

The Power of a Memorable Line

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."

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

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

The ad then used only two numbers. Nearly 2,000 families buying new homes and 6,500 marriages to tell a story of the new beginnings with images of a couple getting married.

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

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.



Morning in America ad for President Reagan's 1984 re-election.

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

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.

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.

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?

The Bottom Line

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.

Creating Your Memorable Line

That same day, Hal Riney also wrote another ad, *Bear*. 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 actually 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.

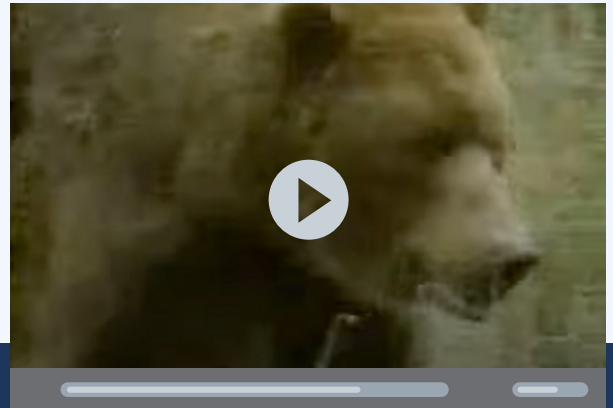
Think about your own campaign or message.

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.



*Bear ad for President Reagan's
1984 re-election.*

Looking for more ideas?

For more tips on creating a simple message that works for your campaign check out these Winning Edge:

WINNING EDGE #57

Say It Until It Sticks

Today, the closest modern version might be Buckle's billboards. They start hundreds of miles out and keep reminding you: "537 miles," then "525 miles," then "Next exit." The message repeats until it sticks.

The bigger point here isn't about the cleverness of the message.

WINNING EDGE #42

One Statistic, One Story, One Solution

In January 1855, England was in the middle of the Crimean War. For the troops on the ground, there was little fighting that month—about 100 soldiers died in combat, a tragic number although much smaller than casualties from the earlier heavy fighting.

But still, another 2,800 soldiers lost their lives that same month. These men didn't die on the battlefield—they died in military hospitals from disease and unsanitary conditions.

One woman refused to accept this. Florence Nightingale, a nurse working near the front lines, saw the horrific conditions that killed more soldiers than the war itself.

When she returned to England, she made it her mission to fix the system. She needed to persuade Parliament to act.

But it wasn't easy for a woman in the 1850s to try to influence lawmakers, and she needed a persuasive approach. She focused on three elements:

- **One Statistic:** 2,800 preventable deaths in a single month
- **One story:** January's devastating hospital death toll
- **One solution:** Vote for specific hospital reforms

It took time, but her approach worked. Parliament passed the reforms, and Nightingale went on to transform modern nursing, eventually advising leaders like Abraham Lincoln on hospital design during the Civil War.

When persuading others to change, simplicity and storytelling work better than a tsunami of statistics. Here's how to do it:

One Statistic

People need a clear, memorable number.

When we shift our perspective on something, it often comes from realizing the seriousness of the problem.

One Story

Use a story to connect and add emotion to your statistic.

Stories add emotional weight to statistics, making both more memorable and persuasive.

One Solution

Have one specific action for the audience to take.

Just as Nightingale focused on one crucial vote, focus on the achievable action that matters.

With your next speech or presentation:

- Identify your single most compelling statistic.
- Find one powerful story that shows its emotional impact.
- Focus on one specific solution you want your audience to take.

Then test your message by asking: Is your statistic clear and memorable? Does your story stick? Is your solution specific and achievable?

The Bottom Line

Remember Nightingale's formula: one statistic, one story, one solution. In a world of endless distractions, this simple approach still changes minds.

WINNING EDGE

Use early road trippers. After the first "See you don't think much about it. After the third or fourth, the kids say, 'By the fifth or tenth, you ask about it at a stop and eventually you are promising to stop."

Simple Message Repeatedly

Use with our messaging. We get tired of saying the same thing over and over. Often, we stop long enough to think about it.

Busy with work, family, kids, school, and other that fills everyday life. You can't expect a line about the Pennsylvania budget once every 10 years.

What's our "See Rock City" message?

One line you're going to say over and over budget? Make it easy to remember.

Like:

ro's got a Binge Spending Problem.

e largest spending increase in PA history."

eed voters to remember a dozen numbers, or two phrases over and over. And when they're completely sick of saying it, that's when people start to pay attention.

et, think about Rock City and what you'd paint on the side of the car, and repeat it until you're sick of hearing it.