

Smokeless Tobacco Spring Media Campaign

March 17, 2009

Background

The Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) is developing a media and counter-marketing campaign on the health effects and social consequences of using smokeless tobacco products. The TPCP media and counter-marketing contract with Knupp & Watson, Inc. will be used to develop the campaign.

The proposed campaign responds to the increased focus that tobacco companies are putting on smokeless tobacco products. The number of smokeless tobacco products and their marketing has amplified as more and more states pass comprehensive smoke-free laws. The proposed campaign provides critical counter-marketing to decrease the tobacco companies' effectiveness in getting youth to use their smokeless products.

Target Audience and Key Components of Campaign

The campaign's primary audience is Wisconsin youth ages 13-17. Campaign components were chosen based on their popularity with the target audience. Key elements include radio advertising and online banner ads on websites popular with youth (Myspace, Facebook, video game web sites, sports websites). All advertising will direct youth to a special Myspace page created for the campaign. The campaign's Myspace page will provide visiting youth with information on the short and long-term health problems and social consequences of smokeless tobacco, tobacco cessation program options, and links to tobacco prevention youth activism sites. The TPCP will measure the campaign's success by tracking visits to the Myspace page and the number of "Friend" requests received.

Why Myspace was Selected

Myspace was chosen based on its popularity with our target audience of teenage youth and because it allows for the creation of a visually engaging web destination without the expense that comes with creating a new multi-page website. Facebook was initially considered for the campaign, but its visitation skews older than our demographic, and its page design restrictions limit the ability to be creative with the page's design. It is also more cost efficient to maintain a Myspace page than a full website. Myspace pages can also be added to a radio commercial tag easier than an individual Facebook page. Facebook page URLs are long and complicated (preventing them from being used as a tag), whereas a radio spot could easily be tagged with something like "Visit www.myspace.com/saynotosmokeless" (Note: the final URL has not been selected).

Management of the Myspace Page

Knupp & Watson will create the campaign's Myspace page and TPCP staff will maintain it. TPCP staff will check the site regularly for "wall comments" and "friend requests". The TPCP will approve the comments or friend requests for posting on the campaign page in cases where the friend request or comment is non-controversial (example: a non-profit sends a friend request; a Myspace user writes a comment saying "This site rocks!"). TPCP staff will determine the appropriate response with TPCP Section Chief Vicki Stauffer (or Jim Malone if appropriate) in cases where there is uncertainty about a comment or a friend request. No privacy issues are anticipated as all Myspace users need to agree to the site's "Terms of Use" before joining the site (the terms include the option to create an anonymous profile).

Next Steps

The campaign is timed for May to take advantage of lower radio advertising costs. The campaign's budget and timeline will need to be retooled to allow for the creation of a new smokeless tobacco website if TPCP doesn't receive approval to create the Myspace page. This change will also decrease the reach and frequency of our radio and online media buys and put added pressure on an already tight timeline. According to Wisconsin State Statute, the funds for this campaign need to be spent by June 30, 2009.

DHS Communications Director Seth Boffeli has indicated his support of the campaign plan. TPCP requests DHS web department approval of the Myspace page by March 20.