

# Unethical actions of tobacco companies

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Ethics can refer to many things such as a code of rules, a set of principles one lives by or the study of what is right or wrong (Bowie and Duska 1991).

Either than everyday life, ethics matter also in business. They matter because it is essential for business and also they are unavoidable. In the opinion of Sternberg (2002 p. 15 ) " Business ethics challenge is to make it better and far from being anti-business, business ethics actually provides essential support for maximising long-term owner value".

Fisher and Lovell (2003) pointed out that, in business when companies grow larger to meet the ambitions of organization's members, they may also act selfishly and not in the public interest and this kind of activities matter in ethics. Also in the opinion of Singer (1991 p. 31) profits are no longer condemned along with avarice in moralizing sermons and corporations are no longer envisioned as faceless, soulless, amoral moonlights.

For now, the real concern of the companies should be just how profit should be thought of in the larger context of productivity and social responsibility and how corporations as complex communities can best serve both their own employees and the surrounding society. Moreover Weiss (2003) mentioned that, the main aim of business is to make profit but to make profit companies should not make harm or be the reason of making harm due to their activities.

If this kind of activities takes place for the focusing on individualistic pursuit of profit, human's social needs became ignored and this is not ethical in the opinion of Fisher and Lovell (2003). Bowie and Duska (1991) also supported this idea and added that besides avoiding making or giving harm, companies

have to be trustworthy and stand behind their promises. Turning back to tobacco companies, the products they produce are also harmful and it is one of the key reasons of causing deaths.

However besides these points, a research in USA showed that, in 1994 %64 of the USA citizens thought that, smokers themselves are either mostly or completely to blame for the health problems faced by smokers in USA. Only 25 percent said that the tobacco industry was either completely or mostly to blame. In 2000, %59 of Americans in the current poll say that smokers are to blame for their own problems, with just 26 percent saying that the tobacco companies are mostly or completely to blame.

Fourteen percent said both are to blame equally. In another research and in a very similar industry, gun industry's actions are not generally blame for causing death; citizens (%28) thought that mostly the ones who buy them are responsible for this kind of activities and deaths ([www. globalethics. org](http://www.globalethics.org)). As mentioned before, company should be trustworthy and has to stand behind its words. There was an announcement made by former Geoff Bible who was the CEO of Philip Morris who said that

" if they found out that cigarettes had killed one person that company would stop making them immediately" (Temple 2004) and for now smoking causes 11, 000 deaths a day (Bhatiasevi 2001) and Philip Morris tobacco company is still running their business as fast as strong as possible which can be understood as making unethical action. Sternberg (2002) explained that, unethical companies or activities can be costly in all conditions for the ones

who are making them. Failure to recognize and address ethical problems can lead to very substantial charges, both legal and financial.

Also he added that most of the company failure story's main reason is not showing keen interest such points in ethics. Turning back to tobacco companies, due to producing harmful products, governments are charging these companies by huge amounts of money and also restricting their actions in many areas. Besides economical punishments, many countries are banning tobacco advertisements. For an example in UK government made heavy regulations on tobacco advertising.

Tobacco companies can not make advertisements which will directly effect the citizens and encourage them to smoke (UK GOVERNMENT 2002). By this kind of action governments believes the ban will help cut the number of people taking up smoking. However tobacco companies disagree with this idea that claiming advertising only encourages existing smokers to swap brands and that will be it (BBC 1999).

However, another research showed that, besides many regulations on advertising, only the tobacco companies in USA spent \$5.6 billion per year on advertising and promotions and this rate is increasing constantly by the following years because these companies found another way to advertise their products. Neither than direct advertising, they are doing indirect advertising which can be explained in five points which was explained in the 11th World Conference on Tobacco or Health (2000). First one is the sports sponsorship. Tobacco compaies link their products with health and athletic

prowess and reach large number of people including young ones by sponsoring sporting events and teams such as F1 grand prix.

Marlboro is one of the biggest sponsorship of the champion Ferrari team. Millions of people are watching and supporting them and this group is not only the adults' actually mostly young generation. Other method is making promotional items. Tobacco companies put their cigarette logos on t-shirts, hats, backpacks and other consumer items popular with children and among adults. Third one is Brand Stretching which can be explained by sharing brand names just like Marlboro Classics clothing, Salem Power Stationmusicstores and Benson ; Hedges coffees and coffee shops.

These marketing strategies are powering up their promotional actions when advertising is banned. The fourth one is giving free samples especially in the places for the young people like shopping malls, rock concerts and discos. This kind of activity cost them a little but it enables them to make new customers addictive to their products. The last activity, they focus on is the entertainment sector. They become the sponsorship of discos, rock concerts and other events popular with young people.

They are trying to say that they are always with us in all conditions to make costumers to remember and keep them in mind all the time. As it is obvious from above, activities of tobacco companies are effecting young generation besides adults. There is a huge increasing trend in young generation to smoke. The number of these smokers is increasing and for now there are billions of smokers' around the world. In an example, due to the activities of

Philip Morris 2000 kids in a day become addicted to smoking (www.tobaccofreekids.org)

However, in the opinion of BAT (www.bat.com) and Philip Morris (www.tobaccofreekids.org) their only target is adults. They are making up campaigns to prevent youth from smoking and they are organizing seminars and different activities in schools and in televisions to explain the harms of smoking. Moreover, in the report of BAT company announced that, government made many research about their policies and actions but they had never been charged or blamed for any kind of actions for targeting young generation (www.bat.com).

Besides these announcements in 1984 R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company market researcher admitted in a secret internal report that " Younger adult smokers have been the critical factor in the growth and decline of every major brand and company over the last 50 years. They will continue to be just as important to brands/companies in the future for two simple reasons: The renewal of the market stems almost entirely from 18-year-old smokers.

No more than 5 percent of smokers start after age 24.[And] the brand loyalty of 18-year-old smokers far outweighs any tendency to switch with age... Brands/companies which fail to attract their fair share of younger adult smokers face an uphill battle. They must achieve net switching gains every year to merely hold share... Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers... If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline, just as a population which does not give birth will

eventually dwindle. " (www. who. int)Smoking is one of the key problems for all the inhabitants around the world.

Tobacco producers are generally very big companies and they have huge effect on countries economies and also in media. As most of the other companies do, they are making profit and trying to fulfill the demands of their customers. However, their products are directly the main reason of many deaths. The actions they made, the words they said, are not fitting what they have to do. None of them can be explain in terms ethical. But the thing is, really are they responsible from these consequences or their customers.

It is human's responsibility take care of their life and health. These companies are not pointing gun to their heads to start smoking. Mostly customers are choosing this way but it is definite that tobacco companies are indirectly pushing them for smoking. Neither than who carries this dreadful flag, tobacco companies should not convinceenvironmentand they must start being ethical in all action that they will make in the future because they have their own social responsibility to fulfill besides filling up their pockets.