

Philip Morris Is Giving up Cigarettes - And Asking Consumers to Do the Same

Although it may seem counterintuitive for a company to discourage consumers from buying its products, we have seen this strategy work in brands' favors in the past – Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign resulted in an overwhelming positive response from consumers who took extra time to learn about the brand's mission before making a purchase. Now, one company with a notoriously controversial product is attempting to pivot its business model to be more socially responsible – and marketing directly to consumers during this transition.

As part of its New Year's resolution, tobacco company Philip Morris has launched an aggressive anti-smoking campaign against its own product – urging consumers to give up cigarettes as the company itself commits to doing the same, with a bold ambition to “stop selling cigarettes in the U.K.” The brand explains that this untraditional call to action is necessary for the brand's future, with CEO André Calantzopoulos stating, “We have a duty to our business that we ensure we have a viable business going forward, so we're investing in alternatives so we provide a future for them as well.” The company is hoping consumers will join it in this pivot. To get the word out, Philip Morris ran an ad in several U.K. newspapers sharing the brand's new commitment and encouraging readers to join the smoke-free movement. Additionally, to support smokers during the challenging task of quitting, the company created a 'Smoke Free Future' website and campaign which provides smokers with information on quitting and cigarette alternatives. The brand is also seeking approval from the government to provide information about quitting and cigarette alternatives directly on its cigarette packaging – placing information front and center in the hopes of creating behavior change.