

# Gosh, you're right. Everybody in this business is a *genius* and a *mensch*.

MAJOR STUDIOS delivered an estimated *1.5 million* new young smokers to the tobacco industry over the last four years. Public health advocates and prosecutors have offered the industry easy ways out. But Hollywood still delays and dithers. Why?

**CORRUPT, STUPID OR BOTH?** Health groups (*see box*) have offered Hollywood four simple ways to stop pushing tobacco at kids. But most kid-rated movies still feature tobacco. Let's review these reasonable solutions one at a time — and the studios' most recent responses:

## 1] Rate future smoking "R."

**POLICY:** Any film that shows or implies tobacco should be rated "R." The only exceptions should be when the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or is necessary to represent the smoking of a real historical figure.

**REASONS:** The R-rating creates a market incentive to keep PG-13 films, which teens see most often, smokefree; projected to avert 60,000 future tobacco deaths annually. (Adding a PG-13 tobacco advisory would be 90% less effective.)

**STUDIO RESPONSE:** "[Then MPAA president Jack Valenti] rejected any effort to alter the movie ratings system to warn parents when a film shows one or more characters smoking." (*Variety*, May 11, 2004)

## 2] Certify no payoffs.

**POLICY:** Producers should post a certificate in the closing credits declaring that nobody on the production received anything of value from anyone in exchange for using or displaying tobacco.

**REASONS:** Tobacco industry files show a historical pattern of misleading lawmakers and the FTC on

product placement, and the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement does not bar paid product placement by tobacco company affiliates overseas. Certification encourages producers to halt side-dealing and properly vet production funding.

**STUDIO RESPONSE:** Industry denies any tobacco product placement. But nobody is willing to swear to it.

## 3] Require strong anti-smoking ads.

Studios and theaters should require a genuinely strong anti-smoking ad (not one produced by a tobacco company) to run before any film with any tobacco presence, in any distribution channel, regardless of its MPAA rating.

**REASONS:** Strong anti-tobacco spots help inoculate audiences against

the promotional effects of smoking..

**STUDIO RESPONSE:** Two years after U.S. Senators urged this policy in a Capitol Hill hearing, no spots are in theaters. In 2005, state Attorneys General asked studios to put spots on DVDs. The MPAA responded that "this is one element that will be considered among other ideas in an overall campaign...to curtail cigarette smoking in situations in which it does not contribute to the development of the plot, story or character." Translation: "No, and here's something to read while you wait."

## 4] Stop identifying tobacco brands.

There should be no tobacco brand identification nor the presence of tobacco brand imagery (such as billboards) in the background of any movie scene.

**REASONS:** Brands in a movie are like ads on a 20-foot tall billboard. And unlike magazine ads or 30-second commercials, on-screen endorsements are forever.

**STUDIO RESPONSE:** Tobacco firms say they don't give permission to use their trademarks; studios never ask. Deniability all around.

**Bottom line:** Of the 1.5 million kids the major studios delivered to the tobacco industry since 2002, half a million will die from tobacco diseases.

And Hollywood wonders where its audience is going? *It's time to act...*

### PARTIAL LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS ENDORSING FOUR POLICIES:

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ALLERGY,  
ASTHMA, AND IMMUNOLOGY  
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION  
AMERICAN LEGACY FOUNDATION  
AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION \*  
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
CAMPAIGN FOR TOBACCO FREE KIDS  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH SERVICES  
NATIONAL PTA \*  
SOCIETY FOR ADOLESCENT MEDICINE  
US PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

\*Endorses R-rating policy

Straight talk, real answers at [SmokeFreeMovies.ucsf.edu](http://SmokeFreeMovies.ucsf.edu)



**SMOKE  
FREE  
MOVIES**