

Blogs, videos & text messages A new way to stop smoking

The future is indeed friendly, especially for those TELUS employees who took advantage of the company's smoking cessation coaching service called STOMP, an acronym for STop smoking Over Mobile Phones.

Zak Bhamani, director of consumer health at TELUS Health Solutions along with Product Manager Pete Cronin used established internal communications channels like the Healthy Living programs (championed by the wellness team and led by Director Janet Crowe) to explain the science behind the application and create interest in the program.

For example, using Team Vision—a five-minute video clip that is distributed to employees every two weeks highlighting programs, jobs and news around the company—Cronin and Bhamani created a three-minute segment on exactly how STOMP worked.

"And then, of course, there was Cronin's blog," says Bhamani. "We have internal blog sites for our employees, so Cronin authored one just for pre-launch so that people could converse with him, and it really put more of a personal note on STOMP."

Originally developed and clinically validated by the University of Auckland in New Zealand, STOMP is a behaviour-based coaching program that offers 24/7 support with daily motivational tips along with automatic and individually prompted text messages.

As Bhamani is quick to point out, "It's got the ability to offer you that 24/7 support, and, realistically, how else are you going to get that support?"

Throughout STOMP's quitting process (which averages six months) 140 character texts are sent to participants at specifically prescribed intervals with messages of encouragement. Additional messages of support can be prompted at any time by the participant. For example, a cigarette craving inspired by stress and anxiety can be quelled by the participant texting "crave stress," to which the service will respond with suggestions for taking the participant's mind off smoking and overcoming that specific situ-



Zak Bhamani



Pete Cronin

Employee
Communication

ational craving.

Results have been promising. At the half-way mark, the churn rate (participant dropout rate) was a low 35% and the sustained quit rate (rate of uninterrupted smoking cessation by continuing participants) was 17.4%. Compare that to the statistic of individuals who try quitting without support: a meager 3% success rate.

Originally launched as a pilot program with a six-month cycle (that would have ended this September), TELUS has now left STOMP's registration open and is seriously considering making the program a permanent part of their wellness offering. □

Editor's Note: Stay tuned to *Working Well's* next issue when we'll take a look at TELUS's final STOMP results.

Photo: Dave Strain/Unep... Jeff Vinkat (bottom)

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