Deconstructing Philip Morris

Have you read their latest ads? Nick Naylor would be proud.
Below, an insider’s guide to PR for the shameless corporate racketeer.

In mid-August, a federal judge ruled in *United States v. Philip Morris USA, et al.* that the company had violated antitrust and racketeering laws and defrauded the public for half a century. "Brands are trademarks; trademark holders say "cease and desist," not "please."

Other companies have written protests against the use of tobacco in movies, but only after they were pushed to do so by California’s Attorney General. The 1998 Master Settlement Agreement bars paid tobacco brand placement in any medium. Most tobacco in films is now unbranded. Smart.

Actually, more than 60 studies on four continents, taken together, show that exposure to screen smoking leads teens to start smoking. Research also finds that PM USA’s youth campaign makes kids more likely to smoke.

Notice that this statement comes from PM USA. Does it apply at all to PM International, the much larger Altria division actually on the record paying for product placement? And if PM USA is diving for legal cover, isn’t Hollywood left twisting in the wind?

These ads give cynicism a bad name. They appear to suggest that Hollywood is now more pro-tobacco than the world’s largest tobacco company. The remarkable thing is, Big Tobacco doesn’t care how preposterous this sounds.

**Philip Morris USA Asks “Please Don’t Give Our Cigarette Brands a Part in Your Movie”**

RICHMOND, Va. — (BUSINESS WIRE) — Philip Morris USA (PM USA) is asking entertainment industry decision-makers to voluntarily eliminate the use of its products from their productions with a new trade print advertising campaign. Designed to raise awareness of PM USA’s positions on product placement and the use of its brand imagery, the campaign also encourages the industry to reduce or eliminate smoking scenes in movies directed at youth.

"Movies have the power to amuse, delight, teach and inspire. However, some studies suggest they may also influence a child’s decision to smoke.,” said Jennifer Hunter, vice president, Youth Smoking Prevention and Cessation Support for Philip Morris USA.

The ads will appear in *Daily Variety, The Hollywood Reporter,* and other trade publications beginning the week of November 13th.

Philip Morris USA does not want its brands or brand imagery depicted in movies and television shows. Since 1990, Philip Morris USA’s policy has been to deny all requests for permission to use or display its brands in movies and television shows intended for general audiences.

Philip Morris USA is an operating company of Altria Group Inc (NYSE: MO). For more information about Philip Morris USA, our programs and positions on tobacco-related issues, please visit us at *www.philippomorrisusa.com.*

To view the ads, please go to the address below: *http://www.philippomorrisusa.com/en/downloads/about_us/pressroom/general/pdf/smoking_in_movies_ads.pdf* ...

1 Sargent, J.D., Beach, M.L., et al. (2005),

Leading health authorities in the U.S., and the World Health Organization, endorse four policy solutions that can effectively make G/PD/PG-15 movies smokefree and end 90,000 future tobacco deaths a year in the United States alone. The question is no longer “Why?” but “When?”

The scientific evidence from scores of studies is conclusive: movies sell smoking. Philip Morris was right about the movies. Now prove them wrong about the film community.

Accepted policy solutions at *smokefreenmovies.ucsf.edu*

The R-rating, among other Smoke Free Movies policy proposals, is endorsed by the World Health Organization, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Legacy Foundation, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Society for Adolescent Medicine, L.A. County Dept. of Health Services, and others. This project is supported by the Annenberg Fund of the Tides Foundation and other donors. To explore this critical health issue, visit our website.