



The Tobacco Industry: The Fight against Secondhand Smoke

Restrictions or prohibitions on smoking in indoor environments have a direct impact on tobacco consumption and negatively affect tobacco industry profits. Therefore, it is not surprising that the tobacco industry has put tremendous effort and resources into preventing such policies from being passed. The tobacco industry has gone to great lengths to discredit the medical and scientific research on secondhand smoke. The industry has fought for the support of the hospitality trade, as smoking is still allowed in most leisure and hospitality venues. Here are some of the methods used by the tobacco industry to weaken the case for indoor air policies:

Careful selection of terms to minimize hazard: The tobacco industry has preferred to use the less personal term 'environmental tobacco smoke' rather than secondhand smoke, passive or involuntary smoking. Industry documents suggest that this term was coined in the early 1970s.¹

Denial: Vociferous public denial of the health impacts of secondhand smoke has become a trademark of the industry, although internal documents reveal that tobacco companies did accept the risks associated with secondhand smoke, as far back as 1981.²

Hide the truth: In 1982, an industry commissioned report found that even smokers actually preferred smoking restrictions.³

Recruit and discredit: Philip Morris sponsored Project Whitecoat, a program that screened and recruited a worldwide group of scientific witnesses who were paid by the industry to make pro-industry comments on secondhand smoke issues and to discredit medical and scientific experts who were reporting unfavorably on secondhand smoke. This went on throughout the 1980s and into 90s, when the project was revealed.⁴

Public relations campaigns: Realizing that fighting science was becoming increasingly difficult, the tobacco industry shifted gears in the 1980s. In a joint meeting of international cigarette manufacturers Dr. Franz Adlkofer of the German tobacco industry, suggested that what the industry needed was "good public relations, not good science."⁵

Change of tactics: "Whether or not we succeed in discrediting the notion that ETS is a health risk, we can place the risk in context and thereby minimize it. Thus, non-smokers may still believe ETS is a health risk, but on a par with driving a car, or shoveling snow."⁶

Building alliances: "The hospitality industry is our greatest potential ally...we need to build a strong and relevant partnership with the hospitality industry...we are reliant on (them) to be out in front fighting on this issue."⁷ The strategy was to use its hospitality allies to fight regulations on secondhand smoke and to fund industry-friendly initiatives focusing on "accommodating" both smokers and non-smokers. These often stressed ventilation as the most effective way to deal with secondhand smoke.



Expand & Conquer: By the 1990s, with smoking restrictions becoming well established in the US, the tobacco industry identified Europe as the next region that was most likely to become a threat. A presentation given in 1994 describes Philip Morris' strategies to fight public health efforts in Europe and to counter the activities of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).⁸ "Objective: To prevent unacceptable workplace and public smoking restrictions by defeating legislative initiative(s) or by assuring favorable wording."⁹

¹ Rylander, R. Environmental tobacco smoke and lung cancer- an alternative hypothesis. Bates number 2029167838/7843, May 1990.

² Hirayama T. Non-smoking Wives of Heavy Smokers have a Higher Risk of Lung Cancer: A Study from Japan. *British Medical Journal*/1981: 282 (6259: 183-185); quoted in Glantz, SA et al. *The Cigarette Papers*, University of California Press, 1996, p.413.

³ Fackelma, EJ. Smoking Attitudes Study. Bates number: 505745699-505745830, 1982.

⁴ Dehlavi Naj and Amanda Sandford. "The tobacco industry, ETS, and the hospitality trade: A chronology of tobacco industry obfuscation." *Action on Smoking and Health*. May 2003.

⁵ Minutes from Joint Meeting on ETS- London, England, 1988.

⁶ No author stated; found in the area of Tom Borelli/office; corporate author Philip Morris by inferences within document. "ETS: Science Action Plan." 1989 (est.) Bates: 2021159478-2021159480.

⁷ Philip Morris. Philip Morris and the hospitality industry. June 1995. Bates range 2045517337-7347.

⁸ Philip Morris. "Consumer freedoms overview EU and national support." 4 July 1994. Bates No. 2028381353/1365.

⁹ Pmcs; Pmi, Philip Morris International; Wirz, Gerard."PMCS Draft Strategy Document- Retreat II. 01 Jan 1993 (est). Bates: 2501140155-2501140162.