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CANCER
ACTION®

TOOLKIT

2012



If you find this toolkit useful, please consider donating to support BCAction's Think Before You Pink® work. Suggested donation is \$10.

Register your toolkit at <http://www.bcaction.org/toolkit> to stay current with the Think Before You Pink® Campaign, get news about events in your area, and receive toolkit updates.

The staff of Breast Cancer Action gratefully acknowledges the dedication, vision, and hard work of these volunteers and consultants who helped create the Think Before You Pink® Toolkit: Miriam Hidalgo, Ben Wilkinson, Shazia Manji, Robert Gomez, Sun Young Han, Yvonne Day-Rodriguez.

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Welcome to Breast Cancer Action's Think Before You Pink® Toolkit!

Breast Cancer Action (BCAction) has created this Think Before You Pink® (TB4UP) Toolkit to provide you with useful tools for action to change the conversation about breast cancer.

Since 1990 BCAction has challenged the impact of Breast Cancer Awareness Month (BCAM). So far, the primary effect of BCAM has been to fill October with pink ribbon products to ostensibly raise awareness about breast cancer. Despite billions of dollars raised for the cause, BCAction continues to question just how far we've really come.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) predicted that in 2011, an estimated 230,480 women in the United States would be diagnosed with breast cancer.¹ Despite the successes in eliminating the stigma of breast cancer, better treatments, deeper understandings of the disease, and improved access for many women, approximately 40,000 women still die each year!² The lifetime incidence of getting breast cancer has actually increased—from 1 in 10 in the 1970s to 1 in 8 today.³

This TB4UP Toolkit is the first step in changing the conversation around breast cancer and pink ribbons. Inside, you will find information and tools to:

- **LEARN** about the politics of breast cancer, the truth about pinkwashing, and the history of BCAction's Think Before You Pink® campaign.
- **SHARE** what you learn about critical questions to ask before you buy pink, how to talk to friends and family about walks and runs, FAQs about pink fundraising, surprising answers to a Think Before You Pink® quiz, and how to effectively use social media to change the conversation.
- **ACT** to change the conversation by asking companies to sign the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing, launching your own Think Before You Pink® campaign, writing a letter to the editor, supporting legislation that will move us closer to a decrease in breast cancer diagnoses, and supporting the vast Breast Cancer Action community of women and men who want to end this epidemic.

We need action that changes the ways the breast cancer industry does business; action that regulates toxic substances; and action that holds corporations responsible for the ingredients in their products that increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. By joining together to take action that benefits the health of all women, not just ourselves individually, we can prevent future generations of women from receiving a breast cancer diagnosis.

Less pink, more action, because action speaks louder than pink.

1 Breast Cancer Facts & Figures, 2011-2012. American Cancer Society.

2 Ibid.

3 "Probability of Breast Cancer in American Women," National Cancer Institute.
Available at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/detection/probability-breast-cancer>.

LEARN

The Politics of Breast Cancer and the Pink Ribbon

The history of the pink ribbon is a story about pinkwashing. In the early 1990s, Charlotte Haley, alarmed by the number of breast cancer diagnoses in her immediate family, attached peach-colored ribbons to postcards and distributed them to everyone she knew. The postcards read: “The National Cancer Institute’s annual budget is \$1.8 billion, only 5 percent goes for cancer prevention. Help us wake up our legislators and America by wearing this ribbon.” Her outrage was over a lack of federal commitment to cancer prevention. Recognizing the power of Haley’s ribbon, *Self* magazine and Estée Lauder cosmetics reached out to her requesting use of her peach ribbon as a promotional tool during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Alexandra Penney, of *Self* magazine, said, “[Haley] wanted nothing to do with us. Said we were too commercial.” *Self* and Estée Lauder consulted lawyers, who told them they needed only to use a different color. Focus groups confirmed pink as a soothing, comforting, quieting color. And the pink ribbon was born.

Breast cancer has come a long way in the last 30 years. Activists have successfully demanded access to mammograms through insurance plans and free screening services; many pharmaceutical treatment options are available, with more being researched; radical mastectomies without patient consent are no longer the norm; and the bioscience industry has developed an understanding of genetic factors, which has led to the isolation of the breast cancer genes. Indeed, the numerous pink ribbon awareness campaigns have undoubtedly helped destigmatize breast cancer and put it on the women’s health map.

However, the corporate takeover of the pink ribbon has so narrowly focused popular attention on awareness that prevention continues to be overlooked. Each year pink ribbon cause marketing generates hundreds of millions of dollars. In fact, the term “cancer industry” is now frequently used by breast cancer activists and the media to describe corporations, organizations, and agencies that use pink ribbons to profit directly from breast cancer.

Despite the billions of dollars that have been spent on pink ribbon awareness campaigns, research, screening, and testing, women continue to get breast cancer. Do you ever stop to ask yourself why? Corporations profit hugely by linking their products to a pink ribbon— they



“It’s fine to discover cures, but, remember, chronic conditions are our bread and butter.”

profit financially, and they profit from the positive association of linking their company with a worthy cause. However, many of these companies, including cosmetic and car companies, are themselves contributing to causing breast cancer. Breast Cancer Action believes that instead of profiting from breast cancer, these corporations, if they want to make a difference, should be taking action to prevent women from getting sick in the first place. The pink ribbon will never get us as far as we need to go to end this epidemic, because pink ribbons are tightly bound up with corporate profits.



Pink ribbons have become a distraction. They divert our attention away from the root causes of this disease. Pink ribbons politely ask us to spend our money on many products that may increase our risk of developing breast cancer. For the sake of all our lives, we must do more than shop (and walk and run), because despite our best intentions, these acts have not brought an end to this epidemic.

The History of Think Before You Pink®

In 2002 Breast Cancer Action launched Think Before You Pink® in response to concern about the overwhelming number of pink ribbon products and promotions flooding the market. Think Before You Pink® calls for more transparency and accountability from companies that take part in breast cancer fundraising, and encourages consumers to ask critical questions before purchasing pink ribbon products.

Breast Cancer Action coined the term “pinkwasher” as part of the Think Before You Pink® campaign.

Pinkwasher | pink'-wah-sheer | noun

A company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease.

Over the past 10 years, Think Before You Pink® has changed the conversation around breast cancer cause marketing. The term “pinkwasher” is now a common term used freely by many advocacy organizations and the media to describe the hypocrisy and lack of transparency that surrounds breast cancer fundraising and Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Think Before You Pink® campaigns have successfully targeted cosmetic giant Avon; car manufacturers Ford, Mercedes, and BMW; and Yoplait yogurt maker General Mills.

Major Think Before You Pink® campaign accomplishments

2002: Who's Really Cleaning Up?



ACTION BCAction formally launches the Think Before You Pink® campaign and develops www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org, highlighting critical questions that consumers should ask about pink ribbon products; we take out a ¾ page ad in the *New York Times* and hold the first annual "Parade of Pink."

SUCCESSSES Eureka and American Express stopped cause marketing.

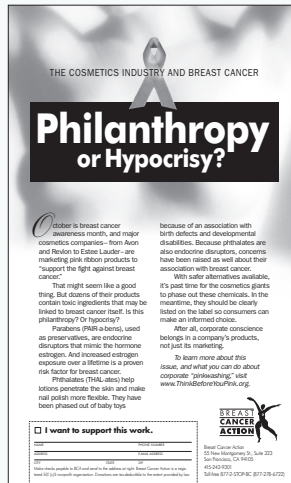
2004: Beyond the Pink Ribbon and Answers Wanted Campaign

ACTION Puzzle Project demands from researchers a coordinated, adequately funded approach to understanding breast cancer research, with the goals of understanding the causes, the reasons for different incidence and mortality rates among different racial and ethnic groups, and discovering effective, less toxic treatments.

SUCCESSSES First meeting of breast cancer research funders to discuss how to pool resources.



2003: Cosmetics—Philanthropy or Hypocrisy



ACTION BCAction coins the term "pinkwasher;" we focus on cosmetics companies that raise money in the name of breast cancer, but manufacture body care products with known carcinogens or reproductive toxins; we take out a ¾ page ad in the *New York Times* challenging Avon's pinkwashing practices.

SUCCESSSES Initiated California Safe Cosmetics Bill that is passed in 2005; identified parabens and phthalates as a source of concern.

2005–2006: Before You Buy

ACTION BCAction goes back to the basics of the problems of cause marketing, launching an online flash file urging people to ask critical questions about pink ribbon products.

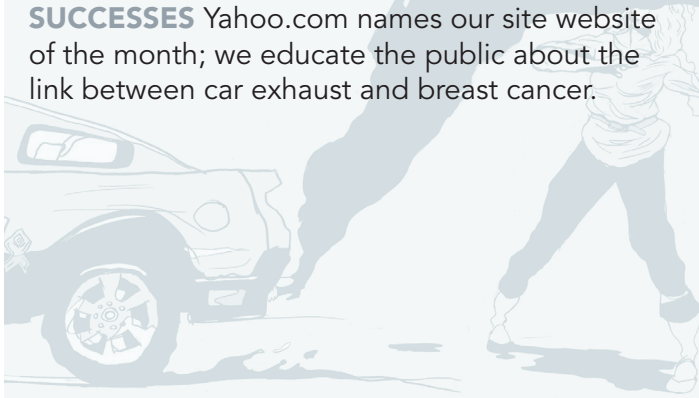
SUCCESSSES Cause marketing beneficiaries adopt BCAction's questions; BCAction receives thousands of e-mails asking for Think Before You Pink critical questions; our website gets 77,065 hits.



2007: Clean Cars

ACTION BCAction mobilizes the public around car manufacturers who sell cars to raise money for breast cancer, while the cars themselves produce air pollutants linked to breast cancer: we demand they stop pinkwashing and make cleaner vehicles!

SUCCESES Yahoo.com names our site website of the month; we educate the public about the link between car exhaust and breast cancer.



2008: Yoplait: Put a Lid on It

ACTION BCAction focuses on Yoplait's pink-lidded yogurt, sold to raise money for breast cancer, but made with dairy stimulated with the hormone rBGH. Thousands of letters are sent to General Mills from BCAction supporters to demand they remove rBGH from their dairy products.

SUCCESES General Mills and Dannon who make 2/3 America's dairy products now manufacture rBGH free products; BCAction is awarded first place at the 2009 BENNY Awards for an outstanding corporate campaign victory.



2009: Milking Cancer Launch/ Thanks for the Cancer

ACTION 4,000+ letters were sent to Eli Lilly plus postcards; we launch a video on YouTube

SUCCESES We are still waiting for a response from Eli Lilly

**Milking
CANCER**

2010: Milking Cancer/Be the Billboard

ACTION Petition to Eli Lilly; make your facebook photo a billboard

SUCCESES 6,732 signatures collected to petition Eli Lilly to stop making rBGH; our message is deemed "too political" by billboard companies so advertising space is denied us which solicits a huge amount of national press coverage

2010: What the Cluck?!

ACTION BCAction launches a letter writing campaign to call out the health hypocrisy of "Buckets for the Cure," a partnership between KFC and Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

SUCCESES Nearly 5,500 letters are sent to Komen, and BCAction receives tremendous media attention surrounding the campaign, including from the Colbert Report.



2011: Raise a Stink!

ACTION BCAction launches a letter writing campaign to Susan G. Komen to demand they recall Promise Me perfume because it contains chemicals not listed on the label that are regulated as toxic and hazardous, and to adopt the highest precautionary standards to protect women's health by signing the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing.

SUCCESES Approximately 5,000 people sent letters to Komen leadership urging them to recall Promise Me and sign the Pledge; Komen issued a public statement in response to the questions raised about ingredients in Promise Me and continues to say the perfume will be reformulated; unprecedented mainstream media coverage of the issue.

Facts That Demand Action

The abundance of breast cancer awareness programs in recent decades means that today everyone is aware of breast cancer. Yet, despite all this awareness, BCAction continues to work to dispel widespread myths and misconceptions.

The lifetime risk of breast cancer has increased steadily over the past 60 years.

- Today, women in the United States have a 1 in 8 chance of developing breast cancer during their lifetime, which means that if every woman lived to age 85, 1 in 8 would develop breast cancer.⁴
- In the 1970s a woman's lifetime risk was 1 in 10.⁵
- Although African-American women have a lower incidence of breast cancer compared with white women in the United States, they are more likely to die from it.⁶



Genetic mutations to the BRCA ("breast cancer") genes and individual lifestyle risks cannot alone explain this increased incidence.

- Family history and heredity accounts for 10 percent of all breast cancer cases, at most.⁷
- Fewer than half of all breast cancers (just 30–50 percent) involve one or more of the following known risk factors: family history; early menarche (i.e., menstruation before age 11) or late menopause (age 51 and over); bearing children later in life (age 35 and over) or no childbirth; hormone replacement therapy; alcohol consumption; and exposure to ionizing radiation (e.g., x-rays, mammograms, nuclear power plants).⁸

More than half of all breast cancers—50–70 percent of all cases—are from, as yet, unknown causes—leaving us with a lot we have yet to understand about breast cancer.⁹

- In April 2010 the President's Cancer Panel declared: "The Panel was particularly concerned to find that the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated [and] ... the American people—even before they are born—are bombarded continually with myriad combinations of these dangerous exposures." They urged the President "to use the power of [his] office to remove the carcinogens and other toxins from our food, water, and air that needlessly increase health care costs, cripple our Nation's productivity, and devastate American lives."¹⁰

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Breast Cancer Facts & Figures, 2011–2012. American Cancer Society.

7 "Identifying Gaps in Breast Cancer Research." *California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP)*. Ed. Julia Brody et al. Available at <http://www.cbcrp.org/sri/reports/identifyingGaps/index.php>.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 "Reducing Environmental Risk Factors: What We Can Do Now." Presidents Cancer Panel Report, 2008–2009. Available at <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/annualReports/index.htm>.

- Throughout our lives, we are all exposed to multiple toxins through our air, water, food, homes, and workplaces. Some of these exposures can be limited by our choice of household cleaners, beauty products, and food. But the majority involves exposures we can't control.
- Xenoestrogens are manmade chemicals that *mimic* estrogen in our bodies and have been shown to increase women's risk of breast cancer. These chemicals are found in many places in our environment, including personal care products and cosmetics (e.g., parabens), weed killers that make their way to our water sources (e.g., atrazine), food preservatives (e.g., butylated hydroxyanisole), baby bottles (e.g., BPA), and plastic containers and toys (e.g., phthalates).
- Today, less than 2 percent of breast cancer research funding goes toward understanding environmental causes of breast cancer.

There are major gaps in the regulation of chemicals.

- Of the estimated 100,000 chemicals in commercial use in the United States today, more than 90 percent have never been tested to determine their effects on human health.¹¹
- As a result of the "innocent until proven guilty" philosophy of chemical regulation, the harmful impact of many chemicals has not been studied or has not been studied in combination with other chemicals with which they frequently interact. This makes it hard for consumers to make fully informed decisions regarding the safety of products.
- The Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 is the current law regulating chemicals in the United States. Major loopholes in this law include: (1) the chemical industry is not required to prove a substance is safe before putting it out on the market, and (2) manufacturers are allowed to keep certain ingredients secret from the public in the name of "trade secrets."

We must work together to create the systemic changes necessary to address the epidemic, put patient interests before profits, and stop breast cancer before it starts.

11 Zeeman, M.G. 1995. "EPA's Framework for Ecological Effects Assessment." Screening and Testing Chemicals in Commerce. U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment.

SHARE

Think Before You Buy Pink: Critical Questions for Conscious Consumers



We all want to make a difference in the breast cancer epidemic. A lot of companies are selling pink ribbon products that supposedly raise awareness of and money for breast cancer. But did you know that these pink ribbon products may not be making the positive impact the companies claim? These four critical questions for conscious consumers can help you make sense of the pink ribbon madness.

1. Does any money from this purchase go to support breast cancer programs? How much?

Any company can put a pink ribbon on its products. The widely recognized pink ribbon symbol is not regulated by any agency and does not necessarily mean it effectively combats the breast cancer epidemic. Some products sport pink ribbons to try to communicate that they are “healthy” and don’t contribute to breast cancer, such as a number of natural health and beauty products. Other products have a pink ribbon in order to indicate that the company supports breast cancer programs even if the company’s contributions are not tied to the purchases of the specific product bearing the ribbon. Still other companies give a portion of an item’s cost to a breast cancer organization but may require further action on the part of the consumer for the donation to be realized. Can you tell how much money from your purchases will go to support breast cancer programs? If not, consider giving directly to the charity of your choice instead.

EXAMPLE: In 2010, Dansko shoe company sold pink ribbon clogs. Consumers likely thought that a portion of their purchase of pink ribbon clogs went to a breast cancer program. However, purchase of the pink ribbon clogs was not connected to Dansko’s donation—none of the portion of the sales went toward their already set donation of \$25,000 to Susan G. Komen for the Cure. No matter whether or not you bought the clogs, their donation was the same.

2. What organization will get the money? What will they do with the funds, and how do these programs turn the tide of the breast cancer epidemic?

Many companies that sell pink ribbon products and donate a percentage of each sale to breast cancer programs fail to indicate which of the many different breast cancer organizations will get the money. Furthermore, the consumer is left to trust that these organizations are engaged in work that is meaningful and makes the greatest difference. If money goes to “services,” are they reaching the people who need them most? How do screening programs ensure that women can get treatment? And how do breast cancer awareness programs address the fact that we already know that breast cancer is a problem and that action is needed in order to end the epidemic? Does the money go to truly addressing the root causes of the epidemic, like social inequities that lead to women of color and poor women dying more often of breast

cancer, or environmental toxins that are contributing to high rates of breast cancer? Before donating, check the recipient organization's website to make sure that its mission and activities are in line with your personal values. If you can't tell, or you don't know what the organization does, reconsider your purchase.



EXAMPLE: The KISSES for a Cure music box is advertised by its maker, The Bradford Exchange, online with the following: "A portion of the proceeds from this music box will be donated to help fight breast cancer." It is not clear what breast cancer organizations would benefit, how much money they would receive, and what programs or work would be funded by the donation.

3. Is there a "cap" on the amount the company will donate? Has this maximum donation already been met? Can you tell?

Some companies that indicate that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of a particular pink ribbon product will go to support breast cancer programs put an arbitrary "cap" on their maximum donation. Once the maximum amount has been met, the company may continue to sell the product with the pink ribbon without alerting customers that no additional funds will be donated to breast cancer organizations. This means you may be buying a product for which none of your purchase price will go to a breast cancer cause but only to the bottom line of the company.

EXAMPLE: In 2010, Reebok marketed a line of pink ribbon emblazoned footwear and apparel at prices ranging from \$50 to \$100. Though it heavily promoted the fact that some of their pink ribbon product sales would be donated to the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade, they set a limit of \$750,000, regardless of how many items were sold, and there was no mechanism in place to alert consumers once the maximum donation had been met.

4. Does this purchase put you or someone you love at risk for exposure to toxins linked to breast cancer? What is the company doing to ensure that its products are not contributing to the breast cancer epidemic?

Many companies have sold pink ribbon products that are linked to increased risk of breast cancer. We believe that companies that are profiting from building a reputation based on their concern about breast cancer have a responsibility to protect the public from possible harms when scientific research indicates that there is a risk or plausible reason for concern. Some of the earliest cause-marketing companies were well-known cosmetics companies that continue to sell cosmetics containing chemicals that have been linked to breast cancer. Even car companies have gotten in on the action and sell cars that emit toxic air pollutants in the name of breast cancer. In considering a pink ribbon purchase, does the product contain toxins or otherwise increase the risk of breast cancer?

EXAMPLE: In 2011, Susan G. Komen for the Cure commissioned a perfume called Promise Me that contains unlisted chemicals that are regulated as toxic and hazardous, have not been adequately evaluated for human safety, and have demonstrated negative health effects. Although Komen says they will reformulate future versions of the perfume, without official adoption of the precautionary principle, there is no guarantee that future versions would be better.

If you have doubts about your pink ribbon purchase after reviewing these critical questions:

1. Write a letter asking the company to be transparent about its donations.
2. Write a letter asking the company to sign BCAction's Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing. See pages 18–20 of this toolkit for sample letters and the Pledge.
3. Consider giving directly to a breast cancer organization whose work you believe is most essential to addressing the breast cancer epidemic.

Breast Cancer Runs and Walks

Almost all of us have at one point or another been asked to support friends and family who are looking for sponsors for their walk or run benefiting a breast cancer organization. You may have even participated in one yourself. BCAction recognizes and honors the personal commitment, passion, and camaraderie involved in many of these events, as well as the personal benefit of exercise. In addition, walks and runs can be a terrific opportunity to connect with others and feel less alone in one's cancer experience. But walks and runs mainly occur as fundraisers for breast cancer.

BCAction's concerns with walks include:

➤ **Inefficiency**

The enormous overhead of these events represents a significant cost and, by most accounts, drains more than half of the money raised by participants. Donors and sponsors often don't realize that most of their money is going to pay for the walk/run itself. In contrast, donating directly to breast cancer organizations can put 100 percent of that money to work.

➤ **Lack of transparency**

Few if any of the organizers of these fundraising events clearly explain what the money that is donated to breast cancer organizations is used for. "Awareness" is one of the most common aims of these walks. While we are all aware breast cancer is a problem, too little funding goes to addressing the root causes of the epidemic. Ask the organizers where the money goes and how it affects the epidemic.

➤ **Doubts about awareness**

Although organizers and participants claim these events raise awareness, most people involved acknowledge that sponsors are supporting the individual person rather than demonstrating and deepening their concern about breast cancer. Furthermore, there are questions about what kind of awareness is raised. Do these walks educate people about the surprising facts and ugly truths of breast cancer? Do they further the growing perception that breast cancer has too much of the limelight while other diseases need more funding?

➤ **Diverted resources**

The sheer number of human hours spent by millions of Americans in preparing, training, and fundraising for these events represents a resource at least as valuable as the money raised. BCAction believes that if the same energy and time were focused on addressing the root causes of the breast cancer epidemic, we might have more to show as a result.

➤ **Ties to pinkwashing**

A lot of corporations have spent years linking their brand to breast cancer cause-marketing. However, many of these companies have not taken steps to make sure that their products are safe and don't contribute to the epidemic. For instance, Avon sponsors breast cancer walks every year but uses toxins linked to breast cancer (including parabens and phthalates) in some of its cosmetics.

For these reasons, BCAction believes there are more effective ways to address the breast cancer epidemic than participating in a walk or run.



Tips for talking to walkers/runners

It can be challenging to talk about your concerns with breast cancer walks and runs when you are asked to sponsor someone who believes he or she is making a difference. We have collected some tips for talking to walkers/runners:

- Recognize the individual's enthusiasm and interest in supporting those affected by breast cancer.
- Acknowledge that these events can be great opportunities to connect with others and share similar experiences.
- Explain your concerns with the efficiency, transparency, and efficacy of the walks and runs despite the widespread appeal of these events.
- You can always let the person know that, although you would prefer to abstain from funding or participating in the walk/run, you personally support them and you would gladly make a donation in their honor to a breast cancer organization with which you feel comfortable.



Sample letter/email

You may find it helpful to look at the letter below, written by a BCAction staffer to a friend who asked for sponsorship for a popular breast cancer walk. While you will want to write your reply in your own words, we are including this sample so that you can see how someone else has handled this sensitive issue.

Dear [Friend],

Thank you for reaching out to let me know about your upcoming walk/run and inviting me to sponsor you. I know how passionate you are about this cause, and I also am deeply alarmed by the breast cancer epidemic.

I admire your commitment and want you to know that I personally support you and your passion. However, I have some concerns about these walk-for-breast-cancer events. Since you've asked me to sponsor you, I want to share with you some of what I've learned about breast cancer walks/runs.

I was dismayed to learn that most of the money raised by walkers/runners goes to pay for the overhead and costs associated with putting on the event. Additionally, I have concerns about those funds that actually make it to a breast cancer organization and what programs are funded. Specifically, I think we have enough awareness already, and I want to see more resources going into systemic change to address the root causes of the epidemic, not to mention funding for metastatic disease, inequities, etc.

I want to be sure you know that I support your personal commitment to this issue, and in honor of your efforts, I have decided to donate to Breast Cancer Action in your name, because I believe that this organization always puts patients before profits and addresses the root causes of the epidemic. Please let me know if you want to talk more about my decision or the work of Breast Cancer Action.

“Isn’t ANY Money for Breast Cancer Good?” and Other Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some questions we often hear when having conversations about pink ribbons, breast cancer, and what’s really going on with the epidemic. We hope the questions and answers below will help you have your own mind-changing conversations with friends and family.

How do pink ribbon promotions work?

Often, a company puts a pink ribbon on a product (e.g., toilet paper, wine, macaroni, chocolate, tote bags), and when someone buys that product, some of the money goes to a breast cancer organization the company has partnered with. This lets a company “brand” itself as caring about women and breast cancer, which supports overall sales for the company. Alternatively, a company puts a pink ribbon on one of its products, and consumers think their purchase will support a breast cancer organization, but the company is just “promoting breast cancer awareness” through the pink ribbon on their product. Because the pink ribbon is not regulated, consumers must look beyond the ribbon to know what is actually going on.

Why criticize companies that raise money for breast cancer?

BCAction is not opposed to companies donating to support breast cancer organizations. Our concern is that every year, consumers spend millions of dollars on items with pink ribbons because they’ve been led to believe that their purchases will help end the breast cancer epidemic. More often than not, these purchases are not as effective as people think: typically very little money from each purchase goes to programs or research, and often the emphasis is on awareness rather than prevention. Rather than focus on buying pink ribbon items, we encourage people to get involved with breast cancer organizations that are engaged in work in alignment with your vision for how to address the breast cancer epidemic, whether financial support and access to treatment for women living with breast cancer, focusing on prevention, providing services to the underserved, or innovative research.

The worst part of pink ribbon marketing is “pinkwashers,” or companies or organizations claiming to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time producing, manufacturing, and/or selling products that are linked to the disease. Companies are profiting from a disease they help create, and we think women deserve better.

Shouldn’t companies be commended for donating some of their profits to a good cause? Isn’t any money for breast cancer good?

“Better than doing nothing” is not good enough. While the interest in breast cancer fundraising is encouraging, we often have no idea how much these companies are raising or how it’s being spent. What happens to the money that does make it to the cause? Is it doing anything worthwhile for women living with, or at risk for, breast cancer? We think the huge amount of pink ribbon fundraising allows people to think the problem is taken care of when in fact the problem is not any closer to being solved. As long as consumers think they’re doing something meaningful about breast cancer by participating in cause-related marketing campaigns, the real work that needs to be done around treatment, access to care, and true prevention will continue to be underfunded and ignored. In effect, pink ribbon fundraising is diverting and pacifying the public into thinking we are addressing breast cancer issues while issues of prevention are ignored.



So what would you like me to do instead?

You've taken the first step—by asking critical questions and understanding more about the politics of breast cancer you can now make your own assessment, based on your personal values, about where and how you want to make an impact on breast cancer issues. An informed consumer is one who doesn't just give/buy blindly simply because of a pink ribbon.

If we all demand corporate responsibility in using the pink ribbon, we can start to make a difference. BCAction invites you to hold corporations accountable for their actions by asking them to sign the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing. Send a letter to companies challenging them to clean up their act if they are currently pinkwashing, or acknowledge those companies that produce healthy products for their efforts to safeguard public health. Check out sample letters and the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing on pages 18–20 of this toolkit.

Think Before You Pink[®] Quiz

Challenge your friends and family to test their understanding of the pink ribbon industry. The following quiz is an excellent way to start the conversation.

1. True or False: The first known use of a pink ribbon in connection with breast cancer awareness was in the fall of 1991, when Susan G. Komen for the Cure (then the Susan G. Komen Foundation) handed out pink ribbons to participants in its New York City race for breast cancer survivors.

2. True or False: Purchasing a product with the pink ribbon label guarantees money will be given to breast cancer causes.

3. True or False: National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM), filled with pink ribbon promotions and breast cancer related events, was in part created by AstraZeneca, a pharmaceutical and biologics company that develops an herbicide considered to be a carcinogen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

4. Name two corporate sponsors of breast cancer awareness events, i.e., those that contribute financially to organizing the event and in return receive promotional benefits.

5. Can you guess which of the following is not a true pink ribbon item, i.e., it was not marketed to customers with the claim that the company was donating profits to breast cancer awareness?
 - a. Pink bottle of vodka
 - b. Pink handgun
 - c. Pink buckets of fried chicken
 - d. Pink beer pong table
 - e. Pink lip gloss

ANSWERS

1. False! In the early nineties, Charlotte Haley, a 68-year-old woman who watched her sister, daughter, and grandmother suffer from breast cancer, was the first to use a ribbon to advocate for breast cancer. Haley distributed peach ribbons in a grassroots effort to spark conversation about the breast cancer epidemic. Each set of five ribbons came with a card saying: "The National Cancer Institute's annual budget is \$1.8 billion, only 5 percent goes for cancer prevention. Help us wake up our legislators and America by wearing this ribbon."

Upon hearing of Charlotte Haley's campaign, the editor of *Self* magazine approached Haley with an offer to use the peach ribbon as part of the magazine's second annual breast cancer awareness issue. Haley turned down the offer, saying she was not interested in having her peach ribbon grassroots campaign used by large corporations. To avoid property theft, *Self* changed the color of the ribbon to pink. In the fall of 1992, *Self* and partner Estée Lauder distributed over 1 million ribbons at makeup counters, all void of any calls for prevention or better fund allocations.

2. False! There is no regulation on who can use the pink ribbon. Any corporation is free to use the pink ribbon symbol, including those selling products that may increase women's risk for developing breast cancer.

3. True! AstraZeneca, a pharmaceutical and biologics company, is a principal sponsor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). The NBCAM website and event encourages women to take part in self-breast exams and mammography testing, but messages and information about the causes of breast cancer and its environmental links go unmentioned. This is not surprising since AstraZeneca manufactures chemicals, including the cancer-causing herbicide acetochlor. AstraZeneca also manufactures two of the most popular breast cancer drugs in the United States, Nolvadex (tamoxifen) and Arimidex (anastrozole).

4. The following two companies are corporate sponsors of breast cancer awareness events:

Chevron is the largest industrial polluter in Richmond, California, releasing approximately 29 billion pounds of toxic chemicals every year. The Richmond area has a disproportionately large burden of industrial pollution and high rates of asthma and cancer. Chevron creates an annual

breast cancer awareness car and is a sponsor of Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure local affiliates.

CKE Restaurants is an international quick-serve restaurant chain that includes Carl's Jr. The company partners with the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc., to display commemorative pink Happy Star™ cutouts in restaurant lobbies, along with distributing \$10 coupons for every \$1 donated at restaurants during the company's annual May campaign. Fast food restaurants are disproportionately located in low-income communities that are underserved by grocery stores, where residents often struggle to stretch their food dollars.

5. They all are!

a. Sutter Home wine, Fat Bastard wine, Global Journey wine, Pinky Vodka, Support Her Vodka, and even Mike's Hard Lemonade. One international study estimates that 9 percent of preventable breast cancer deaths in high-income countries are due to alcohol. Alcohol consumption is linked to increased risk of breast cancer incidence.

b. In one instance, the "artist" decided to take a Stag 15 gun and paint it pink, then raffle it, donating the profits to breast cancer research.

c. KFC and Susan G. Komen for the Cure partnered for "Buckets for the Cure," a campaign that used the breast cancer epidemic to improve the American public's perception of KFC and increase the company's profits. KFC, like most fast food chains, is overwhelmingly present in communities that have poor health outcomes. BCAction called out the partnership and organized people like you to demand that Komen partner with corporations that don't contribute to the breast cancer epidemic.

d. As with the marketing of alcohol to promote breast cancer awareness, a pink beer pong table was another effort by a company to promote its image among the American public by linking its products to a good cause.

e. Lip gloss along with many other cosmetics contain chemicals known as parabens and phthalates, which recent studies indicate may be linked to cancer development. Because testing is voluntary and controlled by the cosmetic manufacturers, many ingredients in cosmetic products are not tested for safety. The Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep website states that 89 percent of ingredients used in personal care products have not been evaluated for safety.

Using Social Media to Change the Conversation

Rather than post about “bra color” on Facebook to raise breast cancer awareness, use Facebook and Twitter to educate your friends about pink ribbon marketing and the need for systemic change to end the breast cancer epidemic.

Messages for Facebook

- When a company puts pink ribbons on their products, but also sells a product linked to breast cancer, that’s called pinkwashing. Tell corporations to end their pinkwashing ways—send them the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing today.
- Pink ribbons = distractions from the real issues. Learn about the politics of breast cancer from Breast Cancer Action so you can help end the epidemic.
- When we talk about breast cancer awareness, what are we aware OF? Let’s increase our awareness of the CAUSES of the breast cancer epidemic. Learn more from Breast Cancer Action.

Find BCAction on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/BCAction>

Messages for Twitter

- Make sure your cart is pinkwasher free. Ask #thinkbeforeyoupink critical questions (http://thinkbeforeyoupink.org/?page_id=13)
- Change the conversation about #breastcancer! Join @BCAction’s #thinkbeforeyoupink campaign now!
- #pinkribbons = distractions from the real issues behind the #breastcancer epidemic.
- Move beyond #breastcancer awareness with @BCAction. Let’s talk about the causes of the #breastcancer epidemic!

Follow BCAction on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/#!/bcaction>

Email BCAction at info@bcaction.org to let us know about the conversations you have about pink ribbons and breast cancer!

ACT

R

eady to take action right now? There are many ways you can take action to end pinkwashing, increase transparency of pink ribbon fundraising, and work to end involuntary exposures to toxins that put us all at risk.

Support BCAction's Annual Think Before You Pink® Campaign

Join the growing movement of activists calling for transparency and accountability by companies that take part in breast cancer fundraising, and ask critical questions about pink ribbon promotions. Go to www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org to learn more.

Launch Your Own Think Before You Pink® Campaign Challenging Pinkwashers

Use the information from this toolkit to write to companies engaged in pink ribbon marketing to launch your own Think Before You Pink® campaign. Some industries that have a history of pinkwashing include automobile companies and cosmetics and other personal care product companies. If you can't answer the "Critical Questions for Conscious Consumers" by looking at a pink ribbon product, write to the company asking it to be transparent in their cause marketing. Ask them how much money they are donating to what organizations and for what programs, as well as what steps they are taking to end the breast cancer epidemic.

BCAction has developed the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing, which you can send to any company or organization you identify that sells a pink ribbon product in the name of breast cancer fundraising. We have also written sample letters you can include when you contact companies. One is geared toward pinkwashing companies, while the other letter can be sent to companies with health-protective policies.



Sample Letter to Pinkwashing Companies

Product of Concern: _____

Ingredient(s) of Concern: _____

Manufactured by Company: _____

[Address of Company]

[Date]

Dear [Name of Company CEO]:

Like millions of people in the United States, I am a person concerned about the breast cancer epidemic. I am sending this letter to your company because I believe you are marketing a product in the name of breast cancer that may actually contribute to the disease. This makes your company a pinkwasher. A pinkwasher is defined as a company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease.

As a company which claims to care about breast cancer, I call upon your company to support breast cancer prevention through precaution. I urge you to adopt the highest standards by taking active steps to ensure that your products do not contribute to an increased risk of the disease. I invite you to stand with me, Breast Cancer Action, and all women living with and at risk of breast cancer by endorsing the attached Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing, making official your commitment to end this epidemic.

In order to eliminate pink hypocrisy and instead ensure that all companies that sell products in the name of breast cancer are standing by their stated commitment to women, I am urging your company to do your part to work to end the epidemic. I call on your company to do more than put a pink ribbon on your products—I call on you to sign and return the attached Pledge and to ensure that your products do not put women at increased risk of this disease. By sending the signed Pledge back to Breast Cancer Action, they will be able to list your company, along with other Pledge signatories, as a company that works to end the breast cancer epidemic rather than contribute to it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Print your name]

[Your contact information]

Sample Letter to Non-Pinkwashing Companies

Name of Company: _____

Address of Company: _____

[Date]

Dear [Name of Company CEO]:

I was pleased to see your company's stated commitment to safeguarding human health and to ensuring that your products do not put women at an increased risk of breast cancer. As a supporter of Breast Cancer Action, I invite you to sign the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing (attached) to formalize your company's commitment to ensuring that your products do not fuel the breast cancer epidemic.

By signing the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing, your company makes official that you stand with women living with and at risk of breast cancer. Your company commits to following the precautionary principle by acting now to prevent harms related to breast cancer and agrees to take all necessary action to ensure that your products do not put people at risk of breast cancer. Finally, as a signatory to the Pledge, your customers will be pleased to know that they can trust your company will never engage in pinkwashing by producing, selling or endorsing products in the name of breast cancer that are known or suspected to put people at increased risk for developing the disease.

I applaud your company's stated goal of using ingredients that are not suspected of contributing to breast cancer, and I encourage your support of the Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing. By sending the signed Pledge back to Breast Cancer Action, they will be able to list your company, along with other Pledge signatories, as a company that works to end the breast cancer epidemic rather than contribute to it.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Print your name]

[Your contact information]

Pledge to Prevent Pinkwashing

I, _____ ,
NAME

representing _____
NAME OF CORPORATION OR ORGANIZATION

pledge to:

1. Take all necessary action to ensure that our products do not put people at risk of breast cancer. Our products will be free of carcinogens, endocrine disruptors and all other toxins that are known and/or suspected to increase a woman's risk of breast cancer.
2. Follow the precautionary principle by acting now to prevent harms related to breast cancer. We will not sell, produce or endorse products that are suspected of causing harm to human health, and have potential for causing increased risk of breast cancer, unless we have proven they are safe.
3. Never engage in pinkwashing by producing, selling or endorsing products in the name of breast cancer, including and not limited to, use of the pink ribbon, that themselves may put women and men at increased risk for developing the disease.

SIGNATURE/DATE

PHONE

EMAIL

WITNESS/DATE

Pledges must be signed, dated, witnessed and returned to:

Breast Cancer Action, 55 New Montgomery Street, Suite 323, San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 243-9301 Fax (415) 243-3996 www.bcaction.org

SENT TO CORPORATION BY

ACTIVIST'S NAME:

ACTIVIST'S CONTACT INFORMATION:

Write a Letter to the Editor or an Op-Ed

Compose a letter to the editor of your local newspaper—see sample—that calls on pinkwashers to end their practices. Here are some tips¹² before you write:

- Keep your letter short (approximately 150–200 words long); make your letter personal – how does pinkwashing relate to you and your community? Sign your letter, and provide your contact information (phone, email); submit the letter using your local newspaper’s preferred method—postal mail, fax, or email.

If you want to write something longer, submit an Op-Ed. Here’s a simple approach you can follow:

- Open with a lead statement to grab the reader’s attention and a news “hook” by connecting your letter to a current news event, a public holiday, personal anecdote, new major study, (i.e., breast cancer awareness month, new pinkwashing product).
 - a. State your point in a clear statement of argument
 - b. Present your argument as 3 main points
 - i. 1st point + evidence + evidence + a concluding statement and then follow the same format again with a 2nd and 3rd point
 - c. Include a “to be sure paragraph”—use this to preempt your potential critics by acknowledging any flaws in your argument and address any obvious counter-arguments
 - d. Conclusion: often circles back to your point and hits the argument home

Let Breast Cancer Action know if your letter or Op-Ed is published! Email a copy to info@bcaction.org.

Here’s a sample letter you can use to get started:

Dear Editor,

As a supporter of Breast Cancer Action’s Think Before You Pink® campaign, I write to call out companies X, Y, and Z that are pinkwashers. The term “pinkwasher” was coined by BCAction and refers to a company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease.

Recently, I noticed that XX product had a pink ribbon on it and that it contained the ingredient YY, which is linked to increased risk of breast cancer. It’s time for Z company to pull this product from stores until it can be proven safe for the public.

Public health should trump private profit. The only way to end the breast cancer epidemic in this country is to stop cancer before it starts and not allow companies to put toxic ingredients in products that they sell in the name of breast cancer.

Sincerely,

Your name, Your phone number

¹² These tips are adapted from *SPIN Works! A Media Guidebook for Communicating Values and Shaping Opinion*, <http://www.spinproject.org> and *The OpEd Project*, <http://www.theopedproject.org>.

Support Legislation

Tell your legislators that you support making systemic change to ensure that companies can't put harmful chemicals in their products! We've included examples of two bills that would make real change to stop cancer before it starts.

The **Safe Chemicals Act of 2011 (S. 847)** would modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to require (a) chemical companies to demonstrate the safety of industrial chemicals and (b) the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to evaluate safety according to the best available science. The bill, which was introduced in April 2011, would:

- Ensure that the EPA has all the information on the health risks of chemicals
- Require the EPA to prioritize taking action on chemicals based on their health risks
- Expedite action to reduce risk from chemicals of highest concern
- Require additional testing and risk assessment on chemicals that may not meet safety standards
- Provide access to reliable information about chemicals to workers and the general public
- Promote safer alternatives to chemicals of concern

Join BCAction today and contact your legislators about the Safe Chemicals Act of 2011—go to <http://www.bcaction.org/take-action/action-center> to send a letter.

The **Safe Cosmetics Act of 2011 (H.R. 2359)** was introduced in June 2011 and would give the U.S. Food and Drug Administration the authority to ensure that personal care products are free from toxic ingredients and that all ingredients are disclosed. Specifically, the bill would:

- Phase out harmful ingredients linked to cancer, birth defects, and developmental harm
- Create a health-based safety standard that would protect vulnerable groups
- Require full ingredient disclosure on product labels and company websites, including ingredients in fragrances
- Provide workers access to information about unsafe chemicals in personal care products
- Provide adequate funding to the FDA Office of Cosmetics and Colors so it can provide effective oversight of the cosmetics industry

To join BCAction in voicing your support for the Safe Cosmetics Act of 2011, visit <http://www.bcaction.org/take-action/action-center>.

By letting your senators and congresspersons know that you support the systemic change made possible by the Safe Chemicals Act and the Safe Cosmetics Act, you can have an impact on regulatory reform in the United States.

Thank You for Joining Us in Taking Action!

Your actions joined with our action can bring about the systemic changes that will stop women from being diagnosed with this disease and provide those living with the disease access to treatments that work. Demand an end to pinkwashing in the name of breast cancer.

We want to hear from you! As you make use of the information and tools contained in this toolkit, be sure to let us know about the ways you are taking action. Contact us at info@bcaction.org.

Is Your Shopping Cart Pinkwasher Free?

Critical Questions for Conscious Consumers

Does any money from this purchase go to support breast cancer programs? How much, and is it enough?

What organization will get the money? What will they do with the funds, and how do these programs turn the tide of the breast cancer epidemic?

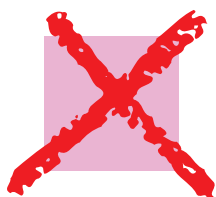
Is there a "cap" on the amount the company will donate? And has this maximum donation already been met? Can you tell?

Does this purchase put you or someone you love at risk for exposure to toxins linked to breast cancer? What is the company doing to ensure that its products are not contributing to the breast cancer epidemic?

Pinkwasher

|pink'-wah-sher| noun

A company or organization that claims to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon product, but at the same time produces, manufactures and/or sells products that are linked to the disease.



**think before
you pink**.org

BREAST
CANCER
ACTION®



**think before
you BUY pink**

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www.bcaction.org
www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org



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www.bcaction.org
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Support Breast Cancer Action

Make a donation directly to Breast Cancer Action, where over 78 percent of our income is spent on programs that bring about the systemic changes needed to stop cancer before it starts. Visit www.bcaction.org/donate, or call 415-243-9301 to make an investment today.

Host an event to introduce your network to Breast Cancer Action. You can customize your event using BCAction resources and toolkits. Popular events include a Think Before You Pink® party, an outdoor event, or a night on the town! Contact BCAction's development director to get started by emailing sharding@bcaction.org.

Become a BCAction fundraiser by creating your own personal fundraising page in celebration of a birthday, wedding, or cancer anniversary, or in memory of a loved one. Your fundraising page will directly support our cutting-edge programs to address and end the epidemic. Start your own page by visiting <http://fundraising.bcaction.org>.

Want more copies of the toolkit?

Please contact Breast Cancer Action to get more copies of the Think Before You Pink® Toolkit. To download the toolkit, visit <http://www.bcaction.org/toolkit>. To get paper copies, call us at 415-243-9301 or email us at info@bcaction.org.





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