



CROOKED NINE

NINE WAYS
THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY
UNDERMINES
HEALTH POLICY

Tobacco is on pace to kill 1 billion smokers in the 21st century. Replacing these customers is the only way tobacco companies can survive, and they need weak or ineffective regulations to accomplish this goal.

Crooked Nine outlines the nine tactics the tobacco industry uses to undermine the policies that reduce smoking and ultimately save lives. STOP researchers documented examples from nearly 30 countries on every continent and at the United Nations.¹

Understanding the tobacco industry is the first step in countering its actions.



STOPPING TOBACCO
ORGANIZATIONS & PRODUCTS

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Tactic 1

Building alliances and front groups

Tobacco companies mislead the public by orchestrating support from diverse groups, including farmers, retailers, and influencers. For example in 2017, Philip Morris International established the front group² Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, with a USD \$1 billion budget, claiming “to improve global health by ending smoking in this generation.” PMI has a long history of paying for research to delay government action that could curb smoking. Delays enable it to continue marketing and selling cigarettes.

Tactic 2

Trying to weaken the public health community

In 2011, when **Australia** introduced legislation to mandate plain packaging on tobacco products, trans-national tobacco companies lodged 52 freedom of information requests with Australian health authorities.³ The deliberate campaign delayed government departments with legally binding requests and promoted divisive issues internally.

Tactic 3

Disputing public health facts

PMI's Foundation for a Smoke-Free World established several “Centers of Research Excellence” which produce research on alternative products, like e-cigarettes. In 2019, a scientist from one of these centers in **New Zealand** told a New Zealand Health Committee that there have been no scientific studies proving that exposure to cigarette smoke in the car causes disease.⁴ This is not true.⁵

Tactic 4

Producing and promoting misleading research

Japan Tobacco International co-authored a report in 2019 that cited a survey as evidence that the **South African** public did not support plain packaging of tobacco products to reduce youth smoking.⁶ When researchers looked into it, they found that the report included biased questions and a dubious sample size.⁷

Tactic 5

Lobbying

British American Tobacco developed a lobbying campaign in 2014, warning **Ugandan** members of parliament that strengthening the existing tobacco law would threaten the livelihoods of thousands of farmers.⁸ BAT threatened one member with a letter listing 709 tobacco farmers in the member's constituency that BAT would no longer do business with, if the member continued to support the new bill.⁹

Tactic 6

Influencing high-level policies

In 2015, Philip Morris International announced it would invest USD \$1.9 billion to expand factories in Indonesia.¹⁰ Philip Morris International views “Sampoerna” as its crown jewel in **Indonesia**. It is no surprise that Indonesia continues to support policies friendly to tobacco production and it still allows tobacco advertising on television.

Tactic 7

Litigation

In 2013, Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco and Japan Tobacco International legally challenged the **Thailand** health ministry's proposal to make pack warnings bigger. The companies claimed that more effective warnings violated freedom of expression and undermined intellectual property rights. They also claimed that mandating bigger warnings was illegal because the government did not consult with retailers and manufacturers.¹¹

Tactic 8

Facilitating smuggling

The tobacco industry's cigarettes comprise an estimated 58% of the illicit cigarette market today.¹² Typically, tobacco manufacturers can avoid paying in countries with high taxes by oversupplying tobacco in nearby low-tax countries. The extra cigarettes can then find their way to the high-tax country without customs and revenue authorities collecting their taxes. In one example, in 2014, the **U.K.** fined British American Tobacco for being complicit in smuggling tobacco products into the U.K. and Europe.¹³

Tactic 9

Seeking to improve its reputation

With assistance from the American Chamber of Commerce in 2016, Philip Morris International hosted a summit on climate change in the **Philippines**, including people from all levels of the Philippines government.¹⁴ While tobacco industry-related corporate social responsibility activities are banned for sport, concert, arts and cultural events in the Philippines, they were able to have a platform and easy access to governments. The tobacco industry has also donated to flood victims in Myanmar and promoted their philanthropic work on Twitter, all in the pursuit of delaying stronger tobacco regulations.¹⁵

Endnotes

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- 6 JTI. Results of a national public opinion survey on the perception of plain packaging on tobacco one year after its implementation in the UK. May 2018. Internet Archive. Available from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180521085637/https://www.jti.com/sites/default/files/global-files/documents/related-documents/results-national-public-opinion-survey-perception-plain-packaging-UK.pdf>
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