

Activists Say No to Tobacco

Smoking is the country's number one killer. More people die from smoking than from murder, suicide, AIDS, and car accidents combined. And yet the tobacco industry promotes it as a way to be cool, rebellious, sexy, and fun-loving. Not surprisingly, many people, from young teens through adults, have been alarmed by the manipulative and deceitful advertising of the tobacco industry. Here are some examples of consumer groups that have found creative ways of saying "No" to tobacco promotion:

- An American organization of medical students and doctors called DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) seeks to change attitudes with "non-traditional" educational resources. Their mission is to educate young people in humorous and refreshing ways by focusing on specific brand names, and the consumerist vocabulary created by Madison Avenue. They do this through counter-advertising campaigns and the development of innovative health promotion materials. They have, for instance, inserted stickers into magazines containing tobacco advertising. The stickers read: "Many of the ads in this publication are misleading, deceptive and/or a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, successful or athletic. It does make one sick, poor and dead."
- The Boston-based consumer group [INFACT](#) has launched a number of anti-tobacco campaigns.

In 1994, INFACT used a giant light projector to project facts about the effects of tobacco advertising on children and the number of youth hooked on smoking so far that year – a whopping 959,250 young people – onto the Park Avenue headquarters of Philip Morris.

In 1995, it began a campaign to give a human face to the rising death toll from tobacco use. The Human Toll of Tobacco photo project collected 8,000 photos of people who had died or who were suffering from tobacco-caused illnesses. (The number of photos symbolized the total number of people from around the world who died each day from tobacco use.) The photos were mounted on a banner and presented to tobacco companies at their Annual Shareholder meetings, and to the media and Congress in Washington.

In 2001, INFACT worked with other anti-tobacco organizations to organize the "International Weeks of Resistance to Tobacco Transnationals." Anti-tobacco demonstrations were held in 35 countries.

INFACT initiated a boycott of food products from companies owned by Philip Morris. It also produced an award-winning documentary entitled *Making a Killing: Philip Morris, Kraft and Global Tobacco Addiction*, which is fostering international grassroots support for anti-tobacco legislation.

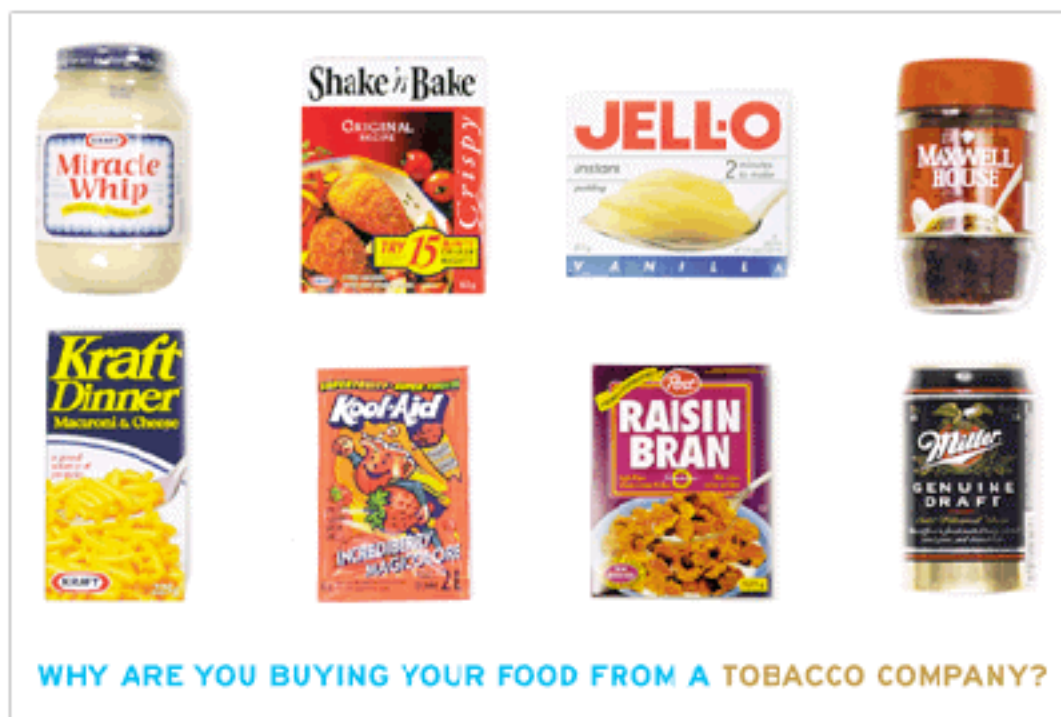
- The Canadian group [Adbusters](#) has mounted a boycott against tobacco giant

Philip Morris, which also owns Nabisco and Kraft Foods Ltd. Its aim is to “revive the citizen’s right to revoke a corporate charter to operate if it has violated the public interest.” Adbusters chose Philip Morris as the first “corporate criminal” to be put to the challenge. Its strategy includes:

Mounting a TV and radio campaign exposing the truth about Philip Morris.

Asking people to sign a petition demanding that the New York State Attorney General revoke Philip Morris’ charter.

Promoting a boycott of Philip Morris food brands (such as Kraft and Nabisco) by letting the public know that when they buy these products, they’re supporting Big Tobacco.



CT and Adbusters seem to be working. In November 2001, Philip Morris changed the name of its company to the Altria Group to distance its tobacco company from its food and brewing companies.

- The Web site for Tobacco Free Kids features a “Take Action” section that includes ideas for creating an anti-tobacco rally, writing letters to the editors of magazines that accept tobacco ads, and writing letters to film producers who promote smoking in their films.
- The “American Legacy Foundation” launched a teen-led “Truth Campaign” designed to reduce smoking through creative and humorous counter-advertising. The campaign has been credited with creating a significant drop in teen smoking.