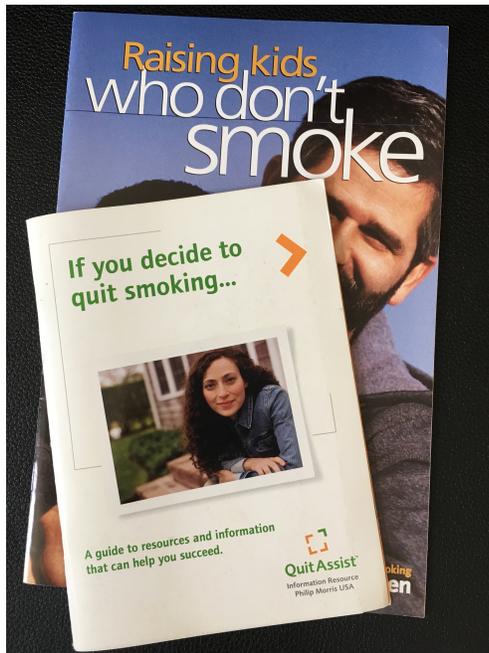


CASE STUDY:

AN ETHICAL COLLABORATION WITH INDUSTRY TO REDUCE SMOKING

I consulted to Philip Morris/Altria for over five years as part of a corporate social responsibility campaign. My work included:



- *Founded and led an expert advisory board to help smokers quit, and helped recruit a second group of respected experts to address youth smoking prevention.*
- *Wrote motivational QuitAssist booklet that refers users to government and nonprofit cessation resources tailored to different audiences.*
- *Maintained control over all content to ensure consistency with public health and ethical principles, and supported all content with research citations.*
- *Interviewed successful quitters to provide real-life examples for print and web materials*
- *Oversaw focus group research used to improve appeal, clarity and usability of materials.*
- *Also researched and coauthored a set of print and web materials for parents on youth smoking prevention.*

Hundreds of thousands of cessation booklets and 70-million youth smoking prevention parent brochures were distributed

by Altria. Our story-based, research-backed approach influenced later government and commercial campaigns.

Throughout my career, I have served as a bridge between people of different backgrounds, to help them collaborate effectively. I've helped academics and journalists understand each other's assumptions and goals, and explained the relevance of research to policymakers. In other cases, I've bridged the gap between academics or nonprofits and the corporate world.

One of the most challenging such cases was **my consulting work on youth smoking prevention and on smoking cessation with a broad range of clients including nonprofit anti-smoking groups and Philip Morris USA, now known as Altria**. Two senior academic colleagues at other institutions had received grant funding from PMUSA for their research or outreach efforts to reduce adolescent risk behavior. In 2002, they encouraged me to talk with the youth smoking prevention group about possible support. Having worked with multiple grantees of the State of California on smoking prevention and cessation, and seen the (apparently deliberately) ineffective corporate-sponsored curricula of the 1990s, I was extremely skeptical.

PMUSA managers asked if I would consider editing a booklet they were developing for smokers who wanted to quit. Based around the U.S. Public Health Service's five keys to quitting, the booklet's ultimate goal was to motivate smokers to access government and nonprofit

resources. As a tobacco company, they could not express any opinions or judgments in such a publication, which left the prototype version I saw generic and uninspiring. I felt that the resources of PMUSA—not only dollars, but also control over key counter space at countless convenience stores and pharmacies, and mailing lists of smokers—should not be wasted on another bland and ultimately ineffective effort from an advertising agency. With my expertise and oversight, this could serve as an extension of and complement to efforts funded by the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. I agreed to take charge of the project, but only if I had absolute control over content, and help from an expert advisory board.

Over several months, I put together the advisory board. I wanted people with extensive experience in behavioral health issues and no previous ties to tobacco companies. I viewed it as a good sign if they, too, were skeptical of PMUSA's motives but driven by the potential to use this connection to reach out to people who needed this intervention the most. They needed to have enough trust in the PMUSA staff to collaborate effectively. But they also had to maintain a watchful, questioning attitude to ensure that our work gave maximum benefit to the public with minimal burnishing of the company's image. The group included psychiatrists and psychologists with expertise in addiction, a scientist who co-developed the nicotine patch, a behavioral medicine expert who worked with low-income smokers, and psychologists who worked with Spanish-speaking populations (who supported a cultural translation of the 48-page booklet).

I reviewed and commented on lists of resources for smokers with varying backgrounds and needs, and sought out additional options. I translated recommendations from published research into everyday language. I interviewed my board members, integrating their best practical advice. PMUSA's public relations firm was also part of the collaboration. To limit potential for bias introduced by PMUSA staff, I worked directly with the PR firm to recruit former smokers whose stories and practical advice I could use to bring the QuitAssist booklet to life.

While leading the QuitAssist effort, I also served on the board of the parent-focused Youth Smoking Cessation program. (There was substantial overlap between the boards.) All publications from both boards were extensively evaluated, using focus groups (which I observed) and mall intercepts, leading to some useful revisions. For one, I learned that smokers don't want to hear from doctors; they trust advice from successful quitters, and want to hear their stories.

Ultimately, PMUSA distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of our cessation guide. Seventy million of our parent brochures on youth smoking prevention went out in magazines and on store counters—a reach that is orders of magnitude greater than most smoking cessation efforts! Later, PMUSA translated the guide into a website featuring videotaped stories of former smokers, in English and Spanish (with the guide still available as a PDF download). For a time, the QuitAssist site was the single largest source of referrals to Smokefree.gov. I am also proud to have helped launch the trend of using the real stories of smokers as the focus of cessation content.

The objectively measured success of that program as well as the scientific basis of the content have allowed me to maintain my relationships with anti-smoking organizations as well, since they recognized the integrity of our group's approach and the value of the materials we created. In fact, the executive director of the American Legacy Foundation, which was funded by the Master Settlement Agreement, asked me to give a presentation to her senior staff.