

Campaign Title: "Finish It"

Brand: truth

Company(s) Involved: Truth Initiative, CommSight, Crux Research, GfK Research, 72 and Sunny, Assembly, Ketchum

Category: New Audiences

Summary

Faced with a generation where only 9% of teens smoke, truth had to reignite interest in fighting tobacco use among young people- the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. Research of Gen Z youth revealed high motivation to create social change, particularly among non-smokers. This led to a game-changing insight: rather than continue messaging to the small segment of those at-risk for smoking, we decided to leverage the social power of the much larger universe of teens who do not smoke to influence the 9% who still do, inspiring Gen Z to "be the generation that ends smoking." The FinishIt campaign generated successful social media metrics, earned media and significant changes in campaign-related attitudes smoking.

Marketing Challenge

truth has been credited as the most successful social marketing campaign in history and earned Campaign of the Decade as a brand that educated and engaged teens by exposing Big Tobacco's lies.

However, a lot has changed since truth first came out in the early 2000s. Big Tobacco is no longer in the national spotlight for its deceptive practices, tobacco advertising has been restricted, cigarette taxes in many states are high, and smoking is banned in a majority of public places. Moreover, teen smoking in the U.S. has dropped from 23% in 2000 when truth started to just 9% in 2014. Primary research confirmed that Gen Z youth don't consider smoking or the tobacco industry to be a problem.

Yet, over two million youth and young adults in the U.S. continue to use tobacco and it remains the leading cause of preventable death in the country, threatening the lives of 5.6M children alive today.

Our marketing challenge was to overcome the disinterest and complacency today's youth had with regards to smoking. But to be successful, we needed a new strategy to address the cultural shift from Gen X (the original target of truth) to Gen Z. Our goal was to effectively overcome Gen Z's disinterest and apathy about tobacco use and instead inspire a broad audience of Gen Zs, including nonsmokers, to connect with the issue of tobacco use.

Methodology

We employed a multi-method approach to inform and evaluate our creative work, with pre-campaign market testing to develop strategy, and post-campaign evaluation to measure performance. This led to a campaign that was thoroughly researched, data-driven, and supported with compelling outcomes.

Our research enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of our audience's values and lifestyles - what Gen Zs care about, how they feel about tobacco, what they think of truth, and how they use media. Using both quantitative segmentation and qualitative methods, we explored how best to effectively engage a broad Gen Z audience and uncover messages which deeply resonate to inspire motivation.

Through quantitative surveys, in depth interviews, focus groups and triads we learned about today's youth wanting to create social change combined with youth smoking rates being at an all-time low led us to flip our focus to target a new audience - rather than continue to message only to the remaining 9% of youth smokers, truth needed to talk to the 91% of non-smoking youths, using their strength in numbers and desire to participate in a social movement to rally this new generation to influence the current 9% of smokers to join their ranks.

Creative Execution

truth stepped back to re-align and reposition the brand for a new generation of young people with the mission to “be the Generation that ends smoking.” The new campaign focuses on the cultural denormalization of youth tobacco use, serving as an emotional rallying cry to help empower Gen Z to use their influence, power, and creativity to “FINISH IT” – to end smoking for good. With this new rallying cry we decided to leverage the social power of the much larger universe of teens who do not smoke to influence the 9% who still do, inspiring Gen Z to “be the generation that ends smoking.”

By highlighting the progress already made in reducing tobacco use, featuring images of other successful movements, and calling on young people to be the generation that ends smoking, the campaign has effectively showcased why smoking is socially and culturally out of step with youth aspirations.

Examples of some of the campaign content include our “Finishers” spot, which introduced the movement, and “Progress Reports” which highlighted tobacco control success stories, ranging from reductions in youth smoking in Florida to CVS quitting selling cigarettes. This comprehensive campaign has reignited enthusiasm and motivation among young people to join in and FINISH IT.

[Finishers:](#)

This new generation expected to participate and become involved in a collective fight against Big Tobacco. The brand transitioned from just speaking to at-risk smokers to also speaking with the 91% of youth that didn’t smoke.

[Progress Reports:](#)

These ads help to create a pulse of progress and make ending smoking feel more tangible. The spot ‘CVS’ celebrates CVS for quitting selling cigarettes and calls on other pharmacies to follow suit, while the spot ‘Florida’ celebrates Florida’s record low teen smoking rate of 7.5%.

Business Results

By listening to our Gen Z audience's perspectives, we were able to increase engagement with our ads and campaign and ultimately change the attitudes, commitment, and behavior of today's Gen Zs.

As our campaign gained momentum, the teen smoking rate in the U.S. dropped 16% from 9.6% to 8%. This was an 8% faster drop than the year before, or an estimated reduction of 400,000 in the number of youths smoking.

Crafting the Message: Compelling Evidence of Ad Effectiveness

We embarked on a comprehensive pre-market ad copy testing initiative which led to over 2100 ad evaluations collected among 15-21 year olds. This provided compelling data of the effectiveness of "Finishers" and "Progress Reports" relative to benchmark campaigns, and helped truth prioritize which content was better suited for an online only environment. Performance metrics included motivational power, proportion of audience impacted, value of impact (% of minds changed to be more favorable to our goals), strength of communication, trended engagement, feelings profile, and changes in attitudes toward smoking, among others).

Measuring the Reach: Social Media and Earned Media Results Demonstrated Incredible Reach

By ensuring that both the TV and online ads spoke to our new audience, we set ourselves up to see incredible social and earned media results.

Attitudinal and Behavioral Impact: Significant Changes in KPIs Demonstrate Powerful Impact

As engagement with the ads skyrocketed, we employed two methods to measure changes in attitudes about tobacco: a continuous media tracking study that surveys 140 new respondents per week, and a nationally representative longitudinal cohort study that interviews over 10,000 target audience participants every 6 months on truth, tobacco attitudes and tobacco use. Our truth® continuous media tracking study and longitudinal cohort demonstrated significant changes in awareness and campaign related attitudes throughout the course of the campaign.