

I. Introduction:

I am Michelle Kilgore a Media Specialist with the California tobacco control section media unit. I was asked to speak today about what I've learned while trying to come up with effective messages to reach the military population in California.

Our goal to educate service members on the dangers and impact of tobacco use, and drive calls to the California Smokers Helpline.

The first thing I wanted to do was to better understand the military culture so I started by reading articles and studies and making calls to people who are experts in their field. What I found out is that while each branch has its own unique culture the basic messages are the same.

I am going to talk about a few of the people that I spoke with and what each of *their* ideas were on the best way to reach the population that they work with. Then I will talk about what method we at TCS are looking at to reach California's military.

- a. First I talked to Captain Larry Williams, with the Dental Corps, US Navy, He is also a consultant on the Department of defense Alcohol and tobacco advisory council.

*Biggest issues are Health, Money, and Readiness

Health

Endurance shot if winded

10% of enlisted failing fitness test. The majority of those people are tobacco users.

Injuries heal slower and the results of the injuries are more severe in smokers.

As study in the Journals of Psychiatry – smokers are twice as likely to suffer from post traumatic stress disorder as non-smokers.

Smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative

Readiness

*Supply of tobacco – can't function well because of the severity of nicotine withdrawals.

They can't focus, shaky, irritated.

Concealment – when you light up a cigarette you become a target for enemy fire.

Smoking reduces night vision. I just read an article where it says it can reduce it as much as 20 to 50 percent.

Money

Aspect very important.

\$ 4 a pack average

If new recruit smokes a pack a day for a year that is equivalent to an entire months pay that is going to buy cigarettes.

He also mentioned

Leadership and tobacco

The higher up in the ranks the fewer smokers there are.

We also talked about...

Why recruits start smoking

Stress and boredom are big reasons. It is also part of the culture. Smokers get to take breaks to go smoke. Non-smokers may start smoking just because it's a way to escape for a little while. He mentioned that the military should think about offering mental health breaks or healthy choice breaks to non-smokers.

*Other effective messages

Family (If they quit)

Better (and healthier) future tobacco free
Kids healthier (no exposure to SHS)
More money for family

b. Keith Haddock, PhD. Associate Professor of Psychology and Medicine,
Mid American Heart Institute in Missouri. Air Force

1. Health Impacts
2. Readiness
3. Social Responsibility and Influence
4. Social Standing

Health impacts

Reduced night vision
Sick more
Drop out of training more

Short term health messages – Special Forces are affected more by messages of health

The number of airmen disabled because of smoking is equivalent to an entire air force base being down for a year.

Readiness

Supply - Nicotine withdrawals

Concealment – Enemy forces can trace locations by smokeless tobacco (chew) spit (the dogs can smell it)

Messages with appeal

Social responsibility & influence

Kids see you smoke in uniform it send the message that it's OK
Take care of yourself and have pride.

Social standing

How they are viewed in the military is very important. Stereotypes of smokers are negative.

What does work?

Statistics with testimonials works

Personal testimony from other military personnel.

Public affairs article – Have high ranking official write it and take credit for it.

Don't like group treatment

18-24 don't seek treatment because they have self exempting beliefs

He also gave me a list with 7 statements about smoking and the military that are backed up by studies conducted with U.S. Military personnel. (Attachment)

- c. Attempted to talk with Lt. Col. Sherry Sasser who is the chief of health promotion for the Air force in the office of the surgeon general. Never worked out.
- d. Contacted by Martha Hunt. Health Promotions Coordinator Naval Hospital 29 Palms. Works with Marines.

Messages most effective:

Health impacts – impotence

Dead by age 55

Chemicals in cigarette smoke

Family and Kids

Cost

Tobacco and Fitness

I asked her what message she finds to be most effective.

The message that the average tobacco user dies by age 55. It seems forever in the future to most of them, but some get the message that if they keep smoking or dipping, that they won't see their kids or grand kids grow up.

She mentioned that in her experience Hispanic and Asians were more impacted by that message.

She also said that because they are always being told what to do they like the fact that there is no pressure to attend her classes.

In the end, she said they have to want it bad enough. She focuses on 'knowledge is power' whether driving a tank or giving up tobacco and she gets them to draw on their own self discipline skills to get through tobacco withdrawal.

Her other suggestion - Keep it simple and common sense. Don't talk down to the Marines. If you put any concept in terms people can understand, then they will get the message.

II. TCS media plans for outreach

After hearing from all the experts we worked with our PR agency to come up with some ideas to reach out to smokers in the military. Here are a few of the ideas that were possibilities.

- a. Guest column (someone from each branch) in military papers.
- b. Letter or column story (story of someone in military impacted by dangers of tobacco)
- c. Advertorial – an advertisement that looks and reads like an article.
- d. Online presence/use tobaccofreeca.com Use banner on military newspaper websites. They could click on banner and would direct to webpage with info on military and how to quit.

With limited resources we wanted to reach the most military population so we decided on having an online presence and using the website banner to drive traffic to our [tobaccofreeca](http://tobaccofreeca.com) website. There we would have a special page for members of the military.

We were working on designing the page and were focusing on using a previously created publication called "Hot Topics" Packed Poison: The truth about Tobacco Products" For Army leaders. It is a supplement to ***Soldiers Magazine***. It seemed to touch on nearly all of the issues that I had discussed with military experts. After getting permission from the creators of the supplement we were going to use the already existing images and rework some of the messages to be more California specific. I have the Hot Topics supplement as an electronic file and can send it to those who are interested. I just wanted to warn you that it is a huge file. 10 MB

That plan was put on hold while we completed production of our new general market and ethnic ads.

We are again refocusing on military. I am still planning to talk to more key opinion leaders and we are still looking at moving forward with the website. We are also looking at using some of our existing creative. (Paycheck poster/attached). At some point we will hold focus groups to make sure that we are reaching the military population in an effective manner. I am open to suggestions of ways to reach the military and to people to talk to so please feel free to let me know if you have any ideas.

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