

Promote It!

Just offering help is not enough. Employees need to know help is available and that it can ease the quitting journey. And they need to know how to obtain it. In this chapter, you will learn steps to effectively promote the tobacco-cessation benefits or services you provide.

Step One: Conduct research

1. Assess current tobacco use

If you want to measure your program's effectiveness, collect up-front data. Survey employees to find out how many use tobacco. Many companies use a health-risk assessment tool to gauge smoking levels. Others use life insurance records, as life insurers charge additional premiums for smokers.

Average smoking rates vary by geography, ethnicity, profession, and other factors. About 21 percent of U.S. adults smoke. But an adult in Kentucky is nearly three times more likely to smoke than one in Utah. (28.8 percent vs. 9.8 percent). Native American men smoke at a rate of 36 percent, compared with 5 percent among Asian women.⁴⁹ In some occupations, including blue-collar trades, smoking rates are close to double the average.⁵⁰

2. Find out what benefits you offer

Employers are often surprised that tobacco-cessation, though a standard measure for quality care, is not a standard benefit in many health plans. Effective health benefits include medications and counseling or classes with little or no copayment.

Check with your human resources department or insurance agent to find out your benefits, deductibles and limitations for tobacco-cessation.

3. Consider what your employees think

Before you promote tobacco-cessation help, find out:

- How many employees smoke, and if a particular work group smokes more than others
- How many employees plan to quit within the next six months
- What employees know about their tobacco-cessation benefits
- Where they prefer to get information about benefits and stop-smoking programs
- Quitting barriers they face, especially in the workplace
- How you can help them quit

This can be done with a written or web-based survey or focused group discussion.

Find sample survey and focus group guides that can help you assess your workplace tobacco issues and design effective promotions in Resources D, E, and F.

Step Two: Prepare your messages

1. Prepare key messages

Two key messages employees need to know are:

- Help makes a difference
- Help is available (through benefits or services).

Smokers in focus groups say they are most interested in learning about the kinds of help you provide. Make this a key part of your message.

2. Provide information

You can provide other helpful information, such as:

- The national toll-free number, 1-800-QUIT NOW. This links callers to free telephone consultation in their state. Services vary from state to state and, depending upon state budget support, may include information, a quit coach, nicotine-replacement therapy, local resources, services in various languages, and referrals to other services in the community.
- Local tobacco-cessation classes and support groups
- Stop-smoking tips and strategies

You can find websites with stop-smoking strategies in Resource G.

3. Use encouraging and hopeful messages

Don't forget the power of storytelling. Employees who have quit smoking motivate others to follow suit. When someone believes they can change, they are more likely to try.⁵¹ Foster positive thinking by featuring success stories in publications and other venues.

Timing is everything

People are ready to quit at different times, and the average smoker tries several times before quitting. That can be discouraging — for smokers, their families, their co-workers and their employers. A person who resumes smoking after trying to quit may be discouraged from trying again. That's why it's important to assure people that help is available when they are ready to quit. Persistence does pay off: Of those who try to quit, half will ultimately succeed.

Union Pacific makes sure the employee is ready to quit before enrolling them in its cessation program. "We've found they have to really be ready for it to work," says Marcy Zauha, director of health and safety. If they don't succeed the first time, Union Pacific pays for prescription medication a second time.

Common sense, research and testimony from smokers and former smokers tell us they are unlikely to quit until they are ready. Thus, accessible information about how to get help can catch a smoker when he or she is prepared to quit. Employers are well positioned to provide this information.

Step Three: Choose communication tools

In developing communication strategies, answer these questions:

Who are you trying to reach? Since tobacco use may span different departments, you may want to use an array of strategies. But if you find tobacco use is more common with certain groups, you may want to start with those employees.

What is your message? Two key messages that employees need to know are:

- 1) Help makes a difference and
- 2) Help is available (through benefits or services). Tell employees what kinds of benefits or services you provide and how to get them.

When should you promote benefits and programs? Often. If you are changing your tobacco-use policies, promote help before, during, and after your company's changes. Targeted information campaigns at various times during the year will boost enrollment. At the same time, remember that quitting tobacco is an individual journey: People are ready at different times. Some people will quit, then slip. With a little encouragement and help, they can try to quit again. Keep information about benefits and services in front of smokers regularly.

Where do employees get information? Ask your employees. While employees can find information in a variety of places, find out their preferences, particularly for health and health care issues. Learn what sources of information and messengers they consider credible.

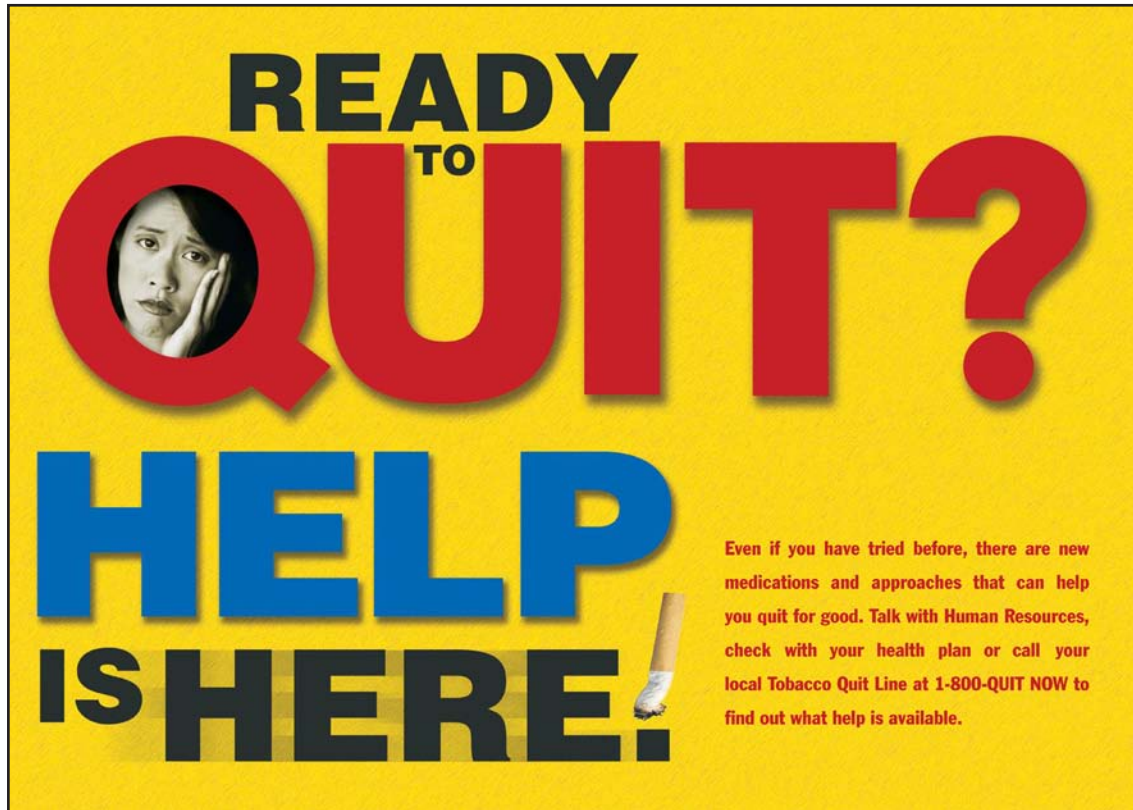
How should you promote tobacco-cessation? Many ways. Some employees prefer meetings and health fairs, while others would rather read a newsletter or website. Your messenger and how he/she communicates can be as important as the message itself.⁵² Smokers may be more likely to enroll in a program promoted by a co-worker who successfully quit than a manager from a different department or a representative from a different company. Word-of-mouth communications can be very powerful.

Suggested communication tools

Poster in the workplace

One popular way to reach employees is to post information on bulletin boards in the break room, cafeteria, copy room, restrooms or other shared areas in the workplace.

Consider displaying these posters to encourage employees to get help quitting tobacco.



Every month, Portland General Electric posts a one-page flyer, titled "Stall Talk," on the inside door of employee restrooms. This colorful flyer focuses on health and wellness topics, including tobacco-cessation.

Posters you can hang in your breakroom are in Resource H.

Company newsletter

Company newsletters can remind employees of the benefits or services available to them to help quit tobacco. They can feature success stories, provide news about stop-smoking seminars, quitline numbers and the like. Consider running a tobacco-cessation article at least once every quarter. (Remember, people are ready to quit at different times.) And don't forget company e-mail newsletters.

Sample articles are available in Resource I.

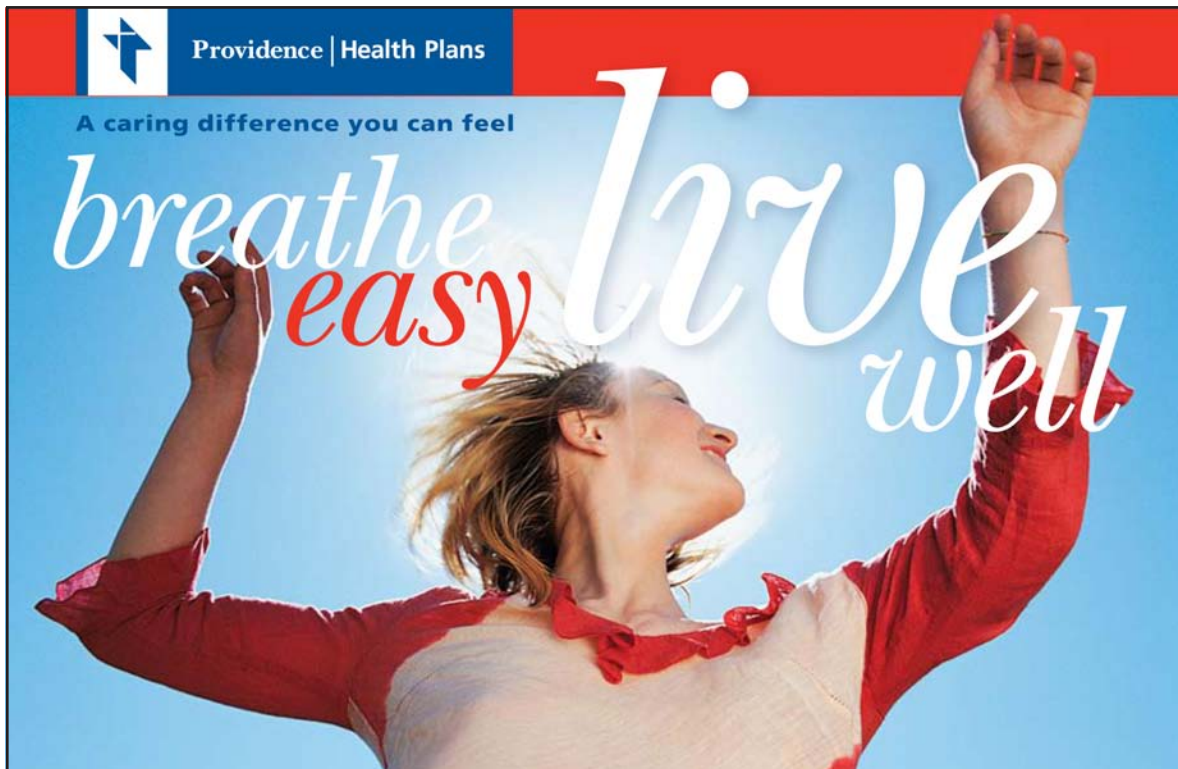
Information on the intranet

Most companies with internal websites include general information about health care benefits. Feature your tobacco-cessation services in a prominent place. The intranet also is a great place to include general stop-smoking tips.

Resource G includes websites with information about how to quit smoking.

Postcards, flyers, brochures

Some companies put postcards or flyers in employee mailboxes, or mail information to their homes, letting them know what benefits or services are available for employees, spouses, significant others, and dependents.



Providence Health System promotes tobacco-cessation to employees with this postcard.

Wellness events, health fairs

Many companies have health fairs, wellness weeks and other regular events which provide opportunities to promote cessation services and benefits. Other companies plan special events or campaigns to coincide with annual days and observances that are natural times for people to quit tobacco, including:

New Year's Day (Jan. 1)

World No-Tobacco Day, (May 31)

The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, (third Thursday in November)

Co-workers help out at Medtronic

Medtronic, which makes health care equipment, supports a healthy workforce. Tobacco-cessation has long been a key component of Medtronic's wellness focus. Medtronic uses the Great American Smokeout as a rallying time to get employees geared up to quit smoking. The entire company gets into the act – smokers and nonsmokers alike.

The company gears up for the day by promoting it early and often through newsletters, the website and posters. Employees are encouraged to set the Great American Smokeout as their quit day. That day, classes and seminars are held to get people started. Benefits and services for smokers are heavily promoted. Everyone gets a free lunch. Mints, gum and toothpicks are well-stocked to help allay cravings. The company also offers cash incentives for employees who agree to "adopt" a co-worker and help them through the day as they're trying to quit.

Moral support and encouragement are key ingredients in Medtronic's successful tobacco-cessation program. Smokers are embraced.

Company meetings and presentations

Company-wide or group meetings are a good way to let employees know about the tobacco-cessation benefits available to them and their families. Make sure this information is highlighted in any company meeting about health benefits or wellness.

Word of mouth

Employees who have used your program to quit smoking can be your best promoters. Consider ways they can reach out to their co-workers to encourage them to quit tobacco.

Stimson Lumber's T-shirts give employees a way to trumpet their new smoking status. A visible 'quitter' can be an inspiration and resource to others wishing to break their addiction to smoking.



Boeing sustains enrollments

Typically, when a company adopts a new tobacco-cessation program, eager employees rush to join. But after an initial surge lasting less than a year, enrollment may dwindle. Not so with The Boeing Company.

Boeing folded tobacco-cessation into its wellness program in 2003 and was determined to maintain momentum, said Wellness Program Director Michael Brennan. Boeing promoted the program through posters, letters, health fairs, and other conventional means, adding new innovations each year.

One effective strategy, Brennan says, is “keeping our customers.” Free & Clear, Boeing’s cessation vendor, conducts post-program surveys, congratulating participants who have successfully quit and inviting the others to try again. This strategy, says Brennan, recognizes the chronic nature of nicotine addiction. At the same time, a welcoming approach to ‘customers’ is consistent with Boeing’s ultimate goal: a healthy workforce.

Over a six-year period, roughly one-third of Boeing’s smokers—or nearly 12,000 people—have tried to quit smoking or chewing tobacco. As many as 5,300 have succeeded. Boeing introduced a new tobacco-free policy in 2008. The momentum to quit continues, Brennan says.

Year	Boeing’s Campaign Strategy
1	Health letter mailed to homes, new employee orientation materials, health fair give-aways, posters, and printed materials in the company clinic
2	(All of the above plus): Treatment for family members, integrated program with disease management and medical clinics, new tobacco policy
3	(All of the above plus): Recruitment through health-risk assessments, urged prior participants to re-enroll, web enrollment
4	(All of the above plus): Web-based program to complement cessation program
5	(All of the above plus): Refined policy to reflect new Washington state law and addition of new telephone weight-loss program
6	(All of the above plus): New tobacco-free workplace policy

Support from your health plan or vendor

Meet with your tobacco-cessation vendor or representatives of your health plan to discuss how they can help you promote tobacco-cessation services to their members. They may conduct special mailings, host employee meetings or develop other strategies to promote the benefits you pay them to provide.

Free & Clear, the nation’s largest tobacco quit-line vendor, helps businesses tailor posters, websites and other tools to promote workforce quit attempts.

Unions, associations

Consider enlisting others who communicate with your employees, such as unions or associations, to spread the message about cessation benefits and programs. They also have newsletters, meetings, websites and other communication vehicles where they can post information about employee services.

The Carpenters Trusts of Western Washington offer 9,500 members and their families tobacco-cessation counseling and medication at minimal cost. The trusts provide health and pension benefits to carpenters who work at hundreds of businesses.

Closed-circuit television

Companies that have closed-circuit television are often looking for employee-friendly stories and information. This would be a great place to highlight a success story and feature information about tobacco-cessation benefits or services.

Step Four: Evaluate and adjust

You will want to evaluate the effectiveness of your tobacco-cessation promotion as you would other company investments. Ask employees for advice, formally and informally. Consider surveying employees to determine if your promotion efforts have made an impact. Seek information, not only about tobacco use but also measuring employee awareness of benefits or services, attitudes toward company promotions, etc. Armed with this information, you can adjust your program to be as effective as possible.

Plan how you will promote your tobacco-cessation benefits or services. Resource J will help.