

# **Anti-Smoking Groups Hone their Tactics to Suppress Dissent: My Suggested Guidebook for Tobacco Control Advocates for Quelling Internal Dissent**

Over the past months, anti-smoking groups have been forced to hone their techniques of suppressing dissent from within the movement, since so far I have not been deterred by any of these tactics.

But I've learned a lot about how the groups are able to suppress dissent.

Thus, I offer my Top Five List of Techniques to Suppress Dissent. I propose this as a guidebook or manual that could be given to anti-smoking advocates. I even offer actual, real-life examples of each of the techniques.

## **Top Five List of Techniques to Suppress Dissent: A Guidebook for Tobacco Control Advocates**

### **5. Accuse the Dissenter of Being Paid Off by the Tobacco Industry**

When you don't like what a colleague is saying, simply turn the tables on him and accuse him of being paid off by the tobacco industry. Don't worry about not having documentation of your accusation or the possibly defamatory nature of your public statement. After all, claims only need to be documented when they're made by the tobacco companies. Anti-smoking groups are not subject to the same ethical standards.

Example: Accuse the dissenter of being a [tobacco stooge](#).

### **4. Accuse the Dissenter of Supporting the Tobacco Industry**

Just shy of making an outright accusation that the dissenter is being paid off by the tobacco companies, simply accuse the dissenter of supporting the tobacco industry cause. This relieves you of the defamation risk but allows you to accomplish virtually the same objective of discrediting the dissenter and ruining his career. This is enough to discourage all but the most hardy of anti-smoking advocates from offering any criticism of the tactics, statements, or agenda of the movement.

Example 1: Accuse the dissenter of [lending support to the destruction of the health](#) of the public.

Example 2: Accuse the dissenter of [running a tobacco industry support group](#).

### **3. Accuse the Dissenter of Helping to Kill People**

There are times when tactics #4 and #5 will not work because the dissenter has a long history of fighting Big Tobacco and it will be clear to your colleagues that he doesn't support the tobacco industry cause. In these cases, an excellent approach is to accuse him of helping to kill people, even though that may not be his actual goal. By aligning him with the goals of Big Tobacco without actually suggesting that he is intentionally supporting tobacco companies, you have at your hands an excellent way of discrediting the advocate through personal attack.

Example: Accuse the dissenter of [helping Big Tobacco kill people](#).

### **2. Implore All Anti-Smoking Groups and Advocates to Ignore the Dissenter**

If you don't think that anyone will buy the argument that the dissenter is taking money from Big Tobacco or supporting the Big Tobacco cause because he has devoted 20 or more years of his life to fighting tobacco-related morbidity and mortality, the next best thing to do is to try to get all of your colleagues to simply ignore him. Sending an email to thousands of advocates entitled "[Please Ignore \[insert name of dissenter here\]](#)" is a great way of accomplishing this.

Example: Implore thousands of colleagues to [please ignore](#) the dissenter.

### **1. Censor the Dissenter by Removing Him from All Internet and Email Listserves and Discussion Forums**

There are situations in which none of the less aggressive tactics will work. In cases of especially well-known and prominent dissenters who have made major contributions to the tobacco control movement through decades of research, advocacy, and leadership, you may need to resort to more aggressive and definitive tactics. Since email and internet discussion forums are now a predominant mode of communication in tobacco control, expelling the dissenter from all tobacco control email listserves and discussion forums is an ideal tactic to silence him.

Remember that you don't need a legitimate reason to expel the dissenter. You can simply state that he has interfered with the quality of the listserve messages, or that he is being too repetitive.

Example 1: [Expel](#) the dissenter from listserves and discussion forums.

Example 2: [Expel](#) the dissenter from listserves and discussion forums.

### Additional Techniques to Consider

In rare situations, none of the above techniques will be effective in suppressing dissent from a colleague because he may actually have a conscience and may decide that expressing the truth to the public is worth risking his career. Do not worry. In these situations, there are a number of additional techniques that you can use.

#### 1. Suggest that There Are More Important Things to Worry About than the Concerns Raised by the Dissenter

There are times when the concerns raised by the dissenter are actually valid and his arguments are compelling. In these cases, an effective technique is to make people think that there are many more important things to worry about than the concerns raised by the dissenter. Some very good lines to use are the following:

"We are too busy fighting Big Tobacco to pay attention to this distraction from our important work."

"Nobody is perfect. In our work to protect kids and save lives, we are bound to make a few mistakes."

"Sure we made a few misleading statements. But they're nothing compared to the statements being made by the tobacco companies and smokers' rights groups."

The word "distraction" is an excellent one to use. It turns the attack on the dissenter, suggesting that he is a distraction to the movement. Trying to deflect the criticism by turning it against the tobacco industry is also a wise and effective strategy. No matter how unethical or inappropriate the tactics and statements of the anti-smoking groups are, it will never be as bad as what the tobacco companies have done. Reminding people of that will always deflect attention from any untruths being spread by the movement.

Example: Suggest that [there are more important things to do](#) than worry about the concerns of the dissenter.

#### 2. Point Out that Only a Small Fraction of Statements We are Making are Misleading

No matter how inaccurate or fallacious a statement the anti-smoking

movement is making may be, it will never represent more than about 1% of all statements made by these groups. Thus, pointing out that only a small fraction of statements made by anti-smoking groups are misleading or inaccurate is a valid and effective technique. It will take attention away from any deception that is going on and focus attention on the many accurate things that we say. Combining this technique with Additional Technique #1 is particularly effective, as it may help not only to distract attention from the deception going on in the tobacco control movement's propaganda, but re-focus it on the deception going on in the tobacco companies' propaganda.

Example: Point out that our misleading statements are only a fraction of all of our statements.

### Techniques to Avoid at All Costs

The one technique to avoid at all costs is responding substantively to the arguments being made by the dissenter. Respond with an ad hominem attack, but by no means address the actual argument being made.