



Testing of Health Warning Messages and Health Information Messages for Tobacco Products - Part 4 of 5

Online Qualitative Phase

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Online Qualitative Phase

In January 2009, Decima conducted a series of online focus groups to compliment previously collected data. A total of four (4) 2-hour online focus groups sessions were conducted. The purpose of the groups was to test Call-to-action taglines, as well as various layouts and colours for Health Warning Messages and for the word “warning”.

For a detailed description of the methodology, please see Appendix 

Section 1 - Call to Action Phrases

Ratings for each of the sections can be found in Appendix D.

Part 1 of the discussions focused on a series of “call to action” phrases that were tested with participants.



Before discussing the phrases individually, a few general observations can be made about reactions to the phrases:

- Younger smokers tend to see this information in a different light than do older smokers, especially those who have been smoking for a long time. Younger smokers were more likely to have more positive reactions to the messages.
- As well, those who are thinking of quitting smoking tend to have more positive reactions to the phrases than those who do not.
- Phrases that are encouraging, empowering towards the individual and put the onus on the individual, work better than those that are seen as sounding like “someone else” is being pushy about it. For example “Vous avez ce qu’il faut pour arrêter!” vs. “À vos

marques! Prêts? Appelez pour arrêter!” and “You can quit” vs. “Get the support you need to quit.”

- Shorter, snappier sentences are more likely to be impactful and memorable than longer phrases.
- The words “Contact us” and “We can help” are often seen as redundant, since they are followed by a phone number and a website.
- The findings were occasionally different for French phrases than for English phrases, as they were not always closely translated but did convey a similar message. Some examples include:
 - Give yourself another chance to quit. / Donnez-vous une autre chance de vous libérer du tabac.
 - Call us first. Then call it quits. / À vos marques! Prêts? Appelez pour arrêter!

A - Thinking of quitting? We can help. Vous pensez arrêter? Nous pouvons vous aider.

In both languages, this message was not particularly well-received, as it seemed to only speak to a small percentage of people who were actually thinking of quitting at that point in time. Although, some English participants, mostly in the older participant group, ranked this in their top-three. It did not receive strong support in the French testing; in neither the younger nor the older participant groups.

- “We can help” is seen as a bit patronizing, especially by many older smokers in the English groups. “There is help” would make it somewhat more neutral and encouraging across all groups. Although the reaction to the message overall does not become much more positive if this would be changed.
- Across all groups, it was unclear what “we/nous” is referring to.
- Some respondents found the message encouraging and liked knowing that there’s help available.
- Some respondents mentioned that not everyone needs help to quit and that help is really easy to find if they need it.
- Many French respondents felt that the message was too general. They stated that they could not really relate to the message and felt it was impersonal.
- French respondents in general (both in the young adult and adult groups) also mentioned that the message lacked originality and that they felt they heard it many times before. This was somewhat echoed by English older smokers respondents.
- Slightly more positive reactions from both the younger and older French participants emerged when the phrase was changed to “Faites appel à nos services”, Participants felt that it was a little more original and they liked the fact that it was telling them that

there are services available instead of simply contacting a person.

Evaluation of the addition of the words “It’s free” and “sans frais” to the message:

- The addition of “It’s free” was seen as being unnecessary, as to virtually all focus group participants it is obvious or expected that the phone number would be toll-free, as would the information on the website.
- Some even said that it may bring up more questions than the statement actually warranted, for example whether other services, or other parts of the services that they’re not aware of, may not be free.
- It is not expected that free cessation tools (such as patches) would be provided for free.

**B - Give yourself another chance to quit.
Donnez-vous une autre chance de vous libérer du tabac.**

Although in English, this option garnered more negative reactions than positive ones, some French participants ranked this in their top-three. This is a good example of a case where the phrasing in French and English was different enough to yield a different reaction from participants.

- Some French participants, both in the younger and older groups, felt that the words “libérez-vous du tabac” reflected well their perception of their smoking habit. Many felt that it was positive and encouraging.
- However, the use of the word “another/autre chance” received mixed reactions in all groups. Some have seen it as particularly encouraging and for others (mainly among older smokers) it was a reminder of how difficult it may have been in the past when they tried unsuccessfully to quit, and is therefore discouraging.
- One suggestion was “Give yourself a chance to quit”.
- There were however participants, mainly among the adult sessions of both the French and English groups), even among those who have in the past tried to quit, who were open to giving themselves another chance to quit. They found the word “another” was encouraging and offered them another chance (they stated that almost every smoker have tried quitting before).
- For others, especially in the older groups, it makes them feel like they are spoken to and are perceived as failures who have in the past not been able to quit (but who will now be helped by calling a number or going to a website).

**C - You can quit. We can help.
Vous pouvez arrêter. Nous pouvons vous aider.**

This is one of the strongest messages tested; particularly among both younger and older English participants. It is a phrase that worked quite well because it was empowering and encouraging to smokers, acknowledging that *they* are the ones first and foremost who can make their own decisions about whether they want to quit or not.

- Some in both English groups felt that only the first part of the phrase was needed, and that it may be stronger without “We can help,” although others liked having the sense that there was some kind of help or “safety net” available.
- English and French participants alike often felt that the first part of the phrase was true and encouraging but felt that the second part of the message was not strong enough and a little patronizing.
- The words “we can help” was seen by the English young participants as redundant, since they are followed by a phone number and a website.
- Some French respondents in both the young adult and adult sessions felt that the phrase lacked originality and didn’t really capture their attention.

D - You have what it takes to quit!
Vous avez ce qu’il faut pour arrêter!

Some participants liked that this was an encouraging message, although others felt it was a bit too generic. Although, some in both English groups and most in the adult French group ranked it in their top-three.

- In both the English and French groups, the use of the exclamation mark made it sound a bit less serious to some, especially in the younger groups. Instead, respondents suggested putting a period at the end of the sentence to make it sound more factual.
- Many younger participants in the English sessions found the message generic, cheesy and, some said, like a video they were shown in school.
- Many adult participants in the English session and the majority of French participants of all ages found the phrase was trying to give them confidence when they are ready to quit.
- Overall, the use of the word “you” works well, because it speaks to them.
- Some mentioned that the phrase doesn’t put pressure on them to quit and they liked that.

E - Make today the day. Contact us.
Le meilleur jour pour arrêter, c’est toujours aujourd’hui.

French participants overwhelmingly liked this phrase, although English participants had more mixed impressions. It was favorably ranked by both groups, unlike others there was a great difference between the groups.

- French participants in both the young adult and adult groups liked the immediacy and the positive vibe of the message. They mentioned that they should stop delaying the decision to quit.
- As mentioned, “contact us” in the English phrase was not necessary for most, and it was often seen as a bit too forceful.
- In English, the statement does not literally reflect anything about quitting, which many said was felt to be lacking.
- It was, however, seen as a positive message overall.

F - Help to quit is just a call or click away.
De l'aide pour arrêter, à portée de mains.

This message tested poorly in both languages and for both younger and older participants alike.

- It did not add much to the telephone number and the website; in fact, it was seen as largely redundant.
- In the young adult French session, one participant suggested that the phrases in general should focus more on quitting rather than calling the number or visiting the website.

G- Call us first. Then call it quits.
À vos marques! Prêts? Appelez pour arrêter!

This phrase did not make many people's top-three in either language.

- Some French participants in the young adult group mentioned that quitting is a long-meditated and difficult process that should not be compared to a race.
- The English phrase was seen as slightly too forceful, even pushy. It does not speak to smoker's ability to help themselves, which they believe is the crucial hurdle to overcome. This sentiment was especially strong among the older participants.
- In all groups, at least some participants mentioned that it's not that easy to quit as the message implies.
- In the English version of the phrase, many participants felt that the word “call” is used too many times.

H - Get the support you need to quit.
Trouvez le soutien dont vous avez besoin pour arrêter!

There is a positive tone to this message that many participants, across all groups, thought could be effective, but with some slight adjustments.

- Overall, the idea that there is support out there, a group that is willing and ready to help should they want it, is generally appreciated.
- Instead of the term “need” (which is seen as a bit patronizing, as not every smoker feels they *need* help to quit, but can do it on their own if they choose to do so), softening that language (such as “may be looking for”) would make it an even stronger statement. This was stated by participants across all sessions.
- Even those who said they’re not ready to quit, found this message acceptable, as they don’t feel pushed or threatened by it.
- However, many participants particularly liked the words “soutien/support” as opposed to “aide/help” in this phrase. They felt it was a better choice because the word “aide/help” is usually used to describe people who are weak and desperate.

I - Need help to quit? Besoin d’aide pour arrêter?

It was more effective in English than in French, in significant part because it was short and concise, and because it asked a question instead of pushing an answer. Some of the English participants in the young adult group ranked this message in their top-three. It did not receive strong support in the French testing for both age groups.

- Participants were divided about whether the word “help/aide” would be better, or whether “support/soutien” would be a stronger word to use instead, or whether it made a difference at all.
 - Among older smokers in general, the leaning was slightly towards “support/soutien.”
- French participants in both groups felt there was something missing in the French phrasing, and that the phrase was not structured properly. It had a neutral effect on most.
- A suggestion was to change the words “pour arrêter” for “pour vous libérer”

J - You have the will. We have the way. Vous avez la volonté. Nous avons un plan.

The positive tone of the first part of this phrase in particular made this work among some younger English participants and among many French participants. Some of the English and many of the French participants ranked this in their top-three.

- “We have the way” was alright to most, but not as strong as “You have the will,” which clearly speaks to self-determination.
- Some younger French participants did not like the second part of the sentence because they felt it sounded like it was not referring to a plan to quit, but rather to a retirement plan or something else.

Section 2 - Graphic concepts

Part 2 of the discussions focused on a series of questions about colours and layouts of the contact information section and colors of the HWMs background.

HWM Colours and Layouts

The contact information section was tested on various [colors and layouts](#) and with king size and flip-top pack size and different HWM colours. The analysis is based on both a rating exercise and a forced choice exercise, in which participants were asked to identify which graphic concept out of these four would be the best compromise in order to keep the effectiveness and noticeability of the warning message and, at the same time, the effectiveness and noticeability of the contact information (quitline and website). The findings of both discussions were very much consistent, and therefore the analysis of each of the sections A to D is based on a combination of the discussion of the concepts in both ways.

- In general, many participants felt that black text on a white background had the best balance of being noticeable and clearly readable. Older adult smokers, in both the English and French groups, in particular tended to say that the white text on a black background was neither attractive nor easily readable, and would therefore be less likely to be read.
- Among those who did like the white text on black, the options without the black box around the whole message stood out more when looking at the call-to-action in isolation, although when asked to look at the whole of the HWM and the contact information combined, some said that the box around both elements helped tie them in a bit better and would draw their eyes more equally to both elements. However, this latter option did not come forward as a clear “winner” in any of the four series.

Although the above findings can be said to be generally true for all four series tested, there are some variations. Specific findings for each of the four series are:

- For both the “A” and “B” series, the monochromatic option (yellow on yellow) was not seen as standing out in the same way as the options with black and white did. However, when discussing the HWM in combination with the contact information, this first option was often seen as the one that tied the two elements together best, in the same way as the black box may have done.

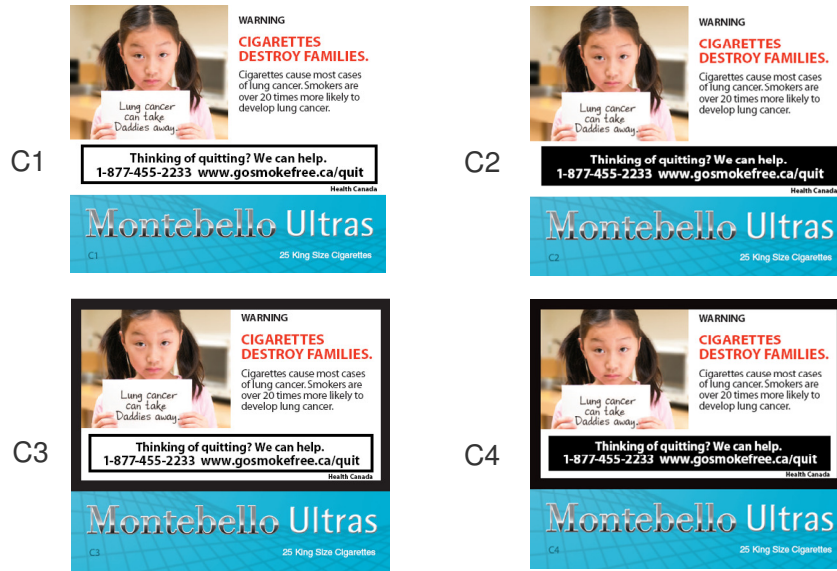


- Across all sessions, most participants gravitated towards black text on a white background. However, the yellow line (underlining the website) in the last option in the “B” series also garnered positive feedback, as it drew people’s eyes to the message and the website. It also made the mention of “Health Canada” more part of the whole, instead of it falling outside the box. The font also appears to be bigger in this option, which takes away some of the concerns raised about readability of white text on a black background. These findings were consistent when discussing the information in combination with the HWM.



- In the “C” series, the options with the borders tested slightly better than in the “A” and “B” series, although this appeared to be a function of the way they were displayed (white creative on white background).

In particular C3, as well as C4, was said too have too much black. Altogether, C1 still garnered the most positive feedback in this series. These findings were consistent when discussing the information in combination with the HWM.



- In the case of the “D” series, these options have more black than any of the others, the yellow tended to stand out for participants. The options with black text on the white background were overall more appreciated, as it was said by some that D4 also had a lot of black. These findings were consistent when discussing the information in combination with the HWM.



Icon

Adding an icon draws some positive reactions when it comes to catching the eye to the contact information. But although it adds that element of colour and newness, some feel that it may make the cigarette pack too cluttered, and that it may be a bit childish or cheesy. Among older participants in the English sessions, a few stated that the icon had some resemblance to the “heart smart” symbol.



HWM background colours

When looking at the background colours for the HWMs, participants across all groups gravitated towards the option they found displayed the combination of readability and communication of danger best, which in this case was the option with a white background, and red and black text.

- In essence, many felt that although the bright colours like orange may make the pack stand out more, but it would turn them off from reading any of the text or even from looking at the picture. And these background colours also made it more difficult to read the black text.
- The reason the red fared somewhat better than the orange, was that red is more associated with “danger”, so when asked to rate the concepts on that merit, it may rate a bit higher for some.
- The first option drew criticism among those who did not find white letters on black background easy to read but it was preferred to orange and red options.
- Ultimately, the option shown with a white background, with red and black text, tended to be rated most highly, especially due to readability and the communication of danger
 - The white background makes the text easy to see.
 - And the use of red text adds the element of “danger.”



Use of word “Warning”

From the last exercise it became clear that there was agreement among all participants that communicating the sense of danger is best done by making the word “warning” stand out rather than to have it blend in. Therefore, the options where the word was “boxed in”, either in red with white lettering or in black with white lettering tended to be chosen. As well, the font on those four options was bigger than on the other four, which also made the word stand out more.

