



The "Become an EX" Smoking Cessation Campaign

Support for a public/private partnership to help American adults stop smoking

SUMMARY

From 2008 through 2010, the [American Legacy Foundation](#) ran "Become an EX," a national smoking-cessation campaign that portrayed quitting smoking as a challenging yet achievable goal and offered smokers free help to quit through an online quit plan available at [BecomeAnEX.org](#) (in all ads), as well as through state quitlines (in ads that ran on state-purchased media).¹

Legacy—created as part of the Master Settlement Agreement between the tobacco industry and state attorneys general—ran the campaign in partnership with the [National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation](#), which included 18 state governments, six public health organizations and two foundations, one of which was the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). These members signed contracts and paid yearly contributions to fund the campaign.

(Legacy asked states to contribute 25 cents per smoker in their state, and other partners to make a "best effort" contribution. See the [Appendix](#) for a list of members and their contributions.)

In 2008, Legacy subcontracted with staff at the [Research Triangle Institute](#) in Raleigh, N.C., to survey 4,067 adult smokers in eight media markets before the launch of the EX campaign and six months after, to evaluate its impact.

In 2010, because many states could no longer afford to participate, Legacy worked with the [Ad Council](#) to transition the EX campaign from paid ads to public service announcements on television, radio, Web sites and billboards. The Ad Council produces and promotes public service campaigns for nonprofits and public agencies.

¹ The campaign ran on paid broadcast media between 2008 and 2010. Then it ran on donated media via the Ad Council throughout 2010. In addition, it has been running on online media throughout this entire period.

Context

Before the EX campaign was launched, Legacy piloted and evaluated it in four media markets in 2006 and 2007: Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baltimore; San Antonio; and Buffalo, N.Y. The *American Journal of Preventive Medicine and Social Marketing Quarterly*² published findings from that evaluation.

Results

In a report to RWJF, Legacy staff cited these results from the 2008–2011 campaign:

- The "Become an EX" campaign featured television, radio and online ads and media coverage that focused on how to quit rather than why, and relied on an empathetic tone to encourage smokers to "re-learn life without cigarettes." National ads promoted the EX Web site, www.BecomeanEX.org (see below), and ads running on state-purchased local media promoted state-based telephone counseling services available via 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

For example:

- EX ads ran during Fox Sports broadcasts of the American League Championship Series and World Series in October 2009. Coverage included virtual signage on home plate, as well as a number of other in-game mentions.
- "Become an EX" minishows on ESPN 2 in November 2009 and February 2010 featured attempts by fishing pros Kevin Wirth and Zell Rowland to quit smoking using the EX Plan.
- Legacy staff promoted the campaign to car racing enthusiasts by partnering with Carl Edwards, a winning NASCAR driver, in 2010. Edwards appeared in videos posted on the EX Web site to encourage his fans to live healthier lives and break their addiction to tobacco.
- The *Today Show* featured EX during "Today Calls It Quits"—two shows airing in January 2009 that reached 5.5 million people.
- In 2010, the CBS show *The Doctors* featured 60 audience members who were smokers. Each smoker received EX materials and a referral to the EX Web Site for counseling and support.

² Vallone DM, Duke JC, Mowery PD, McCausland KL, Xiao H, Costantino JC, Asche ET, Cullen J and Allen JA. "The Impact of EX Results from a Pilot Smoking-Cessation Media Campaign." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 38(3, Suppl.): S312–S318, 2010. Available [online](#).

McCausland KL, Allen JA, Duke JC, Xiao H, Asche ET, Constantino JC and Vallone DM. "Piloting EX, a Social Marketing Campaign to Prompt Smoking Cessation." *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 15(Suppl. 1):80–101, 2009. Abstract available [online](#).

— The *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* covered the EX campaign, as did *Self*, *Glamour* and *Parents* magazines and Fox News.com, ESPN.com. and Yahoo! News, among other outlets.

- Legacy staff worked with participating states to adapt national EX ads to state and local markets, such as by creating posters for use in convenience stores and other community areas. States also distributed EX quit manuals and brochures through social service agencies, faith-based organizations, health providers, businesses and retailers such as pharmacies.

See the [Bibliography](#) for more information on these and other campaign materials.

- Legacy launched www.BecomeAnEX.org in 2008. The site offers a free personalized quit plan developed in conjunction with Mayo Clinic, as well as a virtual community where smokers can join affinity groups and share stories and strategies.

The site recorded more than 2.25 million unique visits during the campaign and registered nearly 400,000 users. Lapsed members received a "reactivation e-mail" encouraging them to return to the site and reengage in the quitting process.

Findings

Researchers at Legacy and the Research Triangle Institute reported findings from their surveys of adult smokers before and after the launch of the campaign in the *American Journal of Public Health*.³ Findings included

- Some 41 percent of respondents were aware of EX ads.
- Individuals with confirmed awareness of the campaign were 24 percent more likely to have made a quit attempt than adults who were unaware of the campaign.

The researchers concluded that a national, branded, mass media campaign can change smokers' perceptions about quitting and increase quit attempts.

Lessons Learned

1. Engage partners as early as possible when developing a national media campaign. Legacy developed the campaign concurrently with engaging partners. Although there was sometimes tension between the national branding and messaging of the campaign and the needs and interests of state partners, their input at the beginning of the process helped create a stronger campaign overall. "Involving partners from the beginning enabled us to ensure that their needs were being met as much as is possible with a national campaign," according to Project Director Amber Thornton-Bullock.

³ Vallone DM, Duke JC, Cullen J, McCausland KL and Allen JA. "Evaluation of EX: A National Mass Media Smoking Cessation Campaign." *AJPH First Look*, published online ahead of print December 16, 2010. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(2): 302–309. 2011. Abstract available [online](#).

2. A national campaign can provide media cost efficiencies. It was determined that it was less expensive to purchase media on a national level than it would have been to purchase it in each of the 18 states that ended up contributing to the National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation. "Although running a national campaign while just 18 states contributed led to some concerns about "free riders" who benefitted from EX without having to pay for it, the overall media effort was more efficient," said Thornton-Bullock.
3. Sustaining funding for public-private partnerships is challenging. State health leaders need to show return on investment to legislators and face sensitivities in contracting with out-of-state entities. Identifying a private-sector partner to represent state officials within an alliance might be more effective and also spur advocates to work to protect public funds from budget cuts. (Project Director/Thornton-Bullock)

Funding

RWJF, a member of the Alliance for Tobacco Cessation, provided a grant of \$720,000 to Legacy for the campaign from January 2007 to February 2011.

Afterward

Legacy continues to update and promote the EX Web site. The foundation may conduct another paid media campaign if funding becomes available.

Report prepared by: Barbara Matacera Barr

Reviewed by: Sandra Hackman and Molly McKaughan

Program Officer: Joe Marx

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Program area: Public Health

APPENDIX

Founding Members of the National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation

(Current as of the time of the grant; provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF.)

• American Legacy Foundation	\$12,500,000
• American Cancer Society	\$100,000
• American Heart Association	\$25,000
• American Lung Association	\$25,000
• American Lung Association of D.C.	\$20,833
• Arizona Department of Health Services	\$205,350
• Arkansas Department of Health	\$209,608
• California Community Foundation c/o Kaiser Permanente of Southern California	\$150,000
• Connecticut Department of Health	\$221,066
• Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation	\$285,337
• Kentucky Cabinet for Health & Family Services	\$458,106
• Louisiana Public Health Institute	\$187,069
• Missouri Foundation for Health	\$538,203
• New York State Department of Health	\$1,440,779
• North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	\$370,237
• North Dakota Department of Health	\$38,843
• Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust	\$287,278
• Rapides Foundation	\$15,712
• Rhode Island Department of Health	\$64,949
• Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	\$720,000
• State of Oregon	\$131,558

- State of Utah, Department of Health \$21,934
- State of Washington \$404,738
- Vermont Department of Health \$22,073
- Wyoming Department of Health \$34,795

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

Articles

Journal Articles

Vallone DM, Duke JC, Cullen J, McCausland KL and Allen JA. "Evaluation of EX: A National Mass Media Smoking Cessation Campaign." *AJPH First Look*, published online ahead of print December 16, 2010. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(2): 302–309, 2011. Abstract available [online](#).

Education or Toolkits

Toolkits, Toolboxes or Primers

EX Quit Plan Guide. Washington: American Legacy Foundation, 2009. Available [online](#).

EX: Relearn Life without Cigarettes. Quit manual for low-literacy audiences. Washington: American Legacy Foundation, 2009. Available online in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Communications or Promotions

Grantee Web Sites

www.thenatc.org. Provides information on the National Alliance for Tobacco Control. Washington: American Legacy Foundation, 2008.

www.becomeanEX.org. Provides tips and tools for quitting smoking. Washington: American Legacy Foundation, 2008.