple, affordable, and easy to replicate. With just a small lot and a few thousand dollars, anyone could build a family attraction that kept customers coming back.

Mini golf exploded because Carter took golf, something big and intimidating, and turned it into something bite-sized, and fun for a much broader audience.

These same principles apply to all written persuasion, especially when writing persuasive email updates or newsletters. You want to give voters bite-sized content. Don’t expect them to slog through long, wordy emails about the statehouse. Don’t make it feel like homework. Instead,

give them a mini golf experience in your email newsletter: short, light, and easy-to-read highlights of what's going on.

And when your updates are simple and enjoyable, people will come back week after week, just like customers did with another round of mini golf.

## **The Mini Golf Treatment for Your Email Newsletter**

### **Keep it small and simple**

- Think of your newsletter as a bite-sized version of your bigger message. Make it easy to skim and get the point.
- A good test: send it to your own phone and make sure you can read and skim it easily from a smartphone.

### **Make the subject line sticky**

- Nobody opens an email without a headline that grabs them.
- Use tools like ChatGPT or Grok to brainstorm 20–30 subject line options and pick the one that pulls you in.

### **Adjust the preheader preview**

- Most email programs let you customize the preview text that shows up next to your subject line. Make that copy persuasive.
- Drop your email into ChatGPT or Grok and ask: *“Create 10 versions of an email preview that are 150 characters or less.”* You'll get plenty of options to test.

### **Use the 3–2–1 structure**

Don't overcomplicate it. Pick one of these formats and mix it up every few weeks:

- **3 Quick Updates** – Share three short topics, written casually like how you talk to a friend over coffee. Or use three steps to explain something.
- **2 Points or a Contrast** – Compare two things, like what the budget was 10 years ago versus today. Simple contrasts make a big point.
- **1 Big Thing** – Keep the whole email focused on the single most important thing that happened at the Capitol.

### **Repeat your message from different angles**

The budget is a big issue, don't write about it once and move on. Come back to the budget again and again but shift the perspective.

- One week, explain what it means for taxpayers.
- Another week, focus on small businesses in your district.
- Another time, show the impact on local towns. Same core topic, but with a different perspective each week.

### **End with a little fun**

Remember, you're competing with TikTok, Instagram, and everything else on your reader's phone. Close with something local, light, or visual:

- A photo from the district
- A group snapshot of visitors at the Capitol
- A funny cartoon
- A quick story that leaves people smiling.

### **The Bottom Line**

Carter turned golf into mini golf and created a craze. You can turn heavy issues into bite-sized emails and create loyal readers, but you'll need to keep it short, make it fun, and repeat the message until it sticks.