

Macro International Inc.
11420 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Phone: 301-770-5800
Fax: 301-984-3972
www.orcmacro.com



**TRICARE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TOBACCO CESSATION
& EDUCATION CAMPAIGN**

MESSAGE TESTING REPORT

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TOBACCO CESSATION MESSAGE TESTING REPORT

INTRODUCTION

“We all know the health risks [of smoking tobacco], but it’s harder to focus on that when you’re dealing with the stress of this job every day.”

Focus Group Participant (Air Force)

Tobacco is currently the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and the best predictor of military training failure (i.e., being discharged before assignment to the first duty station). It is a positive sign that more than half (59.0 percent) of the military personnel who smoke attempted to quit during the past year (Bray, Hourano, Rae, Dever, Brown, Vincus, et al., 2003). Although Health Promotion programs offer courses/support to help individuals quit using tobacco and the Department of Defense (DoD) participates in antismoking campaigns, more can still be done (*Creating a Healthy Lifestyle Culture in the Military*, 2004). ORC Macro is currently working with the TRICARE Management Authority (TMA; the U.S. Department of Defense Military Health System) to develop and implement a marketing and education campaign to promote tobacco cessation among junior enlisted men and women between the ages of 18 to 24.

As an initial step in the development of the campaign, ORC Macro conducted an environmental scan to garner insights from previous and in-progress research on this topic and provide a solid framework for the primary research. The environmental scan helped to further define the audience for the campaign to focus on those individuals with a readiness and intent to quit using tobacco within the near future. It suggested that a high percentage of the target population has such intent and there may be more of an opportunity to affect behavior change initially with them than with others who have not seriously considered quitting their tobacco use.

To test the message platforms, ORC Macro conducted a series of focus groups with junior enlisted personnel (rank of E1–E4) between the ages of 18 to 24 across the four branches of military service, segmented by those who indicated they intended to quit using tobacco within 6 months and those who indicated they did not intend to quit. The intent was to learn the reactions to the messages of these two segments of tobacco users within the target population and determine what messages would be further developed into campaign materials.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participation

Sixteen focus groups were conducted across four military installations. A total of 144 active duty junior enlisted (E1–E4) men and women who are current tobacco users participated in these focus groups. Participants were assigned to groups based on whether they said they did or did not intend to quit using tobacco products in the next 6 months.

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Overall Findings

Key themes readily emerged as thoughts, opinions, and reactions of participants expressed in the focus groups were remarkably similar in all of the groups, cutting across the branches of military service, geography, and stated intention to quit. The following sections summarize these themes.

Environment and Image

- **Participants perceive tobacco use in the military as very common across all ranks.**
- **Quitting is hard. Quitting in the military is harder.** In all of the focus groups, including those with participants who said they did not intend to quit using tobacco, somewhere between one-third and one-half have tried to quit at least once in the past. The military environment makes tobacco cessation particularly challenging for reasons that include amplification of stress, boredom, and social desirability—key motivators for using tobacco.
- **Smoking is the only way to take a break.** Many participants emphasized the importance of being able to take a break to collect their thoughts or think about what they had to do next. However, they described a smoke break as the only “legitimate” and acceptable way to take a break in the eyes of supervisors.
- **Perception of tacit support for tobacco use among supervisors.** Following from the theme stated above about smoke breaks, a widespread perspective of the focus group participants was that using tobacco was considered normal and acceptable by supervisors, who often smoked themselves, encouraged smoke breaks, or considered those who were taking breaks but were not smoking to be slackers and sent them back to work.
- **Image of success in the military.** Most participants described success in the military as being able to get the job done, being a good leader, having goals, and working toward them. Many said that whether someone uses tobacco does not affect that image, but a few said that tobacco use does not fit with their image of a leader.

Online and Telephone Support

- **Curiosity is an initial motivator.** Some participants expressed curiosity in the services that could be offered through online support and indicated that they would log on if they found it worthwhile. Since many of those with intent to quit are looking for help or reinforcement in their decision to quit using tobacco, it is reasonable to expect that if they can be shown the value of an online support system or service, they will avail themselves of it.
- **The pervasiveness of cellular phones is a challenge to the introduction of a telephone-based quitline.** Most participants use cell phones and expressed hesitation about using their minutes to telephone for support to quit using tobacco. This finding does not completely rule out the idea of a telephone support line, but it does require some thought about how to entice people to use such a service that is currently associated with this type of barrier.

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Campaign Message Platform Testing

- **Quit for yourself and those you love.** All focus group participants, and particularly those who intend to quit, respond to the concept of quitting for themselves and those they love—particularly their children. Many of the participants have children or were thinking of having children in the near future, and this message resonated with them as a motivator to stop using tobacco. Those who did not have children said they thought of younger nieces, nephews, siblings, or other children in their families or communities when presented with a platform centered on making others proud.
- **Participants are saturated with military images.** Across the focus groups, participants did not respond as positively to the images that involved military scenarios related to training or deployment.
- **Pride and strength are values to be recognized.** Participants take pride in serving their country—and they want to be recognized for their services and their strength. Many participants took exception to suggestions that using tobacco products might interfere with job performance.
- **Intent to quit.** Participants in the *Intend to Quit* focus groups were quite earnest in their desire to quit and were open to suggestions for helping them do that or for messages that would reinforce their reasons for quitting.

Campaign Design Implications

- Materials that take advantage of the connection to family and the desire to set a good example (especially for children) hold promise for reaching this audience.
- Materials that honor and recognize the work junior enlisted military personnel do and their own desire to quit using tobacco could also play an important role in the campaign by reinforcing audience values and motivations for quitting.
- Use of military images or settings would need to be done carefully to break away from the general perceived overuse of these images.
- Participants seemed to validate the value of using service-based delivery channels (e.g., on-base advertising and promotions and newspapers) and also emphasized nonmilitary venues such as televised or live sporting events (national and local) or radio/TV advertisements for programming popular with this age group.
- While the participants did not immediately embrace the idea of online or telephone support for quitting tobacco use, some participants expressed curiosity about such support services, particularly online support. In addition, a number of participants have already tried support programs such as smoking cessation classes. This would lead to the conclusion that if those members of the target audience who have a desire and intent to quit using tobacco could be

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convinced of the value of online support, they would try such a resource. Motivating this audience to use a telephone support service appears to be more challenging.

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METHODOLOGY

Focus Groups

Focus group methodology was used to test the message platforms developed for the tobacco cessation and education campaign. This method for collecting data was chosen because holding in-person focus groups with members of the target audience offered the opportunity to see and hear the immediate reactions to the proposed messages and then probe for the reasons behind these reactions. The focus groups provided a structured and rigorous, yet flexible, opportunity to gain the insight into the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of the target audience that is needed to understand how the messages will be received, responded to, and, ultimately, how they may motivate behavior change in these individuals.

This methodology is particularly well suited to message testing for health marketing campaigns such as tobacco cessation, as it provides an avenue for immediate feedback on concepts and messages and offers a high degree of face validity. A well-designed moderator guide and an experienced moderator can elicit honest responses from focus group participants that will reflect the experiences of the participants and provide the information necessary to revise the materials to better serve the participants' needs (Greenbaum, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Tobacco use is a complex behavior that takes time to change. The development of the tobacco cessation marketing campaign is therefore a multistage project built on a theoretical framework for understanding behavioral change. The development of campaign messages and materials, including the testing of those messages and materials through focus groups, reflects the Prochaska and DiClemente Stages of Change Model. Used extensively, and in fact emerging from the field of research on smoking cessation, this model of behavior change shows individuals moving through a process of change from precontemplation to action to maintenance. The following chart illustrates the various stages of change and the recommended techniques for moving people along the continuum of change.

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Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change Model¹

<i>Stage of Change</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Techniques</i>
Precontemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently considering change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate lack of readiness Clarify: decision is theirs Encourage reevaluation of current behavior Encourage self-exploration, not action Explain and personalize the risk
Contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambivalent about change Not considering change within the next month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate lack of readiness Clarify: decision is theirs Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of behavior change Identify and promote new, positive outcome expectations
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have some experience with change and are trying to change Planning to act within 1 month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and assist in problem solving re: obstacles Help patient identify social support Verify that patient has underlying skills for behavior change Encourage small initial steps
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing new behavior for 3 to 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on restructuring cues and social support Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles Combat feelings of loss and reiterate long-term benefits
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued commitment to sustaining new behavior Post-6 months to 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for follow-up support Reinforce internal rewards Discuss coping with relapse
Relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resumption of old behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate trigger for relapse Reassess motivation and barriers Plan stronger coping strategies

¹ Adapted from UCLA Center for Human Nutrition. Available online: http://www.cellinteractive.com/ucla/phycsian_ed/stages_change.html.

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Segmentation Plan

To gain the most information about the intended audience for this tobacco cessation campaign—active duty, junior enlisted military men and women (E1–E4), 18–24 years of age, who currently use tobacco products and have an intent to quit using tobacco within the near future—we determined the following segmentation plan for the focus group message testing.

Segmentation Plan

Branch of Service	Intend To Quit Using Tobacco In 6 Months	Do Not Intend To Quit Using Tobacco
Marines	2	2
Army	2	2
Navy	2	2
Air Force	2	2
Total Number of Focus Groups	8	8

In collaboration with TMA, the following military installations were chosen for data collection:

- Camp Lejeune Marine Base, Jacksonville, NC
- Ft. Bragg Army Base, Fayetteville, NC
- San Diego Naval Station, San Diego, CA
- Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, NV

A point of contact (POC) was designated at each installation. This POC, typically a health promotion specialist, was asked to assist ORC Macro in arranging logistics for the focus groups, posting recruiting materials, and escorting staff members through security procedures as needed. POCs also promoted the focus groups and secured the necessary support for the focus groups by informing commanders, squadron leaders, and supervisors of the groups and their purpose.

Protection of Participant Confidentiality

ORC Macro submitted the protocol and instrumentation for the focus groups for review by the ORC Office of Human Research Participant Protections. This review board approved the procedures and techniques proposed for campaign message testing. Two issues were noted for attention: ensure that no techniques that could be construed as coercive were used to recruit focus group participants, given the inherent chain of command in the military; and reassure participants that their confidentiality would be protected. Both of these issues were addressed in the recruitment and consent procedures for the focus groups.

Recruitment and Screening

Participants were recruited through posters and flyers distributed by the POCs at each installation. These materials included a toll-free number for individuals to call if they were interested in the focus groups. (The recruitment flyer appears in Appendix A.)

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When an individual called the toll-free number, he or she was screened to determine if the following eligibility criteria for the study were met and, if yes, the person was assigned to the appropriate group. (The screener appears in Appendix B.)

Eligibility Criteria

- Currently on active duty
- Rank of E1–E4
- Age 18–24
- Currently stationed at the designated installation (base)
- Used tobacco products at least once a week over the past 30 days.

Assignment Variable

- Intend to quit using tobacco products within the next 6 months.

In addition, ORC Macro contracted with independent market research firms to conduct intercept interviews onsite at each installation for several days in locations of high traffic such as dining facilities and military stores. The onsite recruiters approached perspective participants and asked if they could ask a few questions. If the person qualified for the study in age and rank, the recruiter then proceeded with the remainder of the screening questions. If the candidate was qualified, interested, and available at the time of the scheduled focus group, he or she was given the necessary information about date, time, and location.

During initial planning for the focus groups, the decision was made to provide a meal to group participants as an incentive to participate. As the recruitment process proceeded, the decision was made offer an additional incentive of \$50. This decision, along with the decision to use onsite recruiters, was helpful in increasing the numbers of individuals recruited for the focus groups across all of the installations. A significant challenge for the study was making members of our target audience aware of and interested in the opportunity to discuss smoking cessation given their busy and demanding work days. The combination of having someone talk to them directly for a few minutes about the study, serve a meal, and provide an incentive of \$50 for participating was successful in recruiting the people needed to appropriately conduct a test of the campaign messages.

One additional factor in the planning and implementation of the focus groups was the need to coordinate with another TMA contractor conducting focus groups with the same target audience about the reduction of alcohol abuse. To reduce the burden on the military installations, these two contracts coordinated recruiting, screening, and implementation efforts, with minimal impact on the study design or products.

Implementation of the Focus Groups

All focus groups were conducted using a structured moderator guide developed in consultation with TRICARE (Appendix C). Sections of the guide reflected standard focus group practice of

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moving from general topics to more specific topics and our intent to briefly ask about themes identified in previous research, then move into testing specific message platforms. The sections of the guide included:

- Welcome/introductions
- Image—Success in the military, where does tobacco use fit
- Tobacco cessation advertising
- Reactions and feedback on message platforms
- Delivery methods.

Specific questions in the moderator guide subtly reflect the Stages of Change Model, but are deliberately conversational in nature and include potential probing questions for more in-depth exploration of the thoughts and ideas expressed. Given the time available for the focus groups (90 minutes) and the proposed size of the groups (8–12 participants each), the number of questions was minimized to allow for the most discussion between participants, which is the greatest strength and benefit of focus groups.

Additionally, four message platforms, each with two executions, were to be tested in the focus groups. This required appropriate allocation of time so each message platform could be reviewed adequately. The majority of time in each focus group was spent testing the messages. To avoid bias, the order of presentation of the message platforms was alternated repeatedly.

A different moderator's guide was used for the *Intend to Quit* focus groups and for the *Do Not Intend to Quit* focus groups. These two guides differed only in questions asked of the *Intend to Quit* groups about the type of support services they had tried before and if they would be interested in online or telephone support services or systems in the near future.

All of the focus groups were conducted by an experienced team of three focus group researchers who had worked closely together to review the materials developed in previous phases of this project to ensure they were familiar with the objectives of the project and the intent of the focus groups. One person on the team assumed responsibility for moderating the focus groups, and she also played a role in reviewing and revising the moderator guide. The other two members of the team were responsible for taking detailed notes during the focus groups, each on various installations, and for debriefing with the moderator. All of the focus groups were audiotaped to support the development of this report.

Analysis

Analysis of the focus group data was done through note-based and audio-assisted thematic analysis across the groups, starting with the debriefing notes and moving to group-specific notes (Krueger, 1994). Data was analyzed for convergence and divergence of theme and tone across all groups and for differences between the *Intend to Quit* and *Do Not Intend to Quit* groups and between the service groups. Specific considerations in the analysis function included:

- Words
- Context

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- Internal consistency
- Frequency of comments
- Extensiveness of comments
- Intensity of comments
- Specificity of comments
- Big ideas.

The intent of the analysis is to synthesize comments heard in 16 focus groups into relevant themes that represent the voice of the focus group participants—their thoughts, feelings, reactions, and ideas about the campaign messages we were testing. From these themes, we gained the direction needed to move forward in campaign development with the creation of campaign materials.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 presents information on the demographics of participants in all focus groups conducted in the message testing phase of this project. These demographics reflect the larger population of junior enlisted service men and women who use tobacco, with a heavier prevalence of white males as identified in earlier studies and underscored in the environmental scan conducted earlier in this project.

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Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Overall Summary of Focus Groups:

Total Focus Groups Conducted: 16 (4 at each of 4 military installations)
Intend to Quit Groups: 9
Do Not Intend to Quit Groups: 7
 Total Participants: 144

Table 1: Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Branch	Gender		Age*			Pay Grade			Race/Ethnicity					Intend to Quit		TOTAL
	Male	Female	18–20	21–22	23–24	E1–E2	E3	E4	White	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian/Pacific Islander	Other	Yes	No	
Navy	26	6	10	13	8	12	14	6	18	5	5	3	1	12	20	32
Air Force	28	11	11	18	10	7	17	15	25	8	4	1	1	23	16	39
Marines	45	3	17	20	11	6	28	14	41	5	2	0	0	19	29	48
Army	25	0	12	5	8	3	8	14	20	2	3	0	0	8	17	25
TOTAL	125	20	51	56	37	28	67	49	105	20	14	4	2	62	83	144

* Missing age for one participant

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FINDINGS

Environment and Image

Perceptions of Pervasiveness of Tobacco Use

Across all focus groups, participants' perceptions are that tobacco use is much more common in the military among their age group than among civilians. They also perceive common tobacco use across the military, including all ranks.

In all of the focus groups, a few participants stated that they started using tobacco when they joined the military. For those who had been tobacco users before joining, most indicated that their use had gone up, at least initially, after entering the military.

Difficulties in Quitting Tobacco Use

Participants stated that the military environment makes it much harder to quit using tobacco. In all of the groups, including those for people who said they were not intending to quit within the next 6 months, somewhere between one-third and one-half indicated that they had tried to quit at least once. Reasons cited for continuing to use tobacco products include:

- Stress on the job. Stress was associated with dealing with equipment, people, chaos, too little time to accomplish expectations, too many bosses, anxiety of deployment, and combat. Stress was the first reason discussed for using tobacco in every focus group, and every participant agreed that this was a primary reason that quitting is so hard in the military. Everyone described stress-filled jobs and indicated that using tobacco calmed them down and gave them a chance to think or take a break.
- Boredom on the job and a need to stay awake. For some participants, the biggest challenge of their jobs was coping with boredom. They described long periods with nothing to do, and used smoking to fill that void.
- Social networking. Smoke breaks offer the chance to spend a few minutes talking to others in the unit or in other units. Some participants said it is the one time that rank does not matter; during smoke breaks everyone is pretty equal. A number of participants specifically mentioned that they were new and they were finding the "smoke pit" a good venue for meeting their peers or getting job advice from more senior members.

Taking a Break

A consistent theme is that going for a smoke break is an acceptable way to take a break to "get your thoughts together." To paraphrase comments heard repeatedly: when the stress gets to you, you take the 5 minutes, think things through, develop a plan, then go back and you can get the job done. Or you can just step out of the situation, smoke a cigarette, talk to someone else, do not think about the problem, and then you are ready to go back and tackle it again.

"If I gave up smoking, I'd give up my chance for a break."

Focus Group
Participant (Army)

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Tacit Approval by Supervisors

Participants across all of the groups described supervisors as being accepting of those who take a break to smoke, while considering a break for any other reason to be slacking off. They see nonsmokers being told to get back to work or being told to step up and do something while they are given a break because they are smoking. Regardless of whether this is true or even if it would match the perceptions of the supervisors and nonsmokers, it is important that focus group participants have such a strong perception. It indicates that supervisors' attitudes toward smoking may warrant further consideration in the development of the campaign, particularly when combined with the participants' perception that many supervisors also are tobacco users.

Reducing or Changing Tobacco Use

Most participants found it fairly simple to curtail tobacco use during basic training. Similarly, participants all stated that they were able to stop smoking when they needed to for some reason—some field exercises demand no smoking and certain jobs require long hours with no smoking—but most indicated that they resumed using tobacco once they had access and no restriction. Some participants even rewarded themselves for having given it up.

Of the participants who began using tobacco again, many who said they have a desire to quit did indicate that they are smoking fewer cigarettes than they once did. The exception to this: Almost everyone agreed that use of tobacco goes up with deployment.

A few participants indicated that they started using smokeless tobacco in situations where they could not smoke. These were participants who considered themselves addicted, who both smoked and used smokeless tobacco, and who did not express an intention to quit.

Image

When asked to describe the things that make someone successful in the military, participants identified (for their leaders and peers) characteristics and abilities such as:

- Confident
- Knows their job
- Knows the jobs of others
- Can be counted on
- Supports and backs up those ahead and behind him or her
- Does what is right
- Dedicated
- Provides for his or her family
- Puts out the effort
- Looks out for others
- Respected and trusted by others
- Gets the job done
- Motivated
- Pursuing an education or career advancement

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- Has goals
- Looks to the future.

When asked how tobacco use affected the image of success, most said that it does not affect how they view someone else—they look at how someone does his or her job. However, a few participants did say that the use of tobacco does not really mesh with their image of a leader and they were a little surprised when they found some of their own leaders using tobacco.

A few said that they think nonsmokers look at them differently, and fewer still indicated that they think using tobacco is irresponsible for their own health, which is one of the reasons they want to quit.

Cessation

Tobacco Cessation Advertising

Across all of the focus groups, participants consistently mentioned the **truth**® campaign as anti-tobacco ads they can recall. Some could recall specifics, such as the ad with the body bags, or the overflowing hospital, or the woman who had to talk with a mechanical larynx. They remembered the ads from their days of watching MTV and they remembered that the images were frightening at the time—but these ads did not inspire them to quit using tobacco or prevent them from starting.

Support for Quitting

Most of the participants in the *Intend To Quit* focus groups, and a few in the *Do Not Intend To Quit* focus groups, have tried to quit before with the help of medication such as Zyban, the nicotine patch, gum, or another substitute for nicotine. Of these, only a few participants experienced any degree of success with these methods (quitting tobacco use completely for any length of time). Most said they had experienced adverse effects such as nausea or insomnia and the costs just were not worth it.

Approximately one-third of participants across the groups had tried smoking cessation classes conducted by health promotion services on base. A few participants knew people who had tried the classes. Of these, many said they did not think the classes worked, but admitted that they had not completed the classes or did not know anyone who had. The participants who had completed the classes said it was just too hard to stay tobacco free in the military environment because of the stress.

When asked, many of the *Intend to Quit* participants indicated that they would be interested in smoking cessation classes if they fit into their schedules and if the classes were not spread out over a long period of time. They were unfamiliar with what was offered on base. They also did not think there was much support for these classes from their superiors if it interfered at all with work—they believed the attitude would be “quit on your own time.”

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Online and Telephone Support

A significant challenge with this target audience in receiving support for their efforts to quit using tobacco products is a general attitude of “*It all comes down to you. If you really want to quit, you will.*” In every focus group there was some level of discussion around this idea of personal motivation and will. However, after asking a few questions, many participants would discuss past efforts to quit using tobacco when they have tried to use other types of supports such as medication or classes and, even if these were not ultimately successful, there was a sense that they could benefit from support.

When we asked specific questions about online support and directed participants’ attention to the Web site information on the message platforms, some said they were curious and would log on if to see what was being offered and to determine if it was of any value. This leads to the conclusion that, if members of this audience could be motivated to turn to an online resource out of curiosity and found it helpful, they would take advantage of such a service.

Offering support via telephone seemed a challenge among this audience. Almost all participants use cell phones and could not imagine using their minutes for this purpose. This method of support should not necessarily be left out of the campaign, but there will need to be a number of creative strategies for encouraging and engaging participants to use their phones to reach out for support in their efforts to quit using tobacco.

Campaign Development—Message Platform Testing

General Findings

- Those who intend to quit respond to the concept of quitting for themselves and those who care about or look up to them—particularly their children.

In fact, the message platform that focused on making others proud and setting a good example, **Quit Tobacco. Make Everyone Proud**, received the most resounding positive responses across all of the focus groups. Many of the enlisted personnel participating in the focus groups have young children or are planning to have children in the near future and were struck by the execution showing the young child. Even those without children indicated that the execution made them think of not wanting their younger siblings or nieces/nephews to see them smoke. For other participants, the execution that showed the father made them think of how opposed their parents are to tobacco use—or how they hide their tobacco use from their parents. This platform struck a positive note for the vast majority of participants and reinforced for them the reason many say they want to quit using tobacco.

- Participants are saturated with military images and did not respond as positively to images that involved strictly military scenarios.

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Many participants responded to the military images as recruitment or reenlistment posters and said that they would not read them as anything different. They found this to be especially the case with the realistic images, such as the aircraft carrier.

- Participants take pride in serving their country—they want to be recognized for their services and their strength. Many participants took exception to suggestions that using tobacco products might interfere with job performance.

A great deal of discussion in every group centered around the effects of tobacco on stamina, night vision, and judgment, as brought out in various messages. While there was some acknowledgement that stamina could be affected by smoking, few participants accepted the other claims. Even more importantly, some participants were offended by concepts that implied they were weak or would let down others because of their tobacco use. For most participants, even those with a desire to quit, tobacco use is just a normal part of everyday life; it is not considered a big deal or something that they spend a lot of time thinking about. The following comments from participants help illustrate these points:

“We know we have to depend on each other for our lives; we’re not going to mess up and we’re not going to let each other mess up. We have to watch out for each other.” (Focus Group Participant, Army)

“A smoker will look at this and say it doesn’t make sense and get mad because it says smokers can’t handle big responsibilities or millions of dollars worth of equipment.” (Focus Group Participant, Marines)

“There just doesn’t seem to be a correlation—I’m going to finish the job, then I’m going to take a smoke break. I’m not going to mess up the job because I’m thinking about smoking.” (Focus Group Participant, Navy)

- Consistent with what was described earlier in the theoretical framework, participants in the *Intend to Quit* focus groups would fall into the Contemplation or Preparation stages of the Stages of Change Model.

They have made at least one serious attempt to quit using tobacco within the last year and are intending to quit within the next 6 months. Many of these participants are quite earnest in their desire to quit and are open to suggestions for helping them do that, or for messages that would reinforce their reasons for quitting. This provides a tremendous opportunity for intervention with this target audience, from developing, testing, and launching campaign materials to online and other support services and systems that can be of ongoing reinforcement to them as they change this difficult behavior.

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Message Platform Testing—Specific Findings

Quit Tobacco. Make Everyone Proud

In general, this platform received the most favorable reactions across all of the groups. Participants responded to the images of family (we used the executions showing child and father) and the concept of “Do it for yourself. And everyone who cares about you.”

Execution 1: Make sure when he looks up, you like what he sees.

The execution showing the child hugging the man in uniform received more favorable reactions than the father wearing the t-shirt saying “My son is a Marine.” Many participants have children or said that they saw themselves having children within the next few years. They did not want to smoke (or dip or chew) around their children because of secondhand smoke and they did not want to influence their children to use tobacco. Those without children, or intentions to have children, soon discussed this execution in terms of their younger brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, or neighbors, and had the same feelings.

Many participants said they know that children look up to them and they don’t want children to see them using tobacco. A few talked about being role models for children and said they particularly thought it was important not to smoke in front of children when they were in uniform.

This execution of the message platform clearly had the strongest emotional impact on participants, regardless of gender, race, or any other apparent factor. Most participants described their feelings about this image and text as hitting them in the heart. A few participants said they thought the execution was somewhat manipulative or difficult to relate to because they did not have children, but the stronger views and more prolonged discussion came from those who thought this would make people think about their own smoking behaviors and, for people who have a desire to quit, help reinforce that desire.

Execution 2: He’s your biggest fan. Give him something else to cheer about.

The execution showing the father had a somewhat more mixed reaction. Many participants indicated that they care what their parents think of them and they want their parents to be proud. Some said they do not use tobacco in front of their parents or do not even let their parents know they use tobacco, as they know this would disappoint them. A few participants shared that their own parents had recently been diagnosed with cancer as a result of smoking and the parents want them to quit (“He tells me all the time that I don’t want you to end up like me.”). For all of these participants, this execution was effective in reinforcing the desire to quit smoking by reminding them of a primary reason they want to quit.

For only a few participants, this execution was seen as disrespectful. They indicated that they have good relationships with their parents, their parents may or may not use tobacco themselves, and their parents know that they use tobacco, even though they may not use around their parents. A few said that they knew their parents would like them to stop using tobacco. However, the

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biggest message is that their parents are proud of them and support them because of what they are doing—and that will not change because they use tobacco. This attitude was exemplified by the comments of one man who said, “My father calls me every day. He doesn’t ask me if I’ve stopped smoking, he asks me if I’m okay.”

Attack Tobacco Addiction

Execution 1: Tobacco Is a Chemical Weapon

All groups spent time initially identifying all of the things wrong with the uniform and gear on the soldier. Immediate reactions were laughter and dismissal; comments were that it was corny or maybe looked like an army commercial that would only get attention from civilians.

After focusing on the copy around the soldier, a small number of participants liked the information about the chemicals in cigarettes being presented and thought it would get people’s attention, but they thought the copy needed to be reworded because some sounded corny or stereotypical (e.g., “lead is the wrong kind of heavy metal for you.”). The remaining participants thought the information was not new to smokers and would have little impact, and they pointed out that in their jobs they handle chemicals that are at least as dangerous all the time.

Most of the participants liked the body copy: **“You’re strong enough to fight for your country. Be strong enough to fight the urge to use tobacco.”** This statement fits their image of themselves as strong and doing something to be proud of but they still have this thing they want to get rid of or get control of.

Execution 2: Tobacco Is a Weapon of Mass Destruction

All groups reacted to this execution as they did to the first execution of this platform: initial laughter and dismissal. After focusing on the copy, there was only one fact that grabbed participants’ attention: “Tobacco hurts you right in the wallet.” Everyone found this credible and realistic, and they said that it would help encourage people to slow down or quit using tobacco.

Participants knew all of the other facts (“We’ve heard these things forever.”) and they had answers for them all (“Yellow teeth? That’s what Crest White Strips are for.” “Yellow fingers and nails? [Check own fingers.] Nope, that’s not a problem.”). The statement about impairment of night vision did not get much acceptance or buy-in from participants.

Quit Tobacco. While You’re Ahead

Execution 1: There’s a weakness in your line of defense.

Across all of the groups, the general reaction to this execution was negative. The general feeling was that it was putting down soldiers because they use tobacco, but they know they are still doing their jobs. Some were offended by the implication that they were weak and could put

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others in danger when in reality they have been deployed and they know the dangers and the demands—and they know they are up to the task.

This execution also typically generated a discussion of long-term vs. short-term consequences. Many participants have either already been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, or some other location, or are about to be deployed. They would bring up in discussion the issue that they know their use of tobacco will eventually have an impact on their health—but that’s 15 or 20 years in the future and they are facing real danger right now. In the face of everything they are dealing with day to day in their jobs and what could happen to them, using tobacco does not seem like a big deal or a reason for them to be overly concerned right now. This opinion was especially strong in the *Do Not Intend to Quit* groups.

Body copy: Tobacco can mess up your night vision, your stamina, and your judgment. This content always sparked a lively discussion in the focus groups.

- **Stamina.** In almost every group, at least a few participants acknowledged that smoking can affect stamina, especially if someone has been smoking for years. But there were also stories of people who smoke and outrun everyone else in their unit or always get the best physical training (PT) scores. There were also a few stories about the older officer who had been smoking for years and was still in good shape. However, a few of the groups held a fairly serious discussion about the impact of smoking on stamina, particularly over time, with many participants agreeing that smoking was inevitably going to have negative consequences.
- **Night vision.** In some of the groups, one or two participants would argue that using tobacco, particularly smoking, can have an impact on night vision, but most disagreed. Once again, the anecdotes about the strength of their vision would abound and the discussion would usually come back to the fact that they wear night vision goggles anyway (especially in combat).
- **Judgment.** This part of the text had no credibility for participants, who launched into comparisons between using tobacco and alcohol or other drugs and the fact that smoking or using dip does not interfere with their judgment. When asked if this may refer to times when they cannot use tobacco as they normally would, they indicated that they may get irritable at those times but it does not interfere with their judgment.

Execution 2: You’re tough, accomplished, decorated, and addicted.

The first reaction from many participants is that this looks like a Marine recruiting poster. After reading the headline, they pointed out that there is no way you know it is about tobacco use—it just looks like you are building up these people who have accomplished so much only to knock them back down. Most participants found it negative for that reason. However, the Marines had a more positive impression—you are all of these things but you have this one little problem.

Body copy: Tobacco can be as addictive as heroin or cocaine. While there was usually agreement that addiction to tobacco was difficult to break, no one thought it was a good idea to

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equate it with illicit drugs, as doing that lowers the credibility of the message and makes people dismiss everything else you have to say.

You Can't Afford To Use Tobacco

In both of the executions for this message platform, there are realistic military images and testimony from someone on active duty. In general, participants found these executions to resemble military recruitment or reenlistment posters. They were momentarily attracted by the visual images but said they would likely not read the text if they just saw the posters in print somewhere. When asked to read them, they commented that they did not like the approach of testimonials and thought there was too much copy to read.

Execution 1: Airman First Class Roger Walker, U.S. Air Force

Many participants liked the picture, the color, and the implication of action, though most said that they would not read it unless they were somewhere like a waiting room where they were trapped with nothing to look at for a time—the execution contained more text than they were interested in reading.

After reading the quote, there was typically laughter. Most said they thought it was staged, that people they know do not talk like that. However, the participants caught the message and they took exception to it. Most said that they take pride in doing a good job—no matter what their job is. They are not going to do a lesser job just because they smoke or use tobacco. And they depend on each other for their lives; they know who does good work and who does not and it does not have anything to do with using tobacco. Many of the participants were in supervisory positions and held high standards for their units or squads—if they had to make people do work over, they did it and it had nothing to do with smoke breaks or who uses tobacco.

Body copy: Tobacco products command your attention. Most participants thought that the idea of not being able to concentrate because you are thinking about taking a smoke break was overblown and that a good worker can focus and do what is needed. They suggested that a 5-minute break to clear your head is productive for anyone and that most people are smart enough to know when breaks are appropriate (or they have supervisors to tell them, if necessary). It is worth pointing out here that participants described their “5-minute break to clear your head” as smoke breaks earlier in the focus groups because people who took breaks without smoking were considered slacking off. A number of participants told of situations where pressure on the job or between people built up and a supervisor would suggest that everyone go take a smoke break to relax and break the tension. To the focus group participants, taking the time to get away for a few minutes was just as important as or more important than consuming the cigarette.

Execution 2: Petty Officer Third Class Janet Tucker, U.S. Navy

Reactions to this image were mixed, with about half of the participants responding favorably and the other half responding negatively. Almost all participants thought it looked like a recruitment or reenlistment poster. As with the first execution, almost all said they thought it was too much to read in a poster or magazine ad.

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After reading the quote, participants initially laughed at the “to be the best that I could be” phrase because it is so overused in recruiting materials. Some participants could not understand the central message of the quote, which became apparent as they started discussing it. Others who did understand it mostly did not agree with it. Most tobacco users believe that tobacco calms them down and they are using their own personal experiences and feelings to validate this for themselves and each other.

Body copy: Using tobacco products doesn't calm you down. It can make you more irritable, take away your stamina, and impair your judgment. Some participants did acknowledge the irritability they experience when they have to stop using tobacco for any length of time, but they said that it passes fairly quickly. Some say that they use smokeless tobacco during those times when smoking cigarettes is not possible. A few, particularly those who have been smoking for a number of years, noted that they may be seeing a change in their stamina but there were more stories about being able to use tobacco and keeping up or surpassing the unit on physical tests of stamina. As stated before, participants were not persuaded by statements about tobacco impairing judgment.

Endorsement

Participants were asked to indicate their reactions to having the DoD logo on the campaign messages. There was little discussion on this topic, as participants indicated that they would expect to see the DoD logo on such a campaign and they really would not pay that much attention to it. The same would be true if the logos of the particular branch of the military appeared on the messages and materials—logos simply would not grab their attention or make a difference in how they viewed the campaign if the materials meant something to them.

Delivery Methods

The following table suggests possible delivery methods for campaign messages and materials as discussed by focus group participants.

On Base	TV	Radio	Web Sites	Magazines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military newspapers • Gyms • Movie trailers • <i>Not the barracks</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comedy Central • CNN • ESPN • History Network • Cartoon Network • MTV • <i>South Park</i> • <i>Family Guy</i> • <i>Simpsons</i> • Play-off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All types of music • Sports, during games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't use the Web that much • My Space • Yahoo, Hot Mail, Google • Men's Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sports Illustrated</i> • <i>Time</i> • <i>Newsweek</i> • <i>Popular Science</i> • <i>Motor Trends</i>

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	games <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NASCAR• <i>American Idol</i>• Basketball• Baseball			
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Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the findings from the focus groups, several points can be drawn that should be helpful for the campaign development:

- Participants responded to messages that reinforced their own reasons for wanting to quit using tobacco products—doing it for themselves and for their families and being a role model.
- Additional messages that resonate with participants are those that have an immediate impact (e.g., the personal monetary cost of tobacco) and that are within their own experience (e.g., impact on stamina).
- Messages should be simple, straightforward, and succinct. Go for visual impact without too much copy.
- Participants respond to messages that place tobacco use in the context of their jobs and life outside the military, but not that imply smokers may endanger others or be less competent.
- Members of the target audience see themselves and their peers as mostly hard working, dependable, and trustworthy. They are proud to be serving their country. They would like to quit using tobacco, but see tobacco use as a way to cope with stress and boredom in their work environment. They do not necessarily identify alternatives to using tobacco and this may be one value they can find in the campaign materials.
- Focus group participants indicated curiosity about online support services and a willingness to try such services to determine if the services offered are of value to them.

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