

## Why hard-core smokers need more than a quick fix

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Ask most people who smoke whether they want to give up and the vast majority will say yes; tell them that they must quit or face an early grave and they are likely to run to the nearest smoking zone and light up.

This is the dilemma facing the Department of Health (DoH), which has just appointed Carlson Marketing to create a £2m integrated campaign encouraging blue-collar workers to quit smoking (PM March 21). But what about this industry's die-hard addicts, what would it take for them to ditch the 'evil weed'?

"Could direct marketing convince me to quit?" ponders Trinity founder Phil Nunn. "No." Luckily for the DoH not everyone is quite so resistant.

Rapier creative partner John Townshend says direct marketing could definitely contribute towards making him quit, but "only if it talked to me intelligently. Different people require different approaches, but I think the campaigns that seem to work offer help to people".

He adds/ "There have been a million and one anti-smoking campaigns. Some of them have been incredibly powerful and yet they don't work. There's only so much you can do when a smoker is willfully ignoring a sign that takes up 50 per cent of the cigarette packet saying 'Smoking Kills'."

According to Townshend, the key to a successful anti-smoking campaign is to find a new perspective. He admires the recent campaign from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) showing fat oozing out of cigarettes, which presented a different argument besides the risk of cancer.

But Mardev sales director Zina Manda admits that the BHF's shock tactics had very little effect on her. She says: "I know a lot of people who gave up because of that campaign, but I was utterly resistant because I'm hopeless and I'm an addict."

Manda thinks that direct marketing could succeed where many TV campaigns have failed. "For most of us, the fact that we could get cancer clearly isn't enough – I know that sounds strange – but you're either prepared to take the risk, or you think you're immortal.

"Direct marketing could be a great way to tackle that because it's one-to-one. It's not a generic message that assumes everyone has the same motivations and the same reasons for giving up."

EHS Brann managing partner Tash Whitmey agrees: "Direct marketing could really work, because smoking is a serious subject so you need to communicate a lot of information." Whitmey believes that Carlson's campaign could achieve even more success if it applies the practices of customer relationship management to help smokers to give up for good. She says: "It can't be a one-hit wonder. A lot of people find it easy to give up initially, but it's vital that there is follow up."

Nunn agrees, recalling a six-month stint as a non-smoker when he found ongoing support via an anti-smoking website, which charted the various stages of the quitting process. "The problem was that I stopped looking at the website. That's why this campaign shouldn't just be about cold acquisition. Targeted communication during the quitting process would be very smart," says Nunn.

One thing that the team at Carlson must embrace is the right tone of voice to convey the correct message. "Sometimes it feels like a terrible witch hunt," says Manda. "It's like we're the worst criminals in the world."

Other members of our smoking panel also warn against coming across too patronising, bossy, dictatorial, intrusive, preachy, or scare-mongering. This strict criteria suggests that whatever message Carlson tries to put across it is unlikely to be welcomed by smokers.

Yet the agency claims to have pinpointed the best medium to persuade smokers to reject their habit: face-to-face marketing.

What does our panel think of the prospect of an army of anti-smoking missionaries taking to the streets?

"If they're trying to engage us in a conversation like a chugger then I don't think it will work. Smokers, by their very nature, are in denial," says Townshend.

Manda believes that giving out starter-packs could be helpful, but insists that it will only be a success if people are considering quitting already – a view that is echoed by Nunn. He says: "As a person who has not the slightest inclination to give up, face-to-face marketing does not stand a cat in hell's chance." Fag anyone?

### The Facts Key Findings

- \* About 106,000 people in the UK die each year due to smoking.
- \* In 2006, 68 per cent of smokers who were asked said they wanted to give up.
- \* In 2007, 327,800 people set a quit date through NHS Stop Smoking Services. At the four week follow-up 164,711 people had successfully quit, 50 per cent of those setting a quit date.
- \* In 2006, 16 per cent of smokers had their first cigarette within five minutes of waking up.
- \* In 2006, 59 per cent of smokers felt that it would be difficult to go without smoking for a whole day.
- \* People who are married are less likely to smoke than others. Among those aged 25 to 34, 34 per cent of those who were single and 35 per cent of those who were cohabiting were smokers, compared with only 21 per cent of those who were married.

\* There was a fall in the overall prevalence of cigarette smoking between 1998/99 and 2004/05, from 28 per cent to 25 per cent of people aged 16 and over.

\* Since the early Nineties in Great Britain the prevalence of cigarette smoking has been higher among 20 to 24 year olds than in any other age group.

**Source:**

<http://www.precisionmarketing.com...>

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