

Strategy Planning for Tobacco Control Advocacy



To our colleagues in the global tobacco control movement:

For nearly a half century we have been struggling with the 20th century's brown plague: tobacco use. As we begin this new century, we face both a grim forecast, and a new hope.

The grim forecast? This voracious devourer of health and life threatens hundreds of millions of new victims, especially in the developing world.

The source of hope? We have now learned – through our failures as much as our successes – how to fight tobacco.

These lessons were hard won. At first, we believed that the verdict of science, and public awareness of that verdict, would compel tobacco users to quit, and governments to take appropriate action to control tobacco use.

But we were wrong. We did not, could not, imagine the depths to which the international tobacco industry would descend to deny, deceive, bully, undermine, and confuse public understanding and government action. Neither could we imagine the extent to which governments would fail to act as conscience demanded.

We engaged in public health education; the tobacco lobby engaged in unrelenting, often corrupt politics. Slowly, we learned that tobacco control would require strategic political responses to tobacco industry political action and government inaction.

Across the globe, experienced leaders emerged who had learned advocacy skills and strategies to overcome tobacco industry resistance and government inertia. They have achieved the enactment and enforcement of those comprehensive tobacco control policies that science also tells us will halt the spread of the tobacco pandemic.

On behalf of the American Cancer Society, The International Union Against Cancer, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and the many wise and experienced colleagues who contributed to this lengthy project, we are deeply pleased to offer this series of guides, *Tobacco Control Strategy Planning* to the global tobacco control community.

We hope that as you read these guides and learn new lessons in your advocacy efforts, that you will share these lessons with us, so that we can revise and upgrade both the written guides and the website.

We began this letter with the challenge and the hope for global tobacco control in the 21st century. We will end with a quote from Dr. Erich Fromm, the great social psychologist, who wrote that “hope” is “a decisive element in any effort to bring about social change”. But such hope, “is neither passive waiting...nor the disguise of phrase making and adventurism, of disregard for reality, and of forcing what cannot be forced.”

True hope, wrote Fromm, “is like the crouched tiger, which will jump only when the moment for jumping has come.” Today for the global tobacco control movement in every country of the world, “the moment for jumping has come!”

John R. Seffrin, PhD
CEO, American Cancer Society
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American Cancer Society/International Union Against Cancer (UICC) Tobacco Control Strategy Planning

Introduction to the Series

Tobacco Control Strategy Planning is a series of guides developed by the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC). Each guide in this series takes readers through a set of strategic planning questions that address specific challenges in tobacco control advocacy. The guides answer those questions, based on the wisdom and experience of tobacco control advocates throughout the world.

The first two guides in the American Cancer Society/UICC series are basic tools designed to be used together by tobacco control advocates whose countries are in the early stages of tobacco control.

Strategy Planning for Tobacco Control Advocacy takes NGO (nongovernmental organization) planners through the process of developing long- and short-term national strategic plans, with an emphasis on media advocacy.

Strategy Planning for Tobacco Control Movement Building helps planners identify the kinds of people and allied organizations that can be the most helpful to them in putting together and implementing national plans. The guide includes methods for recruiting allies, tips for organizing effective alliances, leadership requirements for effective national tobacco control movements, and critical lessons in movement leadership.

Both guides are also designed to be “meta-guides.” They not only answer strategic questions but also provide Internet links to authoritative and useful publications, fact sheets, tested arguments, background papers, and other online advocacy resources.

To help simplify the strategy planning process for advocates, UICC has created a one-stop website on GLOBALink (www.globalink.org). This site allows advocates to conveniently locate and download all the advocacy resources mentioned in the guides.

This series also includes two specialized strategy planning guides:

Engaging Doctors in Tobacco Control responds to the concern of tobacco control advocates that far too few doctors – who should be among the leaders of every tobacco control movement – are actively engaged in tobacco control.

Building Public Awareness of Passive Smoking Hazards responds to the evidence in many countries of little or no public awareness of the serious, proven health hazards of passive smoking. This lack of awareness severely hampers advocates who try to persuade governments to decree or enforce smoke-free public places or work sites.

Each guide is designed to help advocates develop practical strategies to overcome specific barriers to effective tobacco control policies. As advocates continue to learn valuable lessons about tobacco control advocacy, we encourage them to share their experiences. We will continually update these guides and the related website (www.strategyguides.globalink.org) so that advocates always have access to the most current strategies and resources.

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Contents

Introduction

Our Advocacy Goals	5
Long-term Goals	5
Specific Short-term Objectives	6
Resistance and Barriers	6
Our Target Audience	9
The General Public	9
Individuals	9
Doctors	10

Messages Likely to Move

Our Target Audience	11
Create Tailored Messages	11
Tailor Messages to Specific Public Policies	12
Comprehensive Advertising Bans	13
Clean Indoor Air	14
Tobacco Taxes	15
Vary the Message and Target Audience	15

Messages That Speak to the Brain and the Heart

Develop a Simplifying Concept	17
Tobacco-free Children	17
Fairness to Workers	18
Design Effective Messages	19
Numbers That “Sing”	19
Words That Connect with Values	20
Responsive-chord Messages	21
Focus Groups	23
Use Cultural and Political Tact	24

Effective Messengers for

Our Target Audience	25
The Difference the Messenger Can Make	25
Key Questions	26
Who Listens to Whom?	27
Prime Ministers, on Tobacco Control Legislation	27
Finance Ministers, on Tobacco Tax Increases	28
The General Public, on Clean Indoor Air	28
Doctors, on Their Role in Tobacco Control	29
The General Public, on Tobacco Company Corruption	30
Film Producers, on Portraying Smoking	31

Effective Media for Delivering

Our Messages	33
Lobbying	33
Media Advocacy	34
Narrowcasting	36

Getting the Media’s Attention

Make Stories Newsworthy	39
Go International	40

Making Sure the Media Communicates

Our Messages	41
News Frames	41
Why News Frames Are Important to Advocates	41
Public Health Frames	42
How to Use Public Health Frames	42
How to Counter the Tobacco Industry’s Frames	43
Concrete Examples of Reframing	45
How to Use Media Bites	46

Acknowledgments

.	49
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Planning for Tobacco Control Advocacy

Introduction

This guide is offered as a planning tool to you and other tobacco control advocates, especially those in the early stages of tobacco control efforts. It outlines a process to help you develop effective advocacy strategies, particularly media advocacy strategies, as a key element of your policy advocacy planning.

The guide is organized in the form of a powerful set of strategic planning questions that every successful advocate will need to ask and answer – again and again – as your advocacy efforts develop.

*The longer I am involved
in the treatment of tobacco
dependence, the more I see
the need for advocacy.*

*– Dr. Eva Kralikova,
the Czech Republic*

Question 1. What do we want most, now, from our advocacy efforts?

Question 2. Who has the authority to make it happen?
(Who is our target audience now?)

Question 3. What messages are most likely to move our target audience to do what we want?

Question 4. How do we develop messages that speak to the brain and the heart?

Question 5. Who can carry these messages to our target audience most effectively?

Question 6. What medium will most effectively deliver our messages to our target audience?

Question 7. How do we get the media to pay attention?

Question 8. How do we make sure the media tells stories that communicate our advocacy messages effectively?

This guide will examine each of these questions and provide practical guidance in answering them.

Strategic Planning for Tobacco Control Advocacy is also a road map to the extraordinary and successful tactics developed by advocates around the world. Many of these tactics have been captured in companion guides. Among the most useful general guides to advocacy planning are:

Advocacy for Social Justice: A Global Action and Reflection Guide, by David Cohen, Rosa de la Vega, and Gabrielle Watson. Based on a legacy of experience from the Advocacy Institute and Oxfam America, this volume is the first comprehensive guide for worldwide social and economic justice advocates. Intended for the practitioner, trainer and student of activism, it explores the elements of advocacy and offers a toolkit for taking action, comprehensive case studies, as well as hundreds of resource listings. www.advocacy.org/publications.htm

The World Health Organization's Tobacco Control Legislation: An Introductory Guide, (Geneva, 2003) provides a valuable starting point for advocates, health officials and others interested in developing tobacco control legislation but unfamiliar with advocacy or lawmaking. It combines a theoretical perspective with a practical, hands-on approach designed to de-mystify the process. It is available online at: www5.who.int/tobacco

Tobacco Control Policy: Strategies, Successes, and Setbacks, edited by Joy de Beyer and Linda Waverley Brigden for the World Bank and Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC), provides real life insights into effective – and ineffective – advocacy strategies. Its editors describe it as “a collection of stories about tobacco control policymaking, that illustrate the roles that can be played by evidence, advocacy, political and social change, partnerships, media, public relations and public pressure, economic interests, and adversity and opportunity.” This publication is available online at:

www.publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/catalog/product?item_id=3D1=485821

The Democracy Owners' Manual, by Jim Shultz (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA, 2002); www.democracyctr.org/resources/manual/index.htm#train

Many other useful guides address specific elements of tobacco control advocacy strategy and tactics. As *Strategic Planning for Tobacco Control Advocacy* explores each of the eight strategic questions listed here, we will identify and lead readers through online links to these guides and to other helpful resources.

Question 1. What do we want most, now, from our advocacy efforts?

The ultimate goal of our advocacy efforts – as an essential element of our broader policy advocacy efforts – is to achieve effective, comprehensive, enforced tobacco control laws and policies.

Long-term Goals

Fortunately, a science-based, authoritative vision of ideal comprehensive national tobacco control policies and laws is now readily available. The historic World Health Organization (WHO) international treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), provides a clear road map for tobacco control advocates and lawmakers. The health ministers of the 192 WHO member states have adopted this treaty.

Lawmakers now have available model laws to implement the FCTC policy. The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) has been developing just such model laws. Their website is: www.iuhpe.org.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has produced a document that encourages the “Region of the Americas” to accept the FCTC. This booklet, entitled *The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: Strengthening Health Globally*, also provides guidelines for implementing FCTC policies. It is available online at: www.paho.org/English/HPP/HPM/TOH/tobacco.htm

The World Health Organization’s Tobacco Control Legislation: An Introductory Guide discusses key strategic decisions involved in framing legislation (See chapter 5, “Approaching Legislation: Strategic Choices”), and explains the process of developing legislative text (See chapter 7, “The Drafting Process”). This publication is available online at: www5.who.int/tobacco

This means that strategic planners today have ready access to the best long-term advocacy goals for effective comprehensive national tobacco control laws and programs.

Links to Information on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: www.who.int/gb/fctc

Framework Convention Alliance: www.fctc.org

International Union for Health Promotion and Education: www.iuhpe.org

Tobacco Control Legislation: An Introductory Guide

Chapter 13 of this World Health Organization publication explores the process for implementing the Framework Convention, and the treaty’s relation to other standards of international law. www5.who.int/tobacco

Specific Short-term Objectives

Mapping out your long-term goals does not automatically lead to an effective advocacy strategy. Advocacy planners also need to set ambitious but realistic short-term objectives.

You can set these objectives by looking at three areas:

- How well you understand the political environment.
- The extent of public awareness of the hazards of tobacco use.
- The degree of public support for strong tobacco control laws.

The more specific and well-defined your objectives, the more concrete and effective your strategic planning can be.

In the early stages of tobacco control, advocacy strategies might need to focus on intermediate steps, such as generating support among influential forces in the society – individuals or groups who can influence the government officials who have the ultimate power to act.

For example, tobacco control leaders in many countries have come to see how important it is to encourage doctors and other respected health care providers to become advocates for tobacco control laws and regulations. This issue is the focus of the American Cancer Society and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) *Tobacco Control Strategy Planning Companion Guide, Engaging Doctors in Tobacco Control*.

Resistance and Barriers

At different stages, advocates may face barriers that range from public ignorance, and confusion caused by tobacco industry propaganda, to a smoking addicted health minister, a misinformed finance minister, or a prime minister whose political party has become dependent upon tobacco industry political campaign contributions

Before you develop your advocacy strategies, it is very important that you clearly identify the specific barriers you now face, and then, set your advocacy priorities to address the most immediate of these barriers.

Especially in countries where the tobacco control movement is just beginning, tobacco control advocates usually have limited human or financial resources. With greater resources, advocates could extend their efforts beyond narrowly focused strategies. They could also build public support by educating the general public about the need for and effectiveness of tobacco control legislation. **But when resources are few, we must choose the most effective strategies. Advocates must focus on the most immediate obstacles and opportunities.**

Focusing on the Immediate Objective

Here is an example of why it is important to focus your advocacy strategies and resources on the most critical tactical objective.

In 2002, the Indian Coalition for Tobacco Control undertook a strategic planning process. Their top policy objective was to enact a comprehensive national tobacco control law.

At first, the coalition members looked at a wide range of advocacy initiatives, such as educating the general public about the need for the legislation and lobbying all members of Parliament to support it. But they recognized that the coalition had too few human or financial resources to support such broad strategies.

So they began to focus on their immediate problem: the cabinet's delay on the good tobacco control legislation the national government had already proposed. A parliamentary committee had held hearings on that bill and had reported favorably in support of it.

But the cabinet had not yet tabled the bill for action by the full Parliament. This delay might have been the result of other legislative priorities. Another possibility was that tobacco lobbyists had persuaded key decision makers to delay – perhaps indefinitely – final parliamentary action on the bill.

So the coalition members decided to concentrate their limited resources on pressuring the government to push the bill forward. Included in these initiatives was an electronic Death Clock that displayed and counted off the number of citizens who had died from tobacco-caused diseases since the date the government first proposed its bill. This advocacy initiative was skillfully designed to gain media attention both to tobacco's toll on human lives and the specific cost in lives lost of the government's failure to bring its bill to the Parliament for action.

Question 2. Who has the authority to make it happen? (Who is our target audience now?)

As did the first question, asking this question will help narrow your focus. Your goal now is to identify the target audience for your advocacy.

At this stage in your planning, you must ask exactly whom your message needs to reach now to achieve your advocacy objectives.

The General Public

In a country in an early stage of tobacco control, the public is often not yet fully aware of the severity of the health hazards from tobacco use. Here, tobacco control advocates may need to broaden their target audience beyond government decision makers and carry their message to the general public as well.

This has been the experience of Dr. David Bristol, a surgeon and tobacco control advocate who works in the Caribbean with the St. Lucia Cancer Society. Dr. Bristol said of his challenge: “I think many of the public are really not aware of the basic health dangers of smoking. They still think it’s a kind of a fanciful idea that has been trumped up by somebody in a laboratory.”

In 1995 in Vietnam, qualitative research showed little public support for tobacco control policies. The Vietnamese government has successfully banned virtually all tobacco advertising, but few smoke-free areas exist today, even in schools and hospitals. Why? Widespread ignorance of the health effects of passive smoking, and a generally positive attitude toward cigarettes, still stand in the way. Clearly, advocates need to build public support before tobacco control policies can be implemented effectively.

Individuals

At later stages, once the public has been educated and supports your policy objectives, your target audience might well be a single individual.

Perhaps your only target is the president or prime minister whose ties are too close to the tobacco industry and who is blocking tobacco control action as a result. Your target could be the chairperson of a key parliamentary committee who needs to be convinced to schedule hearings on a proposed law. You could have a slightly broader target audience, such as every member of the cabinet, who must decide whether or not to go forward with a law proposed by the health minister. Your target might be even broader: every member of Parliament.

Even when you direct your message to the public, you need to identify which segment of the public you intend to reach. If your immediate objective is to put public pressure on the national government to move forward, your target audience is not the general public. You should target your message directly to an active and influential segment of that audience: members of society who pay attention to public affairs and can influence the decision makers. Political scientists call this audience the “influentials” or “opinion leaders.”

Doctors

Medical doctors can be opinion leaders. Dr. Thomas Glynn, director of Cancer Science and Trends at the American Cancer Society, has noted that “no country in the world has made significant progress in curbing the tobacco epidemic without its doctors understanding that their professional responsibilities require that they take a leadership role in advocating for comprehensive tobacco control laws.”

If few doctors in your country are actively engaged in tobacco control advocacy, then your country’s doctors must become one of your first target audiences.

When a landmark judgment by the Indian Supreme Court banned smoking in public places, the Cancer Patients Aid Association in Mumbai launched a smoke-free workplace campaign ultimately aimed at employers. Campaigners sought endorsements from a narrow target group: leading bankers and industrialists in Mumbai. The result was that these employers influenced thousands of employees to personally endorse the campaign to make their own workplaces smoke-free. In this case, the individuals with the authority to make it happen, the target audience, were the influential business leaders.

Question 3. What messages are most likely to move our target audience to do what we want?

As advocates, we are eager to develop strong messages to persuade the public that action must be taken to control tobacco use.

Indeed, we might be so eager to create such messages that we fail to stop and ask the question that will make our messages strategically effective. **The question is not, “What do we want to say?” but, “What must we say to persuade our target audience to take the actions we recommend?”**

For example, let us assume that one of your critical target audiences is the prime minister. You want this influential leader to support the enactment and enforcement of a law that will ban all smoking in public places – a national clean indoor air law.

To make this possible, you need the prime minister to believe in your core messages.

Core Messages Speak to the Broad Public Interest

In this case, your core message is threefold:

- Passive smoking is a serious health hazard.
- Passive smoking is a public health hazard that requires responsive public health laws and regulations.
- Clear health benefits will be achieved at reasonable or low cost.

But delivering your core message will usually not be enough. You will also need to develop tailored messages.

Create Tailored Messages

Tailored messages address the self-interests and special concerns of your target audience.

Perhaps, for example, the prime minister and the cabinet are impressed by your core health message but do not feel they need to take action. They are now targets for messages tailored to their own self-interest and concerns. For instance, they may need to hear that important political constituents, such as labor unions, support workplace smoking bans – or at least do not oppose these bans.

The prime minister, the finance minister, and the commerce minister may also need to hear that restrictions on smoking in public places, including restaurants, will not cause economic harm to businesses and will not create a sudden drop in tax revenues.

The prime minister would also probably be impressed to learn that reliable polls show that enacting and enforcing smoking bans in public places would be politically popular moves – not only with the general public, but with voters. (This assumes you have such poll information available. But even if not, a respected political observer close to the prime minister could offer an informed opinion that these measures are politically popular.)

Smoking bans in public places would be politically popular.

In most low-income countries, there is little or no information on the national smoking situation and the damage it is doing to both health and the economy. For example, if cabinet members ask the finance or agriculture minister, “How much does tobacco contribute to the economy in taxes and jobs?” they will hear exact figures. But if they ask the health minister, “How many deaths does tobacco cause in our nation?” they will get no answer.

Yussuf Saloojee, executive director of the National Council Against Smoking, South Africa, as well as strategic leader of Tobacco Control, UICC, was talking about tailored messages when he said, “The clearest antidote to lack of political support is to provide politicians and society with convincing answers to the question – what interventions work and at what social and economic cost? If clear health benefits can be realized at a reasonable cost, most politicians will support health legislation.”

Here is another example. Suppose you know that your government is eager to become a member of the European Union. The tailored message the finance minister may most need to hear is: Clean indoor air laws will bring this country into line with other EU countries. Or say you are aware that your prime minister is eager to be seen as a progressive leader on the international stage. That person might respond to the tailored message that comprehensive tobacco control legislation is something that progressive countries do, as well as what the authoritative World Health Organization recommends in its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

There is a danger, of course, in always assuming the worst in politicians. Most political leaders harbor conflicting values and impulses. While they almost all want to sustain their power and status, many also want to do what is best for their country. One of the most successful tobacco control advocates in Europe, Dr. Witold Zatonski, has discovered what works best in Poland: Appeals to lawmakers’ pride in promoting public health proved a more effective tactic than direct attacks on the greed and political corruption of the transnational tobacco companies and the politicians who take their money.

The more political intelligence you gather about the concerns and motives of key decision makers, the more effectively you can tailor the messages they need to hear to support your advocacy objectives.

Tailor Messages to Specific Public Policies

Our target audience needs to hear different tailored messages for different public policies. Suppose advocates are trying to persuade key decision makers to support comprehensive advertising bans. Their tailored messages need to address the individual interests and concerns raised by advertising bans.

You can advance any policy effectively with some quick and fairly simple research. For example, research in Bangladesh found:

- High levels of support for ad bans, smoke-free places, and tobacco tax increases.
- High exposure of children to tobacco ads (which shows the need for a total ad ban).
- Ignorance of specific diseases and problems caused by tobacco, with nonsmokers showing more knowledge of them than smokers (which shows the need for bigger, clearer, more specific warnings on tobacco packs).

For ideas of specific research projects for different policy measures, see PATH Canada’s *Guide to Low-Cost Research for Advocacy*. The guide covers general tobacco control law and policy, as well as research on the benefits of banning ads and misleading terms on packs, supporting stronger pack warnings, increasing taxes, reducing tobacco use among the poor, and opposing industry-sponsored campaigns to prevent youth smoking.

Another PATH Canada guide, *Tobacco Control Law*, discusses various legal measures and their rationales, examples from other countries, and recommendations.

The International Tobacco Evidence Network (ITEN) maintains “a formal network of economists, epidemiologists, social scientists and other tobacco control experts able to provide rapid, policy-relevant research on country-level, regional or international tobacco control issues.” www.tobaccoevidence.net/

Comprehensive Advertising Bans

To gain support for comprehensive advertising bans, we will send messages such as:

- Advertising restraints will not harm the economy. The advertising industries in countries with advertising bans have not suffered significant losses of jobs or been bankrupted.
- The proposed advertising bans are constitutional under the laws of this country. They place a justifiable restraint on freedom of commercial speech because no civilized society permits profit to be made by marketing disease and death.
- Advertising restrictions and bans have proved effective in keeping fewer young people from starting to smoke.
- Tobacco companies have a long and sordid history of lying to the public and to decision makers about these very issues – ammunition when spokespersons for the industry argue against these facts.

Links to Research and Arguments on Banning Tobacco Advertising

“Tobacco Advertising” www.factsheets.globalink.org/en/advertising.shtml

This fact sheet gives health advocates the arguments and research data needed to face well-prepared tobacco lobbyists in public debate.

“Tobacco Advertising Fact Sheet”

www.tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/docs/advertising.pdf

“How Do You Sell Death?”

www.tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/FCTCreport2.pdf

This report from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids shows how tobacco companies get around partial restrictions on advertising.

“The Case Against Tobacco Advertising”

www.healthpro.org.uk/facts/tobacco_advertising.htm

This document, prepared by the Coronary Prevention Group in the UK, “sets out the arguments why tobacco advertising should be banned.”

Clean Indoor Air

If your clean indoor air objective is, for example, smoke-free workplaces, your messages need to include:

- Less time lost by workers who get sick from tobacco smoke and cannot work brings economic benefits to employers.
- Eliminating the time wasted by employees on workplace smoking breaks brings employers economic benefit, especially since there is evidence that smoke-free offices cause many smokers to quit altogether, resulting in healthier, more reliable workers.
- Employers benefit from lower costs of ventilation and cleaning.
- Employers gain approval and support from nonsmoking workers.
- Employers can usually count on little opposition from workers who smoke.

Links to Research and Arguments on Clean Indoor Air

“Clean Indoor Air Regulations – Fact Sheet” from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention includes statistics on the health risks associated with secondhand smoke and explains benefits of clean indoor air policies.

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr_2000/factsheets/factsheet_clean.htm

“Passive Smoking: A Summary of the Evidence” from ASH-UK, cites many scientific reports to describe the detrimental effects of exposure to secondhand smoke.

www.ash.org.uk/html/passive/html/passive.html

“Business Leaders for a Smoke-Free New England” describes a program developed by the American Cancer Society Smoke-Free New England Initiative. It provides business owners with educational materials about secondhand smoke and some tools for developing smoke-free policies in a workplace.

www.cancer.org/docroot/COM/content/div_NE/COM_4_2x_Business_Leaders_for_a_Smoke-Free_New_England.asp?sitearea=COM

“Smoke Free Restaurant and Bar Laws Do Not Harm Business” is a fact sheet on the importance of U.S. grassroots efforts to increase the number of smoke-free restaurants and bars. It quotes studies to prove that there is ultimately no negative economic impact on sales or employment as a result of introducing smoke-free policies.

www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0144.pdf

“Clean Indoor Air Laws Encourage Smokers To Quit and Discourage Youth from Smoking” is a fact sheet on the benefits of clean indoor air laws.

www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0198.pdf

“Smoke-Free Workplace Laws Reduce Smoking and the Cigarette Companies Know It” is a fact sheet, contains excerpts from the tobacco industry’s internal documents that show the industry’s main concern in blocking smoke-free workplace laws is to protect sales.

www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0196.pdf

Tobacco Taxes

If your policy objective is to increase tobacco taxes, advocates need to persuade finance and commerce ministers that:

- Cigarette tax increases invariably raise tax revenues.
- Such tax increases do not necessarily increase smuggling.

Links to Arguments and Research on Increasing Tobacco Taxes

“Tobacco Prices and Public Health” is a fact sheet, provides a good summary of the data and arguments for increasing tobacco taxes.

www.tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/docs/prices.pdf

“Higher Cigarette Taxes: Reduce Smoking, Save Lives, Save Money” includes links to a host of reports and fact sheets that explain the positive effects of increasing cigarette taxes.

www.tobaccofreekids.org/reports/prices/

“World Bank PowerPoint Presentation on Taxation” lays out some of the main arguments in favor of tobacco tax increases in PowerPoint format.

www1.worldbank.org/tobacco/Presentations/Presentation3/slide2.ppt

Curbing the Epidemic: Governments and the Economics of Tobacco Control, a landmark report from the World Bank, is required reading for every tobacco control activist. It outlines effective policy interventions to reduce smoking, reviews the consequences of tobacco use both on health and on the economy, and highlights the relationship between smoking and poverty. It provides an excellent rationale for government involvement in tobacco control.

www1.worldbank.org/tobacco/reports.asp

Vary the Message and Target Audience as Your Advocacy Campaign Progresses

At different stages in an advocacy campaign, you need to tailor your messages to different target audiences.

For example, you may need to overcome the idea, held for many years even in developed countries, that women were thought to be at less risk than men for tobacco caused diseases. An excellent example of a message that addresses this issue is simply: Women who smoke like men, die like men.

Or you may need to direct your message to the general public, whose ignorance or skepticism about the hazards of passive smoking is even greater than its lack of understanding of all the hazards of direct smoking. In many countries, people believe that direct smoking is a serious health hazard, but not that “passive smoking” is a serious health risk. The message for them is: Science proves that those who breathe other people’s tobacco smoke get sick and die like smokers.

Even the best-educated public officials may not see smoking as a public health issue, especially where tobacco use is important in a society’s cultural history. Even if they understand that smoking is harmful, they may believe the solution lies not in government regulation, but in individual “free choice” – just as the tobacco industry has always argued.

Indeed, the more educated a public is to the risks of smoking, the greater the chance that some public officials believe smoking has become “an informed choice,” and no further government action needs to be taken.

Public officials need to hear this message: Tobacco use is not just a serious health problem, but a public health problem and so demands government action. Therefore, tobacco control advocates must make sure that public officials also hear three complementary and reinforcing messages:

- Most smokers become addicted to tobacco when they are too young to make “informed choices” that will affect their health and life.
- By the time most smokers are old enough to make informed choices, they are addicted to cigarettes. Cigarettes are addictive in a similar way to heroin or cocaine – and no one doubts that heroin or cocaine traffic calls for government action.
- Cigarette smoking is a “communicated” disease, in the words of the World Health Organization. Tobacco companies communicate through their advertising the romance and the social benefits of smoking. People the world over see regulating advertising abuse as a government responsibility.

Question 4. How do we develop messages that speak to the brain and the heart?

In Question 3, we explored the messages that our target audiences need to hear before we can persuade them to support our policy objectives. But in advocacy campaigns, a message needs to do much more than persuade or present an argument.

Ethel Klein is a leading scholar and practitioner of political communications – which is what tobacco control advocates are unavoidably engaged in. She cautions that an effective advocacy message must be “at the same time logically persuasive, morally authoritative, and capable of evoking passion. A campaign message must speak at one and the same time to the brain and to the heart.”

Tobacco control advocates draw on many skills and disciplines to make their messages effective, including political communications, public relations, social marketing, and public health education. Recently, advocates have also looked to new fields of academic research for tools to create better messages, including media-effects research and cognitive linguistics.

Here we introduce some of the tools from these disciplines that seem most useful for message development. We also provide links to some practical guides to their use.

Develop a Simplifying Concept

Susan Bales, Director of the Frameworks Institute in Washington, D.C., applies communications research to advocacy. Effective advocacy messages, she finds, must embody a “simplifying concept.”

These phrases or labels capture the essence of a scientific concept, and are simple and ‘catchy’ enough to spread through the population of non-experts. Examples are the “ozone hole” and “greenhouse gases.”

Tobacco control advocates have developed several simple phrases that convey such concepts with great success. Here are some examples.

Tobacco-free Children

Some tobacco control advocates express concern about focusing on children and tobacco, rather than on all tobacco addicts. This is a valid concern when the term “tobacco-free children” plays into the hands of company propagandists. These propagandists then (falsely) claim that they, too, are deeply concerned about youth tobacco use – and only youth tobacco use.

But many of the most powerful messages for tobacco control advocates focus on youth and tobacco, even when the goal is to build support for comprehensive tobacco control policies that will protect adult smokers.

*Cigarette smoking is a
pediatric disease.*

*– Dr. David Kessler,
former Commissioner, U.S. Food
and Drug Administration*

Politicians appreciate the power of simple, hard-hitting messages. That is why, when comprehensive tobacco control legislation was being debated in the U.S. Senate, virtually every senator who sought to persuade others to support this legislation began by reciting a version of this message: “Every day in America, 3,000 children start smoking; 1,000 of them will die early from the diseases smoking causes.”

This simple message presents scientifically sound logic. It is morally authoritative: Every society recognizes the moral imperative of a government to protect defenseless children. And protecting children has always been an issue that evokes passion.

The term “tobacco-free children” speaks to the mind and the heart, as Klein urges. It brings to mind the idea of freedom and brings to the heart feelings of protectiveness toward children.

This is why one of the most sophisticated and renowned U.S. organizations that advocate comprehensive tobacco control laws – laws to protect not only children – named itself the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Fairness to Workers

As advocates in the United States developed messages to support smoke-free restaurants and bars, they had difficulty countering messages from the tobacco companies. The companies argued that smoke-free laws were “unfair” to smokers. Nonsmokers could simply avoid bars and restaurants whose patrons chose to smoke.

But tobacco control advocates gained strong support, including that of labor unions and ethnic minorities, by shifting their focus. Instead of targeting restaurant and bar patrons, they shifted their message to target the rights of restaurant workers.

The simpler message was not “smoke-free restaurants” or “smoke-free bars,” but “smoke-free workplaces.”

As advocate Joe Cherner says, “The health of ALL workers is EQUALLY important...ALL workers deserve a safe, healthy, smoke-free work environment. No worker should have to breathe something that causes cancer to hold a job, or have to give up a job just to prevent getting sick. Clean indoor air is a basic right to which all workers should be entitled.”

This message is logically strong: Laws against smoking in the workplace in cities like New York were already in place to protect most workers from having to do their jobs in a smoke filled environment. Why should workers in restaurants and bars be treated unequally?

The message also carries strong moral authority. Restaurant and bar patrons can choose not to go to restaurants or bars that allow smoking, as the tobacco companies argued. But workers do not have that choice. In these workplaces, they must accept involuntary exposure to smoke to earn a living.

Ultimately, the message that all workers deserved equal and fair treatment was quick to arouse public passion. This support sped the passing of stronger laws – much more quickly than messages that raised concerns for restaurant or bar patrons.

Design Effective Messages

Experienced tobacco control advocates have built a toolkit of techniques to help them design effective messages. We list some of those tools here, along with references and links to more extensive guidance.

Numbers That “Sing”

Tobacco control advocates can develop motivating messages by presenting statistics in ways that convey scientific truths and also move an audience emotionally. This technique has been called “creative epidemiology” or “social math” – mathematics applied for a social purpose.

Any reputable scientist will tell you that tobacco kills more New Yorkers than any other cause – roughly ten thousand people in this city each year, including some one thousand from involuntary smoking – otherwise known as “secondhand smoke.”

– Michael Bloomberg, Mayor, New York

Over a decade ago, public health economist Ken Warner used this technique in a message on the death toll of smoking:

Smoking kills more people than heroin, cocaine, alcohol, AIDS, fires, homicide, suicide, and automobile accidents combined.

This message is logically sound; it is based on scrupulous scientific data. But it conveys much more than facts.

First, the message compares deaths from tobacco with deaths from other causes that readily command public action throughout the world, such as illicit drug use and AIDS. This comparison carries the “moral authority” that smoking merits at least the same level of public action. Second, the message associates death from smoking with death from other terrible scourges that arouse our compassion and fear. It thus meets all of Klein’s criteria for an effective advocacy message: It is logically persuasive, morally authoritative, and capable of evoking passion.

Here are a few more examples of health messages that take the cold numbers from statistical studies and make them “speak to the heart.”

Action on Smoking and Health, ASH-UK has calculated that about 600 lung deaths and up to 12,000 cases of heart disease in nonsmokers in the United Kingdom can be attributed each year to passive smoking.

Passive smoking, or second hand smoke, kills about the same number of Americans each year as died in the Vietnam War. One American dies from secondhand smoke for every eight who die from active smoking.

– David Moyer, MD, The Tobacco Reference Guide

www.globalink.org/tobacco/trg/Chapter5/table_of_contents.html

The deaths of 350 children under age five could be prevented each day if only 70% of their parents’ tobacco expenditures went to food instead...Each year, 10.5 million children are needlessly malnourished, due in part to their parents’ expenditure on tobacco rather than food.

– Hungry for Tobacco, PATH Canada and WBB (Work for a Better Bangladesh)

A particularly effective message comes from Tony Schwartz, an advocacy genius who has made more than 500 anti-tobacco television and radio commercials:

Cigarettes kill many more people in the United States every year than would be killed by the crash of two fully loaded Boeing 747's each day of the entire year!

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in India recently churned out some interesting sound bites from epidemiological research:

Over 300 Indian babies born dead each day might have lived if their mothers had not chosen to use tobacco.

If all forms of maternal tobacco use were eliminated, over one-sixth of stillborn babies would have been born alive.

Words That Connect with Underlying Value Systems

Tobacco control advocates have also drawn from research in the academic field of cognitive linguistics to create useful messages.

A leading scholar in this field, George Lakoff, has an important lesson for advocacy: People generally do not come to their feelings about political issues by analyzing them in the context of a political philosophy – liberal or conservative. Instead, they form these preferences unconsciously: They relate political issues to familiar words and images that carry imbedded values and feelings.

For instance, Lakoff observes that we almost all speak – and unconsciously, think – of our country and our government as our “family.” As a result, we apply the same moral standard to questions of governance that we apply to the raising of children.

Conservatives elevate the moral value of the strict father within the family, Lakoff notes. They deeply believe that children develop character and virtue only through building moral strength, individual responsibility, self-reliance, and discipline. Virtue comes only from respect and obedience to authority, tradition, and heritage. Grown children can survive in a harsh world only through hard work, competition, common sense, and earning.

For conservatives, then, “freedom” means the capacity for an individual to be justly rewarded for hard work – or to be reasonably punished for dependency, self-indulgence, decay, or degeneracy.

As Lakoff writes of this belief system, “An important consequence of giving highest priority to the metaphor of moral strength is that it rules out any explanation in terms of social forces... If moral people just have the discipline to say no to drugs,...then failure to do so is moral weakness.”

What does this mean for tobacco control advocates who are developing messages targeted at conservatives? The words we choose to support our policy objectives must speak to their highly esteemed positive family values. Also, we must speak of those who resist our policies, such as the tobacco companies or politicians, in words that evoke negative conservative family values.

For example, a tobacco control advocate might say to conservative parliamentarians on the need for smoke-free workplaces:

We work hard to keep our families healthy; we've disciplined our children not to smoke. Why should the state undermine our authority by forcing our children to breathe smoke every time they enter a public place?

We should have the moral strength to preserve a heritage of smoke-free air for our children.

Common sense dictates that we have the discipline to keep our schools – and our children – smoke-free.

What about liberals? Lakoff noted that liberals give highest place to the moral value of the nurturing parent. They deeply believe that children are strengthened by their parents' concern, caring, help, health, safety, and nutrition. Children flourish if they are allowed free expression and basic human dignity.

Therefore, tobacco control advocates can motivate liberals to support policies in which the role of the government is that of a nurturing parent. The key terms for liberals are social responsibility, free expression, human rights, equal rights, concern, care, help, health, safety, and basic human dignity.

Liberals are motivated to oppose policies and their advocates who are characterized by words that threaten the nurturing family/nation: oppression, deprivation, big corporations, corporate welfare, and pollution.

You might present social democrats and other liberals with the following argument:

The tobacco industry is a corporate predator, polluting our health and safety. Our government needs to accept the social responsibility of caring for and helping our children against tobacco industry corruption.

George Lakoff's *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't* can be ordered online at: www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/13121.ctl

Responsive-chord Messages

Advocate Tony Schwartz uses a technique in his message development that he calls "responsive-chord" communication. That is, the message strikes a "responsive-chord" in its audience. Schwartz finds that an electronic message is delivered through the connection between its medium and "the stored information in the minds of those who receive the communication."

A good illustration of a responsive-chord message is an advertisement run by tobacco control advocates in California. Philip Morris had initiated a campaign to force a public vote in favor of Proposition 188, a proposed law that would have lowered California's high cigarette tax.

The tobacco control ad did not openly urge citizens to vote against the proposal. It simply displayed two columns under the heading, "Who is for? And who is against Proposition 188?" Under the "For" column, the advertisement listed all the U.S. tobacco companies. Under the "Against" column were the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and the American Medical Association.

Proposition 188 was overwhelmingly defeated. The advertisement worked because the public trusted the cancer, lung, heart, and medical societies. By contrast, the names of the tobacco companies evoked untrustworthiness in viewers' minds. The ad struck a responsive-chord, even though it did not analyze the content of the proposed law.

Responsive-chord messages often appear in the form of questions that will evoke feelings already present in the audience.

As in the case of the California ad campaign, effective responsive-chord questions often stir up public distrust of large corporations, especially the transnational tobacco companies. One might ask:

The multinational tobacco companies and their advertising agencies tell us there is no evidence that their advertising encourages young people to smoke. Independent scientists, our teachers, our school nurses, and parents tell us that these ads make smoking more attractive to our kids. Who should we believe?

Or:

The tobacco companies tell us that their advertising is not targeted at teenagers – that, like us, they don't want kids to smoke. But do you believe they tell their advertising agencies, "Make these ads sexy and attractive to 20 year olds – but not attractive or alluring to 19 year olds?"

Here are other effective responsive-chord messages:

They make the cigarettes, then tell us not to smoke them – isn't there any other target for their mischief?

– Youth quoted in British American Tobacco's Youth Smoking Prevention Campaign: What Are Its True Objectives? PATH Canada and WBB

Many poor tobacco-growing countries argue that they need the revenue from tobacco. But who in your family are you willing to sacrifice so that the Government can earn more taxes? Would you want your brother, or sister, or child to start smoking so that the Government can earn more money?

– Phillip Karugaba, TEAN, The Environmental Action Network spokesperson

Shoba John, an Indian advocate and organizer, recently heard this statement at a workshop with tobacco farmers in India:

Tobacco companies lure us into [tobacco] farming assuring huge profits at the end of the harvest season. But do they ever care to include the cost of treating our corroded lungs in our pay package? Would they in turn tell their price managers, "Do not pass on the cost to the customer?"

Focus Groups

The advocates' concern always is that their messages will move their target audience. To this end, advocacy professionals routinely hire specialized firms to select and bring together focus groups. These groups consist of randomly selected “typical” citizens who have not thought much, or systematically, about political issues. They commonly harbor contradictory feelings about issues that advocates consider self-evident. Their conversation helps advocates gain a sense of how “ordinary” people think and talk about particular issues, and what messages they are most likely to respond to.

Most tobacco control advocacy groups have no money to hire a specialized firm to organize a focus group. But they can easily reach out to friends and neighbors who are not involved in tobacco control and invite them to come together to sit and talk for a few hours (perhaps over a good dinner).

In the United States, focus groups reacted strongly against advertisements that were plainly meant to appeal to young children. They were not impressed by messages that emphasized the need to protect teenagers. Many people considered teenagers to be rebellious and beyond the reach of reason. This discovery led advocates to an important understanding about how to target their messages.

And, again, this understanding guided the leading tobacco control advocacy coalition in the United States to call itself the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, not tobacco-free teenagers.

Tobacco control advocates in the United States recently looked for ways to involve the U.S. public in international advocacy on behalf of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. They spoke with focus groups in several large cities. The advocates found that ordinary citizens were not generally interested in helping to strengthen tobacco control efforts internationally – until they saw the advertising by U.S.-based tobacco companies in developing countries. The ads clearly target children in those countries.

Advocates who met with community groups in Indian towns and villages also heard opinions useful for revising their tobacco control messages: The female participants resented only messages that detail tobacco's harmful effects on women. Apparently, Indian men used these details as an excuse for their own addiction. Instead, both genders would prefer messages that cordially discuss the economic concerns tobacco causes to the family and immediate community.

Further information can be found in “Getting the Message Right: Using Formative Research,” Advisory #3, *Blowing Away the Smoke: A Series of Advanced Media Advocacy Advisories for Tobacco control Advocates*, which is available online at: www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide04.htm

Use Cultural and Political Tact

Finally, we need to remember that an effective message is one attuned to the social and political cultures of a society. For example, Nigerians still harbor deep resentment against colonialism and its human rights abuses. With that resentment in mind, tobacco control activist Akinbode Oluwafemi created a powerful message: “Aggressive marketing by multinational tobacco companies violates Nigerian human rights.” He explained:

It is the right of every person to have access to good health...This is a human rights issue. The right of a consumer as smoker is also to have access to information about the products they are about to take so that you are able to make what you call an informed choice. The tobacco transnationals, the tobacco industries, have denied smokers adequate, appropriate information about the products. They have twisted information to their own advantage at the peril of even their own customers who are smokers.

Mira Aghi from India highlighted the “family values” of Indians to stop the advertisement of MS Cigarettes in the print media: “I asked the proprietors of the paper if they would want the girls in their family to take up smoking. That is definitely not an accepted norm in our culture, not the least for a woman from a respectable business house. And it worked. No more ads of this brand were ever seen around.”

When British American Tobacco began to heavily publicize its Voyage of Discovery yacht in Bangladesh, local advocates countered with a poster that pictured a boat and made pointed references to colonialism – the underlying message was that the British first came to politically and economically colonize our country, and now they’re back again to do so economically.

Cultural and political feelings can also limit the use of messages that have succeeded in other societies. Some countries, thanks in large part to aggressive reporting, view tobacco companies as evil. But many other countries consider the tobacco industry benevolent. Smokers view the transnational tobacco companies as welcome contributors of “quality” cigarettes. Even nonsmokers view them as a welcome source of economic investment and jobs. In these nations, a media advocacy campaign based on messages that evoke negative feelings about the tobacco companies may not prove effective.

***Without industries we can't collect taxes...
BAT, they are paying me \$40 million
annually...I only [wish] I had 1,000 [BAT's].***

***– Yoweri Museveni, President, Uganda,
Museveni Roots for Big Business,
by Badru D. Mulumba/The Monitor,
Kampala, All-Africa.com, March 15, 2002.***

Similarly, advocates need to be cautious with messages that emphasize religious values in support of law and regulations. These may be persuasive in religiously homogeneous societies but may be seen as inappropriate in secular and pluralistic societies.

We also need to be aware that cultural differences can influence the effectiveness of the messengers we choose to carry our advocacy message. For example, in the United States, many admire young people who openly criticize political leaders for accepting gifts from tobacco companies. They are commended for an idealism that both the U.S. media and politicians respond to favorably. But many other societies consider outspoken criticism by young people rude and disrespectful behavior, at the very least. Messages they deliver will not be heard with favor.

Question 5. Who are the most effective messengers for our target audience?

The same message delivered by different people can have completely different credibility, power, and effect.

The Difference the Messenger Can Make

Ira Shapiro served as general counsel to the U.S. Trade Representative. Later, he agreed to serve as a spokesperson for the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control alliance of tobacco control advocates. In that role, he argued that health concerns must outweigh economic concerns, as WHO members deliberated over whether the FCTC should make this an issue.

If a public health professional had stood up to make this argument, few would have listened. The speaker could be dismissed as a naive advocate, ignorant of international trade law and policy. But when Shapiro stood up, he introduced himself this way: “I am a former United States trade negotiator. In fact, my first time in this room was on the morning of December 15, 1993, when the nations of the world announced the successful completion of the Uruguay Round of global trade negotiations. I speak to you as a strong supporter of the rules-based international trading system.”

If such a strong, credentialed free trade advocate believed that health rules should override trade rules, then the WHO members would – and did – pay close attention!

In this case, the messenger made the message effective.

“Mangala” (name changed to protect the identity of the person) worked on tobacco farms and barns in her home State of Karnataka in India for more than 15 years. The audience of workers and farmers discussing tobacco issues at the Asia Social Forum (ASF) sat speechless as she described her fate in the farms: “My insides (of lungs) were so corroded that the local doctor asked me ‘Do you smoke cigarettes?’ I responded angrily ‘Am I a city girl to do such a thing?’” Mangala’s witnessing shook the participants and provided the media with the much awaited bait. Next day, the Forum’s official paper carried a sizeable article on the poor conditions in the tobacco farms tarnishing the rosy pictures painted by the tobacco industry. This was surely a surprise, considering that the Forum itself is dominated by pro-tobacco unions. The messenger did the job!

*– Shoba John, PATH Canada,
workshop co-organizer*

In South Africa, an elegant radio advertisement refuted tobacco industry arguments against an advertising ban: “The tobacco industry claims that a ban on tobacco advertising and promotions is an attack on freedom of speech. We asked a former smoker what he thinks.” The ex-smoker replied in a tinny voice: “When you have lost your voice to cancer of the larynx, you don’t have much freedom of speech.” The advertisement not only made an important advocacy point, but also greatly increased calls to a QuitLine from smokers who wanted to quit.

Organizations dedicated to tobacco control advocacy often spend a great deal of time and care developing their messages, but just as often spend no time considering who would be the most effective person to deliver them. We might assume that our group leader will deliver the messages, or the chairperson of the organized tobacco control coalition. That person could indeed be the most effective spokesperson. But we will know this only after a strategic analysis similar to the one we go through to develop the messages themselves. What we are looking for is a combination of individual legitimacy and personal eloquence.

The dedication of tobacco control leaders does not necessarily make them the best spokespersons in all settings. Leaders need to be self-aware and able to suppress their egos to recognize and admit, for example, “I’m not the right one to lobby Parliament” (or to go on TV for this interview). “Someone else can do this better.”

Key Questions

In the process of deciding who will be the most effective messengers, we must ask:

- **Who is most likely to influence our target audience favorably?**
- **Whom is our target audience politically responsive to?**
- **Whom does that audience most want to please?**
- **Whom is that audience politically (or financially) obligated to?**
- **Whom does it honor? Trust? Respect? Fear? Like? Perhaps even love?**

The companion questions we must ask are in the negative. They are along the lines of:

- **Whom among our possible messengers does our target audience dislike? Scorn? Not take seriously? Distrust?”**

Suppose we have already determined that the message we will use to persuade a finance minister is: “Raising cigarette taxes will increase tax revenue.” Who will bear that message most convincingly to the finance minister (our audience)? An epidemiologist? A consumer activist? A minister of health? Not likely. Perhaps an economist, or even a world-renowned economist, sponsored by the World Bank. Even better, an economist who is the former finance minister of a neighboring country that enacted a cigarette tax increase and experienced a dramatic increase in tax revenues!

Who Listens to Whom?

Persuading our target audience will depend as much on our messenger as on our message.

Parliamentarians are likely to give a great deal of weight to the political advice of their peers. For example, suppose a respected member of Parliament who is also a doctor makes a scientific and political case on the floor of Parliament for an advertising ban. Her statement will carry a great deal of weight. Or imagine a prominent political columnist who has the ear of government leaders – or is feared by them – who raises questions about the corrupt influence of tobacco lobbyists. His column will be far more influential than a letter to the editor from an unknown tobacco control advocate.

Tobacco control advocates in Poland found an ideal messenger. Leading cancer-control doctor and epidemiologist Dr. Witold Zatonski was liked and trusted by the national media and was a skilled media advocate. Parliamentarians liked him as much as they respected him. He was warm and humorous, rather than moralistic or lecturing, while he communicated his messages clearly. Parliamentarians felt he respected them, and even smokers understood that he wasn't condemning them. Indeed, Zatonski would often say he "loved" smokers – that was why he worked so hard to help save their lives!

Not every country has a Zatonski. But every policy maker has an individual to whom he or she is more likely to listen with an open mind. Among Zatonski's allies, for example, was the very popular wife of the Polish president. She was not only an extremely effective messenger to the public, but also, of course, to the president.

Indian tobacco control advocates called on Dr. Raj Kumar Anand, whose close friend in medical school was now the health minister. The advocates chose this respected pediatrician and renowned consumer activist to initiate discussion on a national tobacco control law in the mid-1990s. Dr. Anand could draw on his friendship with the minister and on their shared professional commitment as doctors to protect public health.

Whatever your policy objectives, the ideal messenger will probably vary from situation to situation. Here are some examples of messengers likely to be the most effective for different target audiences and for different advocacy initiatives.

To persuade a prime minister to support comprehensive national tobacco control legislation:

A prime minister is likely to listen to:

- Trusted aides.
- Former aides the PM respects.
- Cabinet members.
- Political leaders of the PM's party.
- The PM's personal political campaign manager.
- Campaign supporters and financial contributors.
- Leaders of important constituent groups – for example, labor leaders, teachers, or local business leaders.

- Media owners, powerful political columnists, and other prominent media figures.
- Nationally known medical and scientific leaders.
- Doctors who are members of Parliament of the PM's party.
- Nationally respected religious leaders.
- Leading business people and business associations.

To persuade a finance minister to support tobacco tax increases:

Your most effective messengers might include:

- Respected national economists.
- Respected international economists from the World Bank or other prestigious financial institutions.
- Finance ministers from neighboring countries who can speak with authority about the economic benefits to their own country of tobacco tax increases.
- European Union officials who favor tax increases, if the country is seeking admission to the EU.

To persuade the general public to support enforcement of clean indoor air regulations:

In the early stages of a campaign to enact and enforce clean indoor air regulations, you will need to begin by increasing public awareness of the serious health risks of passive smoking.

A variety of messengers can be helpful in raising awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke. The general public is most likely to be persuaded by respected scientists and doctors and by those in positions of authority – teachers, priests, nurses, doctors, professors of medicine, presidents of national medical societies, or scientific stars such as Nobel Prize winners.

Celebrities, sports figures, television and movie stars, musicians, and political figures can also serve as excellent messengers to help you motivate and educate the public on the hazards of secondhand smoke.

Another powerful messenger is a nonsmoker who has become seriously ill as the result of the smoking of coworkers or family members.

An Indian NGO enlisted the support of a famous brand name in home electric fans to sponsor its clean air advertisements in the newspapers. Here, the partnership spoke louder than words!

To persuade doctors they have an important role to play in tobacco control:

The most effective messengers are likely to be nationally or internationally honored doctors, well respected by their colleagues, who are tobacco control advocates. As Krzysztof Przewozniak of the Polish Health Promotion Foundation says, “Doctors believe doctors.”

David Simpson is the author of *Doctors and Tobacco: Medicine’s Big Challenge*, an important resource which provides information for medical associates and individual doctors on effective action in tobacco control. While not a medical professional, Simpson has been working in tobacco control for more than twenty years and is well respected by his colleagues.

It can be found online at www.tobaccocontrol.org/tcrc_Web_Site/Pages_tcrc/Resources/tcrc_Publications/Publications_Other_Languages/English/English_DT_Publication-Download_Page.htm

Doctor advocates with institutional and economic influence over other doctors or over hospital administrators may be the most powerful messengers for other doctors. Health ministries and tobacco control NGOs often include doctors known to be leaders among their medical peers.

In some countries, leading physicians have access to the mass media. Usually they appear as guest experts on news programs and talk shows, but some have their own regularly scheduled health guidance programs. Such media access may give them the opportunity to target messages to their colleagues about the importance of getting involved in tobacco control.

An excellent example is the experience of one physician-advocate, Dr. Elmer Huerta. A native of Peru, Dr. Huerta hosted a U.S. radio show to discuss health issues in Spanish. This eventually led to his own cable television show. Dr. Huerta today is a celebrity in the U.S. Latino community, known especially for his strong beliefs about tobacco control.

Other effective messengers to doctors might include senior health ministry physicians, WHO regional advisers, medical ethicists, leaders of medical and specialist societies, and medical writers. Medical school professors and their curricula offer a prime opportunity to educate young doctors about the hazards of tobacco use.

The second of the ACS/UICC *Tobacco Control Strategy Planning Companion Guides*, “Engaging Doctors in Tobacco Control”, provides further information on this topic. It is available online at www.strategyguides.globalink.org/doctors.htm

To persuade the public that tobacco companies are corrupt:

To teach the public that multinational tobacco companies and their messages are not to be trusted, the voice of a former tobacco industry lobbyist or executive can carry enormous weight. During the late 1990s in the United States, Victor Crawford, a former tobacco industry lobbyist, came forward to tell the truth about the work he had done for the industry. Crawford gained national media attention when he admitted that he had invented and lied about scientific findings and had unfairly attacked public health leaders as “health nazis.”

The tobacco industry’s own internal documents can serve as messages against them. Examples from tobacco control organizations who have drawn upon these documents include publications by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and ASH UK and by Profits Over People for Latin America; and the PATH Canada guide *International Tobacco Growers’ Association: ITGA Uncovered – Unraveling the Spin; the Truth behind the Claims*. In Bangladesh, WBB quoted internal tobacco industry documents to show how the industry has fought legislative changes over the years. With accompanying research that shows the need and support for strong tobacco control legislation, the WBB document has proved a highly useful lobbying tool.

Lawsuits in the United States have forced tobacco companies to release millions of pages of internal documents. For your campaign, you now have easy access to some of the most revealing quotes from the tobacco industry. For example, suppose a tobacco company announces a “youth-smoking prevention program.” You can help journalists understand the company’s motives with some strategic use of quotes from industry documents that state these programs are designed to forestall regulation.

Links to Quotes from Tobacco Industry Documents

“Trust Us: We’re the Tobacco Industry” includes tobacco-industry quotes that cover many issues and regions. www.ash.org.uk/html/conduct/html/trustus.html

“Profits over People: Tobacco Industry Activities to Market Cigarettes and Undermine Public Health in Latin America and the Caribbean”
www.paho.org/English/HPP/HPM/TOH/profits_over_people.htm

“The Voice of Truth: Multinational Tobacco Industry Activity in the Middle East: A Review of Internal Industry Documents”
www5.who.int/tobacco/repository/tpc48/VoT1-en.pdf

To persuade film producers to stop portraying smoking as a glamorous route to romance and adulthood:

Our best example comes from the U.S. film industry, where tobacco control activists have had little success among screenwriters. Indeed, writers often resent their efforts as attempts to censor artistic freedom. Joe Eszterhas, a leading screenwriter, had written fourteen movies, many of which glamorized smoking. When Eszterhas contracted lung cancer, he publicly renounced his own work. He told his fellow writers: “What are we doing by showing larger-than-life movie stars smoking onscreen is glamorizing smoking. What we are doing by glamorizing smoking is unconscionable...A cigarette in the hands of a Hollywood star onscreen is a gun aimed at a 12 or 14 year-old...The gun will go off when that kid is an adult.”

These words carried enormous potential impact for Hollywood writers, because they came from a peer.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Message and Messenger

The formal adoption of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by the 192 member states of the World Health Organization in May 2003 provides perhaps the single most powerful message to government decision makers by the single most influential messenger.

Now, when advocates approach government leaders and parliamentarians, we are not speaking only for ourselves. We can now say:

- The world's leading health authority, the WHO, supports the tobacco control policies we propose.
- The global threat of tobacco use is so serious that it has led to the first international disease-control treaty in the 55-year history of the WHO.
- The mandate of the FCTC is politically sound and practical – 192 governments around the world have endorsed it.
- Our government has signed and ratified this treaty. It is legally and morally bound to implement it.

For example, in Romania, parliamentarians showed little interest or support for new tobacco control initiatives until advocates showed them a summary of the FCTC provisions. It opened their eyes – and their minds. Until then, it was easy to dismiss the arguments of the country's health ministry. Now, the advocates' messages carried the weight of the WHO and 192 national health ministers – and the knowledge that their own government supported and signed the treaty.

Question 6. What medium will most effectively deliver our messages to our target audience?

A frustrated tobacco control advocate once exploded in frustration at the stubborn resistance of a key legislator to a modest proposed tobacco control law: Not even a thunderbolt from God would change that fellow's vote!

Maybe not, but it certainly would be an effective medium for delivering the message...

Just as we need to analyze our target audience carefully to design the most effective messages and choose the best messengers, we must choose the most effective medium to reach and open the minds of our audience. As the New Age media guru Marshall McLuhan famously said, "The medium is the message."

Lobbying: Direct Communication

If you are fortunate enough to enlist one of the powerful messengers we discussed in Question 5, then your most effective medium may be direct lobbying. This can range from a formal scheduled visit to a parliamentarian...to a heartfelt plea from the parliamentarian's wife over breakfast... to a seemingly casual conversation among parliamentarians passing in the corridor or at a reception.

Be creative in deciding who is "powerful." Sometimes you most need someone who understands the issue. Politicians sometimes welcome information from any trusted source – to increase their knowledge base, and to speak with more authority in meetings on the subject. In Bangladesh, advocates did careful research on who would be attending an inter-ministerial meeting on tobacco control law. Before the meeting, they gave a copy of the PATH Canada guide *Tobacco Control Law* (translated into Bengali) to everyone attending.

The participants were expected to come up with all sorts of arguments against the law. Instead, they arrived at the meeting with the guide in hand, quoted directly from it, and made positive suggestions! Obviously, they were thrilled to be able to speak as if they knew something about the issue. They looked at the distribution of the guide as a gift rather than a lobbying effort.

Advocates in Bangladesh have also noticed that they do not need to hold advanced degrees or high positions to be listened to. They simply must provide basic information in a factual manner and be helpful where possible. (They even offer to type up the minutes of meetings!)

Internationally respected messengers might best deliver your message in a more formal setting. They might testify at a public hearing or give a speech at a conference whose audience includes key decision makers.

Messages are usually less effective when they are delivered through phone calls, faxes, e-mail messages, or petitions. One extremely self-important lawyer lobbyist for Philip Morris, known to be the closest advisor to the U.S. president, once made the mistake of not delivering an important message face to face. He left a phone message for the chairperson of the Senate committee that was considering two versions of a tobacco labeling and advertising control bill. "We," the message read, as if the lobbyist spoke for the president, "want you to vote for [the weaker] bill." The committee chairperson ignored the message. He might have listened had the lobbyist taken the trouble to visit him in person.

For a clear practical guide to nonprofit lobbying, see Chapter 11 in Jim Shultz's *Democracy Owners' Manual* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA, 2002); www.democracyctr.org/resources/manual/index.htm#train

The World Health Organization's *Tobacco Control Legislation: An Introductory Guide*, Chapter 8, "The Legislative Battle" offers suggestions for effective communication throughout the stages of the legislative process, including direct communication with parliamentarians. It is available online at www5.who.int/tobacco

Lobbying can take more aggressive or creative direct forms, such as picket lines, demonstrations, "sit-ins," and street theatre. The PATH Canada guide *Using the Media for Tobacco Control* provides practical guidance on how to use demonstrations, events, and stunts to attract the attention of the media. Find it online at www.pathcanada.org/public/Media_Guide.PDF

Media Advocacy

Tobacco control advocates around the world have learned to take advantage of the power of the media.

In South Africa, we focused essentially on media advocacy...We had to fight and win the minds and hearts of the public...We made sure that we put our own positions forward in the media, and nothing that the tobacco industry said went unchallenged. So media advocacy was one of our most important strategies.

– Yussuf Saloojee, National Council Against Smoking, South Africa

Very quickly I understood that the best way to influence Parliament is not necessarily to go to Parliament, but to have press conferences. I learned how to speak with journalists. The campaign and to create legislation – and the controversy – was very interesting to the media and the media began to educate the public. It became a topic for people to discuss. It began to change the attitude of the Polish population. It became the fashion for politicians to tell the media they would like to stop smoking.

– Witold Zatonski, Poland

We look at basic things like research and trying to get a new angle on what's happening, trying to get a lot of the positive things that are happening in the community to journalists, so that the media run with the positives and focus on the positives, be it local media or national media.

– Shane Bradbrook, Maori Smoke-Free Coalition, New Zealand

If I look back to '93 or even '96/'97 tobacco control had not much support. But now, our activities attract media attention, we can see the movement from that media attention.

– Yul Deravuth, Cambodia

What we have managed to do by using the media as much as possible is that the politicians themselves see our programs on TV, which are run in conjunction with other groups like the Health Education Bureau and the local medical association.

– Dr. David Bristol, St. Lucia Cancer Society, Saint Lucia

Our coalition is a small group; but by getting attention in the media, the coalition comes to seem larger and more powerful.

– Shoba John, PATH Canada, India

As we have seen, a tobacco lobbyist, perhaps a popular former parliamentarian who has made large political contributions to the governing party, has no difficulty making an appointment with any member of the government. This individual can then personally deliver the tobacco industry's messages to policy makers.

Sometimes, tobacco control advocates can also gain personal access to decision makers. Doors may open because they are highly respected members of society or represent noteworthy NGOs – or because they have worked hard to build relationships of trust and confidence with key influentials.

But more often, the doors to high-ranking offices are closed to tobacco control advocates – along with the minds of their occupants. In such cases, advocates must find the right medium to deliver their messages.

Professor Franklin D. Gillian of the University of Southern California is a leading scholar in a new branch of political science, media effects research. “The news has the power to set public agendas, direct attention to particular issues, and, ultimately, influence how we think about those issues,” Gillian tells us. “In short, [the news] is an important link between citizens and their government.”

For tobacco control advocates, this is critical information. We cannot try to solve a problem that the public is unaware of. The media must herald the news that tobacco use will ultimately result in disease and death. And it must get these facts to the public as often as possible, and as dramatically as possible.

Our discussion in Questions 7 and 8 addresses media advocacy in more detail. Under Question 7, we cover “access strategies.” These are the techniques skillful tobacco control advocates use to get the news media to turn its attention to the health, economic, and environmental effects of tobacco. Under Question 8, we discuss “framing strategies.” We will see that the way the news “frames” a problem determines how the public will view that issue. This means that not merely the volume of news but also its presentation determines the rise of an issue to the national policy agenda.

Narrowcasting: Media Advocacy in the Advanced Stages of a Campaign

Once the public is educated about the hazards of tobacco, the focus of tobacco control media advocacy shifts to its next stage: delivering the messages that key decision makers need to hear. In this stage, advocates concentrate on the media that reach and influence decision makers – even if these media do not reach the broad public. Such media advocacy is sometimes called “narrowcasting” (as opposed to “broadcasting”).

Narrowcasting requires us to look at media in terms of specific, limited audiences.

Parliamentarians are likely to read the news and editorial pages of their nation’s most widely circulated newspapers – especially papers published in the nation’s capital city. They also read newspapers from the heart of the region whose voters elect them to office. They may watch the evening news on national television.

Maori activist Shane Bradbrook describes the importance of getting the media’s attention, of timing, and of knowing which media to use to reach lawmakers in New Zealand:

In terms of the politicians, newspapers are really important. Okay, but what newspapers, what’s important, and what day is it important? Because, in New Zealand, they tend to fly in on Monday morning, so it’s really important that they get the main national papers in front of them and the stories in that. And also, they tend to leave on, say, Friday, so you know you’ve got to get those stories in. Obviously, they’re there during the week, but probably – the feedback we’ve had is – for those early morning papers, basically every day, that’s what a politician will be flicking through.

Suppose your target audience is an individual, such as the finance minister, or a narrow group, such as government economists. You may choose to narrowcast your message to them through specialized media. You might approach a nationally or internationally respected economics journal, such as the economist or the regional editions of the *Wall Street Journal*.

Tobacco control advocates need to learn as much as possible about precisely which media are the most likely to influence the key decision makers who need to hear their message. They must then develop strategic approaches to those media outlets.

“Talk radio provides some useful opportunities for advocacy but like other outlets needs to be thought of in a proactive way so that it fits in with an overall media strategy. As with other media outlets it is important to know the different talk radio formats and who the audience is for particular broadcasts.” This is the advice of Makani Themba-Nixon, Lawrence Wallack, and Lori Dorfman in *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*.

Another medium that is often useful to advocates is a report from an official body. *Tobacco Control Strategy Planning, Engaging Doctors in Tobacco Control* provides this example:

The Tobacco Advisory Group of the Royal College of Physicians of London published a report in February 2000, entitled Nicotine Addiction in Britain. It was targeted and distributed directly to British doctors. By emphasizing the ‘central role of nicotine addiction in smoking: its physical, pharmacological, and psychological effects,’ this report encouraged physicians to make smoking a ‘major health priority in Britain.’ It also made specific recommendations ‘for the ways in which smoking could be managed by doctors and health professionals in the future.’

Yussuf Saloojee, working in South Africa, has been among the most strategic tobacco control media advocates. He cautions:

While it makes sense to define our target audience, tailor our messages to that audience and use the vehicle most likely to reach that audience, for me one of the joys of media advocacy is that while delivering a specific message to a specific target, you may at no extra cost, be able to reach a much wider audience.

It may depend upon the media culture of a country, but in South Africa, I have found that getting our stories on the South African Press Association wires (SAPA is a news agency like Reuters), inevitably means that the story gets picked up by all the media. I very rarely give exclusives to any newspaper. The only time I target a specific newspaper is through the letters pages, which allows us to get our views to readers unfiltered by the perceptions of reporters seeking “balance” between public health perspectives and tobacco company public relations propaganda.

Once, our environmental minister, while abroad, had seen a report in the press that cigarettes were cheaper in SA than in virtually any other country surveyed. Upon returning home the environment minister took up the issue with the finance minister, becoming one more advocate for higher taxes; another benefit of a shot-gun approach that hits many targets, as opposed to the single shot which hits one.

We list other helpful guides for media advocates under Question 7.

Question 7. How do we get the media to pay attention?

Media advocacy expert Lori Dorfman, of the Berkeley Media Studies Group (www.bmsg.org), the author of *Blowing Away the Smoke*, Media Advocacy Advisories 5 and 6 (www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide06 and www.strategyguide.globalink.org/guide07), tells us:

The news media sets the public agenda: The more often an issue is reported in the news, the more people are concerned about it. If we want to keep tobacco issues on people's minds, you have to make sure those issues are regularly discussed in the news. You have to get the journalists' attention.

To convince the news media to discuss the health, economic, and environmental effects of tobacco, we need to develop “access strategies.” We must use these techniques honed by successful tobacco control media advocates to reach and persuade the journalists to carry our message.

Being a media advocate means being pragmatic about how the news works, and what we need to do to be part of it. We need to learn to think like journalists, to look for good stories, and to bring them to journalists' attention.

Make Stories Newsworthy

Of course our stories are important, or we wouldn't be working on them. But journalists cannot cover every important story. They must tell the news of the day within limits: a brief TV news segment, a short newspaper item, or a few minutes on the radio.

To get journalists' attention, we have to emphasize what makes our stories interesting.

Tobacco control media advocates should not think: “Here is an important health issue the journalist has an obligation to write about!” Instead, we should always be thinking: “How can I present the journalist with a good, newsworthy story?”

Remember, your story must grab the interest and attention of at least two people to become news: the reporter and the reporter's editor (or TV or radio news producer). Even a journalist eager to work with you has to convince the editor that your story deserves to be part of the day's news. The more ammunition you provide a journalist to prove your story is newsworthy, the better the chances you will read it in the newspaper or see it on TV.

To get journalists' attention and convince them to cover tobacco control issues, we have to make our stories fit traditional patterns of newsworthiness: We need to highlight the aspects that make them stories. Typical news stories interest a wide audience. And the more newsworthy elements your story contains and the broader the audience it interests, the more likely it will capture a reporter's attention.

For example, we know that celebrities nearly always make the news. During the fifth negotiating session of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, advocates in the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) invited the director general of the World Health Organization, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland to attend their “opening-day ceremonies.” Dr. Brundtland accepted. The FCA then announced to the media in Geneva that the director general would attend their event. On the morning of the ceremony, several camera crews were in place, hoping to catch a newsworthy moment with Dr. Brundtland. In the end, the FCA gained a great deal of media attention for an event that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

Links to Media Advocacy Guides

Smoke Signals, the original ACS/UICC media guide.
www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide10.htm

Blowing Away the Smoke series, *Advanced Media Advocacy, Advisory #5*,
written by Lori Dorfman for the Advocacy Institute
www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide06.htm

Now Hear This: The Nine Laws of Successful Advocacy Communications is an excellent
guide from a leading progressive U.S. communications firm.
www.fenton.com/pdf_files/Packard_Brochure.pdf

The SPIN Project's online tutorial includes helpful checklists for groups who want to
engage in advocacy communications.
www.spinproject.org/resources/spinworks.php3

PATH Canada's guide *Using the Media for Tobacco Control* provides tips for tobacco
control advocates who have little or no experience working with the media.
www.pathcanada.org/public/Media_Guide.PDF

Apart from celebrities, what catches journalists' attention? What are some creative ways to make your tobacco control stories newsworthy? Helpful guides for tobacco control advocates examine these questions in depth.

As you will see from these guides – and, eventually, from your own experience – media-access techniques can help you overcome the indifference of journalists. They will also help you persuade publishers and broadcasters who are afraid of losing advertising revenues or of antagonizing powerful business interests.

Go International

Sometimes even your most creative efforts to develop a newsworthy story will fail to sway your country's journalists and other media gatekeepers. Then you may want to turn to your international allies to help generate international news about your story. Often, widespread attention encourages local news media to take a closer look at your story.

In June 2001, an agency hired by Philip Morris presented the members of the Health and Social Affairs Committee of the Czech Parliament with a "study." Their numbers showed that smoking is good for the Czech government's finances because of the savings from early deaths caused by smoking.

Surprisingly, the Czech Parliament accepted the findings of this report. Even more stunning, the report did not interest the local media, despite its absurdity. As Dr. Eva Kralikova, a tobacco control activist, said: "Following that logic [of the report], the best recommendation to government would be to kill all people on the day of their retirement."

Since Czech journalists were not interested in this story, Dr. Kralikova turned to her colleagues at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. They immediately saw its value and presented it to the U.S. press: "Philip Morris' cost-benefit analysis of the consequences of smoking represents not only bad economics, but also a callous disregard for life."

Only after the report gained international publicity did the story become "news" to the Czech media, and it was reported widely in the Czech Republic at last!

Question 8. How do we make sure the media communicates our advocacy messages effectively?

We have drawn information on news frames from *Blowing Away The Smoke, Advisory # 6, "Framing for Content: Shaping the Debate on Tobacco"*, by Lori Dorfman (www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide07.htm)

News Frames

"Frames" are the boundaries around a news story. Just as you decide what to include when you take a photograph, journalists decide what to include in a story. "Framing" describes the journalist's selection process – which issues, ideas, and images should appear in a news story. The news frame draws attention to specific parts of the picture, relegates other elements to the background, and leaves out some aspects entirely.

Take, for example, a TV story about teenage smoking. It is far too likely to be framed as an illustration of typical teenage rebellion, rather than as a story about the seduction of vulnerable teenagers by sophisticated cigarette advertising.

Framing can also refer to the attitude or perspective the writer takes toward what is included in the story. This is often referred to as the "angle" or "spin" on the story. To understand how writers frame stories – and to frame stories ourselves – we need to pay attention to symbols, metaphors, or visual aids that evoke particular meanings.

Advocates gained support for tobacco control in Bangladesh by framing the issue as one of poverty. They conducted research and publicized the results, for example, in "Hungry for Tobacco: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Tobacco on the Poor in Bangladesh," by Debra Efroymsen, Saifuddin Ahmed, and Joy Townsend (*Tobacco Control* 10 (2001): 212-217). They chose to focus on the number of malnourished children who could be saved by redirecting spending from tobacco to food. Framing their story in this way, advocates succeeded in interesting groups who had felt tobacco was a low priority in a country with so many other serious health problems. The research caught the attention of the media, NGOs, and even the prime minister.

Why News Frames Are Important to Advocates

How the news frames an issue helps its audience decide who is responsible for the cause and solution of a problem. How the media chooses to frame the tobacco control movement and the tobacco industry influences many citizens who are not as engaged in the issues as we are.

"Media effects" research shows that TV news viewers typically place responsibility for fixing a problem on the people depicted as having that problem. This is a concern for public health advocates, because the usual frame in TV news emphasizes isolated events or people and minimizes the larger social and physical landscape.

For example, suppose viewers see teenagers buying cigarettes from vending machines or smoking in shopping malls. Research tells us that most viewers will focus on the irresponsibility of teenagers – not on the tobacco products or its marketers. But suppose instead a national TV news program shows teenagers smoking to illustrate a true story: a former cigarette company advertising creator who tried to make smoking attractive to all young people. The audience is then more likely to view the tobacco industry's advertising practices as a cause of teenage smoking.

Public Health Frames

When people view tobacco primarily as a personal issue, they “blame the victim.” They see the individual both as the cause of the problem and as responsible for finding a remedy. In this view, people who use tobacco have made a bad decision and have no willpower. They are morally responsible as a result. This view largely ignores the behavior of tobacco executives and government regulators, since smokers are exercising “free choice.”

By contrast, the public health frame shows tobacco use as a social and political issue. The primary focus is on the behavior of the tobacco companies and the policy makers, rather than the individual smoker. The goals then become, for instance, eliminating advertising that encourages tobacco use, and protecting nonsmokers from secondhand smoke.

The function of the public health frame is to highlight governmental and corporate accountability to build support for necessary policy solutions.

How to Use Public Health Frames

Advocates can take several concrete steps to make the public health perspective resonate in their news stories.

Translate the individual problem into a social issue

The public health frame should emphasize social determinants and the policies that can change them rather than individual choices. This means talking about policies, not behavior. The change in language from “smoking” to “tobacco” demonstrates this shift. “Smoking” is an act performed by an individual; “tobacco” is a product that is manufactured, marketed, and regulated. The language you use must always demonstrate that there is a larger environment in which people are trying to make healthy decisions. What barriers limit their options related to health? What elements of the environment could support them? Illustrating the answers to these questions would help journalists and their audiences understand the importance of addressing solutions that go beyond help for individual smokers.

Assign primary responsibility

Without information from us, most news consumers assume that the smoker – the person with the problem – is responsible for solving it. If a television show depicts teenagers smoking, then most viewers will consider the teenagers irresponsible. If we want audiences to understand the public health perspective on problems, we must constantly assert the corporate, governmental, or institutional responsibility for those problems. This means we talk about “the tobacco companies and those who regulate them,” rather than about “smokers.” We need to name the individual or body whom we hold responsible for taking action.

Suppose we want to convey the issue of fairness, for example. We can first develop a story that personalizes the injustice taking place. Then we can provide a clear picture of who benefits from the situation. We now have a story about an exploiter and the exploited. Tobacco control advocates have been very effective in creating an image of powerful tobacco company executives who exploit children and youth for profit. The key to advancing the social justice and fairness issue is to create a story that leads people to say: “That just isn’t right. There ought to be a law.”

Present a Solution

If someone asks you what needs to be done about smoking among kids, you should be prepared with a simple, effective answer. For example: “We need to raise the price of cigarettes through excise taxes or penalties on cigarettes.”

Another example: “We need to raise the price of cigarettes through excise taxes or penalties on cigarettes because research shows that the best way to reduce youth consumption of a product is to raise its price.”

Or: “We need to enforce the new ordinance that bans billboards in the city. Those messages are reaching our kids.” You do not list every possible solution. Rather, you highlight the one resolution that your group has given top priority – the one you believe must be advanced today. This means knowing what you want to say and being able to say it simply. Practice with colleagues until the answers roll off your tongue.

In Bangladesh, for instance, an intensive media strategy by Work for a Better Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance has successfully changed the focus of media coverage from “how tobacco harms the health” to “we need strong laws and higher tobacco taxes.”

Make a Practical Appeal

The good news is that public health solutions are usually winners – from a practical as well as moral perspective. From a practical perspective, policy changes behavior more effectively than does education alone. A successful policy change is cost effective: It can reduce or eliminate the need for ongoing remedial programs. This is because the policy will likely address one of the basic causes of the problem, such as the availability of tobacco products or regulating where smoking is permitted. So you should talk about how your solution will save money, enhance productivity, save lives, or protect children – protecting vulnerable “innocent” children is still a function of government that most people support. Have concrete examples of how your policy will benefit the entire community – not only those who suffer from the problem.

Policy changes behavior more effectively than does education alone.

How to Counter the Tobacco Industry’s Frames

As tobacco control advocates create and use media frames that will generate support for our policy objectives, we must overcome more than the preconceptions of journalists. We must also contend with the active propaganda efforts of the tobacco industry to frame tobacco control issues to support their negative advocacy.

Fortunately, tobacco control advocates have developed effective strategies for countering industry media-advocacy efforts. These strategies have been captured in two guides that tobacco control advocates around the world have found useful in their campaigns: *Smoke Signals* (www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide10.htm) and *Media Strategies for Smoking Control* (www.strategyguides.globalink.org/guide09.htm)

Public Civility

Smoke Signals examines the frames, messages, or symbols of debate the tobacco industry has long used to try to deflect public and government focus from the public health issues of secondhand smoke.

To deflect attention from the public health hazards of involuntary smoking the tobacco spokespersons seek to transform the issue into a matter of mutual accommodation and courtesy, casting the nonsmoker duly concerned about his or her health in the role of social bully.

Tobacco Industry Messages: “Common courtesy – not regulation.” “Mutual accommodation of smokers’ and nonsmokers’ rights.” Freedom from anti-smoking zealotry. “Resistance to moral dictatorship.”

Pro-Health Counter-Messages: “It’s not a matter of courtesy; it’s a matter of public health.”

More examples of Counter-Messages:

- There’s nothing courteous about your polluting my air space.
- Involuntary smoke can kill as surely as air pollution, reckless driving, and spreading AIDS. Are they merely matters of courtesy?
- Your smoking threatens my health; my nonsmoking does nothing to you.
- Many people are reluctant to ask strangers not to smoke for fear of provoking resentment or anger. In the absence of rules and signs, common courtesy means smokers feel free to light up without regard to the feeling of nonsmokers.
- Clear rules on indoor smoking promote courtesy by defining and clearly marking the places where smoking is not permitted. That prevents embarrassment and needless conflict between smokers and nonsmokers.
- When smokers choose to smoke in the privacy of their own homes, the courtesy decision is theirs; nonsmokers can choose to leave. [However, it is important to remember that children do not have that choice.] But nonsmokers can’t choose to leave their workplaces.
- In a perfect world, common courtesy would prevent all harmful behavior – littering, speeding, stealing, assault, murder. If common courtesy were always sufficient to prevent harm, we would need no laws.
- When two people share an office, or sit next to each other in a public place, courtesy may restrain smoking, but if it doesn’t, most nonsmokers will be reluctant to raise the issue unless they are supported by a smoke-free rule.

Recommendation: Avoid letting the debate degenerate into a conflict between militant smokers and nonsmokers. Wherever possible, focus the debate on the misappropriation of “common courtesy” by the tobacco industry in its effort to create conflict between smoker and nonsmoker. In the name of “courtesy,” the industry generates ill will. Its militant manifestations (“Freedom from anti-smoker zealotry”) fortify the paranoid smoker’s belief that he or she is being imposed on, and even the mild form (“common courtesy”) is designed to portray the concerned nonsmoker as a bully.

Concrete Examples of Reframing

by Yussuf Saloojee

In order for people to become engaged in your campaign, their current view of the situation needs to be changed to one that is more supportive. For instance, if a smoker's attitude changes from "It is my right to smoke anywhere I chose" to "My smoking affects other people and is not fair to them" they are more likely to support and respect laws against smoking in public.

How to achieve this change in attitude is a black art. New information that challenges the old modes of thinking may be one route. For instance, a well publicized report from a National Medical Association reviewing the dangers of passive smoking could be very useful in promoting changes in the attitudes and beliefs of several groups, including smokers, nonsmokers, business owners, and politicians, as shown below:

Audience: Smoking Public

Current beliefs/attitudes:

- Smoking is my personal choice. I should be able to smoke anywhere and everywhere.
- I don't think government should restrict smoking.

Desired beliefs/attitudes:

- Based on the new Medical Association report passive smoking seems bad.
- My smoking affects other people's health.
- Smoking and non-smoking sections are a fair solution.

Desired action:

- Support restrictions on smoking in public places.
- Change behavior and not smoke in public places.

Audience: Nonsmokers (apathetic neutrals, quiet sympathizers, supporters)

Current beliefs/attitudes:

- Passive smoking is not a big deal. I don't think I should be overly concerned about its health effects.

Desired beliefs/attitudes:

- My friends/spouse smoke. ETS bothered me somewhat before, but now, with the Medical Association report, maybe I should be more concerned about it.
- Nobody has the right to pollute the air we all breathe.
- By supporting government restrictions on smoking in public I can protect my kid's and my own health.

Desired action:

- Question fairness of current smoking policies.
- Voice their opinion on grassroots level.
- Demand and use smoke-free areas.

Audience: Business Owners of Public Places

Current beliefs/attitudes:

- I don't think that passive smoking is harmful.
- The smoking issue is a big hassle, and frankly, I'm not sure what to do about it.
- My business depends on satisfying the customer and I don't want to lose customers.
- I can't afford to control smoking; I'll lose business to my competitors who allow smoking.

Desired beliefs/attitudes:

- Based on the Medical Association report, passive smoking seems bad, particularly for my staff.
- The public is becoming more concerned about the problem. I will lose customers whatever I do.
- Government regulation of all restaurants seems to be a sensible solution to the smoking issues.

Desired action:

- Write a letter supporting the government policy.
- Create and implement policies that restrict smoking.

How to Use Media Bites

The successful media bite is one of the most challenging and creative tools for framing a news story to get your point across effectively.

What is a media bite? What does it mean to have an effective bite?

A “bite” is a single mouthful of food. A media bite, then, is a short (bite-sized) quote that reporters find so appealing and tasty they want to place it prominently in their stories.

To be truly effective, the media bite must combine the art of the poet with the soundness of science.

The best media bites solve three of the media advocate’s greatest challenges:

- To be an effective simplifying concept for your policy objective.
- To grab the attention of a journalist and gain “access” in a news story.
- To help frame the issue in a way that points toward your policy objective.

When you want your story to be in the news, you must work within the constraints of news time. Reporters usually develop their stories by conducting interviews with known sources – people familiar to them. As they begin to gather information, reporters may talk to you for background on an issue. These discussions may provide the reporter with direct quotes for their story. But usually reporters select quotes later, after they better understand the issue and know which of your words best represent a particular aspect of the story. At that point, media bites become extremely important. At the most, you can expect to be heard for 15 seconds in a TV story, or to appear for a few sentences in a print story. Despite the complexity of your issue, you must make it come alive for news consumers in short “bites.”

Many overworked reporters lift quotes directly from press releases. So pay particular attention in your releases to framing your message in sharp, short quotes. For an example, look at: www.tobaccofreekids.org/Script/DisplayPressRelease.php3?Display=607

How do you come up with media bites? Practice with colleagues; try out different ways to describe the problem and convey your solution. Try to speak to the shared values of your society: Stress themes such as fairness, common sense, or protecting children. Talk about what is at stake. Who is affected? What will this mean to people’s lives? Don’t be afraid to take a stand. Successful media bites often convey some irony, sometimes comparing the public health problem to another issue people feel strongly about. Here are some examples.

On “healthier” cigarettes:

Smoking a lower tar and nicotine cigarette is like jumping out the window of a 14th story building instead of the 19th story.

Many advocates use this media bite in response to the development of tobacco industry products, such as low-nicotine cigarettes or “smokeless” cigarettes that are implied to be safer for consumers. The goal is to illustrate the absurdity of the product and ridicule the tobacco company’s attempt to win public favor by doing something “healthful.”

On clean indoor air:

Having smoking and nonsmoking sections in the same air space is like having urinating and nonurinating sections in a swimming pool.

This widely used media bite describes the reason clean indoor air laws are necessary. The analogy illustrates clearly why “no smoking sections” are not enough to protect people’s health.

On damage to children:

Tobacco is a pediatric disease.

The U.S. food and drug commissioner, David Kessler, made this statement in a speech in 1995. Kessler’s remarks got national media attention; the headline in the *New York Times* was “Head of FDA Calls Smoking Pediatric Disease.” The simple sentence makes the urgency of holding the tobacco industry accountable more evident. It highlights the damage industry actions do to children, rather than to “irresponsible” adults who decide to smoke.

On the same issue, a UNICEF-commissioned study looked at child labor in the bidi industry. Bidi are hand-rolled cigarettes common in India and Bangladesh. PATH Canada’s *Tobacco and Poverty: Observations from India and Bangladesh* contains some heartbreaking stories and quotes from the study. One girl spoke of the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her master, and an 11 year-old girl said, “If somebody told me to starve and not do bidi work, I would be happy.”

On tobacco advertising:

Banning only some forms of tobacco advertising is like locking all but one of your doors to keep thieves out.

On tobacco-related deaths:

Nearly as many Americans die every single day from the effects of smoking as died on that one day 85 years ago in the sinking of the Titanic.

In this example, Al Gore, former U.S. vice president, compares something that society is often complacent about – the large number of annual deaths from tobacco-related causes – to a tragedy that resulted in far fewer deaths, yet captured a great deal more attention. It is an effective reminder that, despite the fact that deaths from tobacco do not occur all at once or in such a dramatic fashion, they are still a tragedy and can be prevented.

On the trustworthiness of the tobacco industry

The tobacco industry says it has changed, that it is a new responsible industry. That's a bit like a snake shedding its skin and saying it's changed, while the fangs and the venom remain.

– Clive Bates, ASH, UK

Asking the tobacco industry for input on drafting tobacco control laws is like asking a thief where to build the police station.

– Dr. Charles Maringo, Kenya

Besides the quotes mentioned, several successful media bites have already found their way into this guide:

Cigarettes kill more many people in the Unites States every year than would be killed by the crash of two fully loaded Boeing 747's each day of the entire year!

Women who smoke like men, die like men.

[Our law to ban smoking in restaurants and bars] will ensure that no worker in our city will ever have to risk contracting cancer, heart disease, or lung disease from exposure to others' smoke just to hold a job.

By passing India's vanguard law on tobacco control you may well be responsible for saving more future lives than all of the cancer surgeries to be conducted in the world.

– Modified from UICC's letter to the Indian health minister, who was piloting the national law in the Parliament

From ways to build upon the legal and moral authority of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to insights into the “art” of tobacco control media advocacy, this guide offers advocacy lessons from one generation of tobacco control advocates to you, the next generation.

In the last 50 years, we advocates have faced as much failure and disappointment as triumph. But we have tried to learn equally from those failures and from our successes. We hope that you who now set out to develop new tobacco control advocacy plans and strategies will be able to avoid the costly and painful mistakes we made. We hope that the health and life of your nation will thus be spared much of the ravages of the tobacco pandemic that still afflicts us and threatens to afflict so many more. That will be your gift to us!

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The guide also draws extensively upon CTFK's exhaustive "taxonomy" project in which CTFK set out to catalogue the hundreds of guides and other resources developed for tobacco control advocates over the past twenty years. This project enabled the developers of this guide to identify and provide links to the most useful advocacy arguments, guides, and other resources. Find the guide at: www.tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/taxonomy/

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