



Leveraging the Monday Effect for Tobacco Cessation

Introduction

The Monday Campaigns (TMC) launched in 2003 with the mission to make Monday the day we collectively commit to our health by bringing best practices of marketing to public health. The first Monday initiative – Meatless Monday – has become a global movement with active programs in over 40 countries.

One of TMC’s major priorities has been to apply the Monday concept to tobacco cessation as a way to encourage people to quit when they’re most open to taking action and to build in a weekly cue to recommit to their quit and re-quit if they’ve had a relapse. The current practice among major tobacco cessation organizations is to tell people to quit today, quit on a special occasion, or just pick any day in the future, and many don’t have strategies to sustain support for smokers over time even though the average person relapses 7-10 times before quitting for good.

In the last five years, TMC has worked with the Institute for Global Tobacco Control at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to explore the ways in which Monday can be a leverage point in helping people quit and stay quit.

This includes peer-reviewed research published in JAMA Internal Medicine about weekly patterns in quit smoking-related internet searches, an analysis of weekly patterns in calls to 28 state quitlines, online polls of smoker preference of quit days, three pilots of Monday programs in community and state tobacco cessation programs, and most recently an analysis of the Truth Initiative’s data on engagement with their Become an Ex program.

Here’s what we found:

Monday is the day smokers are most likely to choose as a quit date.

- An online poll of almost 7,000 people on The National Cancer Institute’s website smokefree.gov found 53% of respondents indicated Monday was the best day to quit smoking. (National Cancer Institute, 2011).
- Another online survey of 1,000 people conducted by FGI Research found that smokers felt Monday was the day they would most likely choose to quit.¹

People seek cessation services and information more on Monday than other days.

- A study published in JAMA Internal Medicine showed “quit smoking” query volumes are 25% higher on Mondays than other days, amounting to 8 million more quit smoking searches per year on Mondays across 8 different languages.²
- An analysis of participant engagement data from Truth Initiative’s “Become an Ex” quit program shows that there are more initial contacts with the online program at the beginning of the week as compared to other times.³
- An analysis of 16 state quitlines and the US national quit hotline showed that Mondays are the most popular day for calls, with a consistent weekly pattern of a beginning of the week “surge” in call volumes and a decline towards the end of the week and over the weekend.⁴

Engagement with online quit programs follows a weekly pattern with Mondays demonstrating higher engagement.

- Results from the Johns Hopkins analysis of Truth Initiative’s “Become an Ex” quit program show that there is more engagement with the online program at the beginning of the week as compared to other times.³

Choosing Monday as a quit day increases confidence and success rates for quitters.

- A QSQM pilot conducted by the Information & Quality Healthcare and the Mississippi state smoking quitline found that smokers given the QSQM intervention had a 47% quit rate at 90 day follow-up versus 39% for those that did not receive the intervention.⁵
- In a pilot conducted with smokers in State of Maryland counselor-led weekly in-person cessation groups, Johns Hopkins researchers found that those in the group that encouraged using Monday as a quit day were more likely to show increased self-efficacy about quitting at the end of the study than those that did not.⁶

Promoting cessation services on Monday increases visits to websites and engagement with quit resources.

- A QSQM campaign conducted by the Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI), in collaboration with the state health department's Louisiana Tobacco Control Program (LTCP), found that the average number of daily users of their website increased by 49% from the previous year and average daily page views increased by 41% from the previous year, exceeding campaign objectives.⁷

What does this mean?

These findings suggest a range of improvements to existing cessation programs that are easy to implement and *can save lives!*

It's time to recommend Monday as a day to quit.

- While some may choose to quit on another day, building in a Monday quit recommendation along with education on how to use it as a weekly cue to stay on track can give quitters a tool to stay quit over the long haul.

Leverage insight about the collective “Monday mindset” to quit smoking communications.

- Every Monday millions of smokers around the world are contemplating quitting. We need to connect them, support them, and let them know they're not alone!

Focus deployment of precious resources when people are most likely to quit... and don't waste resources when they're not paying much attention.

- This means staffing up quitlines, buying advertising, and engaging followers and participants at the beginning of the week. Messages can incorporate the “fresh start” Monday insight to give meaning to the timing of the message.

Regardless of what day people chose as their quit day, Monday sustaining messages should be built into every tobacco cessation program as a way to help people stay quit.

Our team is eager to work with leading tobacco cessation groups to offer digital resources and content to help incorporate Monday into existing programs. If you are interested in working with us, please contact Catherine Chao (cchao@mondaycampaigns.org).

References

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2. [Ayers, J.W., Althouse, B.M., Johnson, M.J., & Cohen, J.E. \(2014\). Circaseptan \(weekly\) rhythms in smoking cessation considerations. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 174, 146-148.](#)
3. De Leon, E., Welding, K., Cha, S., Johnson, M.L., Cohen, J., Graham, A. (2016). *Weekly enrollment and usage patterns for the BecomeAnEX on-line smoking cessation intervention.* Manuscript submitted for publication.
4. [Johnson, M.J. \(2011\). Weekly patterns in usage of tobacco quit lines. Presented to the North American Quitline Consortium. November, 2011.](#)
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7. Louisiana Public Health Institute (2015). Pilot of a Monday-based tobacco cessation service promotion strategy in Louisiana.