

Winning Edge #60 – The Power of a Memorable Line

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



In June 1984, Hal Riney sat at a bar and began to write. Over the course of a few hours, he drafted the scripts for what would become the most iconic ads of Ronald Reagan's reelection campaign. One of them was [Morning in America](#).

The ad came out at a precarious moment. Over the past four years, the U.S. economy had started to recover from a deep recession and over 18% interest rates. But it wasn't yet roaring. The challenge was how to tell that story, how to show progress without drowning people in statistics.

Riney's solution was to create an ad that was a *feeling* supported by a few important numbers woven into the story. The opening line set the tone:

"It's morning again in America. Today more men and women will go to work than ever before in our country's history."

This gave people a narrative, words to match the optimism they were beginning to feel about the economy.

The ad continued:

"With interest rates at about half the record highs of 1980, nearly 2,000 families today will buy new homes, more than at any time in the past four years."

It reinforced that the recovery wasn't just vibes, but was grounded in facts.

Next came another image:

"This afternoon, 6,500 young men and women will be married, and with inflation at less than half of what it was just four years ago, they can look forward with confidence to the future."

Together, these lines implied that the work wasn't done, but the country was on the right track.

It closed with:

"It's morning again in America, and under the leadership of President Reagan, our country is prouder and stronger and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were less than four short years ago?"

Morning in America was so successful because it did more than reflect the data. Riney had sold hope, and the ad captured how people felt and then gave them language to describe it.

That same day, Riney also wrote another ad, *Bear in the Woods*. It showed a bear, symbolizing the Soviet Union, lurking in the woods and talked about how we must be ready if the bear attacks. President Reagan himself liked the Bear ad more, but it only ran once. Why? Because the hopeful message of *Morning in America* resonated far more with voters.

When creating our own messaging, we want to remember *Morning in America*. The most persuasive messages mix emotion with fact. There is a saying: We buy on emotion and justify with facts. People wanted to believe things were getting better. The ad gave them the words, and a few solid numbers, to support that belief.

So think about your own campaign or message.

1. Start with the feeling you want to create.
2. Then ask, what is the simple, true line that captures it?
3. Back it up with one or two facts, framed as a story and not as a spreadsheet.

The next time you need to craft a message, remember *Morning in America*. Lead with emotion, back it with a few facts, and let one memorable line do the heavy lifting. That is how you create the line people remember long after the rest is forgotten.