

A Typical Success Story

In 1983, Fred Vandegrift was the publisher of the *Salina Journal*, a daily newspaper in Salina, Kansas. He'd been getting numerous complaints from employees who were bothered by smoking at work. So he decided to make the *Journal* a smokefree workplace, effective New Year's Day 1984. Vandegrift had some apprehension that the ban might offend customers and employees, but no problems materialized. Indeed, in the first quarter of the year the new policy was effected, only one cigarette was smoked in the building: A customer came in smoking, not noticing signs posted at all entrances, but politely returned outside to dispose of his cigarette upon request.

Vandegrift also offered a \$500 bonus to any smoking employee who quit smoking during the first three months of the year. Among the smokers: Fred Vandegrift. He'd quit several times in his life, but was smoking between two and three packs a day when he made the announcement of the impending ban. "Certainly the policy was an encouragement to me. I wanted to quit. It doesn't take a genius to know it's not good for you," Vandegrift said. The publisher wrote himself a \$500 check on April 1, 1984.

Twenty-five of his thirty-one employees who were smokers on January 1 also earned \$500 checks on April 1. The new ex-smokers thanked him for his help. One

circulation department employee, who had once kicked the habit for a year on a \$5 bet, was particularly delighted with the \$500 incentive.

The real surprise, entirely unexpected, was public response to the new policy. The story made headlines nationwide. At least 20 radio stations and a half dozen TV stations called requesting to interview Vandegrift. Hundreds of letters poured in from all over the country. Other employers considering such a move themselves, or merely intrigued by the *Journal's* action, wrote requesting information. Workers from other companies wrote to applaud the *Journal* and say that they wished they had smokefree jobs, too. Vandegrift says 99 percent of the response was positive.

The story of the *Salina Journal's* new nonsmoking policy contains three elements usually encountered by companies that decide to go smokefree:

- They were apprehensive.
- Implementation of the policy was much easier than they had anticipated.
- They were flooded by good publicity and by positive responses from other employers and employees outside the company.

The *Journal's* experience also contains an interesting example of changing attitudes toward smoking: Fifty years ago, during World War II, a printer at the newspaper, Dick Levin, was in the Navy,



SMOKEFREE AIR
Everywhere

stationed in the Aleutian Islands. The *Journal*, in a friendly gesture typical of the era, sent him five cartons of cigarettes. "Now," says Levin, a little perplexed, "they're offering me \$500 to quit."

The *Journal* did lose some cigarette advertising. They were also challenged by employees and the public to drop cigarette advertising altogether. Many felt that it was inconsistent to ban smoking, a health hazard, while continuing to accept income from cigarette promotion. So on January 1, 1985, the *Journal* dropped all cigarette advertising.

A year later, Fred Vandegrift retired. The new publisher, Harris Rayl, reported that the policy on smoking was no longer a matter for comment, but was accepted as the established way of business. The decision to refuse tobacco ads generated much positive support from readers; many said they had been offended by cigarette ads. Asked about the loss of income from the ads, Rayl said, "We do make a little less money. But it was a good decision, morally, and in terms of public relations."

This report first appeared in Toward a Smokefree Workplace, published by New Jersey GASP in 1985. It was updated in 1986 for the second edition. In interviews for Smokefree Air Everywhere, Journal publisher Harris Rayl and Business Manager Dave Martin gave updates on the newspaper's smokefree policy, reporting that the Journal's being smokefree is "old news" and businesses without smoking control policies are now viewed as unusual.

The Journal is considering making its outdoor smoking area smokefree. Its beautiful patio, overlooking the Smoky Hill River, has been marred with cigarette butts. Publisher

Rayl issued a statement announcing his intention to eliminate smoking if the problem continued, and Manager Martin says smokers are "scrambling" to keep the area pristine.