

Winning Edge #59 – Why the Person with Paper Wins

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



In Winning Edge [11](#) and [12](#), we looked at how to create an effective one-pager with your talk or high-stakes meeting. What continues to be true, no matter any of the other changes in recent years, is this: **the person with a piece of paper usually wins.**

If you're trying to persuade an audience to take action—whether that's a group of people, your legislative colleagues, or someone in a one-on-one meeting—if you're the one who creates and hands out a one-pager, you usually win.

But how do you create a one-pager?

The first thing you want to ask is: *What's the bottom line?* What's the action I want my audience to take? Write that out in one or two sentences. One sentence to summarize the issue, and one sentence to state clearly what you want the audience to do.

Next, define the problem. What's the problem you are trying to solve? The key here is to write it from your audience's perspective. If you can see and describe the problem the way they do, you've already made a lot of progress toward getting them to yes.

Then, spell out your solution. If you're trying to persuade, you're always selling some kind of solution. Make it seem easy to do. This is where you can use the 3-2-1 approach we've covered in the [last Winning Edge](#):

- 3: Three steps if you want to show a process.
- 2: Two points if you want to show contrast or a simple comparison.
- 1: One big thing if you want to emphasize the most important point.

Organize your solution in one of these three-two-one patterns so it's clear and simple.

Next, what's the data? What data or statistics do you have to support your solution or highlight the problem? Pick two to three data points to feature on your one-pager. Don't overcomplicate it. Just highlight the most effective data.

What's the story? Is there a short story you can tell? Maybe it's about someone who was helped by your solution, or someone affected by the problem. Share it in just a few sentences. And if you can, include a picture to go along with it.

That brings us to the last part: what's the visual? Do you have something that will pull the reader in? For example, a picture? A chart?

When you create a one-pager for a presentation, a talk, or a meeting, remember it doesn't have to say everything. It's just a recap of the points you're making. Keep it simple. Keep it to one page. And use one of these three templates:

1. **The One Point**

Make it so simple even a caveman can get it. Don't try to be clever. Just use the formula: one point, one story, one call to action. Add a headline at the top and that's enough.

2. **The Lawmaker Special**

Perfect when you're trying to convince colleagues or fellow lawmakers. Lay out the problem, give the facts, tell a story to make it memorable, and end with the solution. Balance facts and logic with a story that makes the problem come alive.

3. **The Reverse Mullet**

Party in the front, business in the back. Use this when you're presenting a complex issue and some in the audience will want more details. On the front, dedicate three-quarters of the space to design and clear points. In the bottom quarter, under a sub-headline like "More Details," add a short section of extra text. Then use the back for the dense details.

So the next time you have a persuasive talk or meeting, remember: the person with a piece of paper usually wins. Have your staff use one of these templates to create a one-pager. That way, you're the one with the paper—and you're the one who wins.