



Leadership
Institute

CORE TO CROWD: Strengthening the Party Brand from the Faithful to the Persuadable

Ron Nehring
Director of International Programs



Hello! I'm Ron Nehring

Chairman, California Republican Party (2007- 2011)

Chairman, Republican Party of San Diego County (2001 – 2007)

Presidential Campaign Spokesman Sen. Ted Cruz (2016)

Republican nominee for Lt. Governor of California (2014)

Director of International Programs for Leadership Institute

Local elected officeholder in San Diego County, California



**My interest in
party branding**



How do they feel about the party?

And how do they feel about it?



Your brand is not a logo.

It's the sum of the emotional, visual and behavioral perceptions people have about a party, candidate or movement.

It's the promise, personality and reputation in the minds of voters.

The critical role of party identity

- Impacts voter behavior.
- Distinguishes the party from competitors.
- Creates lasting voter connection.
- Essential in fragmented political landscapes.
- Differentiator in coalition governments.



It's one of the oldest debates in politics



“Left or Right?”



**Is this how ~~people~~ think?
normal people**

Political theory

Human beings cannot be usefully reduced to a single number placing them on a theoretical, one-dimensional political spectrum. Political theory is often incomplete or misleading.

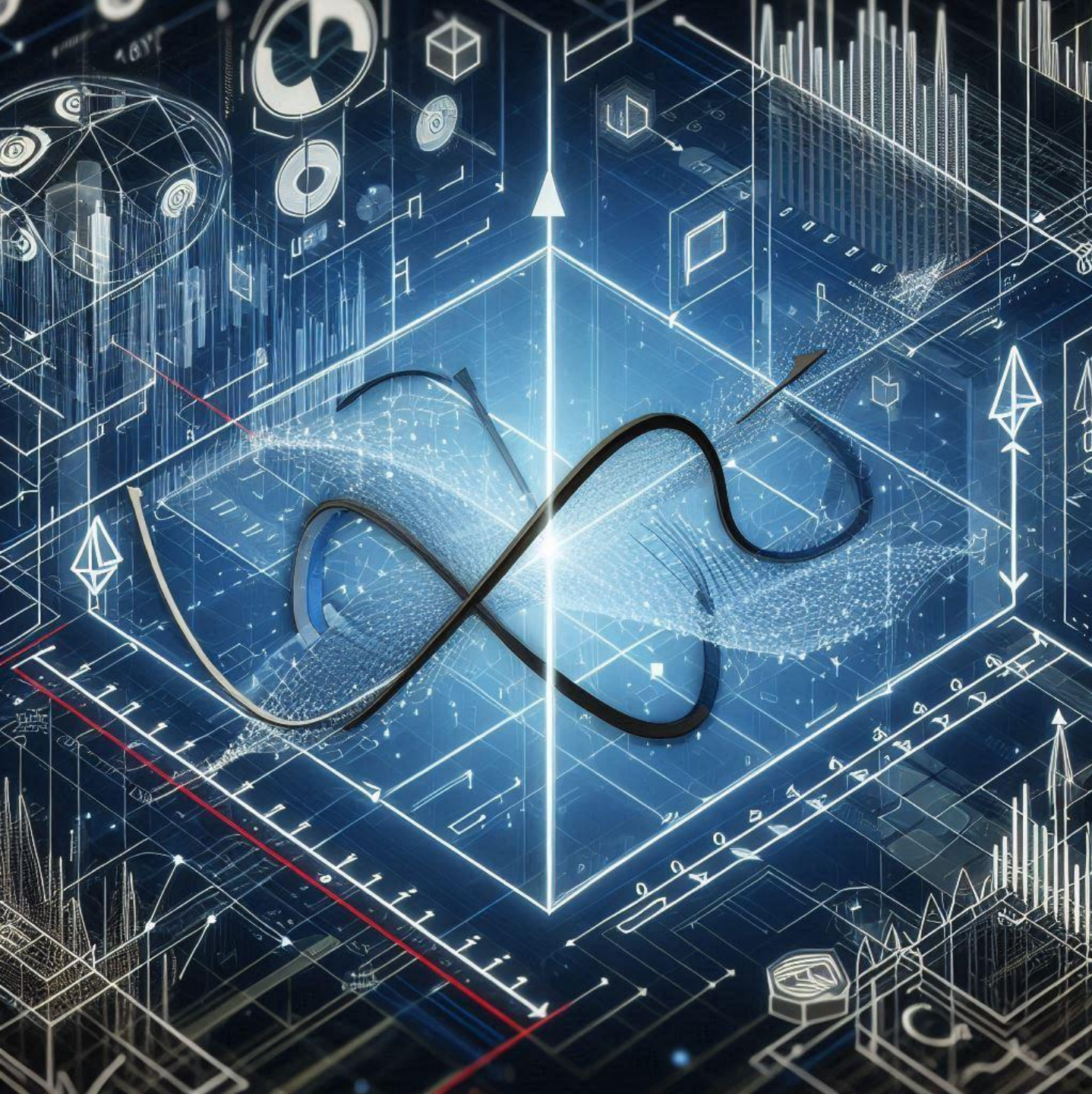
Polling

“The problem with market research is people don’t think what they feel, don’t say what they think, and don’t do what they say.”

David Ogilvy

**A change in perspective
is worth 80 IQ points.**

Alan Kay



**There's more than
one dimension at
work here...**

Political party branding/reputation

Social psychology

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo

Provides a framework for understanding how individuals process persuasive messages.

It identifies two main routes: the **central route** and the **peripheral route**.

Key Finding

Highly engaged and less engaged people process information differently.

The highly engaged process information more deeply, while less engaged rely on superficial cues.

Central Route

Detailed arguments
and evidence.

Peripheral Route

Cues and signals as
shortcuts.



Now, let's apply it to politics...



Central Route

Detailed arguments
and evidence.

CORE

Peripheral Route

Cues and signals as
shortcuts.

CROWD

Central Route

Detailed arguments
and evidence.

CORE

We really understand the
problem.

Solution + Benefits.

Evidence, data,
testimonials.

Platform/manifesto.

Themes.
Visual identity.
Storytelling.
Emotional connection.
Social proof.
Aesthetic appeal.
Charisma.
Positive imagery.
Consistency.

Peripheral
Route

Cues and signals as
shortcuts.

CROWD



As we make branding decisions,
what do we need each to do?

CORE

CROWD

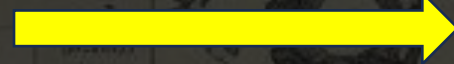
CORE

Show we really understand the problem.

Solution + Benefit.

Evidence, data, testimonials.

Platform/manifesto.



Volunteer

Donate

Engage

Vote for us

CROWD

Theme

Visual identity

Storytelling

Emotional connection

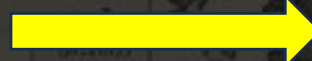
Social proof

Aesthetic appeal

Charisma

Positive imagery

Consistent



+Impressions

Recognition

Trust

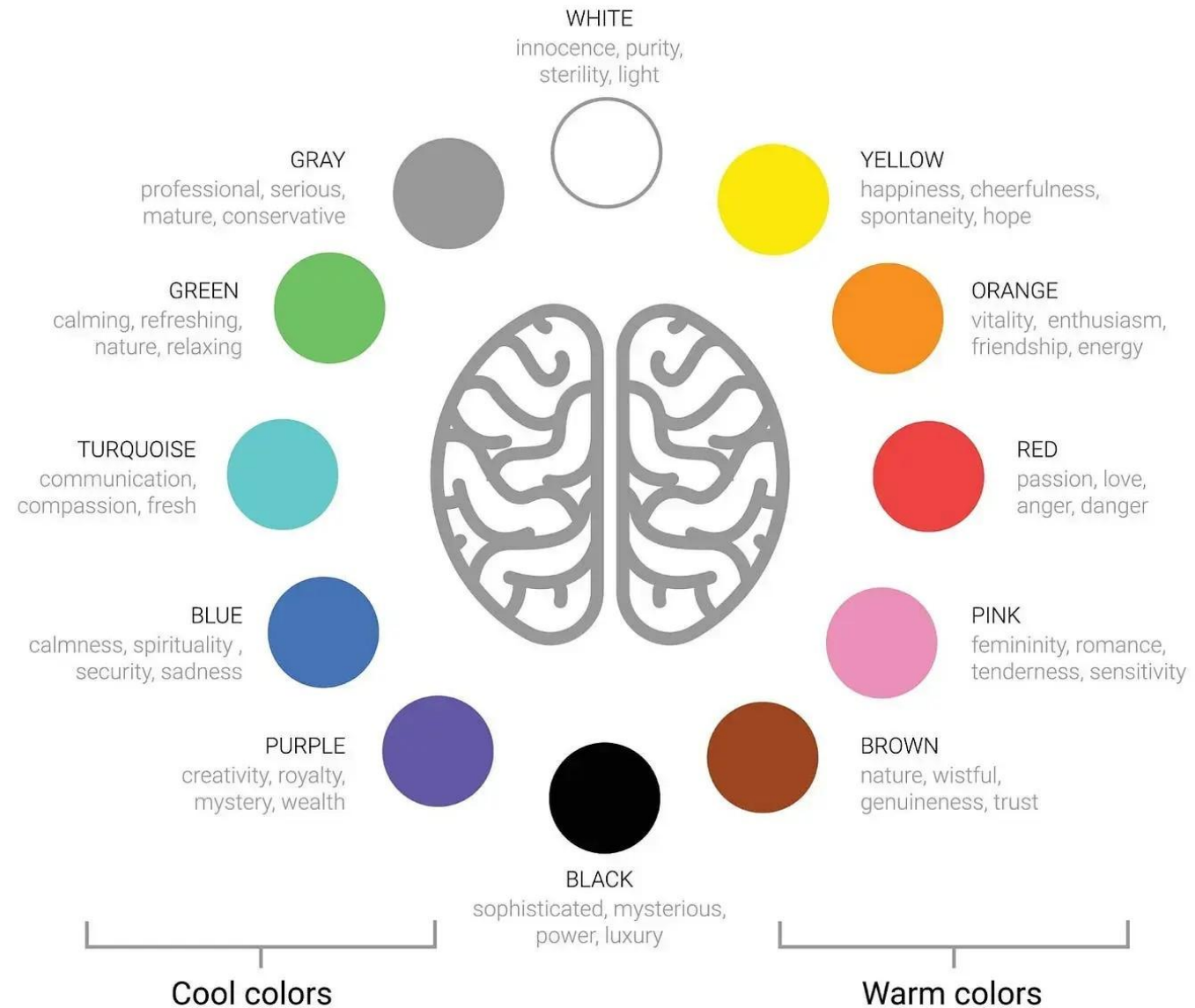
Vote for us

Visual Identity and Symbolism

Colors, logos, and symbols evoke emotions and establish identity.

These elements should resonate with both core and broader audiences.

PSYCHOLOGY OF COLOR



Branding Must Appeal to Core and Crowd

- Design branding to resonate with a wide audience.
- Use inclusive imagery and universal values to attract a broader electorate.



Conservative

Themes Must Appeal to Core and Crowd

- Effective themes are simple, memorable, and aligned with the party's values.
- Appeal to both the central and peripheral routes.





Success stories

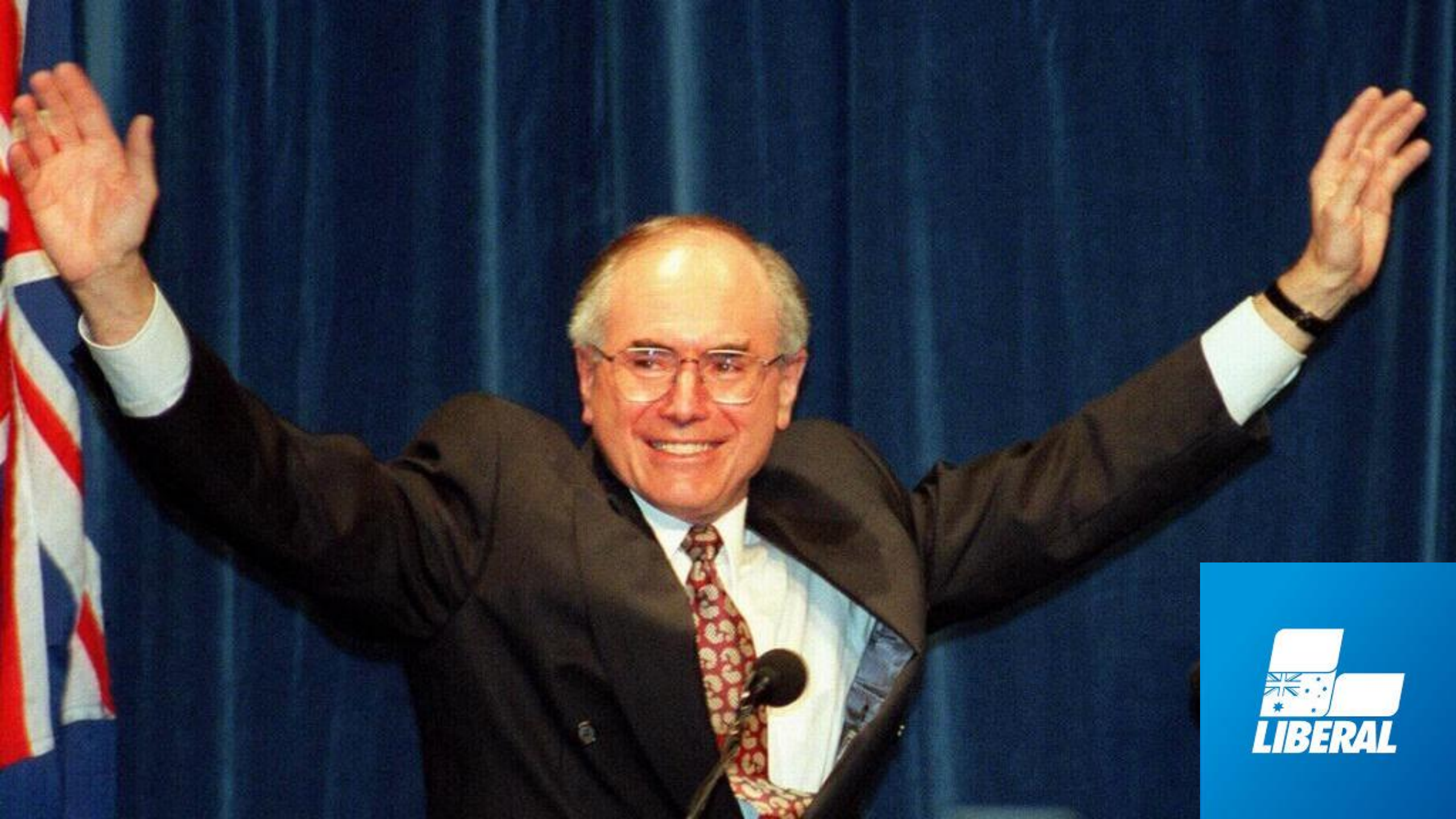
A blue rectangular sign is mounted on a wall made of light-colored stone or concrete blocks. The sign features the text 'Die neue Volkspartei' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the text. The sign is secured with four screws, one in each corner. Above the sign, a metal door handle is visible, consisting of a curved bar with two mounting brackets.

**Die neue
Volkspartei**

CSU



Näher am Menschen





A Work in Progress

CAGOP



From talking to ourselves — to connecting with everyone



- Old Logo – “CAGOP” (Core-focused)
- Insider shorthand.
- Appeals to those with high political knowledge.
- Limited emotional or symbolic resonance.
- Flat design and muted colors: institutional, not inspirational.
- Prioritizes identification *within* the party, not *connection beyond* it.



- Full party name: instantly recognizable
- Combines logic and emotion: clear identity *and* visual storytelling.
- Uses California symbols (bear, star, arc) to evoke pride and belonging.
- Strong colors and dynamic form cue confidence and optimism.
- Bridges core conviction with broader voter appeal — central + peripheral routes united.

Flawed approaches to rebranding



Move left on issues. (That's it)

Core feels abandoned, demotivated.

Fail to increase appeal to the less engaged.



Same party, new wrapping.

Superficial and weak.

Fail to strengthen core by updating policies/ideas.

Strategic Engagement Framework

Party (re)Branding in 3 dimensions

CORE

CROWD

PROCESS

Use a Two-Track Strategy

CORE

The Six “P’s”

Principles

Policies

Proof

Positive

Progress

Purpose

CROWD

IMPACT:

Inspire

Motivate

Positive

Appealing

Connect

Trust

Political Science



Know what to avoid + Find Balance

The Six “P’s”

Principles

Policies

Proof

Positive

Progress

Purpose

CORE

Fringey

Irrelevant

Ambiguous / Dilute

Easily attacked

Lacking evidence



I.M.P.A.C.T.:

Inspire

Motivate

Positive

Appealing

Connect

Trust

CROWD

Boring

Long-winded

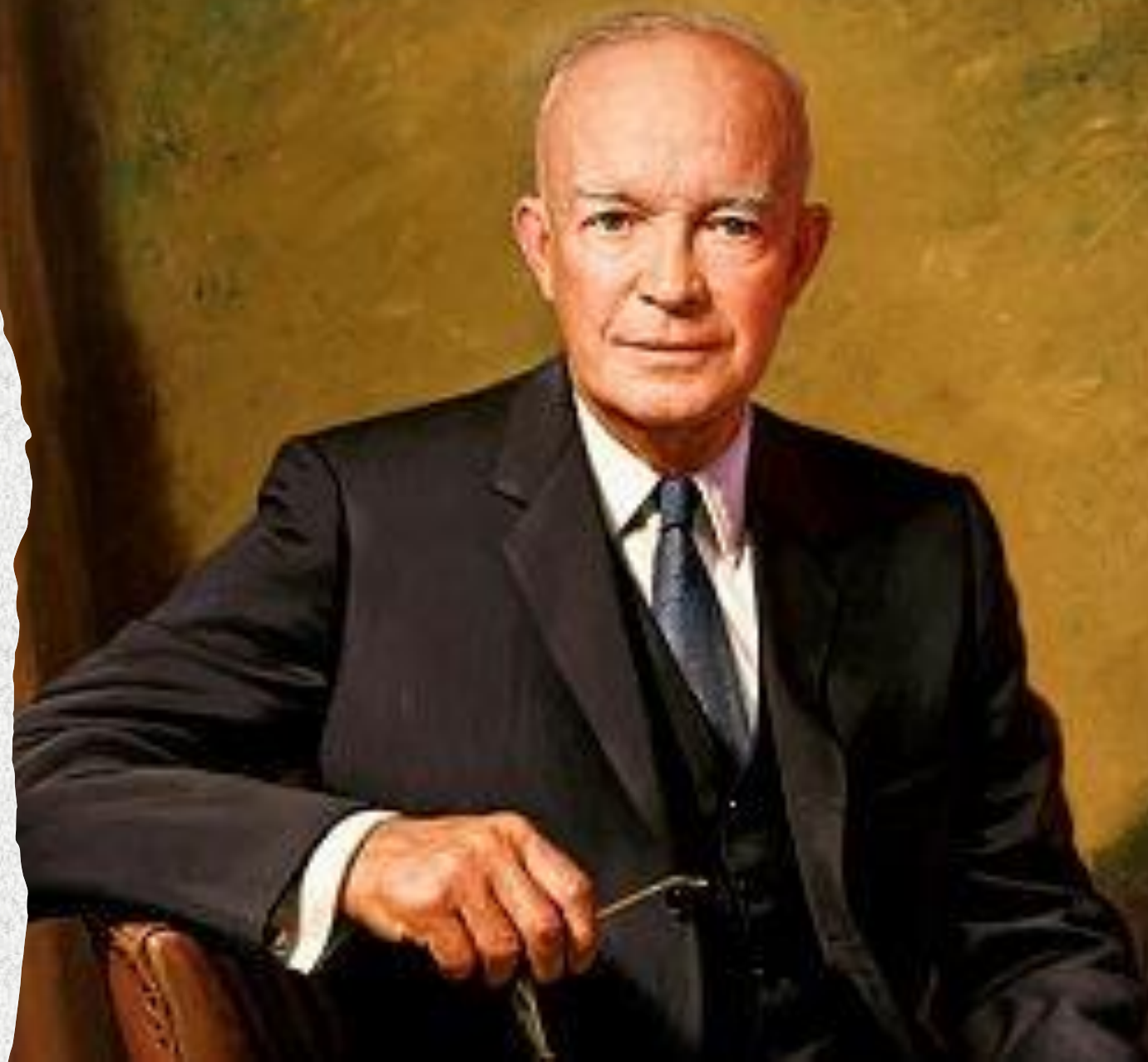
Needlessly alienating

Narrowcast to small audience

Emotionally disconnected

**“In preparing
for battle I
have always
found that
plans are
useless, but
planning is
indispensable.”**

Dwight D. Eisenhower



“The most common error of a smart engineer is to optimize a thing which should not exist.”

Elon Musk

The political spectrum is just not helpful for branding purposes.



Not everyone thinks the same.

**Not everyone went to political
science class.**

**Not everyone thinks like politicians
and political reporters.**

Core to Crowd: The Takeaway

Inspire the core

Lead with conviction, clarity, purpose and ideas that stand up to scrutiny.

Engage the crowd

Through themes, storytelling, and a powerful visual identity.

Appeal emotionally

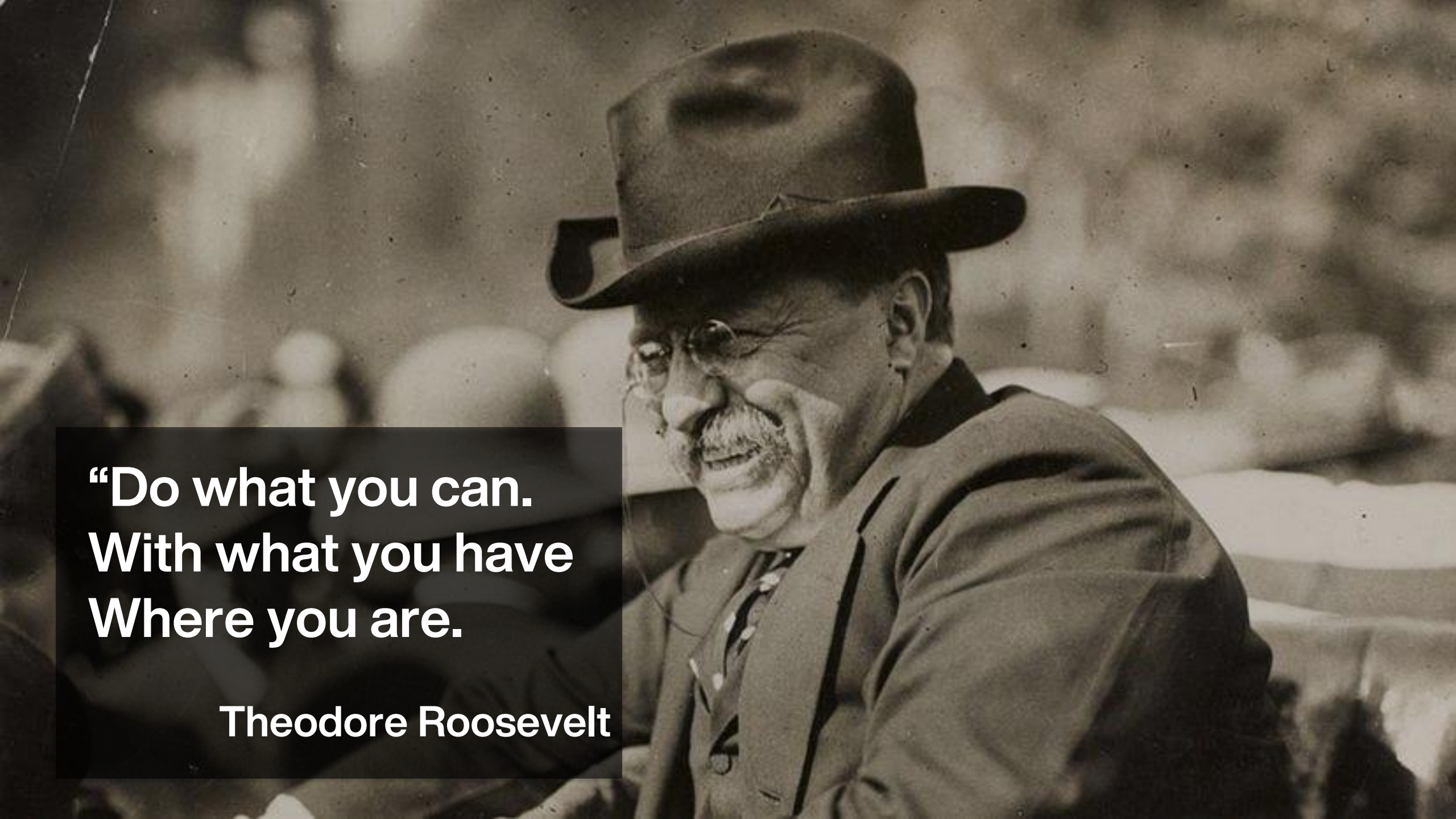
Build connection through charisma, positive imagery, and consistency.

Get people to believe you

Reinforce it with social proof and aesthetic credibility.

Drive results

Build it, sell it, then punch it home at the ballot box



**“Do what you can.
With what you have
Where you are.**

Theodore Roosevelt



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Ron Nehring
Director of International Programs
for the Leadership Institute

My contact card:

