COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE BINGE DRINKING PREVENTION

The Students’ Perspective

THE CENTURY COUNCIL
Distillers Fighting Drunk Driving & Underage Drinking

ACE
American Council on Education

Ad Council
Discovering the voice of the students on the issue of overconsumption
The Century Council partnered with the Ad Council and the American Council on Education to sponsor the American Advertising Federation’s 2009 National Student Advertising Competition.
MORE THAN 140 college and university teams submitted communication plans to address dangerous overconsumption of alcohol and design a campaign to promote behavioral change.
you think you can dance

And you could. Three drinks ago.
It takes LessThanUThink.org

And you wouldn't. Three drinks ago.
It takes LessThanUThink.org
YOU KNOW YOUR FRIEND WANTS TO DRINK HER SORROWS AWAY AFTER BEING DUMPED. BE THERE.

YOU KNOW, BE THERE.
TO LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO TO BE THERE, VISIT US AT:
WWW.YOURKNOWBETHERE.COM
In 2010, The Century Council and Ad Council partnered to conduct follow-up qualitative and quantitative research to further investigate students’ perceptions focusing on:

- Student attitudes and behavior
- Audience segmentation
- Message evaluation
OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY
Gain a deeper understanding of binge drinking behavior among college students
Understand the “type and tone” of messages that would cause a re-consideration of behavior
Create a nationally relevant strategic framework that engages students and can be adapted to different local markets
We reviewed current research, programs and campaigns dealing with overconsumption of alcohol, and established a panel of experts to provide guidance and feedback.

* While expert panelists provided extensive feedback through the project, please note that not every panelist or organization endorses every finding and recommendation included in this report.
QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY
BOSTON, MA

3 DISCUSSION GROUPS
(6-8 respondents per group):
Moderate Drinkers:
Males 18-20
Infrequent Drinkers:
Females 21-25
Bingers:
Females 21-25

1 TAG ALONG/RED-EYE RECAP
(4 respondents):
Bingers:
Females 21-25

24 DISCOVERY JOURNALS

24 BLOG RESPONDENTS
3 DISCUSSION GROUPS
(6-8 respondents per group):
Infrequent Drinkers:
Males 21-25
Bingers:
Females 18-20
Bingers:
Males 21-25

1 TAG ALONG/RED-EYE RECAP
(4 respondents):
Bingers:
Males 21-25

24 DISCOVERY JOURNALS
24 BLOG RESPONDENTS
Boulder, CO

3 Discussion Groups
(6-8 respondents per group):
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(4 respondents):
Bingers:
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24 Discovery Journals
24 Blog Respondents
QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY
Online survey of 1500 college students who drink and go out socially

**Screening requirements:**
- Full time college students at 2-year or 4-year undergraduate institutions
- Mix of ages 18-24
- Mix of private and public institutions
- Nationally representative (gender, ethnicity, and geography)
- In a typical week – goes out socially at least twice
- In a typical week – drinks alcohol at least once

**20 minute survey covering:**
- Demographics, psychographics, media habits
- Drinking-related attitudes and behaviors
- Responses to a variety of binge drinking reduction message platforms
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
The term binge drinking is not relevant to college students, nor is the “5/4” government definition.

Drinking too many nights per week and too much on one occasion.

**WHAT WE HEARD**

- Get hammered
- Trashed
- Tanked
- Buzz Killington
- Drinking till you pass out
- Blitzed
- Crazy
- Shammered
5 drinks in 2 hours? Then I would say that 100% of college kids binge drink.

21+ FEMALE, BOSTON
I’d say a typical night out for me is about 15 drinks or so.

21+ MALE, BOULDER
THE "GOLDEN ZONE"

Maximum night out ≠ drinking to the maximum.

- Meet new people
- Stop worrying what others think
- Connect with friends on a new level
- Have unforeseen adventures
- Create life-long memories
- Get a much deserved break
6 KEY MESSAGING INSIGHTS

were uncovered from the qualitative work
THE 6 KEY MESSAGES WERE:

1. Speak to universal truths that don’t require the support of statistics/facts or scare tactics

2. Highlight the feelings of overconsumption not the math

3. Peer based messaging works only if it’s really about a student’s own peers

4. Peers have a great deal of influence on drinking behaviors

5. Embarrassing behavior is indicative of a great night out

6. Messages that influence the situational factors surrounding a night are more readily accepted
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Attitudes and Behaviors
OF THOSE WHO DRINK AND GO OUT SOCIALLY

2/3 OF RESPONDENTS SELF-REPORT BINGE DRINK ON A WEEKLY BASIS
On average, college students reported drinking more than 4-5 drinks in a two hour period about 2 times per week.

Q2B. Approximately how many occasions, in a typical week, do you have more than 4-5 drinks in a two-hour period?
Base: Total Respondents (n=1,500)
Q5. Using a scale from agree strongly to disagree strongly, please rate each of the drinking styles in terms of how well it describes how you consume alcohol.

Base: Total Respondents (n=1,500)

Despite the fact that a majority are bingeing on a weekly basis, 78% of students felt they have “a good grasp on their drinking limits and always maintain them”
Q16A. Below is a list of factors that may possibly influence you to drink more than you otherwise might have on a specific occasion. Base: Total Respondents (n=1,500)
A VARIETY OF EXPERIENCES occur when students drink too much – top outcomes tend to have short-term consequences.

- Being physically sick: 69%
- Humiliating yourself: 59%
- Getting drunk too quickly: 51%
- Blacking out: 47%
- Becoming a different person: 43%
- Sending regrettable texts/voicemails: 43%
- Ending up in sketchy situations: 43%

Q14. Which of the following have you experienced when you feel like you drink too much?
Base: Ever Feel Like Drink Too Much (n=598)
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Drinker Type Segmentation
DEFINING DRINKER TYPES helps develop communications strategies for targeted messaging

- All college drinkers are not the same
- All nights out are not created equal
- Drinking behaviors vary
STUDENT DRINKER TYPES

- Captains of Control: 25%
- Savvy Sippers: 23%
- Malleable Moderates: 21%
- Easily Swayed Swiggers: 18%
- Copious Confidents: 12%
DRINKER TYPE 1

CAPTAINS OF CONTROL
COMMON TRAITS OF

CAPTAINS OF CONTROL

FUTURE FOCUSED
RESPONSIBLE
IN CONTROL
COMMON TRAITS OF

CAPTAINS OF CONTROL

MY MANTRA

“I am a casual drinker and I’d much rather have a good time socializing with friends than focus on getting drunk. I have no problem controlling how much I drink and rarely have regrettable experiences. I am in college to learn, not to party.”
COMMON TRAITS OF

CAPTAINS OF CONTROL

- Skews toward females
- Less likely to go out socially
- Fewest drinks consumed in an occasion and in a typical week
- Least likely to end up drunk when drinking – have limits and try to maintain them
- Not easily influenced to drink when they don’t want to
- Tend to stick to their pace regardless of how others are drinking around them
- Firm grasp on level of drunkenness throughout the night
DRINKER TYPE 2

SAVvy SIPPERS
COMMON TRAITS OF

SAVVY SIPPERS

STEADY
CAUTIOUS
SENSIBLE
COMMON TRAITS OF

SAVVY SIPPERS

MY MANTRA

“I am a moderate drinker. Drinking is not the main objective of the night and I am typically cautious about how much I drink by doing smart things like drinking water now and then. However, on occasion I may drink too much.”
COMMON TRAITS OF SAVVY SIPPERS

- Experimental
- Enjoys being part of the group rather than the one in charge
- Sometimes feel they drink too much, but overall maintain their level of drunkenness
- Rarely ends up too drunk too quickly or blacks out
- Less likely to be influenced to drink more
- Enjoy pacing their drinks and don’t feel the need to hurry through drinks
DRINKER TYPE 3

MALLEABLE MODERATES
COMMON TRAITS OF
MALLEABLE MODERATES

ADAPTABLE
PERSUADABLE
LAID BACK
COMMON TRAITS OF

MALLEABLE MODERATES

MY MANTRA

“Although I’d consider myself a moderate drinker, I never feel I drink too much. I enjoy pregaming and like using different tactics like taking shots to feel the alcohol quicker. Once in awhile, even if I may not be in the mood to drink, I can usually be persuaded to do so.”
College is a time to let loose and have fun
Tend to drink more when they go out
Generally feel they do not drink too much
Can be influenced to drink when they don’t want to
More strongly influenced to drink more by outside factors like cost of drinks, friends, pregaming
Don’t enjoy the act of drinking and rely on shots as a way to quickly get the “work” over and done with
DRINKER TYPE 4

EASILY-SWAYED SWIGGERS
COMMON TRAITS OF EASILY-SWAYED SWIGGERS

EXTRAVERTED
AGREEABLE
EASILY INFLUENCED
EASILY-SWAYED SWIGGERS

MY MANTRA

“I consider myself a socializer. I enjoy drinking at the pace of everyone around me, which more often than not gets me into trouble and too drunk. I give into peer pressure more than I probably should, but I look at it as just a part of college life.”
COMMON TRAITS OF

EASILY-SWAYED SWIGGERS

- Skews toward younger males
- Frequently go out socially
- Extremely important to feel part of a social group and fit in with peers
- Greatly affected by the way their friends drink and try to keep up with those around them
- Often feel like they drink too much, and usually end up drunk
- Often drink even when they don’t want to
- Pregaming and drinking games/rituals frequently lead them to over-consume
- Dislike the act of drinking – try to hurry through the “work” as quickly as possible
DRINKER TYPE 5

COPIOUS CONFIDENTS
COMMON TRAITS OF

COPIOUS CONFIDENTS

DIRECTIVE
EXPERIENCED
SELF-ASSURED
COMMON TRAITS OF
COPIOUS CONFIDENTS

MY MANTRA

“Drinking is a big part of my college experience. I would consider myself drunk on most drinking occasions, but never to the point where I would say I drink too much. I enjoy drinking thoroughly, but only drink when I want to.”
COMMON TRAITS OF

COPIOUS CONFIDENTS

- Skews toward older males (22-23 year olds)
- Frequently go out socially and enjoy being the leader of the group
- Heaviest consumption of all drinker types (by occasion and frequency)
- Rarely feel like they drink too much
- Most likely to end up drunk when drinking
- Rarely influenced to drink when they don’t want to
- Tend to drink quickly, but able to adjust pace to those around them
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Message Evaluation
MESSAGES WERE PRESENTED TO STUDENTS

all with a unique way of tackling the issue at hand
1. Remember these **SIMPLE TIPS** for a better night

2. **TAKE CONTROL** of your night and enjoy it your own way

3. **DON’T FORCE IT**, some nights aren’t meant to be

4. If you **STICK TO YOUR LIMITS**, the potential of the night is limitless

5. You **KNOW WHERE YOUR LINE IS** … try not to cross it.

6. College students across the country are having awesome nights out **WITHOUT DRINKING TO EXTREME** … so can you
TAKE CONTROL

You should always drink at your own pace not at the pace of others. Sometimes that means having the control to pass on that extra round or two at the end of the night.

Take control of your night and enjoy it your own way.

KNOW WHERE YOUR LINE IS

Those extra couple of drinks can mean crossing a line from fun person to idiot, saying something to ruin a friendship or texting something desperate to an ex.

You know where your line is… try not to cross it.

2 MESSAGES

were the most impactful among students
Two messages were the most impactful among students.

**Take Control**

“It tells me not to let other people’s behavior affect my own.”

**Know Where Your Line Is**

“This statement stands out because it says it’s okay to drink, just know your limit and take control of it.”
WHY DID THESE MESSAGES RESONATE?

- Motivating
- Uniqueness
- Clarity
- Relevance

The messages never try to preach and they always respect the individual.
CAMPAIGN & MESSAGE EVOLUTION
BE REALISTIC

Students continue to **GET DRUNK**

Students continue to **PLAY DRINKING GAMES & PREGAME**

Communications are **UNLIKELY TO WORK** if they tell students to stop drinking
INSTEAD

Communications need to have **2 KEY STEPS** prior to achieving our goal:
Step 1: Create More Self Awareness

Step 2: Build Resilience to Peer Influence

These steps help students understand their own capacity, limits & consequences and recognize the influences on their behavior.

Goal: Rethinking Behavior
So what is the best tone to use?
RESPECT

You’re not kids anymore and we’re not your parents
AUTHENTICITY

We want to be real, truthful and honest about this subject.
We get it that college is about having fun, being spontaneous and testing your boundaries.
CARE / CONCERN

We want you to make smarter drinking decisions
ENCOURAGEMENT

We want to help you gain the confidence to find your own safer “drinking rhythm” that you feel comfortable about.
How do we reach college students most effectively?
DELIVERING THE MESSAGES
WHEN NOT DRINKING

TRADITIONAL MEDIA
- Magazines (4+ times per week)
- College newspaper (1 time per week)

ONLINE MEDIA
- All targets are online
- Heavy YouTube users
- Use social media 20+ hours per week
DELIVERING THE MESSAGES

WHEN NOT DRINKING

AND

WHEN DRINKING

DECISIONS ARE MADE
WHEN DRINKING

DECISIONS ARE MADE

MOBILE MEDIA
- Targets are heavy mobile users
- Use “real time” media to reach them

AMBIENT MESSAGES
- Where students are out and about:
  - On campus
  - Dorms
  - Bars
- Voice of a friend or student peer
NOW WHAT?

2010 research validated key concepts identified by student teams and dug deeper

- Posted and available online at www.centurycouncil.org/fightbingedrinking

TCC-supported campus demonstration projects to test student communications in practice

- University of Alabama
- University of Minnesota
- Ohio University
- George Washington University
- Other schools implementing their own campaigns
WHAT’S NEXT?

2011 provides continued support for campus campaigns and start up funds for additional schools:

- Texas Christian University
- Syracuse University
- University of Oregon

Other 2011 Projects include:

- Emergency Medicine Foundation
- National Judicial College
- Fisher College & International Association of Chiefs of Police

2011 probe drinker types to test specific messages and delivery channels

For more information visit www.centurycouncil.org/binge-drinking