



Tips for Finding & Engaging Supportive Retailers



The movement to further restrict the sale of tobacco products will continue to pit tobacco prevention advocates and organized tobacco retailer associations against one another. Clearly, the tobacco industry will continue to oppose restrictions on their products, but it may be the organized retail associations and their lobbyists that are the most formidable adversaries in advancing local policies to further restrict or eliminate tobacco sales altogether. However, there may be some retailers that support (or wouldn't oppose) further tobacco sales restrictions. Having a supportive or friendly retailer would be a very important voice in any retail tobacco campaign. Finding those retailers will require work and be a bit tricky given their natural opposition to retail tobacco policies. This guidance document is designed to help local tobacco prevention advocates find supportive tobacco retailers.



Assessing the Landscape and Planning Your Approach

Utilize your coalition members' connections to identify which retailers would be most receptive to further communication. Also consider community members and leaders that can also help you identify retailers that would be willing to say positive things. Remember that locally owned establishments, over corporate-owned ones, may have greater autonomy over decisions to support your coalition's efforts.

Think about these 3 suggested levels of engagement of a potentially supportive retailer:

The Ally: On rare occasion, there may be a family run grocery store or a mom and pop pharmacy that willingly gives up selling tobacco because they care about the health of the community. CVS store managers have on occasion spoken about how good they felt when the chain voluntarily stopped selling tobacco nationally. These allies may consider making a public statement at an upcoming city council or board of supervisors meeting, or they may be willing to share a quote as to why their business is in alignment with the goal of having healthy local communities.

The Neutral: While engaging with the retailer community remains crucial, it's also prudent to identify retailers with a neutral stance who will at least agree not to oppose the campaign. These retailers may be invited to educational or listening sessions to provide insights, including opposing viewpoints, pertinent to the campaign's objectives.

The Opposition: Some retailers may simply be opponents. Change is hard, especially if they are concerned about being able to support their families. Listening to opponents can help you plan your education of decision makers to counter the arguments you know they will make. Educating the opposing retailers on facts versus myths (such as the fact that it is very hard for youth to buy nicotine products online in California after passage of SB39) can help prevent them from stating those myths as facts in front of decision makers.

STEPS TO REACHING OUT

Establishing trust demands empathy and a diplomatic approach. It goes without saying that when pursuing ambitious policy objectives such as ending tobacco sales, having a vast coalition of supporters at the table is key to success. When reaching out, start first with those target retailers that fall into the Ally category, or if there are none, in the Neutral category.

"Our family has owned Four Corners Market since 1987 and have been successful without selling tobacco products since 1989. The market is 1100 square foot with only two checkers, yet sales have consistently increased, reaching their current sales of \$3.5 million each year."

-Bill Hall, Alturas, CA



1 Develop Your Talking Points

Schedule time with those who have decision-making power for the business, such as the owner or manager. Respect their time and priorities by scheduling during a time that is most convenient for them to allow for a more focused interaction.

2 Schedule a One-On-One Meetings

Prepare which questions you intend to ask to gain the most insightful understanding of their thought process. Additionally, plan your responses and determine the extent of engagement, if any, you wish to propose. For example, "I'm glad you are supportive of our community's health, we could really use a supportive retailer voice in our efforts."

3 Encourage a Win-Win Vision

Present their prospective engagement positively. If they are contemplating becoming an ally, lead them to acknowledge how their alignment as an ally builds their reputation as a retailer championing a healthier community. If not supportive, thank them and conclude the meeting.

4 Follow-up and Maintain Relationship

Send a note thanking them for their time and summarize any actions from your meeting, if applicable. You may need to update your talking points based on the conversation.

Engaging and educating retailers about the impact of commercial tobacco is a positive step for your coalition's objectives and serves to build awareness in your community.



California Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement

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