**CASE STUDY 1**

**The truth® Campaign**

**Youth Tobacco Prevention: Empowering Teens With truth®**

**1. Background, Purpose and Focus:**

**truth®**, launched in February 2000, is the largest national youth smoking prevention campaign in the United States and the only national prevention campaign not directed by the tobacco industry The campaign was created by the American Legacy Foundation®, founded as a result of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and 46 states and 5 U.S. territories. The foundation’s mission is to *build a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit* (American Legacy Foundation, 2009). The campaign exposes the tactics of the tobacco industry, the truth about addiction, and the health effects and social consequences of smoking. The focus is on inspiring teens to make informed choices about tobacco use by giving them the facts about the industry and its products and tools to enable them to “take control.”

Source: Information and insights for this case were contributed by Patricia McLaughlin, the

Legacy Foundation’s Assistant Vice President of Communication.

**2. Target Market Profile:**

The target market for the campaign is youth aged 12 to 17 years old who are defined as “sensation seekers” and thus most open to smoking. Nearly 80% of smokers begin using tobacco before the age of 18, so it is critical to reach this audience before they take up smoking and face a potential life of tobacco related disease or even death (Mowery, Brick, & Farrelly, 2000). In 1999, a year prior to the campaign’s launch, an estimated 35% of youth in 9th, 10th, 11th, and

12th grades used tobacco one or more times in the past 30 days. Rates increased by age from 28% of 9th-graders to 43% of 12th-graders (CDC, 2009).

**3. Marketing Objectives:**

Marketing strategies were developed with the following objectives in mind:

**• *Behavior objectives:***Influence youth not to smoke and to express their concerns with the strategies, tactics, and lies of the tobacco industry.

**• *Knowledge objectives:***For youth to know that the tobacco industry targeted them and to know the facts about the health effects, social cost, addictiveness, and ingredients/additives.

**• *Belief objectives:***For youth to believe that not smoking is a way to express independence and that smoking is not the norm; they are in control and empowered to make the choice.

**4. Barriers, Benefits and the Competition:**

Many youth find it hard not to at least try smoking, and several factors influence their desire to experiment, including peer pressure, older siblings and/or parents smoking around them, stress, and natural curiosity.

Benefits they imagine or they may assume include looking older, looking sexier, reducing stress, controlling weight, being independent, fitting in, being respected, expressing themselves, and being a rebel or a risk taker.

The competition, of course, is the tobacco industry, and the billions of dollars a year Big Tobacco spends to make its products accessible, visible, and seemingly cool—especially to youth. Other anti-smoking messages in the past came from the tobacco industry, and it was found that exposure was associated with more positive attitudes toward the industry and increased intentions toward future smoking.

**5. Positioning:**

In the end, campaign planners want youth to see that the Big Tobacco companies are trying to manipulate them. As described on **truth®**’s Web site, “We’re not anti-smoker, or anti-smoking. We’re just anti-manipulations. With that in mind, we try to ‘out’ Big Tobacco’s tactics so everyone knows what they’re up to.”

The campaign’s emphasis is on honest facts and information about tobacco products and the tobacco industry and gives teens tools that enable them to take control and make informed decisions about tobacco use. As also described on the foundation’s Web site, “The power of our industry manipulation positioning is not only positioning **truth®** as a value-based brand, but in repositioning Big Tobacco. Our brand is the truth. Their brand lied.”

**6. Strategies:**

The **truth®** Campaign uses evidence-based research, research with teen audiences, marketing and social science research, and lessons learned from the most successful anti-tobacco campaigns to inform its strategies. In the following presentation of strategies, a few that were *not* a direct strategy of the **truth®** Campaign are also mentioned. They are considered companion strategies, because they also target the youth market with similar objectives and positioning.

Several of those that are included are ones highlighted and recommended by the Committee on Reducing Tobacco Use, helping to illustrate the use of the complete marketing mix in trying to achieve certain public health goals.

**6.1 Product**

• The *core product*, the benefit promised, is an opportunity for self expression, healthy rebellion, and the health benefits of being a nonsmoker.

• The *actual product*, the desired behavior, is for youth to reject smoking.

• The *augmented product* includes a variety of opportunities for youth to express themselves, including sharing tobacco-related information with their friends through social networking sites and playing games that educate them about tobacco while entertaining and holding their interest.