

C h a p t e r **5**



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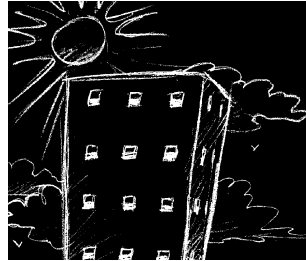
D E C I S I O N S

A N D H O W

T O M A K E

T H E M W O R K

“If you don’t know where you are going . . . you might wind up someplace else.” Yogi Berra



Gather information, and use this information to guide the development and implementation of the policy.

Although you are not putting the policy “to a vote,” most workers do support smokefree policies. Allowing employees to express their opinion will facilitate and guide implementation of the policy.

More and more employers and employees in communities across the nation are working in smoke-free workplaces. Thoughtful planning and a sequenced introduction of a new policy can help ensure the success of your policy. The four steps described in this chapter (Figure 5-1) are based on the experiences of many successful worksite decision makers. Following these steps—with the modifications you make to fit your workplace situation—can smooth the transition to a healthier and safer workplace.

Assess the Current Situation

Your first step is to assess the current situation so you know where you are. Review your company’s current policies, practices, and employee attitudes in regard to smoking policies. Ask the following questions:

- What are the restrictions on smoking, if any?
- Who is covered by the policy?
- When was the policy established, and why?
- What are the employees’ attitudes about the current policy?
- Do employees comply with the policy?
- Who is satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

Use the checklist (Figure 5-2) to help assess the current situation. Also, review any state or local regulations on smoking in the workplace and get a sense of how other business in your area approach this issue.

FIGURE 5-1. STEPS TO EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE TOBACCO POLICIES

1. Assess the current situation
2. Decide on a new ETS policy and develop a plan to implement it
3. Communicate with employees and management
4. Announce and manage the policy

Gathering Information from Management and Employees

In addition to your observations about current policies and practices of your company and of other companies, consider the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of management and employees before developing new ETS policies and smoking cessation activities. Collect this information in the same way you normally pursue information, such as through meetings, work groups, task forces, or surveys. When forming either formal or informal working groups, consider the following:

- If possible, make sure the group is supported by both management and labor.
- Include representation from (if appropriate)
 - Human Resources,
 - Employee Benefits,
 - Facilities and Operations,
 - Labor Unions,
 - Safety and Health,
 - Corporate Medical,
 - Corporate Training, and
 - Corporate Communications.
- Include smokers, former smokers, and persons who have never smoked on the committee.

FIGURE 5-2. CURRENT SMOKING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Our current smoking policy allows smokers, including employees and visitors to smoke

- In offices
- In designated smoking rooms
- Other places inside (list: _____)
- Just outside the front door
- In the parking lot
- In designated smoking areas outside
- In vehicles
- Other places outside (list: _____)

Smokers, including employees and visitors, currently smoke

- In offices
- In designated smoking rooms
- Other places inside (list: _____)
- Just outside the front door
- In the parking lot
- In designated smoking areas outside
- In vehicles
- Other places outside (list: _____)

- Select a group chairperson.
- Establish the mission and goals of the group.
- Communicate the purpose and membership to all employees and managers.

Management expectations often drive corporate policies and programs. It is important to know how senior management feels about certain issues before the plans for the ETS policy and supportive cessation activities are finalized. You may want to share information about the benefits of smokefree policies (see Chapter Two) with management. Find

out what management's opinions are on the following:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the company becoming an entirely smokefree facility or of offering separately ventilated areas?
- Should incentives be used to encourage employees not to smoke?
- Should the company offer smoking cessation programs? If so, who should pay for these programs?
- What are four characteristics of the company that will ease or support the modification of ETS policies and cessation activities?
- What are four obstacles within the company that need to be considered before the new ETS policies and cessation activities are implemented?

Working with Labor Unions

Working with labor unions can be an essential part of gathering information. Three major, relevant labor issues should be addressed:

- whether an employee has the right to smoke at the workplace,

- the relationship of smoking restrictions to collective bargaining, and
- whether a focus on ETS is perceived as a diversion from addressing other occupational hazards.

As discussed in Chapter One, no one has the right to impose a health risk on others, and because an employer has the common-law responsibility to provide a safe work environment, an employer has the right to restrict smoking on company premises and even refuse to hire someone because he or she would smoke on the job.¹ In union-represented work environments, however, the employer may be obligated to subject the policy to collective bargaining, depending on contract provisions. Employers should attempt to work collaboratively with unions rather than act independently to restrict smoking, because management and unions share a fundamental common goal: providing a safe and healthful working environment. Issues such as smoking breaks and provision of smoking cessation support may arise, but these can be addressed within the context of providing a smokefree workplace.

To address the concern that focus on ETS is shielding the issue of other occupational hazards, you should turn to the scientific evidence that ETS is a major workplace hazard and needs to be reduced to the lowest possible levels (Chapter One).

Specific questions to address regarding unions include the following:

- What unions are involved?
- Do the unions have a stated position on smoking restrictions?
- Is there contract language or past practice that addresses smoking on the job by union members?
- What is the opinion of labor relations regarding whether a policy on smoking must be negotiated?
- Can unions be involved in a cooperative policy development effort?
- Is the current state of labor-management relations conducive to a change in smoking policy?

Decide on a New ETS Policy and Develop a Plan to Implement It

Use the information you have gathered to help you decide which ETS policy you will implement. Compare the current situation with the options for workplace policies in Chapter Three. Use the model policy as a reference as well as the sample policies provided in Appendix B. You should also consider how to handle other tobacco products, such as spit tobacco or snuff, if these

FIGURE 5-3. ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN THE SMOKING POLICY

- Purpose for policy (harmful effects of ETS on health)
- A tie between the ETS policy and cessation support and the recognizable corporate values (e.g., performance or employees as an asset)
- Clear statement of where smoking is prohibited
- Clear statement of where smoking is permitted (if anywhere)
- Clear statement on enforcement and consequences of noncompliance
- Clear statement of support to be provided for employees who smoke (e.g., cessation assistance)
- Name and phone number of person who can answer questions about the policy.

products are used by the employees. It is reasonable and consistent to handle all tobacco products at the same time and in the same manner.

Figure 5-3 lists items that the company's policy should include. Circulate this policy to formal or informal working groups for suggestions and modifications to identify any potential problems (such as enforcement issues or choice of outside smoking areas) before you finalize it.

Next, plan how to make the transition smooth and the policy work. Figure 5-4 lists key principles of successfully implementing a smokefree policy. This implementation plan will guide the rest of your actions. You may want to tie significant events (such as the effective date of the policy) to existing events, such as the Great American Smokeout (November) or the season (if your smokers will need to go outside to comply,

FIGURE 5-4. KEY PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL SMOKEFREE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION²

- Focus on smoke, not the smoker.
- Focus on health and safety regarding ETS, not individual rights.
- Obtain management commitment and support. This support can be made visible to employees through the use of paycheck stuffers, posters, newsletters, and other company communication channels.
- Provide training for middle managers and supervisors on policy communication and enforcement.
- Provide real and visible opportunities for employee participation in policy planning and implementation.
- Educate the workplace community about the hazards of combining ETS and materials used in work processes.
- Allow four to six months from the time of the announcement to implementation, depending on the size of the organization and the magnitude of the change from the old to the new policy.
- To maximize motivation, plan to implement the policy in conjunction with national events such as the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout in November or around New Year's Day (when people are making New Year's resolutions).
- Ensure that restrictions and enforcement are equitable across job categories.
- Offer smoking cessation programs to all employees and their families before and after the policy change.
- Enforce the ETS policy just as any other policy would be. Provide training in enforcement for supervisors. Do not differentiate between smoking breaks and any other kind of breaks.
- Anticipate unintended effects (e.g., the concentration of smoke in designated areas).
- Continue to provide smoking cessation educational opportunities and programs after the policy has been implemented to support employees in their attempts to quit smoking and to prevent relapse.

begin during a mild season). The plan should include

- when the policy will be announced (at least four months before the effective date; longer for very large organizations),
- when the policy will become effective,

- events that will be tied to the transition,
- supportive activities for smokers,
- role of contact person listed in policy,
- role(s) of work groups or task forces,
- sufficient time for acquiring appropriate signs to communicate the smokefree policy,
- mechanism for allowing employee feedback during the transition period, and
- time to negotiate and work with labor unions, if needed.

Communicate with Employees and Management

Once you have composed your plan, you will need to inform your employees about the upcoming changes.

Remember to consider the need to involve—or at least communicate with—management and labor unions (if present).

It is important that all employees understand the policy changes and the implications of these changes. Midlevel man-

agers or supervisors need to understand their responsibilities for implementing and enforcing the policies. You may want to hold meetings to familiarize them with their roles. These meetings can be useful in anticipating and preparing for potential problems, such as the abuse of break time or tension between smokers and nonsmokers. If there are questions about the new policies, it will be important for you to have answers. Figure 5-5 lists issues with suggested responses.

Announce and Manage the Policy

You are now ready to formally announce the policy to all employees and prepare for implementation. Suggested actions include the following:

- Announce the policy and cessation support by using your company's standard communication channels (examples include letters to employees and their families, paycheck stuffers, posters, and notices in employee newsletters). It is important to demonstrate that management fully supports the policy (e.g., the announcement should come from the chief executive officer or appropriate senior officer).

FIGURE 5-5. POSSIBLE ISSUES AND SAMPLE RESPONSES

Will there be a reduction in health care costs at the end of year one?

Clarify the difficulties in promising savings in health care costs within one year. If you accurately identify who is smoking before the new policy takes effect, a careful assessment of changes in smoking among employees at the end of year one can be used to calculate the potential cost benefit of the smokefree policy.

Does passive smoking really have any adverse health effects on nonsmokers?

Inform about the known health effects of ETS by using the scientifically referenced information in Chapter One. You may want to seek the support of your corporate medical director or a community health professional.

Should employees be allowed to take time away from their job to participate in smoking cessation activities?

You can plan these programs at times that are not part of the work day but are convenient for employees (e.g., before work, during lunch, or after work). Point out that over the long term, time off to attend smoking cessation programs will add up to less time than employees take to smoke.

Will a smokefree policy result in the loss of smoking employees?

Very few employees leave companies because of implementation of smoke-free policies: 3.5% of an extensive small business sample and 2% of another sample said employees left due to a smokefree policy.³

Will a smokefree policy be too difficult to enforce?

Enforcement procedures are almost never needed, because most policies are self-enforcing and compliance is very high.³ Compliance is high because both management and employees usually support the smokefree policy.

Will a smokefree policy alienate clients?

In most cases, clearly posted signs are enough to alert clients to your smokefree policy. Some companies hand out a small card explaining the smokefree policy.

Won't a smokefree policy cost too much time and money to implement?

Experience and limited survey data⁴ have demonstrated that developing and implementing a smokefree policy does not need to be expensive or time-consuming. Costs and time can be saved with a well-thought-out implementation.

SMOKEFREE COFFEE AND DOUGHNUTS, PLEASE

Extensive communications to explain your intent are essential to implementing a smokefree policy, according to Kim Dionne, Director of Marketing for Bess Eaton Coffee Shops and Bakeries. Bess Eaton is a regional bakery in New England, and all of their 55 sites (retail, baking, and management) adopted smokefree policies in January 1994. Prior to that, the company had no formal policy.

“The EPA conclusion that secondhand smoke is a Group A carcinogen made us want to eliminate ETS in our workplace,” Ms. Dionne explains. “We wanted to offer a clean and healthful environment to both our external customers and our internal customers—our employees.”

To achieve their goal of a smokefree workplace, Bess Eaton worked closely with their local Lung Association. The company gathered key managers as a work group to develop implementation suggestions. The suggestions emphasized the need to explain that the policy is not against smoking or smokers but that it promotes the safest work environment possible.

Bess Eaton wasn't shy about the policy change, and they created a full-blown marketing campaign: “We had speakers and did radio and TV spots. We wanted to make a splash and let our customers know it was coming.” The policy was made effective on January 1, 1994, and for the next year the company supported its employees who smoked by fully paying for Lung Association smoking cessation classes.

Reactions to the policy have been very positive, with customers, employees, and management expressing satisfaction. Some changes take time, but everyone has been able to adjust. Ms. Dionne believes that productivity has improved along with the attitude of the employees.

“Though we were one of the first coffee shops in New England to do it and that could be seen as somewhat adventurous, we have been very happy with the results.”

- Announce a timeline for implementing the ETS policy and cessation activities. The announcement should be made significantly in advance of the policy's effective date to allow smokers to prepare for changes and to permit any facility or material changes that might be necessary (such as removal of cigarette vending machines, placement of out-

door ashtrays and “Smokefree Area/Thank You for Not Smoking” signs, and necessary ventilation modifications). It is recommended that smoking cessation support be offered at the same time as the advance announcement of the pending policy change as well as before and after the effective date. Strong restrictions on smoking may encourage smokers to think about quitting smoking.

- Obtain signs that communicate a positive “smokefree” message.
- Offer to answer employee questions and invite comment about the ETS policy and cessation activities.
- On the effective date of the policy, you should have
 - signs in place,
 - facility changes complete, and
 - smoking cessation and smoker support ready.

Take advantage of the time between the announcement and the policy effective date to anticipate issues that may arise and work to resolve them. Also, don't stop when you flip the calendar to the effective date of the policy. As with other policies, the implementation of the smokefree policy needs to be monitored for effectiveness. Monitoring allows you to tailor implementation and related cessation support, and it allows

you to report to management and employees about the impact of the policy.

Plan to assess your policy in the short term (first one to three months). Figure 5-6 lists what to assess. Find the answers to these questions:

- Are employees and visitors complying with the policy?
- Are smoking employees using the smoking cessation support available to them?
- Are supervisors encountering any problems?

Gather this information through feedback sessions with supervisors, managers, and employees. If you used a survey earlier, you could conduct a brief follow-up survey at this time. For the smoking cessation support, you should be able to monitor how many people take self-help materials, and your smoking cessation group provider (either in-house or outside) should be able to provide you with information about employees' use of their services.

Consider modifying implementation of your policy on the basis of the results of your assessment. Take steps only if there are significant concerns or problems.

FIGURE 5-6. WHAT TO ASSESS

In the short term

- Changes in exposure to ETS in the work environment
- Number of employees attending cessation activities or using self-help materials
- Awareness of ETS policy
- Employee attitudes toward ETS policy and cessation activities
- Improved employee morale
- Less conflict between smokers and nonsmokers
- Enhanced quality of work
- Improved job satisfaction

In the long term

- Changes in number of employees who smoke
- Effect of cessation activities on successful quitting
- Changes in health risks for smokers and nonsmokers
- Enhanced corporate image
- Improved employee attitude toward health
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced health care costs
- Lower accident rate
- Decline in turnover
- Fewer sick days
- Improved productivity

You also may want to evaluate your policy over the longer term (e.g., one to three years). This step will require more effort and time, but it can provide valuable information, such as

- awareness of ETS policy and smoking cessation activities,
- participation in smoking cessation activities,
- effectiveness of smoking cessation activities, and
- management support and ETS policy enforcement.

Obviously you'll want to assess whether your ETS policy and cessation support are working. There are some other reasons for evaluation of ETS policies and cessation activities:

- To identify areas for modification.
- To tell employees and management what happened.
- To provide a structure for the evolution of the policy or activities. All policies and activities need to evolve to meet the changing needs of the organization and employees. Assessment data can help you to justify changes in the policy or activities to meet these changing demands.

This chapter has provided you with detailed suggestions on how to effectively and smoothly implement an ETS policy in your workplace. You will need to tailor the concepts so that they will work in your setting, but the steps have been tested and proven in various environments. The appendices immediately following provides information on organizations to contact for more information, sample policies, and a list of organizations with smokefree workplaces.

References

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