Chapter 10

Grassroots Marketing

We never said 'don't smoke.' Teens aren't looking for more preaching; they're looking for the opposite, actually—a chance to be independent and rebellious. So that's what Students Working Against Tobacco was all about. We didn't preach to our friends. We got a bunch of kids together to make a statement to the tobacco industry—to rebel against them.

Jared Perez, founding marketing director
 Florida's Students Working Against Tobacco

Grassroots marketing encourages people to participate in your countermarketing program. It gets new people involved, increases the involvement of those already reached by your campaign, and employs those already engaged to increase your target audience's exposure to key messages or services. A collection of tactics falls under the heading of grassroots marketing: events, community organizing, partnerships, and some forms of "permission marketing" (offering benefits to audience members in exchange for permission to continue marketing to them). What brings them together is their purpose: they're all about establishing and using participation. (For information on grassroots efforts for policy change, see Chapter 9: Media Advocacy.)

Involving people isn't easy, but it can help you significantly in achieving your goal of decreasing tobacco use or exposure to secondhand smoke. People involved in antitobacco activities are less likely to smoke or chew tobacco themselves and are more likely to urge their friends or family members to quit. Through grassroots marketing, you can build community support for your cause—which is critical to every part of your effort—and you can use

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- Using Community Partners To Reach Your Audience
- Evaluating Your Grassroots Marketing Efforts

community partners to carry messages to your target audience, enhancing exposure (how many people get the message), relevance (whether they care about it), and, in certain cases, credibility (whether they believe it). For example, a father might care more about what his wife says ("The smoke in restaurants bothers our son. I'm going to a rally for smokefree restaurants. Want to come?") than what he hears on television ("Secondhand smoke is harmful to children"). The key is to remember that different people offer credibility on different topics for different audiences. For example, you may trust your doctor for health information, but you'd turn to a mechanic for information on car repair.

Keep in mind that community partners aren't commercial spokespeople. They're not under your control, and they don't always follow the script. However, grassroots activities work best when community participants are treated as partners, at least to some extent. The freedom to make choices is part of what makes an activity powerful for the participant. A clear example is when grassroots marketing is tied to media advocacy. When community members are

treated as partners in creating an advocacy activity, the activity may not be as polished as one that's organized entirely by professionals. However, being part of the decision making draws the people involved deeper into the issue. They emerge more committed and more credible on the issue to other community members, not because they know every message verbatim, but because they believe in what they're saying. This doesn't mean that you want them to be off strategy, saying or doing things that aren't in line with your central messages or goals. The constant challenge for the manager of a grassroots marketing program is to find the right balance between choices and control.

This chapter describes some of the tactics that successful counter-marketing campaigns have used to address the following three goals of grassroots marketing:

- 1. Getting people involved
- 2. Helping those involved to become more engaged
- 3. Using partners to extend the reach and frequency of your messages

What Grassroots Marketing Can and Can't Do

Can

- Involve people
- Create interpersonal exposure to a message
- Channel some feedback
- Build community support

Can't

- Substitute for strategy
- Be tightly controlled
- Expose a broad audience to a very specific message

Keys to Involvement

- Decide whom you want to involve.
- Offer them something that they want.
- Make it easy for them to participate.

Getting People Involved

What's true about marketing in general is also true about grassroots marketing: If you want people to get involved, you need to offer them something that they want. You will also need to make it easy for them to participate. To use commercial marketing terms, you will need to offer potential participants high value at low cost.

Tobacco counter-marketing programs have gotten people involved by offering benefits like glamour, recognition, and—quite simply—fun. Programs hold activities when and where people can easily attend. This may mean scheduling an activity after work or school and in the target audience's neighborhood or, better yet, holding an activity at another event that is already drawing the kind of people that you want.

Start with identifying the audience that you want to reach: Is it young children? Policy makers? Hispanic parents? Women? The answer will depend on your overall program goal and specific grassroots goal. If your program goal is to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and your specific grassroots goal

is to change the social norms around tobacco use, you may want to include policy makers with influence over smokefree restaurant ordinances as one of your target audiences.

The audience(s) you select will help determine the character of the tactic that you use. Offering recognition may draw involvement from policy makers; a contest may interest young children. Be creative: You may want to invent something new, but you don't have to start from scratch. Here are tactics that some counter-marketing campaigns have used and that others have replicated.



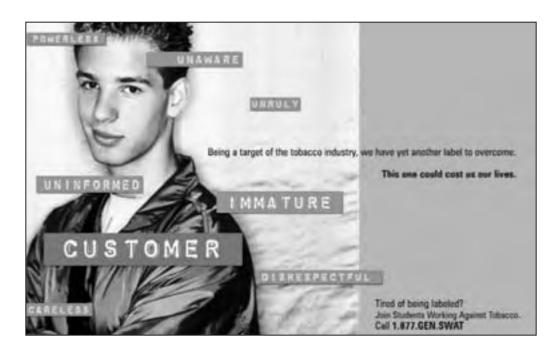
Recognition events. Some of the most important people to recruit in a counter-marketing campaign are those with a lot of influence over potential and current smokers. These "influentials" may be role models or people in a position to control widely distributed tobacco-related images, such as entertainers,

reporters, and publishers. Recognition events are one way to earn the attention of such influentials in the news media and the entertainment industry. By honoring people who do the right thing (portray tobacco honestly) or by exposing people who do the wrong thing (glamorize tobacco), you can offer a benefit that many in-fluentials seek—positive publicity. For example, California presents its "Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!" awards for tobacco use in movies, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse presents its PRISM awards for the accurate portrayal of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use in entertainment. These types of events might help you recruit influentials to be part of a campaign.

Glamour events. Building excitement is one way to attract people. You can piggyback on news events to make your campaign seem current and important or invite celebrities to participate. The key is to make sure that you stay focused on one of your messages. The American Lung Association in Sacramento,

California, does just that to teach media literacy, piggybacking on the Emmy Awards to illustrate how tobacco is glamorized and normalized on TV. The American Lung Association's Flemmy Awards are presented each year to TV shows that inaccurately depict tobacco. This event draws considerable media attention and highlights a message about how smoking isn't as glamorous or as common in real life as it is depicted on TV.

Advocacy events. Activities that advocate for better tobacco policies, such as restrictions on smoking, are not only valuable tools for changing policies, but also a way to get more people involved in tobacco control. Among other advocacy activities, tobacco control advocates have urged restaurants and bars to go smokefree, pleaded with magazines to refuse tobacco advertising, and campaigned to limit tobacco advertising in stores. States can also piggyback on national advocacy events, such as the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids' "Kick Butts Day."



Activities within events. Drawing a crowd or the media—is no easy task. Sometimes, instead of trying to create an event, programs piggyback on existing events. Activities can range from setting up a booth at an ethnic festival to distributing materials at a rock concert. Florida's "truth" campaign sent its "truth truck" to rock concerts sponsored by tobacco brands to offer a needed counterpoint and to recruit youth volunteers. The "truth" campaign also set up booths at concerts to collect signatures petitioning Hollywood stars for more accurate portrayals of tobacco. California distributed its "Gold Card," which was designed to look like a gold credit card and contained the state's quitline number on it, at numerous events. People placed the cards in their wallets and, therefore, had the quitline number available when they needed it. The Gold Card is now the fourthranked source of calls to the quitline.

Research activities. Hearing about something is one thing; learning about it is another. Some tobacco control programs create community activities in which people collect data about their own environment—and become more aware of what's around them as a result. California's Operation Storefront, for example, recruited local youth to collect information about the amount and type of point-ofpurchase advertising done in grocery and convenience stores. Then the youth publicized the results. Although youth might not gather information that is as reliable as what can be gathered by evaluation professionals, the community involvement and subsequent publicity can help engage more people in tobaccorelated issues. The Montana "Most of Us" project relied on grassroots marketing activities to enhance and broaden the reach of its media campaign. Students in a high school math class conducted a school survey on tobacco use, demonstrating for themselves the campaign's message that the majority of teens don't use tobacco. Another example from Contra Costa County, California, involved coalition members who conducted informal opinion polls, surveying community members about their dining preferences (i.e., smoking or nonsmoking section), as a way to personalize attitudes and convey them to local officials during hearings on smokefree restaurant ordinances.

Contests. A prize is one of the most common benefits offered in exchange for involvement. Poster contests often are used to encourage young people, typically those in middle school and younger, to think about the downside to tobacco use. Unfortunately, young people often are asked to create these messages in a vacuum: they have no information about what kinds of messages might work. Messages developed without the benefit of research are less likely to be effective. Using these messages in a campaign (e.g., by buying space on local billboards) is risky. The most effective contests are those that stick to your strategy. In Florida's teen-oriented "truth" campaign, the program emphasized its messages about industry manipulation by creating a contest that asked teens what they might say to a tobacco executive. The teen who submitted the winning answer received an award from Music Television (MTV).



Using specialties and giveaways. Grassroots activities often lend themselves to advertising specialties and giveaways, such as pens, T-shirts, and stickers. If you plan to use these types of materials, first make sure that they fit with your strategy (e.g., California distributed Gold Cards to promote its quitline). Second, don't let each community or group create their own materials. To maintain a consistent message and to create efficiencies of scale, you'll want to produce the materials centrally and then distribute them to your partners for dissemination.

Helping Those Involved To Become More Engaged

Successful events are good ways to involve people initially, but you'll make a bigger impact if you become a more regular part of their lives. You'll want some people to become truly *engaged* in your campaign—to feel a part of it. This is critical if one of your goals is policy change. A tobacco control program can go only so far, especially if it's

managed by a government health department that can't lobby for policy changes. At some point, people in a community need to press for change or it won't happen, which is why community programs are included as a critical component in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs* (CDC 1999).

Different people will be interested in different levels of involvement. You should try to accommodate as many levels of involvement as possible, then "sell up"—encourage them to become more involved over time. In marketing, this relationship is sometimes called "permission marketing": You offer benefits to audience members in exchange for permission to continue marketing to them. The goal is not to make a single "sale," but to develop a longer-term relationship that will involve many "sales" or interactions over a lifetime. For example, sometimes marketers send useful information by e-mail in exchange for information about your purchase preferences, then follow up with an offer to sell you something customized to your needs. The difference with tobacco control advocacy is that you're not selling a product; rather, you're "selling" the idea of actively supporting the program. Grassroots counter-marketing campaigns have several general levels of engagement:

• Sampler. The lowest level of engagement is when people agree to participate in one activity based on the benefits of that activity. One example is a child who will participate in a poster contest because he likes to draw. He may not have

bought into the larger antitobacco effort.

- Ally. An Ally is someone who agrees with your overall goals and will be part of an activity if it seems interesting, fun, or important.
- Believer. A Believer wants to help your cause and is probably thinking of ways to involve others. Believers will participate in almost any activity that they think will further the goals of the effort.



Believers are obviously valuable, but not every-body you reach can be a Believer. Few people are committed tobacco control advocates the first time that they hear about the issue. People change their opinions and level of commitment gradually. Programs attract Samplers, whom they try to convert to Allies. Some of those Allies eventually become Believers. Just a handful of those that you recruit are likely to become Believers.

There are many reasons to have people engaged in your program and many ways that they can make a difference. Once people get involved, you'll face issues related to organizing, effective advocacy tactics, and governance. Although those are important issues for the program at large, this chapter will only address the most salient marketing issue: How do you entice people to become more and more involved?

This question has been around for a long time. Active, organized grassroots support for tobac-

co control is often limited to the public health community. However, it doesn't have to be. Successful tobacco control programs have enlisted wide support on occasion by appealing to various groups, such as women's organizations, organizations that represent other specific populations, and, most notably, youth. Five of the most common

ways that programs have engaged people in their effort on an ongoing basis are:

- Community coalitions. Community
 members guide boards that may issue
 grants, implement community activities,
 or author community planning documents.
- 2. **Advocacy group.** Members and their supporters engage in statewide and community tobacco control activities.

- 3. **Internet communities.** A group of tobacco advocates can network and share ideas through a Web site or an e-mail list (listsery).
- 4. **Professional groups.** Such groups engage or target influential professionals, such as scriptwriters or physicians, to change how their professional group deals with tobacco.
- 5. **Partnerships.** The tobacco control program creates an ongoing relationship with another organization that may support tobacco control, or some aspect of it, but may not have tobacco control as one of its main goals. The program also engages the organization's members in furthering tobacco control goals.

There are almost as many ways to create these relationships as there are established groups. A lot will depend on where you're starting. Does a group already exist? Is the group well positioned to broaden its numbers? What kind of presence does the government agency overseeing the tobacco control program already have at the community level? Regardless of where you start, those with experience in grassroots marketing say that three principles should be followed in nearly every case:

1. **Be clear about the purpose of the relationship.** People will want to know where they fit with the overall goals of the program. The clearer that you are about the role you need them to play, the more informed they will be about whether they want to play that role.

- 2. Show your partners that they will be **doing meaningful work.** If people think that they're contributing to something they believe will make a difference, they're more likely to stay involved. This means that you need to allow for their contributions. Your participants need to be treated as partners who can help mold the effort, rather than servants simply being asked to undertake some tasks. Once you engage them, you'll also need to show them often that they're making important progress toward the goal. Your positive feedback will help to keep them motivated to do sometimes difficult and time-consuming work.
- 3. **Make it easy.** Try to minimize the barriers to getting involved, such as long or numerous meetings. Focus on what people want to do, not just on what you need them to do. Also, find out more about them—their strengths, experiences, and interests—to make the best match with the work to be done. For example, the former Coalition for a Healthy and Responsible Georgia (CHARGe) devoted 15 to 20 minutes during each of its coalition meetings to writing letters to legislators, newspaper editors, and other influentials to educate them about the tobacco settlement issue. They provided all of the necessary templates and materials, including preaddressed, postage-paid envelopes, so that it would be as easy as possible for coalition members to take action.

Using Community Partners To Reach Your Audience

Leveraging the interest and enthusiasm of community partners (which may include people at both the Ally and Believer levels of commitment) is an inexpensive way to boost the reach and frequency of your messages. But remember that the people you want to change are probably not the same people who will be involved in your program. Youth smokers, for example, are typically not joiners: They don't want to be part of an antitobacco group or any organized group. So although your partners aren't necessarily the people that you're trying to reach, they should be people who can talk to your audience—both directly and through the attention that their events attract—without turning them off.

However, recall that using community partners is not the same as paid advertising. You lose some control over the message and how it's presented. This can be minimized through training, but will always be a consideration. You are relying on your partners' credibility, not just your own. This can be positive. For example, some people will believe the American Cancer Society more than they'll believe the state health department. However, it also raises difficult issues. For example, youth who become antitobacco advocates aren't always the trendsetters in school. What if a teen who's widely regarded by his peers as "uncool" or a "goody two-shoes" is the main spokesperson in his school saying smoking isn't cool? The message may lack credibility. This is another reason that balancing the desires of your grassroots advocates with the

Case Study: Reaching Georgia Legislators

To encourage more legislators to support the allocation of tobacco settlement funds to tobacco control, the former Coalition for a Healthy and Responsible Georgia (CHARGe) organized and executed several efforts to involve advocates and community members at a grassroots level. First, they held community forums to educate individuals at the local level about the importance of allocating one-third of tobacco settlement dollars to tobacco prevention and control efforts. At those educational forums, they provided participants with sample letters to the editor, sample letters to legislators, fact sheets, talking points, and other materials to make it easy for participants to take action. A few months later, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association, in partnership with the Fletcher Martin Ewing ad agency, developed a trifold brochure that summarized for local advocates the key benefits of allocating settlement funds to tobacco prevention and control, and included a tear-card that advocates could send to their local legislators about the issue. In addition, CHARGe and the Georgia Health Department's Tobacco Use Prevention Program developed a companion brochure that educated Georgians on the burden of tobacco in Georgia. (For more information, see Appendix 10.1: Georgia Burden of Tobacco Brochure.)

goals of your program is so important. In the example above, this teen could be steered into activities where he could be the most effective—perhaps making a presentation to the school board instead of lecturing his peers.

The main guideline here is that you must consider how your audience views your partners. Your partners may have credibility with your audience on some issues, but not on others. In Florida, teachers were encouraged to present media literacy modules that help teens deconstruct advertising. However, teachers were asked not to distribute any "truth"-branded materials because this antitobacco brand was supposed to be young and rebellious. It would have been much cheaper to promote the "truth" brand through the schools than through TV and events, but Florida passed up this costeffective dissemination channel because it lacked the right kind of credibility to reposition tobacco control as hip and young.

The choices aren't always clear. Florida went so far as to brand its youth advocacy group as "Students Working Against Tobacco" (SWAT), instead of the much more widely recognized "truth." This was a way to put distance between the state's real youth advocates (who may or may not be seen by their peers as cool) and the state's hip, advertising-driven antitobacco brand. On the other hand, Minnesota branded both its teen advertising and its youth advocacy group as Target Market (TM), to invest more marketing muscle in creating activism and to save the cost of creating two brands. Both states have had documented success.

When using partners as a dissemination channel, a program manager also must match the right message with the right partner. Again, partners should only disseminate messages that will seem credible coming from them. Police, for example, may be good messengers on issues of law (such as enforcing smokefree restaurant policies or laws on youth access to tobacco), but less credible with youth on the practices of other youth. ("How would a police officer know how many of us smoke?" a teen might wonder. "Who is going to tell him?") This is true, regardless of whether the partner actually is an authority on the subject. The key question is whether the audience perceives him or her as an authority.

Partners can use dozens of tactics to disseminate messages. Four of the most common tactics are:

- 1. **Media events.** Partners often hold media events that, while not explicitly targeting potential tobacco users, are designed to send them a message. Many of the anti-industry events are staged with this in mind. Few partners expect the industry to change, but anti-industry events can highlight a message to smokers that the industry is trying to manipulate them.
- 2. Counter-advertising. Community groups rarely have enough money to buy a significant amount of media space or time. Sometimes they can develop a partnership with a local TV station or newspaper to place antitobacco advertising at low or no cost. It is also possible to develop a partnership with a radio disc jockey who is willing to read live

- announcer radio ads, at no cost to the program.
- 3. Speaking. Partners can be very credible spokespeople when addressing community groups or their peers (especially younger peers). Several states have created programs where high school-age antitobacco advocates speak to students in elementary or middle schools. In Contra Costa County, California, coalition members persuasively presented qualitative research findings regarding community members' preferences for smokefree restaurants to local officials during hearings regarding smokefree restaurant ordinances.
- 4. Advocacy. As mentioned previously, advocacy activities can serve a number of purposes beyond a change in policy. One is positioning the issue with the target audience. Advocating for smokefree restaurants, for example, is a way to disseminate messages about secondhand tobacco smoke. For example, SmokeLess States Coalitions throughout the country initiated a "tobacco tax challenge" to the state governors, challenging them to help save lives (and increase state funds) by raising their tobacco taxes.

What makes a dissemination effort by your partners effective? Program managers suggest several guidelines for making it work:

 Involve your partners early. People who agree with your goal may not support your campaign if they feel like outsiders.
 If they don't understand your strategy,

- they could inadvertently promote messages that may undermine your effort. (If your strategy is to make not smoking rebellious, it would probably be counterproductive to warn teens that youth caught smoking will be punished.) Help them understand what you're trying to achieve (goal, key audiences, and message strategies) and the important role that you want them to play. Give them as much information as they need or want to do a good job and to sense the urgency of the issue.
- Keep your partners in the loop. When you surprise your partners, you run the risk of lost opportunities as well as hurt feelings. You probably don't know all of the ways that your partners could assist you in your marketing effort. By keeping them in the loop, you can be apprised of opportunities to leverage your investment.
- Match the right message with the right partner. As mentioned, no one is credible with every audience on every subject.

 Encourage your partners to focus on the messages that they're in the best position to deliver. They don't simply need to be able to reach the audience efficiently—they also need to be effective in what they say and how they say it. That means that they need to convey messages on which they are credible.
- Provide training. If you want your partners to be on message, you will have to train them as spokespeople for your

campaign. Provide talking points and tips on how to talk to reporters, and let them practice if you can.

Evaluating Your Grassroots Marketing Efforts

To maximize the effectiveness of your grassroots marketing efforts, you'll need to evaluate what you're doing. Evaluation will not only



help you report to stakeholders about what you're doing, but it will also give you valuable insight about how to improve your approach. Adjusting your approach based on evaluation results can help you get more types of people involved and deepen their commitment and involvement.

Evaluation can help you answer questions such as the following:

- How is the funding for grassroots marketing being used?
- Was your approach implemented as planned?

- Did you reach your target audience, and did audience members find your approach to be beneficial, fun, accessible, and convenient?
- Did you reach a broad range of community partners? Were the partners credible to audience members and willing to deliver the antitobacco message to them?
 - What tactics were most effective in reaching these partners? What tactics did partners use for disseminating antitobacco messages, and how effective were they in reaching the target audience?
 - Did your effort help increase the audience's level of commitmentor involvement?
 - How can you use the results of the evaluation to improve your grassroots approach?

How to Evaluate Your Grassroots Marketing Efforts

You may want to review Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program, which addresses the evaluation process in depth. Be pragmatic in developing your evaluation, and use an approach based on how the results will be used. Once you have determined whom the evaluation is for and what information they will need, you can develop the best questions to find out what you need to know, determine how to get the answers to those questions, and then provide the information to those who need it in a way

that they can use. To do this, you'll want to involve those intended users in shaping the evaluation from the start. At a minimum, you'll want to assess both your process (process evaluation) and the outcome of your efforts (outcome evaluation). To conduct a process evaluation, you can use implementation logs to

systematically monitor and track what you're doing and to assess whether you're meeting your process objectives. If your plan designates that certain tactics will be used to reach a certain number of targeted partners, an outreach log can be used to document how many people were reached in an outreach activity and what tactics were used. Data across outreach events can be summarized to measure your progress in meeting these process objectives.

To conduct an outcome evaluation, you'll need to determine what realistic outcomes you hope to achieve. Once again, these outcomes should be linked directly to your program's goals and objectives. Although the monitoring and tracking system can help you to determine whether you reached the expected number of targeted partners and what tactics were most effective in recruiting them, it won't tell you how your intervention affected these participants.

One outcome you'll probably want to achieve is an increase in the targeted partners' involvement in, and commitment to, the counter-marketing program. To learn whether this occurred, you must develop and use valid and reliable measures of commitment and involvement. For example, if you hope that your efforts will move a certain percentage of partners from being Allies to Believers, you'll need to clearly define what constitutes an Ally and a Believer. These definitions then should be used to accurately assess whether audience members have made this change.

Short surveys administered before the grassroots activity takes place (presurvey or baseline survey) and after it concludes (postsurvey) can determine participants' increased commitment to the issue and their intention to become more involved in the campaign. You could also follow up with a representative sample of the participants to see whether they have become more involved or committed.

Another outcome you'll want to achieve is making the Allies and Believers credible spokespeople. You can measure this through surveys among individuals aware of the grassroots work. For example, you can ask them whether they heard a speech by a representative of the organization (e.g., SWAT) or whether they talked with a member of the organization. Then you can ask them about their impressions of these Allies and Believers, what they learned from them, and other questions that would provide useful information.

Using Evaluation Results for Decision Making

If your evaluation results indicate that certain partners are more effective than others, this may tell you something about their credibility and help you decide which ones to work with in the future. If the results show that certain tactics or messages were more effective than others in involving the target audience or that they were more appealing to Allies than Believers, this information can help you better plan how to involve people initially and increase participants' involvement. After each round of grassroots activities, you'll see what worked and what didn't so that your next opportunity will be more fruitful. By evaluating your efforts regularly, you'll learn more about how to engage your partners and target audience, how to solicit their initial involvement in the counter-marketing program, and how to increase their commitment.

Points To Remember

In grassroots marketing, the bottom line is engagement. You're not just persuading people, you're getting them involved. This activity can be much more challenging than airing advertising or staging a press event. You're working with volunteers, not paid contractors, so they can bow out if they're not feeling motivated, rewarded, or satisfied. However, the potential benefits are enormous. An ad may run for several months, but true Believers are around for a long time.

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