



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 4 to 6

About the Author: *This lesson has been adapted from Smoke-Free for Life, a smoking prevention curriculum supplement from the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Drug Dependency and Tobacco Control Unit*

Thinking Like a Tobacco Company

Overview

In this lesson, students learn how the tobacco industry exploits the needs, wishes and desires of various target audiences in order to foster brand loyalty. Students explore how the tobacco industry creates a false image of the effects of smoking in order to make smoking appear to be a desirable activity. Assuming the roles of marketing personnel in a tobacco company, students suggest ways to exploit teenage girls, teenage boys, and adults.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of how the tobacco industry uses personality profiles about target audiences in order to market cigarettes
- an awareness of how the tobacco industry downplays the health risks associated with smoking
- an awareness of how advertisers use specific strategies to target youth
- an understanding of why the tobacco industry needs to recruit replacement smokers

Preparation and Materials

- Review the teaching backgrounder: *Recruiting the Replacement Smoker*
- For ideas on how to conduct group work on this topic, see the *Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups* teacher backgrounder.

Make photocopies of the following student handouts:

- *Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking*
- *Why We Need Replacement Smokers*
- *Customer Profiles*

Make photocopies or overheads of the following ads, or use these as examples for finding similar ads in magazines:

- *Tobacco Ads That Would Appeal to Young Smokers*
- *Lifestyle Tobacco Ads: Sports, Fitness & The Great Outdoors*

Have large sheets of paper ready for brainstorming.



Procedure

Tell your students to imagine that they work for a large multinational tobacco company and they have been called to a meeting. They all work in the marketing branch of the company. Their job is to figure out how the company can sell more cigarettes, so that it can increase its profits.

Explain that you are the marketing vice-president, and you will begin the meeting by giving a "pep talk." Like most executives leading a meeting, you have visual aids to help you get your point across.

Assume the role of ad executive. Use the overhead projector.

Suggested Script

The good news is that even though we're getting bad press about all the health problems caused by smoking, people keep lighting up! Every time someone lights up one of our cigarettes, that's about one cent profit for us. It may not sound like much, but for each pack-a-day smoker, that adds up to about \$3,500 a year. In Canada, there's about 5 million smokers, representing about 6 billion dollars profit each year. So every smoker that chooses our brand is precious to us. We need them, and because they are addicted, they need us.

Show *Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking*.

Now, the bad news is that our customers are dying off like flies. That's the problem when one's product causes heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and emphysema - to name a few of the unfortunate side effects.

Show *Why We Need Replacement Smokers*.

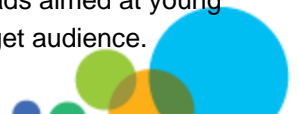
The other news is that when people start realizing that they're killing themselves when they smoke, they get it into their heads that they should quit. We call these smokers "pre-quitters." At any one time, more than half of all smokers are planning to try to quit. Only about 10 - 12 per cent of quitting attempts are successful, but still, about 140,000 Canadians do manage to quit each year. This is terrible! What can we do? (*Ask for suggestions.*) What we need are replacement smokers - new smokers, or "starters," to replace the ones who die or quit. Of course, we also want to convince our present customers that they shouldn't worry about their health. And we want to capture the "switchers" - smokers who are ready to switch brands.

But our best replacement smokers are young people. Why? (*Answers may include: they'll be around the longest, and give us the most money; they don't care about long-term health risks; they just want to have a good time; many already think smoking is a "cool" thing to do because their teachers and parents don't like it.*)

Distribute *Customer Profiles* to students.

The company's market research team has been busy studying three groups of customers: teenage girls, teenage boys, and older smokers. They have told us what these groups need in order to feel that it's okay to smoke. It appears that young people want to feel more mature and independent. This being the case, what kinds of images can we show them? Here's a few that worked well for our competitors:

- Show the *Tobacco Ads That Would Appeal to Young Smokers* - or similar magazine ads aimed at young people. Discuss what elements make these ads effective for reaching the desired target audience.



And for people who are worried about their coughing and scorched throats, and about becoming weaker and out of breath, what can we show them? Images of strength, fitness, and fresh air, of course!

- Show *Lifestyle Tobacco Ads: Sports, Fitness & The Great Outdoors* or similar ads from magazines, stressing physical strength, fitness, sports, and the outdoors. Discuss the messages in these advertisements.

Now your job is to think up new ideas for getting our message across. Think of images that will really "grab" the readers. Who should be in your ads, and what should they be doing? Describe the people in detail, so we can go out and find the right models.

Activity

- Divide the class into three groups. Give each group leader a "customer profile." Have the students brainstorm messages (verbal and visual) that will influence their target group. Have them also decide which magazines to place their ads in.

Ask each group leader to report on the group's strategy, which is critiqued by the class as a whole.

Evaluation

- Group presentations



Recruiting the Replacement Smoker

What is a “replacement smoker”?

In order for the tobacco industry to continue to reap big profits, it must not only replace quitters with new smokers – it must also replace the estimated six million adults who die each year of tobacco-caused diseases worldwide.

Who does the industry recruit as replacement smokers?

Ninety percent of smokers begin by the time they're 18. Adolescents are the most important customers of cigarette companies. Young smokers represent a lifetime of addiction, and a lifetime of profits.

How can the tobacco industry justify marketing an addictive, lethal drug to young people, especially when kids under the age of 18 or 19 cannot legally buy cigarettes?

- The industry denies it. In the U.S., the industry's own voluntary Code of Ethics vows that “cigarette advertising shall not appear on television and radio programs, or in publications, directed primarily to persons under 21 years of age.” In 1998, under the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), tobacco companies agreed not to target advertising to youth under 18. And Phillip Morris USA, the largest tobacco manufacturer in the U.S., created a Youth Tobacco Prevention Department with the aim of helping prevent kids from smoking. In an advocacy ad entitled “We don't advertise to children” (U.S. edition of *Time* magazine, April 9, 1984), R. J. Reynolds (RJR), the makers of Camel and Export A cigarettes, countered prevailing accusations that they targeted teens with this reassurance:

All of our cigarette ads are what we call “brand advertising.” Their purpose is to get smokers of competitive products to switch to one of our brands, and to build the loyalty of those who already smoke one of our brands. At the present there are some 200 different cigarette brands for sale in the U.S. Many of them have only a very small fraction of the total cigarette market. Getting smokers to switch is virtually the only way a cigarette brand can meaningfully increase its business. That's why we don't advertise to young people.

In fact, smokers tend to be extremely loyal to their brand of choice. Only 10 per cent of smokers' switch brands each year.

How do we know that the industry deliberately targets youth?

Internal industry documents acknowledge that success in recruiting young replacement smokers is the key to capturing market share.

- A 1971 Matinee marketing plan stated that: “Young smokers represent the major opportunity group for the cigarette industry. We should therefore determine their attitudes to smoking and health, and how this might change over time.”
- A 1988 Imperial Tobacco marketing plan said: “If the last ten years have taught us anything, it is that the industry is dominated by the companies who respond most effectively to the needs of younger smokers.”



- In 1987, when Canada first passed the Tobacco Product Control Act, which banned cigarette advertising in Canadian print media, the Act's constitutionality was challenged by Imperial Tobacco and by RJR. During the pre-trial, confidential documents from the marketing files of these two international firms became available for public review.

These documents revealed that both companies went to great lengths to penetrate the psyche of adolescents in order to more effectively target their brands to “starters.” Research techniques included wide-ranging surveys, focus group tests, and closed circuit TV observation. A Youth Target Study conducted in 1987 by RJR identified the “primary target segment” among young people, and noted that they are “. . . rooted in the present. They live for the moment and tend to be self-indulgent. . . . Achievement and leadership is not a goal for this group compared to others. Societal issues are relative non-issues. . . . They read newspapers and some magazines, including *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. Heavy metal and hard rock are common music choices.”

The following observations about teen smokers appeared in a report commissioned by Imperial Tobacco:

Starters no longer disbelieve the dangers of smoking, but they almost universally assume these risks will not apply to themselves because they will not become addicted. Once addiction does take place, it becomes necessary for the smoker to make peace with the accepted hazards.

This is done by a wide range of rationalizations...The desire to quit seems to come earlier now than before, even prior to the end of high school. In fact, it often seems to take hold as soon as the recent starter admits to himself that he is hooked on smoking. However, the desire to quit, and actually carrying it out, are two quite different things, as the would-be quitter soon learns.

(cited in Pollay, see sources below)

- An R. J. Reynolds document from 1989 specifically identifies young people as "the only source of replacement smokers." It notes the importance of young people to the future of tobacco industry profits, acknowledging that less than one-third of smokers start after age 18, and only 5 per cent of smokers start after age 24. The document also reveals that younger smokers are important to the industry's future growth – both because they exhibit strong brand loyalty, and because their smoking rates increase as they age.
- It's not only older teens that are targeted. Numerous tobacco industry documents indicate that the industry has perceived kids as young as 13 to be a key market. A 1976 RJR document states:

Evidence is now available to indicate that the 14-18 year-old group is an increasing segment of the smoking population. RJR-Tobacco must soon establish a successful new brand in this market if our position in the industry is to be maintained in the long term.

How do ads target youth?

- Full-page, glossy cigarette ads appear regularly in *Cosmopolitan*, *Maxim*, *Penthouse*, *Rolling Stone*, *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, among others.
- These ads create and reinforce the image of smoking as cool, acceptable and popular among independent-minded, active, fun-loving people.



- An August 2001 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that the cigarette companies increased their advertising in youth-oriented magazines after the Master Settlement Agreement. Advertising for the three brands most popular with youth – Marlboro, Camel, and Newport – rose from \$58.5 million in 1998, to \$67.4 million in 1999.



Cartoon ads have the most obvious appeal for young people. Brown & Williamson used a series of tobacco ads that features 'Willie the Kool' penguin, complete with buzz-cut hair, day-glow sneakers, and sunglasses.

Perhaps the most infamous tobacco-based cartoon character is RJR's Joe Camel – a 'smooth character' modeled after both James Bond and Don Johnson of *Miami Vice*. A study published in the 1991 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that nearly one-third of three-year-olds were able to match a picture of Joe Camel with cigarettes, and that six-year-olds were able to associate 'Old Joe' with Camel cigarettes as easily as they associated Mickey Mouse with the Disney Channel.



Within four years after the Joe Camel campaign was launched, the number of U.S. smokers under 18 who preferred Camels jumped from less than 1 per cent to 30 per cent of the youth market. Sales of Camel cigarettes to kids 12 to 19 years old rose from \$6 million in 1988 to \$476 million in 1991 – clear evidence that cigarette advertising can have a powerful influence on teenagers.

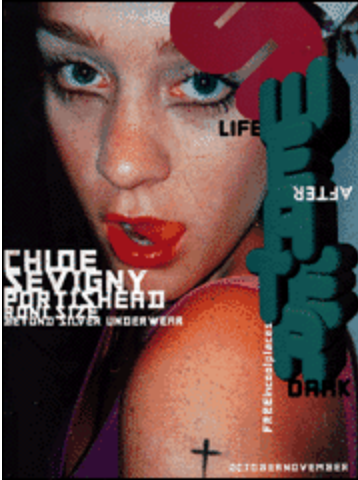
The campaign also included secondary strategies. One Joe Camel ad published in *National Lampoon* and *Rolling Stone* included a coupon for a free pack of cigarettes with the purchase of another, and advised readers to 'ask a kind-looking stranger to redeem it.' And 'Camel Cash' could be redeemed for youth-oriented 'smooth stuff' featuring the image of Joe Camel. Due to pressure by the American Federal Trade Commission, in 1997 Reynolds agreed to stop using Joe Camel in its tobacco ads. However, subsequent campaigns have featured cartoon-like images of young men and young women, as well as humorous ads that mock the Surgeon General warning labels.

What other promotional strategies target youth?

In countries where cigarette advertising is banned or restricted, the sponsorship of sporting and cultural events becomes a primary means of promoting cigarette brands. The use of company logos and names on promotional billboards and flyers associates tobacco with popular culture and exhilarating experiences, and links smoking to exciting and glamorous activities and events. Moreover, when these events are televised, the brand name receives wide exposure. Prior to October 2003, when Canada banned tobacco sponsorship promotions, this was a common method used by Canadian tobacco producers to reach the public. In fact, in 1991, the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturer's Council estimated the industry had spent more than \$40 million on "cultural programs and projects that year."



As sponsorship advertising is phased out or eliminated, and tobacco advertising becomes generally more restrictive, advertisers are trying other tactics. The strategy of handing out free cigarettes has been used to recruit new customers worldwide. The activist group INFACT reports these examples: in Eastern Europe, young women in cowgirl outfits hand out free Marlboros to teenagers at rock concerts and discos. Those who accept a light on the spot are rewarded with Marlboro sunglasses. In Taipei, high school students at the Whisky-a-Go-Go disco find free packs of Salem's on each table. At a high school in Buenos Aires, a woman wearing khaki safari gear and driving a jeep with the yellow Camel logo hands out free cigarettes to 15- and 16-year-olds on their lunch break.



Cigarette logos on T-shirts, towels, baseball caps, sunglasses, and jackets give brand names a high profile while giving tobacco companies one more way to circumvent advertising restrictions. Virginia Slims offers a line of “V-Wear.” In Kenya, children are given Marlboro T-shirts; and in Thailand, cigarette logos appear on kites, notebooks, earrings, and chewing gum packages.

Tobacco companies also support the “alternative press;” offer money to clubs in exchange for displaying tobacco material; and sponsor awards and contests advertised in magazines. Richard Pollay states that “closely associating cigarettes with hip clubs and music venues, and placing advertising in free alternative publications, result in underage teens being exposed to Camel ads... [It] repackages an old message: Smoking is cool.”

Cited in “Tobacco Companies Bankroll Their Own,” *Seattle Times*, Dec. 10, 1997.

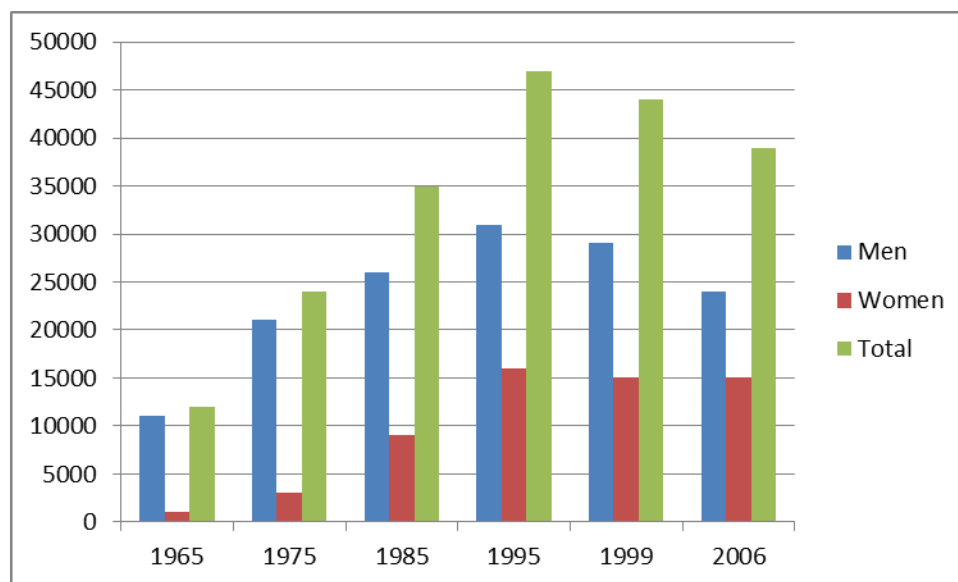
Sources:

Youth and Tobacco: Promoting a Lethal Product, National Clearinghouse on Tobacco and Health, 1993.

Jeffry Jensen Arnett and George Terhonian, “Adolescents’ responses to cigarette advertisements: links between exposure, liking, and the appeal of smoking,” *Tobacco Control Online*, 1998, 7:129-133.



Number of Deaths in Canada Caused by Smoking



Sources: "Tobacco: The Facts" (Canadian Council on Smoking and Health), Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Health Canada



Why We Need Replacement Smokers

Number of smokers "lost" each year in Canada:



Customer Profiles



Customer Profile: Teenage Boys

- want to feel independent, mature
- want to appear strong, tough
- want to be "cool"
- want to be accepted by peers



Customer Profile: Teenage Girls

- want to feel independent, able to stand alone
- want to look mature, tall, thin, in control
- want to be beautiful and well dressed
- want to be accepted and respected by peers

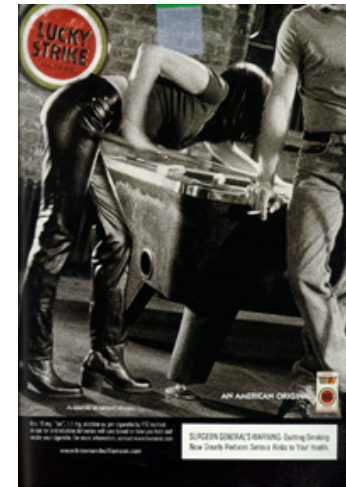


Customer Profile: Older Smokers

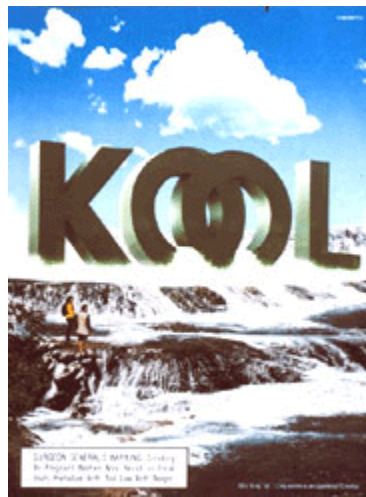
- want to be fun-loving, light-hearted
- want success in business
- want to believe that their health isn't being ruined by smoking - that they can still enjoy sports and the outdoors
- want to be "free thinkers" who don't go along with the crowd



Tobacco Ads That Would Appeal to Young Smokers



Lifestyle Tobacco Ads: Sports, Fitness & The Great Outdoors



Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups

Research indicates that teacher-trained peer group leaders contribute to the effectiveness of tobacco prevention programs in the schools.

Many students feel more comfortable talking about personal and social issues in the presence of peer leaders. The discussion can be more candid, more probing, and more self-regulating. In turn, peer leaders have the opportunity to take on a leadership role and to act as role models for other students.

- 1) Before the first lesson, ask students to select group leaders. A group leader must be respected by his or her classmates, and the leader must accept the position. Note that students who smoke can also be selected as group leaders, since they have valuable experience to contribute. Following are two selection methods.
 - A. Ask the class to nominate six students (three boys and three girls) as discussion group leaders. Each student writes six names on a slip of paper. Collect the nominations and tally them. You should end up with at least one group leader for every four to six students. "Extra" leaders can be used as alternates on days when one of the other leaders is absent.

Or

- A. Divide the class into groups first, and let each group choose its own leader. Students can form their own groups by selecting a partner and then joining another pair, to a maximum of 6 students in each group. On days when some students are absent small groups can combine. Everyone in the group must agree on the choice of discussion leader.
- 2) Schedule a time when the group leaders can meet with you for 20-minute training session. Copy the "Group Leader Guidelines" (below).
- 3) At the meeting, tell the group leaders that they will be helping you with the *Smoke-Free for Life* unit. Explain why this unit is important – the decision of whether or not to use tobacco will have a big effect on the rest of their classmates' lives. As group leaders, their job isn't to convince students that they should or shouldn't smoke but to help guide the group discussion and activities, so that everyone has a chance to come to their own conclusions. Express your confidence in the group leaders' ability, and your support for their role.
- 4) Distribute the "Group Leader Guidelines." Go over each point. If time, do a "dry run" of a lesson activity.
- 5) Plan a brief follow-up meeting after the lesson, to give the group leaders a chance to talk about their experience and discuss problems.

See, for e.g., Thomas J. Glynn, *School Programs to Prevent Smoking: The National Cancer Institute Guide to Strategies that Succeed* (National Cancer Institute, 1990) or, Health Canada includes the use of teacher-led peer assistants in its checklist of "Criteria for In-Class Instruction" section C. Delivery, (*Improving the Odds: Educator's Resource, A Tobacco Use Prevention Resource for School Aged Youth 10-14*, 1995).



Sources:

The PAL Smoking Prevention Program, Health Canada.

Tobacco-Free Teens: The Minnesota Smoking Prevention Program.

Group Leader Guidelines

- Wait until everyone is settled and paying attention before you start the group activity or discussion.
- Make sure everyone understands the assignment.
- Encourage students not to interrupt each other, and to listen to what is being said.
- Help everyone in your group to participate. If someone isn't saying anything, ask for their opinion about what is being discussed.
- Keep an overview of what the group is trying to accomplish. Try not to let the discussion stray too far off track. Bring it back to the topic with a question directed at someone in the group.
- Let the group come to its own conclusions. You can offer your own opinions and ideas, but don't dominate the discussion or feel that you have to come up with all the answers.
- Respect everyone's opinions, and everyone's feelings. Encourage the group to do the same.

Good luck and thanks for your help!

