

The Last Drag Campaign: Countering the Tobacco Industry's Targeting of the Gay and Lesbian Community

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> PROBLEM

- Overall smoking rate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in California is 30.4% — nearly double that of the state's general population.
- Among LGBTs, 18–24 year-olds have the highest smoking rate of 43.4%, which is 2.5 times higher than the general population in this age group.
- The tobacco industry aggressively targets LGBT persons through direct and indirect advertising, community outreach and sponsorships.
- Messages to LGBT community have been relatively absent from advertising until recently, creating positive responses to such overtures.
- Very few smoking cessation programs tailored specifically to LGBT individuals in Los Angeles County.

> OBJECTIVES

- To create awareness about the high smoking rates among LGBT individuals.
- To promote smoking cessation services specifically tailored to the LGBT community.

> METHODS

- A focus group of gay men and smoking cessation service providers was conducted to develop a communication campaign theme and messages to promote free smoking cessation services. The multi-faceted 3-month campaign branded with the unifying tag “Breath Easier. Play Harder.” was developed and consisted of four strategies:
 - Print ads designed specifically for gay publications that would drive smokers to quitting resources.
 - An internet presence with an informational Web site, www.LastDragLA.com.
 - The first ever gay anti-smoking street team, conducting peer-to-peer outreach in bars and nightclubs to inform LGBTs about the free smoking cessation classes and to promote the Web site.
 - Aggressive media relations to broaden reach of message via general market, ethnic and LGBT media.

> RESULTS

- Thousands in target audience saw and/or interacted with street team.
- Communication campaign increased number of calls to smoking cessation providers.
- Last Drag LA Web site averaged 1,986 hits per day in the first month.
- Print advertising delivered more than 500,000 impressions.
- International AP wire story and photo resulted in hundreds of placements throughout country and around the world.
- National coverage — CNN Headline News, NPR's California Report, *New York Times* Marketing/Advertising Section.
- More than 35 blogs discussed campaign (99% positive).

> CONCLUSIONS

- Ongoing communication campaigns that promote comprehensive smoking cessation services tailored specifically for LGBT individuals are needed.
- LGBT population is already overloaded with critical health messages. Communication campaign should promote cessation services in a non-judgmental manner to motivate smokers to quit.
- Communication strategies should include a lifestyle marketing component and target LGBT individuals at locations where they are most likely to smoke such as bars, clubs and gay pride festivals.

