



PHILIP MORRIS: A LONG HISTORY OF DOUBLE TALK

“Lying is as natural to tobacco executives as breathing once was to their customers.”

Editorial, “Drug Pushers: Tobacco Products Should Be Regulated,”
Newsday, September 1, 2006

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For some time now, Philip Morris has been engaged in an aggressive public relations effort aimed at convincing policy makers and opinion leaders (and potential jurors) that it has finally turned over a new leaf and become a good corporate citizen and that the company actually wants to reduce teen smoking. But a look at the cigarette company’s history shows that this media campaign is nothing more than the same old double talk. Since at least the 1960’s, Philip Morris has repeatedly made similar claims that it does not market cigarettes to kids. But internal company documents revealed in the tobacco lawsuits show that Philip Morris has regularly done just that. There are many effective actions Philip Morris could take to prevent and reduce smoking among kids, but it has not – and just talking a good game is not enough.

What Philip Morris Says In Public

- 1965 The cigarette companies’ voluntary “Cigarette Advertising Code” goes into effect. Among its standards: *“Cigarette advertising shall not represent that cigarette smoking is essential to social prominence, distinction, success, or sexual attraction.”* [Section 1(d)]
- 1966 Philip Morris President Joseph F. Cullman, III: *“we do not favor smoking by young people. We think smoking should be a custom for adults.”*¹
- 1969 Philip Morris President Joseph F. Cullman, III: *“It is the intention of the cigarette manufacturers to continue to avoid advertising directed to young persons; to abstain from advertising in school and college publications; not to distribute sample cigarettes or engage in promotional efforts on school and college campuses; not to use testimonials from athletes or other celebrities who might have special appeal to young people; to avoid advertising which represents that cigarette smoking is essential to social prominence, success, or sexual attraction; and to refrain from depicting smokers engaged in sports or other activities requiring stamina or conditioning beyond those required in normal recreation. . .”*²
- 1982 *“On the industry’s behalf, The Tobacco Institute began an advertising campaign which was to reach 110 million Americans with the message, ‘Do cigarette companies want kids to smoke? No. As a matter of policy. No. As a matter of praetice. No. As a matter of fact. No.’”*³
- 1984 Philip Morris Executive Ellen Merlo: *“I have never in my job been involved with trying to get a non-smoker to smoke. ...I don’t think that advertising convinces people to smoke... I have not seen statistics on when people usually begin to smoke.”*⁴
- 1991 Philip Morris Media Affairs Director Sheila Banks: *“Philip Morris strongly believes that young people should not smoke. Smoking is an adult custom. Selling cigarettes to minors is - and should be- illegal, and Philip Morris fully supports these laws.”*⁵
- 1992 Philip Morris Corporate Statement: *“Education and enforcement at the retail level are the only effective means we have of discouraging children from smoking. We want to assure you that Philip Morris remains firmly committed to supporting laws that prohibit unlawful sales to minors. We continue to lend our fullest support to educational programs as well as make very sure that our cigarette advertising is directed exclusively at adults who choose to smoke.”*⁶

- 1995 Philip Morris President James Morgan: “We at Philip Morris USA have long held the position that minors should not smoke and should not have access to cigarettes, and we have backed that commitment over the years with a series of concrete actions.”⁷
- 1995 Philip Morris President James Morgan : “Philip Morris USA believes now, and always has believed, that minors should not smoke nor should they have access to our cigarettes.”⁸
- 1996 Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible: “We do not market cigarettes to children. And we do not want children to smoke.”⁹
- 1998 Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible: “I’m ashamed at that. I don’t like to see something from the company talking about 16-year-olds. We do not market cigarettes to underage people.”¹⁰
- 1998 Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible: “We should not be marketing cigarettes to young people. It is certainly anomalous to the Philip Morris I know.”¹¹
- 1998 Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible: Real solutions include a “willingness to make fundamental changes in our way of doing business.”¹²
- 1998 Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible: “In all my years at Philip Morris, I’ve never heard anyone talk about marketing to youth.”¹³
- 1998 Philip Morris President Michael E. Szyzmanczyk: “We don’t want kids to smoke. We’re intensifying our efforts that we started a number of years ago by launching this new smoking-intervention initiative, starting with these ads.”¹⁴

What They Say In Private: Anti-Youth Smoking As A Public Relations Ploy

- 1979 *It seems to me our objective is . . . a ‘media event’ which in itself promises a lot but produces little.*¹⁵
- 1991 *The youth [anti-smoking] program and its individual parts support The [Tobacco] Institute’s objective of discouraging . . . federal, state, and local restrictions on cigarette advertising.*¹⁶
- 1992 *[If Philip Morris took] a more progressive position on tobacco, it would enable the company to move onto a higher moral playing field, to neutralize the tobacco issue and to focus attention on other, more appealing products.*¹⁷
- 1995 *If we don’t do something fast to project the sense of industry responsibility regarding the youth access issue, we are going to be looking at severe marketing restrictions in a very short time.*¹⁸

What They Say In Private: Marketing to Kids

- 1975 *Marlboro’s phenomenal growth rate in the past has been attributable in large part to our high market penetration among young smokers . . . 15 to 19 years old . . . my own data, which includes younger teenagers, shows even higher Marlboro market penetration among 15-17-year-olds.*¹⁹
- 1981 *Because of our high share of the market among the youngest smokers, Philip Morris will suffer more than the other companies from the decline in the number of teenage smokers.*²⁰
- 1981 *[T]he success of Marlboro Red during its most rapid growth period was because it became the brand of choice among teenagers who then stuck with it as they grew older.*²¹
- 1985 *[Marlboro must] continue growth among new, young smokers... While Marlboro continues to attract increasing shares of young smokers, expected declines in the number of young people restrict future volume gains from this source.*²²
- 1992 *Thus, the ability to attract new smokers and develop them into a young adult franchise is key to brand development.*²³

What They Say In Private: Behavioral Research About Kids

- 1973 A Philip Morris Marketing Research Department document highlights that within a “probability sample of 452 teen-agers ages 12-17” 13 percent smoke an average of 10.6 cigarettes per day and that “the data from the study are consonant with the findings of other such studies, both at Philip Morris and without.”²⁴
- 1974 *We wonder whether such children may not eventually become cigarette smokers in their teenage years as they discover the advantage of self-stimulation via nicotine. We have already collaborated with a local school system in identifying some such children in the third grade. . .*²⁵
- 1981 *It is important to know as much as possible about teenage smoking patterns and attitudes. Today’s teenager is tomorrow’s potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while in their teens . . . it is during the teenage years that the initial brand choice is made.*²⁶

Dr. Carolyn Levy – Philip Morris’ Senior Vice President of Youth Smoking Prevention who is in charge of the company’s \$100 million anti-youth smoking campaign – previously worked in the Philip Morris research department on studies on nicotine effects and smoking behaviors.²⁷ Dr. Levy was also one of two Philip Morris researchers who formally approved the previously quoted special report that stated “Today’s teenager is tomorrow’s potential regular customer.”

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, September 1, 2006

¹ Speech to South Carolina Tobacco Warehouse Association, Inc., June 7, 1966, Bates No. 1002600012.

² Testimony before US Congress, July 1969.

³ Philip Morris, *On Youth Smoking*, 1979, Bates No. 2077153116/3117.

⁴ Ellen Merlo, June 14, 1984, testimony in *Cipollone v. Liggett*.

⁵ Philip Morris Media Affairs Director Sheila Banks, speaking to the Advertising Club of Louisville, February 8, 1991, Bates No. 2025895060/5082.

⁶ *Statement of Philip Morris with respect to its marketing practices and policies*, 1992, Bates No. 2500081599/1600.

⁷ Morgan, J, *New program to address youth access to our products*, Memo to all Philip Morris USA Employees, June 27, 1995, Bates No. 2060138652/8653.

⁸ Philip Morris President James Morgan remarks on the “Action Against Access” program, June 27, 1995, Bates No. 2500050029/0033.

⁹ Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible remarks at the 1996 Annual Meeting of Stockholders, April 25, 1996, Bates No. 2500082439/2451.

¹⁰ Testimony of Bible in Minnesota Medicaid suit, March 2, 1998.

¹¹ Dedman, B, “Tobacco Chief ‘Horrified’ Over Evidence,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 1998, Bates No. T113660354.

¹² Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible, testimony before the House Commerce Committee, January 28, 1998, Bates No. 2065112084/2092.

¹³ Geoffrey Bible, CEO of Philip Morris, *Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune*, March 4, 1998.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, December 3, 1998.

¹⁵ Dryden, F, *August 1 ‘Pre-Adult Education’ Memo*, August 3, 1979, Bates No. TIFL0525654.

¹⁶ Tobacco Institute, *Discussion Paper*, January 29, 1991, Bates No. TIMN0164422/4424.

¹⁷ Hill and Knowlton, *Philip Morris Corporate Affairs Strategic Plan for 1993*, December 3, 1992, Bates No. 2023586677/6725.

¹⁸ Philip Morris, *JJM to PM Invitational – Importance of Youth Issue*, February 9, 1995, Bates No. 2044046017/6022.

¹⁹ Johnston, M, *The Decline in the Rate of Growth of Marlboro Red*, May 21, 1975, Bates No. 1000024921-1000024927.

²⁰ Johnston, M, *Young Smokers -- Prevalence, Trends, Implications, and Related Demographic Trends*, March 31, 1981, Bates No. 1000390803/0855.

²¹ Johnston, M, *Young Smokers -- Prevalence, Trends, Implications, and Related Demographic Trends*, March 31, 1981, Bates No. 1000390803/0855.

²² Plan Overview, 1985, Bates No. 2043440057/0112, 1985.

²³ PMI Marketing Research, *Worldwide Marlboro Monitor; Five Year Trends, 1988-1992*, 1992, Bates No. 2044895379/5484.

²⁴ PM USA Marketing Research Department, *Incidence of Smoking Cigarettes*, May 18, 1973, Bates No. 2041761791.

²⁵ Dunn, WL, *Smoker Psychology*, June 10, 1974, Bates No. 1003288122/8124.

²⁶ Johnston, M, *Young Smokers -- Prevalence, Trends, Implications, and Related Demographic Trends*, March 31, 1981, Bates No. 1000390803/0855.

²⁷ See, e.g., Philip Morris Memorandum, “Smoker Psychology” (PM Doc. #1003293097).