



Presents

5 SECRETS OF WINNING  
**CAMPAIGN  
SIGNS**

Everything you need to know  
about great political signs.

by Brian Floyd & Paul Arney

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# INTRODUCTION

You want signs. You know you do.

Guess what? You're not alone.

You want signs. Your neighbor wants signs. So do your friends and supporters. Your volunteers want to put them up everywhere. Your mother probably wants a sign too, even though she doesn't live where you're running for office.

Everyone wants signs. Even your opponent wants signs.

**A sign is a key part of all political campaigns.**

**Signs done right will:**

- Build name recognition
- Raise voter awareness
- Help you win

Unfortunately, too many candidates buy signs that are too busy, too hard to read, too small, or just unsightly.

You don't want bad signs. You want the best signs.

Keep reading and we'll share with you our five secrets that make winning campaign signs.

— Brian Floyd & Paul Arney, Co-Founders  
The Campaign School

# SIGN SECRET 1

## It's All About the Name

This secret is the most important and you must never forget it.

**Signs are used in in political campaigns to build name recognition.**

While you may know a lot of people in the community and your name may be well recognized in certain circles, most voters have never heard of you.

Signs help fix that. They go up and people start to see them as they go about their day. Signs raise awareness of your name and create curiosity about who you are as a candidate.

By the time you knock on their doors, call them, or send out mailers, you want your signs to have planted the seed that you're running for office. Voters are more likely to listen or read your message if they are already familiar with your name.

Your name is the most important thing to be printed on your signs. Never forget that.

**Your name needs to be as big as possible — and it must always be legible.**



# SIGN SECRET 2

## Last Name Takes Priority

When people talk about politicians they don't call them by their full names or their first names. It's always by their last name.

You probably do it too. Think about how you refer to presidents. Obama – Bush – Clinton – Reagan – Carter – Nixon — even Lincoln and Washington.

This works to your advantage. Since you need your name to be as big as possible on your signs, it makes it much easier to achieve this by only having your last name on your signs.

But what if you have a short last name?

A short name in terms of signs is four letters or less. Only then should you consider also putting your first name on your signs — but only if your first name is also short.

What if you really, really, really want your full name on a sign?

If you must have your first name on the sign, place it above your last name and in much smaller lettering.

### **Last names always take priority on a sign.**

Your last name must be on there, and as you learned in Secret #1, it must be printed as big as possible on your sign.



# SIGN SECRET 3

## Busy Signs Are Bad Signs

Most voters who see your signs will do so driving past them. They don't have time to read them, hence why it's important to adhere to Secret #1 and make your name as big and legible as possible.

### **You must also keep your signs from being too busy or too cluttered**

Following Secret #2 and keeping your first name off the sign will be instrumental in keeping your signs from being overlooked by voters because there is too much written on them.

But there are other things you should **never put on your signs**, no matter how much you are tempted to do so.

### **Never put your picture on your signs**

Pictures take up too much space and limit how much room you have for your name.

Besides you're running for elected office, you're not trying to be someone's real estate agent. Your name is what voters will see on the ballot, not your face. Keep your picture off your signs.

### **Never put your website or phone number on your signs**

Yes, we know you see candidates doing this all the time. Don't follow their bad example. Keep your telephone number and website domain off your signs. It will make your sign too busy and is an unnecessary waste of sign space.

Again, most people will see your signs as they drive past them.

Voters aren't going to call you or visit your website simply because it's on your sign. If a voter really wants to learn about you, they'll Google you.

## **Never put your slogan on your signs**

Again, we're sure you see plenty of candidates putting their campaign slogans on their signs. Don't do it. They're wasting sign space and detracting from their name, therefore defeating the purpose of a campaign sign.

We're sure your slogan is cool and catchy. Feel free to plaster it all over your mail, your website, and your Facebook page. Just leave it off your signs.

That said, we'll grant you one exception for including a slogan on your signs. You can put your slogan on a billboard or any sign that is at least 4' x 8' in size.

But never ever put your slogan on smaller signs.

## **Never put the election date on your signs**

If you've come this far then this one should be a no brainer. Having the date of the election on your signs is a waste of sign space and creates clutter. Don't do it.

Plus there's a practical reason for not including the election date on your signs. Not every one who sees your signs is planning to vote for you. There's no reason to spend your money and the space on your signs reminding your opponent's voters when to cast their ballots against you.

## **Never put QR codes on your signs**

If you're like most people you have no idea what a QR code is. Keep it that way. Should someone tell you that you need a QR code on your sign, just say no.

Now if you do know what a QR code is, you also know that no one in society except bad marketers uses them, so don't put them on your signs. It's a waste of space.

Even if someone does have QR code reader on their phone, they aren't going to stop their car to scan the QR code off your sign.

## What can you put on signs?

There are two things you should put on your signs besides your name — and that's it.

The first thing is the office you're seeking.

It should be placed below your name and in smaller lettering than your name.

You don't need to state the name of the city where you are running for city council. Just put City Council. Following this rule prevents signs from becoming cluttered.

The same is true if you're running for school board, water board or whatever board. Don't include the name of the district. Don't abbreviate it either since no one in the real world even knows what the abbreviation stands for. Just put School Board, Water Board or Whatever Board.

The second thing you can put on your signs is the word Elect or Re-Elect. This is completely optional. If you use it put it above your name in letters smaller than your name, but also smaller than the office you're seeking.

You don't really need to put Elect or Re-Elect on your signs. The simple fact that you have signs up tells voters you would like them to either elect or re-elect you to office.



# **SIGN SECRET 4**

## **The Right Colors Stand Out**

Use a passive color and an action color on your sign. Your name should be in the action color. The background should be the passive color.

### **What are action and passive colors?**

An action color is a brighter color that tends to excite and project energy.

Passive colors are perceived to be more neutral, calming, and are believed to provide more focus.

A yard sign with the candidates name in yellow on a blue background would be an example of using an action color (yellow) for the name and a passive color (blue) for the background.

But really there is no formula as to what colors actually work. However, know your community. Some cities have a large population of alumni from a particular university. They will subconsciously be attracted to signs with their school colors.

In 1992, Barbra Boxer became a U.S. Senator using a sign with a yellow (action color) background and black (passive color) lettering. This is the reverse of the above, but her signs really stood out, were very distinctive, and became collectors' items.

Now, don't get too carried away with colors. Always remember Sign Secret #1: The most important thing on a sign is your name.

### **The colors you choose for your signs must make your name visible and stand out.**

Nearly a century ago a researcher by the name of Hedwig Von Restorff developed what is known as the Isolation Effect or the Von Restorff Effect in an effort to better understand how memory works.

To test her theories on memory, Von Restorff conducted an experiment presenting subjects with a list of similar, but distinct items. All items except one on the list were the same color. After the experiment, she found that the recall rate of the uniquely colored item was dramatically higher than that of the other items.

The bottom line – the uniquely colored item stood out.

Try to pick a color scheme for your signs that will be different than what the other candidates are using. That will help your signs, your name, and your candidacy stand out.

Again, above all things, your name must be readable and stand out.

However don't be strange and use something really odd or offensive to make your signs jump out at voters. Just be distinct and memorable.

A final note – DayGlo colors really stand out – even in the dark. Most people don't use them, but they look really sharp and are very memorable.



# SIGN SECRET 5

## Size Does Matter

As much as colors can make your signs stand out, so can size.

The average voter is not that interested in politics in the first place, so they're not really paying close attention to your campaign signs.

The average voter is driving, and will only briefly notice your sign.

**Your signs need to stand out and have a mental impact.**

Let's go back to Von Restorff's Isolation Effect. Unique items stand out. People remember the uncommon.

If possible, make your signs a different size and shape than everyone else's.

Your standard campaign yard sign is approximately 18" x 24". Make yours larger. Make it 18" x 48" or some other larger than average combination. Just make your signs larger and more dominating.

A large sign, with a distinct color and with simple, clear lettering and no graphics - like website, email, photo, slogans, and QR codes - is much more likely to be read and remembered.

You want voters to get a quick snapshot of your name. Signs are primarily about name identification.

Large signs will cost a few more dollars but if you are going to do yard signs, you should do them right. Make sure your name is visible and memorable.

**BONUS  
SECRET**

# The Best Place to Put Your Signs

The best place to put your yard sign is in someone's yard — but only if you have their permission.

Go to any town in America during election time and you will see yard signs cluster at intersections, on ramps, vacant properties, telephone poles, and so on. Any yard sign on a major thoroughfare is wasted money. Billboards and large banners are a different story. We're talking about yard signs.

Additionally, a lot of these placements are actually illegal. You should always check with your local jurisdiction regarding where you can legally place signs.

**Remember, when placing your signs on private property you must always get the property owner's permission.**

Not doing either of these things will likely result in your signs being torn down and thrown away. Plus, you may be fined.

Now that we got that out of the way, here's your Bonus Sign Secret.

**A yard sign belongs in a yard.**

It may seem obvious, but too many campaigns and candidates forget that. Your signs do you the most good when they are placed in a person's yard.

This is for two reasons: 1) Secondary Commitment, 2) Persuasion

## **Secondary Commitment**

If you are walking precincts or calling voters and the voter says "yes, I will vote for you," will they really? Are they just saying that to get you off their doors step or off the phone? Remember most people don't like to be rude.

If a voter says "yes, I will vote for you" then ask them if you can put a sign in their yard.

If a voter says “yes, I will vote for you” and “yes, I will put a sign in my yard” they are making a secondary commitment of support to you by agreeing to take a sign. It’s also a public commitment and they are more likely to vote for you and to tell people they know to vote for you.

It is like saying “yes, I will vote for you and I will put a sign in my yard to prove it.”

Be sure to get that sign in their yard right away. If you’re going door to door, always have signs in your vehicle so you can place them in the yards of the voters who want them on the spot.

All the “yes” voters you have identified who took signs are most likely very solid supporters.

Bottom line – get those secondary commitments and use your yard signs to do it.

## **Persuasion**

If you are targeting voters in a precinct, getting “yes” votes, and placing signs in yards, then you are increasing your name identification.

You’re also providing social pressure on less consistent voters and undecided voters in that precinct.

According to Alison Ledgerwood, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Davis, people are influenced by others. According to Ledgerwood “... we are social creatures... and use others to influence our decisions...”

Neighbors with signs in their yards are providing name ID for you and persuading others to vote for you by making a public endorsement of your candidacy.

Get those signs up in areas where people are more likely to be swayed to vote – neighborhoods, precincts, or wards with ample turnout where you still have a sizable portion of undecided voters.

Again, don’t randomly place them all over town cluttering up the roadways, city streets, parks, buildings, and vacant lots. Target your sign placement and use your “yes” votes to move the other voters.

There you have it, those are our five secrets of winning campaign signs. If you follow them all, your campaign will have good signs that build your name recognition and help you win your election.

If you have more questions on signs or want more information on winning campaigns, you can visit our website: [TheCampaignSchool.Com](http://TheCampaignSchool.Com)

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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Brian Floyd & Paul Arney are successful veteran political consultants and the founders of The Campaign School.

A native of southern California, Brian Floyd first became fascinated with politics at the age of eight when his uncle, Dick Floyd, was elected to the State Assembly.

After graduating from the University of California, Riverside with a Bachelors Degree in history, Brian professionally entered politics. For three terms, he served on the staff of California State Assemblyman Rod Pacheco.

In 2004, Brian became a professional political consultant and has won over 90% of the races where he's been the lead campaign consultant.

Brian is recognized for his expertise in direct mail, opposition research, campaign messaging, and social media strategies.

Paul Arney is a professional political consultant with experience in local, state, federal, and international elections.

Paul earned his Bachelors Degree from California State University Chico in Political Science with a minor in Economics. He then earned his Masters Degree at CSUC in Political Science with an emphasis on Public Policy and Organizational Theory.

Paul served former California Assembly Majority Leader Dario Frommer as his Field Representative and as the Consultant for the State Assembly's Select Committee on The Future of the California Film Industry. Paul also served as the Political Director to former House Intelligence and Homeland Security Committee Member Jane Harmon.

Paul is an expert in every aspect of campaigning including precinct canvassing, campaign messaging, voter targeting, direct mail, paid telephone calls, polling, fundraising, independent expenditures, opposition research, and grassroots organization.