

Extra credit project for
General Biology (Biol 1114)
General Botany (Bot 2114)
Dr. Stanley Rice
Spring 2014

In these courses I would like to encourage not just knowledge but activism as well. I hope that citizens might have a significant influence on large corporations, even though this hope is faint. Certainly citizens will have no influence if we do not give it a try.

There are numerous socially-relevant issues that involve biological science. I would like to start with one of these: tobacco. Several large corporations make immense profits by marketing a product that is both addictive and deadly. I would like to offer extra credit to students who will write to these corporations and express disapproval of, along with tangible action against, such products.

Although your letter will probably only be read by a lower-level employee, the corporation will probably tally up the letters they receive. You may not be able to be a voice but you will be at least a number, which is better than nothing.

Please be polite in your communications, as in the example below, since the person who actually reads your letter may bear no personal responsibility and might just be happy to have a job. (They might even privately agree with you.)

Here is an example of a letter that could be sent to a tobacco corporation:

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Dear ____:

I wish to express my strong opposition to your corporation's practice of marketing tobacco, an addictive and deadly substance. Because it causes cancer and numerous other health problems, tobacco creates an immense amount of suffering, often resulting in the death of the consumer after a long period of illness, much of it borne at the expense of the non-smoking clients of insurance companies and the taxpayers. Not only do I consider these practices to be inhumane, but corporate profits at public expense are against the spirit of American enterprise. And because tobacco is addictive, consumers are not free to choose whether to continue smoking. Selling products to a captive market is also unethical and against the spirit of American enterprise.

I am also aware that the CEO of your corporation in 1994 knowingly presented false testimony in Representative Henry Waxman's committee regarding his belief that tobacco is not addictive.

I will use every reasonable opportunity to tell my family and friends about the harm that tobacco use is causing.

I realize that it is very unlikely that this letter will actually be read by the CEO or someone who has a decision-making capacity. But I would urge whichever lower-level employee reads this letter to consider working for another corporation, one that you can be proud of, and wish you good fortune in finding such a job.

I would like to urge your corporation to use its immense wealth to invest in something that is constructive, or at least less destructive. We realize that tobacco is your business, but there are other profitable things you can do. I affirm that I will not only refuse to purchase your products but refuse to invest in your corporation, directly or indirectly.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

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Address each letter in the manner indicated below for each of the tobacco corporations. It is easiest to submit comments online, but some of them appear to prefer letters sent to a physical mailing address. In some cases, you cannot enter the website unless you are 21 years old, in which case you will have to send a physical letter. Recipients will probably delete attachments, so please copy and paste your letter (in your words) into the body of the email if you submit your comments in that way.

Here is the contact and other useful information:

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Philip Morris International:

Please copy and paste your letter into the comment box on their website:

http://www.pmi.com/eng/pages/comments_and_suggestions.aspx

Name, email address, and phone number are optional; include email only if you wish to receive their response (which will probably be a form letter). Please be aware that by visiting their website you are allowing them to download cookies into your computer (which everybody does anyway). I would suggest addressing the letter to Representative of Philip Morris International or, if you are brave, to the CEO, who is André Calantzopoulos.

- CEO in 1994: William Campbell
- Philip Morris markets Marlboro; L and M; Merit; Virginia Slims; Parliament; Chesterfield; Philip Morris.

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R. J. Reynolds Tobacco:

Their website contains no information regarding how to submit comments. The nearest match I can find is for two media representatives, listed below. Their job is to send information to journalists. Since you are probably not a journalist, you will probably receive no response. But once again, numbers may count.

David Howard – (336) 741-3489 Email: howardd1@rjrt.com

Richard Smith – (336) 741-1409 Email: smithr19@rjrt.com

I would suggest addressing the letter by name to one of these representatives. You may request that your letter be forwarded to the President and Chief Commercial Officer, Andrew D. Gilchrist.

- CEO in 1994: James Johnson
- R. J. Reynolds now owns Brown and Williamson which markets Barclay; Belair; Capri; Carlton; GPC; Kool; Laredo; Lucky Strike; Misty; North State; Pall Mall; Private Stock; Raleigh; Tareyton; Viceroy; and Wings.

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Lorillard Inc.:

This corporation accepts emails only for comments on specific products that you bought, e.g. you have to provide them with the lot and package number. This company appears to require a physical letter or a phone call: Customer Relations, Lorillard, Inc., P.O. Box 21688, Greensboro, NC 27420; 1-877-703-0386. You may wish to send your letter to CEO Murray S. Kessler.

- CEO in 1994: Andrew Tisch
- Lorillard markets Newport; Maverick; Kent; Old Gold; and True.
- They boast of their profits: “In 2012, we shipped 40.2 billion cigarettes, all of which were sold in the United States and certain U.S. possessions and territories. In 2012, we reported net sales of \$6.6 billion and net income of \$1.1 billion.”

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Liggett Group:

“We welcome your comments or questions. Please email us at consumer.relations@lvbrands.com or write us at Consumer Relations, 100 Maple Lane, Mebane, North Carolina 27302.

You may wish to address the CEO, Ronald J. Bernstein.

- CEO in 1994: Ed Horrigan
- Liggett Group markets Pyramid, Eagle 20's, Liggett Select, Eve, and Grand Prix.

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This letter should be from you, personally, so do the following:

- Of course, remember to include your name.
- Reword it in your own voice.
- Include any personal experiences you may wish. *Do not divulge confidential medical information*, but if you are a smoker you might choose to declare that you have quit smoking, and you might want to mention health impacts caused by smoking upon yourself or members of your family.

In order to follow up on this letter with personal integrity, please do the following:

- If you are a smoker and declare that you have quit, make every effort to follow up on it. The corporation will never know whether you have done so, but personal integrity is important for anyone who wants to be an active citizen.
- There is a very good chance that you may be investing money in corporations. Of course, if you send such a letter, you should not directly invest in tobacco corporations. But you should also check investment portfolios made on your behalf and, to the extent possible, avoid portfolios that invest in tobacco corporations. Such portfolios are very common in retirement plans. Don't wait until retirement to think about this; employers often begin tax-deferred employee retirement plans as soon as they hire you.

In order to receive extra credit for this project (2% on the final grade, which is the amount I have offered for projects in the past), *you must forward me a copy of the email, or submit a Xerox copy or Word file of the letter, for each of the corporations. You must send communications to all of them in order to receive extra credit.*

Legal notice: The instructor (Stanley Rice) accepts no responsibility for the content of your letters or emails. Please don't cause any trouble by calling the corporations or their executives or employees murderers or any such thing; and do not threaten them with anything other than a refusal to buy or invest in their products.