

Candidate Messaging and Signage

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Let's talk about your campaign's Messaging and Signage. Take the advice of a career "peddler" with more than a decade experience as an Advertising Account Executive; who sold, wrote, and produced ads that worked, or his clients would have dropped him.

Recall that there were two featured speakers at the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on that November day in 1863. Edward Everett, a noted orator of the day; and President Abraham Lincoln. Everett spoke eloquently for almost 2 hours and then Lincoln added a "few brief remarks" of just 272 words lasting barely 2 minutes. Notice which message is still remembered, even today. A few years back the outdoor advertising people were advising their clients to create messages of no more than 10 words, because highway speeds meant they didn't have the exposure time to digest more.

Today the world demands even more concise messaging. Now we live in a "Twitter" world where your target has even less time or patience. Your 10 second "elevator speech" must now be just 4 - 5 words or less, to be effective today. And it has to communicate WHY they should support you and your cause, and it needs to MOTIVATE them to action.

"Hope and Change" and "Make America Great Again" both hit their marks, You need to find wording as concise as those to base your campaign on. Think of it as what you are going to put on your yard signs.

The very best yard sign marketing I have seen was done by former Governor Dirk Kempthorne as he ran for Senate. Since he already had name recognition and his positions were known, his yard signs featured just one word in huge type, DIRK. The legal details were in fine print that didn't confuse the issue. His signs were a bright golden-orange color with the lettering in a deep brown, if I remember correctly. The result, you could spot one of his yard signs from a block away, and when you had a bunch on a street they dominated.

Your yard signs absolutely must prominently feature your "handle" as it will be on the ballot. Again, less is more in this game. You are looking for simple name recognition. You want the low intensity voter to feel a familiarity with your name on the ballot when they go into the voting booth. When in doubt we all tend toward the familiar, you need to be that familiar name they see on the ballot - and hopefully a familiarity that they feel comfortable with. Higher intensity voters will drill down and do their homework to find you. But sadly, the majority of the folks who vote, don't have the interest or the time like us political "wonks." That is why it is so important that we present them with our message in the most concise, direct, and motivational way possible.

Simon Sinek, in his book “Start With Why” says that is how great leaders inspire folks to take action and make something happen. And the Perennial Seller says, “You must have a reason – a purpose – for why you want the outcome and why you’re willing to do the work to get it. The purpose can be almost anything, but it has to be there.”

Then, you have to inspire the voters to pick up your cause and make it there’s. There is an old salesman’s axiom we call **WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?)** Until you can convince your voters that your cause is actually important to THEM, you will just be a curiosity. And another axiom we go by says that, “It isn’t important what you SAY; what’s important is what your prospect HEARS!” So be sure to speak from their perspective, show them how your proposition benefits THEM, and how important it is to THEM! And speaking of old adages, one of the oldest; “The customer is always right!” Says that if the buyer makes a bad choice, it’s because the salesperson (we) didn’t present the case properly for the customer to understand. It’s the classic “Failure to communicate” you keep hearing about.

So, build your presentation around a core foundational statement that has to be 5 words or less. You can amplify and expand on individual components in various presentations as your campaign proceeds. But to start, you need that 4 or 5 word phrase that tells your prospect WHY you are running. That’s the “bait” on your hook to catch their attention so you can show them What’s In It For Them; so they can get on-board also. Then make sure every position you take or expound upon ties back to your core statement and amplifies it. Never assume your prospect will connect the dots, show them the connection. No one ever lost a sale because they were too explicit.

After your core statement, you should develop no more than three supportive “legs” to your campaign stool. Exercise these WIIFM factors to seal the deal with your prospects. Choose three varied examples of where and how your core statement delivers value to your voter, and tie them back to your core statement boldly. If there are more issues, consign them to lesser positions of importance. Keep the focus on your core and it’s supporting three legs. Make sure your voter adopts your cause as their cause! You have to become their solution to that core problem or issue.

GOOD LUCK, and GOOD CAMPAIGNING!!!