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Tobacco industry manipulation of the hospitality industry to maintain smoking in public places

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Abstract

Objective: To describe how the tobacco industry used the “accommodation” message to mount an aggressive and effective worldwide campaign to recruit hospitality associations, such as restaurant associations, to serve as the tobacco industry's surrogate in fighting against smoke-free environments.

Methods: We analysed tobacco industry documents publicly available on the internet as a result of litigation in the USA. Documents were accessed between January and November 2001.






Results: The tobacco industry, led by Philip Morris, made financial contributions to existing hospitality associations or, when it did not find an association willing to work for tobacco interests, created its own “association” in order to prevent the growth of smoke-free environments. The industry also used hospitality associations as a vehicle for programmes promoting “accommodation” of smokers and non-smokers, which ignore the health risks of second hand smoke for employees and patrons of hospitality venues.

Conclusion: Through the myth of lost profits, the tobacco industry has fooled the hospitality industry into embracing expensive ventilation equipment, while in reality 100% smoke-free laws have been shown to have no effect on business revenues, or even to improve them. The tobacco industry has effectively turned the hospitality industry into its de facto lobbying arm on clean indoor air. Public health advocates need to understand that, with rare exceptions, when they talk to organised restaurant associations they are effectively talking to the tobacco industry and must act accordingly.

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