

CANNABIS

RETAILER

Business Magazine for Canadian Retailers

UNDERSTANDING CANNABINOIDS

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by Joyce Hayne

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I've been energized lately by participating in The Roll Call, which is a great networking initiative created by Jeff Ord and Alison McMahon at Cannabis at Work. At a time when many of us are working from home, this is a great event to connect with people from all sectors of the cannabis industry. We're working in a tight-knit community and it's wonderful to see how everyone wants to work together to ensure that all businesses in the Canadian cannabis industry are successful!

At *Cannabis Retailer* we strive to provide you with information to help your cannabis retail store be more successful, so if there are topics that you would like to read about, please reach out to me and we'll work towards including them for you.

The industry is continuing to evolve and pioneers are advocating for updated regulations as we prepare for an update to the *Cannabis Act* as well as some provincial regulations. Check out the article "Reviewing the *Cannabis Act*" to see how you can get involved in these conversations and support some of the initiatives.

Another area where you can show your support is fighting 'The Green Tax' applied to cannabis products and businesses. See ACCRES' column and get in touch with the association if you can help them as they fight for the cannabis industry to be treated like all other industries.

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Understanding Cannabinoids

by Amy Watkins

While Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD) are the only two cannabinoids that are currently required to be tested for labelling, many LPs are starting to work with lesser-known cannabinoids as well.


What are Cannabinoids?

Stored in the hair-like glands of the cannabis flower (the trichomes), cannabinoids are the prized parts of the bud that are thought to create various effects. While intoxicating THC and non-intoxicating CBD are the most well-known, there are currently more than 100 identified cannabinoids. THC and CBD are the decarboxylated (heated) version of the acids THCA and CBDA that appear in the 'raw' plant.

Cannabinoids work with the body's endocannabinoid system to 'unlock' specific functions from memory and movement to appetite and sleep. Anandamide is the body's naturally occurring cannabinoid, also known as the 'bliss chemical' as it creates feelings of euphoria. Phytocannabinoids such as THC and CBD are found in the cannabis plant and replicate natural cannabinoids.

CB1 and CB2 are the body's two major cannabinoid receptors. THC mainly interacts with CB1s, which are commonly found in the central nervous system and the brain and are thought to regulate anxiety, appetite, stress, and nausea. CB2 receptors are often associated with having anti-inflammatory healing properties in other major organs and these are more likely to interact with CBD.

"While some consumers are requesting these cannabinoids, education is definitely a challenge," says US hemp company Goodekind's co-founder Flip Croft-Cadera. "People who have been following the research have been waiting for these cannabinoids to be brought to market, but they are the trend-setters. Most CBD users still don't know that there's a plethora of cannabinoids besides CBD or THC."



CBG is able to pierce this biofilm and effectively target these resilient bacteria.

New research is being done into how other cannabinoids interact with the ECS and several are showing promise as non-intoxicating compounds that may have therapeutic properties. US producers are leading the way with research and development of lesser known cannabinoids such as CBG, CBN, THCV, and Delta 8.

Cannabigerol (CBG)

Known as the 'mother' cannabinoid, CBG looks set to be the next 'big thing' in cannabis. "CBG is the stem cell or mother cannabinoid meaning that it is one of the first cannabinoids to be made in the plant and other cannabinoids such as THC, CBD, and CBC differentiate from it," says Emma



Anandia

Cannabinol (CBN)

CBN is a naturally occurring non-intoxicating cannabinoid that is created when the cannabis plant ages, and THC is exposed to light and oxygen. "When THC is oxidized, the degeneration process converts THC to CBN," says Merryfield. "CBN works with both the CB1 and CB2 receptors, unlike CBD which only interacts with CB2 receptors. CBN acts directly with the CB1 receptors making it mildly "psychoactive" but does not make you feel high, just sleepy." CBN is mostly used as a sleep aid or sedative. It's been shown to help regulate the immune system, working to relieve the pain and inflammation caused by several conditions including arthritis and Crohn's disease.

Tetrahydrocannabivarin (THCV)

THCV's appetite suppressing qualities are gaining attention, and scientific studies also suggest that THCV may stimulate bone growth and has potential as an anti-inflammatory and anticonvulsant agent. "THCV is showing popularity as another

THCV's appetite suppressing qualities are gaining attention.

psychoactive cannabinoid found in some landrace strains and sativa strains (Durban Poison, Doug's Varin)," says Denise Johnson, Head of Laboratory at Pura Labs. "It offers an alert and energizing effect and may play a role in appetite suppression."

Delta 8

In addition to naturally occurring cannabinoids, scientists are also starting to create artificial versions.

"Some distillation processes are producing new manmade cannabinoids that do not normally occur in nature such as Delta 8, 10, and 11 THC," says Johnson. "Not much is known about these cannabinoids as very

few studies have been performed. Distillate high in these isomers of Delta 9 THC have been known to not be very psychoactive, but may have other unknown benefits." Delta 8 THC is of particular interest as it offers the therapeutic action of Delta 9 THC without the high. "Hemp-derived Delta 8 THC is the breakout cannabinoid of 2020," says Croft-Cadera. "The growth of interest around Delta 8 is growing exponentially. Personally, I prefer Delta 8 THC over Delta 9 THC, due to Delta 8's anti-anxiety properties."

With new cannabinoids being discovered and developed every year, we may look back on 2020 as the year when we started to go beyond THC and CBD as the principal influencing cannabinoids in cannabis. ▀



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Recently, MediPharm Labs announced a new brand called Labs Cannabis to the market featuring their Pure CBD Crystalline Isolate.

What is CBD Crystalline Isolate?

CBD Crystalline Isolate is a pure form of cannabidiol (CBD) in a crystalline solid or powder form that contains less than 0.3% tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). This means there are little to no intoxicating effects that can be felt and it's suitable for all levels of cannabis experience. In comparison, full-spectrum CBD products contain at least a small amount of THC. CBD isolates can contain 99% CBD with only trace amounts of other cannabinoids, making isolates one of the purest and most potent forms of CBD.

Labs Cannabis' Pure CBD Crystalline Isolate manufactured by MediPharm Labs in their GMP-certified facility, is a high-quality, high-potency, fine-white crystalline powder with 99% pure CBD in a concentrated form. The product is an all-natural cannabinoid supplement made from cannabis extract refined through numerous steps and contains only trace amounts of THC. Each container of Labs Cannabis' Pure CBD Crystalline Isolate contains 500mg of product in powder form.

How is CBD Crystalline Isolate Made?

Making CBD Crystalline Isolate begins with high-purity CBD distillate that is mixed with an organic solvent, which readily dissolves distillate at room temperature. The mixture is then chilled in a controlled manner to rapidly decrease the solubility of CBD. Instead of staying in the solution, CBD prefers to stick to itself, forming precipitates or crystals. These crystals grow over time, pulling more CBD out of the solution and into the crystal structures. The rest of the compounds, like THC and other plant components, remain in the chilled solution. After CBD crystallization is complete, the liquid can be poured off from the crystals. The crystals are washed to ensure high purity and the isolate is thoroughly dried to remove residual solvents and then milled into fine powder. This process has yielded CBD Crystalline Isolate at over 99% purity for the manufacture of this new product.



How Can Consumers Use CBD Crystalline Isolate?

Because CBD Crystalline Isolate does not have intoxicating effects, is almost flavourless and odourless, it can be taken daily and consumed in several different ways, including as a versatile ingredient that won't interfere with the flavour, texture, or aroma of someone's favourite recipe. It can be added to any oil-based foods (CBD isolate is not compatible with water-soluble recipes) and it can be baked with.

Added to Food

CBD Crystalline Isolate is suitable to mix with oil and fat-based foods such as butter, oils, egg products, nut butters or flours, hummus, coconut-based or dairy-based foods such as yogurt or soft cheeses, avocados, olive paste, coco butter, or milk chocolate.

Baking

CBD crystalline isolate can be used in its raw form or added prior to cooking. When baking with it, consumers will want to add the CBD isolate into the oil or egg mixture before folding in dry ingredients and mix well to ensure it is spread evenly. Keep in mind, CBD has a boiling point and can degrade in high heat. Advise people to cook at low temperatures less than 350° Fahrenheit.

Making an Oil Mixture

CBD oil can also be made out of CBD crystalline isolate by combining an oil (sunflower, coconut or olive oils for example) with the desired dose of CBD Crystalline Isolate into a glass tincture bottle. Shake it up and wait until the isolate has dissolved. Once it's dissolved, it can be used in cooking, coffee or tea, smoothies or under the tongue.

Under the Tongue

CBD Crystalline Isolate can be put under the tongue and held there for at least 60 seconds. While nearly flavourless, there may still be a trace of cannabis taste in the isolate.

Cannabis products vary in potency and formulation, and every individual is different, therefore, MediPharm Labs recommends consulting a doctor when using cannabis products for the first time and starting off slowly with a low dose.



Learn more about Labs Cannabis and find some suggested recipes at www.labscannabis.com

A man with a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt, is speaking into a microphone at a podium. He is holding a book or tablet. In the foreground, there are several cannabis plants with purple and red flowers. The background is a stage with a screen displaying a logo.

Cannabis Events During COVID Times: How Brands are Building Their Audience and Staying Connected

by Katie Pringle and Danielle McKay

Courtesy of 420 Cannabis Court – Photo credit: Mike Broley


There's no doubt that COVID-19 shook up one of the cornerstones of the cannabis industry; events. Without large, in-person events like O'Cannabiz, Lift & Co Expo, and MJBizCon, brands are scrambling to reallocate marketing dollars and develop quality virtual and COVID-19 friendly events. From adapting established events to new opportunities here are some innovative events that are leading the way for a post-COVID cannabis industry.

In-store Activations

Generating in-store traffic, even during COVID, is a priority for retailers across the country. One of the best ways to generate foot traffic is through popup events and in-store activations that drive engagement with new and current consumers. It's even better if they are engaging and educational, supporting the knowledge gap between the general public and cannabis products and accessories.

Oak and Earth Paint Nite - Sustainable ceramic smokeware company Oak and Earth adapted their Paint Nite for a fun and COVID-safe night out. Taking place in their production studio and in cannabis retail stores across Edmonton (more cities coming soon), Oak and Earth Paint Nites allow attendees to create their own custom piece of smokeware. Attendees can paint their own glaze and designs under the direction

Mihi Cannabis Launch - The launch of the Mihi Burlington store demonstrated creative ways to get the community involved in person and at home. From great video content about some of their accessories and creators to a socially-distanced launch event with media and local industry friends, Mihi made an impact.



The Mihi Burlington store demonstrated creative ways to get the community involved in person and at home.

of an Oak and Earth artist and then it's fired in the kiln. While painting, attendees learn about how Oak and Earth products are made, the sustainable materials used, and proper use and care of the products.

Virtual Networking Events

From the start of COVID we saw events shift to virtual. Conferences large and small are leveraging online tools such as Zoom to host panels, webinars and networking



Courtesy of mihi

opportunities. Opportunities to network virtually from home have been a cost-effective way to drive business forward throughout 2020.

CanMar Global Expo - The inaugural CanMar Global Expo took place October 23-25 and was focused on education and career opportunities within the cannabis industry. It's a great example of the interesting virtual conferences that have emerged during COVID to connect and engage the global community. One of the major benefits of virtual events is the ability to bring people from around the world together without physical and financial limitations, allowing the global cannabis community to connect and learn from each other.

CanMar worked to create an event that's affordable for attendees while giving back to the community. \$4.20 from each ticket sold went to charity, and attendees chose what organization their money went to: Medical Cannabis Canada, GlobalGiving Coronavirus Relief Fund, or the Last Prisoner Project.

Cannabis at Work Roll Call - The Roll Call, presented by Cannabis At Work is a unique event designed to allow participants to connect on a deep and authentic level. At The Roll Call, business is put on the backburner with personal connection taking centre stage. The Roll Call co-founder Jeff Ord believes that when people get personal and connect without business expectations that's when magic happens and true relationships can form, leading to better personal and business experiences.

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One of the major benefits of virtual events is the ability to bring people from around the world together.

The first Mega Roll Call this past summer was a highlight for the cannabis community. Through a partnership with Organigram and Edison 165 secret packages were sent out to participants, creating joy, anticipation, and a sense of community the cannabis industry has been craving.



Courtesy of Oak and Earth

Offsite Events & Brand Extensions

While driving traffic in-store remains paramount for retailers, reaching and engaging your consumer through offsite events and interactions can help build audience and brand awareness. Collaborations and partnerships can provide interesting new ways to interact with customers.

Another Burger Joint - Even during COVID-19 people love experiential events with a fun theme. The folks from Another Room developed Another Burger Joint, a ticketed all-you-can-eat mini-hamburger event with a cannabis flare. This event brought together a variety of partners including Superette, Tantalus Labs, Pennies, Gossamer and more. With COVID safety guidelines in place, this event was a huge success; bringing awareness to participating brands, business to a local establishment, and joy and burgers to the masses.

420 Cannabis Court Comedy Shows - 420 Cannabis Court is an outdoor venue founded with the purpose of creating paid opportunities for performers who lost work and venue space due to COVID-19. 420 Cannabis Court brings people together to share their art, get paid, laugh, and provide a sense of community for the cannabis industry and people living in the area. For brands looking for compliant, COVID-safe event opportunities, 420 Cannabis Court has show sponsorships available as well as options for venue rentals. Learn more on their website 420cannabiscourt.com

COVID-19 is sure to have a lasting effect on our events-centric industry, but necessity is the mother of invention, and as an industry we are adapting and creating innovative and memorable event opportunities to highlight our brands and connect as an industry. ▀

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TRENDS

Gummies on the Rise: The Rapid Growth of One of the Most Popular Ingestible Cannabis Products

by BDSA

Cannabis consumption in Canada has been increasing with legalization and is expected to reach \$6.1B by 2025. With 67% of adults 18+ in Canada consuming cannabis or open to consuming cannabis, the familiar form factor and multitude of flavours that gummy products present make them especially appealing to consumers.

More than three-quarters of Canadian cannabis consumers report using cannabis for recreational/social benefits, while almost half consume for health/medical purposes. Primary reasons consumers report for using cannabis include:

- Relax/ be mellow
- Sleep better
- Have fun

BDSA Consumer Insights data reports that more than half of Canadian consumers report consuming edibles, while less than one-third prefer edibles over inhalables or topicals. Data from Q1 2020 shows that gummy candies are the preferred ingestible product category for adult-use consumers in both Canada and the US. Of those who reported consuming edibles in the past six months, 60% of US consumers used infused gummies, compared to 54% of Canadian edible consumers. This lower percentage of reported use by Canadians surveyed holds true across most ingestible product categories as edibles are still ramping up in the legal Canadian market.

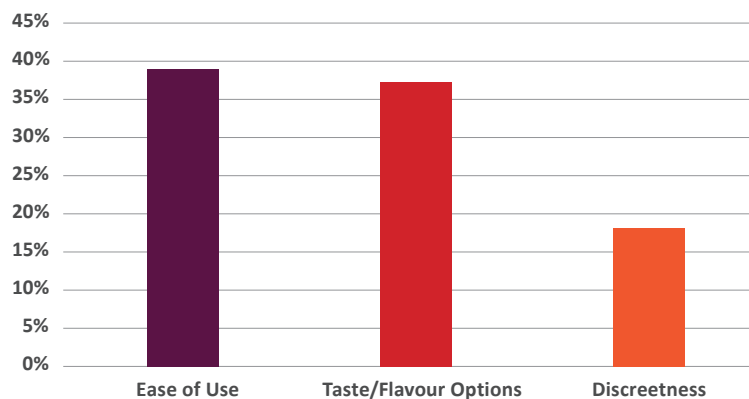
BDSA retail sales tracking data shows that while chocolates captured the largest share of edible sales in licenced stores in both BC and Alberta year to date, gummy sales are growing at a faster rate than chocolates.

The lower rate of edibles consumption by Canadians is likely influenced by the limited availability of edibles in the legal market at the beginning of the year. This assumption is supported by the fact that edible oils, one of the few ingestible products available to Canadians at the launch of adult-use sales on October 17, 2018, saw a past 6-month consumption rate of 21% for Canadians, compared to 13% for US consumers.

Another consideration for edible consumption in Canada may be the relatively low 10 mg THC limit per package that has been imposed on the legal market by Canadian regulators. While this regulation may dissuade some consumers, BDSA's data shows that 47% of Canadian consumers prefer ingestibles containing 10 mg THC or less, while 21% do not know how much THC they prefer, suggesting that potency is less of a deal breaker for consumers when stacked up against other desired characteristics that gummies offer, such as convenience, discretion, and taste.

Gummies are also the most preferred edible product by a wide margin, with

Reasons Consumers Prefer Gummies; Canada



Source: BDSA Consumer Research: Q1 2020 Canada Adults 18+

33% of US and 31% of Canadian ingestible consumers citing gummies as their preferred type of edible.

BDSA Consumer Insights data shows that ease of use and flavour options are the top reasons for ingestible consumers to prefer gummies, with 38% of US ingestible consumers in adult use markets citing these as the reason they prefer gummies. Canadian consumers show a similar dynamic, with 39% citing ease of use as their reason for preferring gummies, while 37% cite flavour options. This suggests that the rising popularity of gummies may be due to the same factors that lead consumers to prefer vapes, which have also seen massive growth in legal markets. The dual benefits of offering a convenient, discrete form of consumption with a wide range of flavours to suit any consumer's taste seem to be key factors leading to the success of gummy products.

The familiar, easy-to-use form and flavour options that gummies present make the product appealing to consumers, even as innovation in the industry has led to a much wider variety of other ingestible products than were previously available. With the appealing characteristics that they present to consumers, cannabis gummies are expected to take up a larger market share of Canadian ingestible sales in the future and become a driving force for total legal ingestible sales for years to come. ▀



FEATURED RETAILER

Photo credit: Arnaud Marthouret

Friendly Stranger - A Friendly Legacy

by Laura Starr

Friendly Stranger Cannabis Culture Shop is no stranger to the cannabis industry, or the culture that binds it. The original location opened its iconic doors 26 years ago as a head shop on Queen Street in Toronto and has been a key player in the evolution of the cannabis retail industry as we know it today, having spent a quarter of a century fighting cannabis prohibition in Canada. At the core of their business is an earnest belief in the strong potential of cannabis for our culture, our environment, and our economy. Even with the substantial growth of the business, which has evolved from an accessories-based store to a holding corporation with six cannabis retail establishments and more in the works, they have held true to their brand and customer experience, which ultimately revolves around being remembered as a friendly place.

From Head Shop to Bud Shop

The journey from headshop to cannabis retailer has not been without some unfriendly bumps though, an experience shared by many, if not all, in the industry. James Jesty, president at the Friendly Stranger Holding Corporation, was the first employee brought on when expansion of Friendly Stranger began as the industry transitioned to legal cannabis retail. He chuckles at the memory of navigating the new legislative waters of opening a

legal cannabis store, most specifically the last-minute government change from open licencing to a lottery of only 25 randomly distributed licences, in late winter of 2018, only months before stores were slated to open. Thousands of businesses that had preemptively invested time, resources, and finances to opening in spring 2019 were severely disappointed to suddenly be denied a licence and be forced to wait until further notice. Friendly Stranger did not win at that stage.

It is not hard to imagine the frustration at a lottery system that is not based on merit in any capacity, especially for a company that has been deeply involved in the cannabis culture of Ontario since 1994. However, with heads held high, Friendly Stranger held out and a second lottery was announced. This one came with much more stringent application requirements (such as real estate and money in the bank) but “we were fortunate in this one,” Jesty recalls, and adds that a trademark deal allowed them to partner with six of the winners and pull new brands in. The government has since moved forward with a third phase of licencing, and has committed to opening more stores than the 20 per month originally slated. It may be slow, and many willing businesses are holding their breath—just think of how many jobs are on hold—but progress is still being made.



Photo credit: Arnaud Marthouret



Photo credit: Arnaud Marthouret

The Creation of a Legacy Market

With a new multi-brand strategy (Friendly Stranger has since acquired Happy Dayz and *HotboxTM*, both long-time brands with existing stores) the corporation is now focusing on getting new doors open, while being careful to update the brands without trampling on their DNA. Each brand has its own feel and its own following, and those qualities are to be respected. The Friendly Stranger brand currently has six stores open: the accessory shop at 241 Queen St. and cannabis stores at 237 Queen St., Church St., and Danforth Ave. in Toronto as well as stores in London and Burlington. Although each location has its own personality, Jesty comments on the diverse demographic that frequents the stores, even being hesitant to call it a demographic and rather a consumer culture. “We get every walk of life and there is nowhere else in the world that these ten people would be in the same room.” Continuing to appeal to such diverse consumers requires a focused commitment to brand identity.

Different Locations, Same Formula

To maintain brand consistency while still adapting to the needs of each unique community (for example, the London location sits at the gates of Western University campus, versus the Burlington location, which is located in a plaza mall), Jesty claims they don't

mess with their formula. The original Friendly Stranger store on Queen St. sets the tone, with each location mimicking the dark, warm, friendly space it is known for. However, their business focus is on accessories and consumption methods, of which Friendly Stranger has 25 years' experience. This is their key competitive advantage: a deep knowledge of how best to consume, and how to relay this process to the customer, in an approachable and unpretentious manner, no matter who the customer is. This expertise is integrated in the company's hiring and training programs as well, and all staff is equipped with 40+ hours of training before setting foot on the floor.

The Future is Friendly

It both seems like a blink and a lifetime since legislation passed allowing legal cannabis sales, and the effortless integration into our culture is partly due to companies like Friendly Stranger having laid 25+ years of prior groundwork, setting a standard for what cannabis culture can look like. Passion and authenticity drive the brand, and with a number of new stores already slated to open this year, we can look forward to a friendly future in the Canadian cannabis industry. ▀



Protecting Your Data

by Lisa Tachan

In late 2018, the online Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) experienced a data breach. The privacy of 4,500 OCS customers was compromised as names, postal codes, and delivery information fell into the hands of a hacker. After an investigation, the flaw was found to be in Canada Post's tracking system, with the breach extending beyond OCS customers. Although the incident was resolved quickly (and with little harm done), it was alarming to cannabis retailers and consumers alike. How did we let this happen? And how can we prevent it from happening again?

What is Cybersecurity?

Studies show that consumers are growing more aware of personal data protection and less confident that their data security is taken seriously. Building trust with your clientele is just one of many reasons why practicing cybersecurity is so important. Along with preserving sensitive data, cybersecurity

protects personally identifiable information (PII), intellectual property, protected health information (PHI), and government and industry information from theft and damage. The goal is to keep the digital networks that hold both personal and business information secure.

What Happens When Cybersecurity is Compromised?

One of the most famous cybersecurity breaches happened to Target in November of 2013, when hackers compromised 40 million payment card accounts and 70 million customer records. Using stolen credentials,

The shift in purchase channels is especially pronounced within BC.

"What people don't realize is just how dangerous the online world has gotten over the past couple years," says Loïc Calvez, Co-Founder and CEO of ALCiT, an emerging Managed Security Services Provider (MSSP). "The sheer number of cyber attacks and the sophistication we're seeing now is nothing like it was before."

hackers gained access to an internal database where they installed malware and captured full names, addresses, and payment information.

"One of the big misconceptions is that small businesses aren't targets for a cyber attack," Calvez says. "Business owners tend to believe you need to be a large, well-known company

with a lot of money. Today that's just no longer the case. Cyber attacks can be automated and are happening all the time. They're targeting everyone."

Consequences of a cybersecurity breach aren't exclusive to customers, either.

"One of the less talked about consequences is the theft of intellectual property," Calvez explains. "If a cannabis retailer were to get hacked, that could seriously hurt your brand and put you back at square one. Aside from that, your business would also have data showing what's working for you and what's not. What's your biggest seller? What's your key demographic? What kind of repeat business do you get? There's a lot of private information from a business perspective that you wouldn't want your competitor to get their hands on."

It's not just computers to be wary of—our phones, tablets, and other gadgets that can be connected to the Internet are also susceptible to cyber attacks. It's important to learn about types of cyber threats and how to prevent them.

Four Common Types of Cyber Attacks

Hollywood movies would have us believe hackers are geniuses sitting behind giant computers writing codes for viruses and cracking passwords with incredible software. However, the reality is quite the contrary—most cyber breaches happen because someone either didn't invest in proper cybersecurity, created lazy passwords, or clicked and opened something they weren't supposed to. Most cyber criminals aren't attacking technology or software, they're attacking people.

Following are some common types of attacks:

Phishing - Individuals are contacted by email, telephone, or text message by someone pretending to be a legitimate business. By creating a sense of urgency (your account is being frozen! Please update your payment info!), these hackers trick individuals into providing sensitive data such as personally identifiable information, credit card details, and passwords.

Man-in-the middle - Vulnerable networks, WiFi connections, and communication lines make it easy for cyber criminals to execute this security breach. Imagine being on a video call with your employee who has just given you sensitive information. A hacker (our man-in-the-middle) will be listening in on that conversation and collecting the information you spoke about.

Malware - Malware is short for malicious software and encompasses viruses, ransomware, and spyware. Cybercriminals will create this software and install it on their victim's device(s) without their knowledge. While malware usually serves as a means for financial gain, sometimes hackers are looking for personal information or to damage your devices.

Password attack - Whether it's through guessing or using some of the more common passwords, a password attack is an attempt to steal passwords and access information. Keep your passwords strong and implement a lockout policy to your cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity is a Team Effort

While firewalls and antivirus software will help keep you compliant and your data secure, they should not be your sole security measures.

"The fact of the matter is a lot of cyber attacks happen through email, malicious sites, misconfigured firewalls, and weak passwords," explains Eric Schlissel, CEO and CTO at Geek Tek. "Make sure your team is aware of best practices for keeping your networks secure. Do they understand what a strong password is? Do they know what a phishing email looks like? Do they know how to identify a risky website? How about what to do if you get infected?"

Schlissel also points out the importance of assessing your business needs when it comes to cybersecurity.

"Risk mitigation is one of the most important things you can do," Schlissel says. "If your database was compromised, what does that mean for your business? What happens if you're found to be out of compliance?"

Most cyber criminals aren't
attacking technology or software,
they're attacking people.



A Canadian report on data protection revealed that while small business owners recognize data security risk, they often underestimate the consequences. For cannabis retailers, ensuring their customers' private information remains private is critical to the business. Moreover, any loss of data or being unable to produce information requested by regulatory governing bodies could put a cannabis retailer out of business.

So if you haven't thought much about your cybersecurity, it might be time to start. ▀

Tech Innovations Accelerated by COVID-19

by Rachel Bachmann

In March 2020, some provinces deemed cannabis an essential service and allowed physical storefronts to continue operations. Other provinces closed their outlets and implemented temporary restrictions, such as mandating private retailers to conduct curbside pickup. For those retailers allowed to stay open or eventually re-open, physical distancing guidelines triggered several technology-enabled measures to reduce human contact to a minimum.

The most significant shift observed was the increase in partnerships between point-of-sale (POS) providers and e-commerce systems.

When a customer walks into a store to purchase a product, everything that enables the processing of the transaction is conducted through a POS system, from scanning the barcode to printing the receipt, to updating the inventory in the system. POS systems are generally tightly linked to the hardware supporting them.

E-commerce platforms, on the other hand, provide other functionality, such as search and compare as well as checkout and payment, without any dependency on physical hardware. With the onset of COVID-19, a larger percentage of purchases shifted to online.

Integration

Retailers providing both e-commerce and an in-store experience require these two types of systems to “talk” to each other, through integration, to enable features such as click-and-collect for curbside pickup. Click-and-collect allows a customer to select their product online and pick up in store. Since a portion of the transaction is conducted online and another in the physical outlet, the POS system is communicating with the e-commerce platform to ensure that the two systems are synchronized. A connected system is critical to customer satisfaction, ensuring that real-time inventory is displayed to the customer and that out-of-stock items are not showing as available for purchase. Another essential feature of connectivity is that it keeps prices synchronized online and in-store, if so desired. In addition, it assures the accuracy and timeliness of the data across channels, allowing retailers to react rapidly to events such as potential stock-outs.

Touchless Payments

Another trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, across all types of retail, is touchless payments. Near-Field-Communication (NFC), a communication protocol used between two electronic devices over a distance of 4 cm or less, is already widespread in Canada. PayPass is an example of NFC. However, NFC is not the only form of touchless payment. Some applications such as WeChat Pay and Alipay, already popular in China, display a Quick Response (QR) code on the customer’s smart device. When scanned by the retail merchant, the transfer of funds between the two parties is completed. With the surge in demand for payment options through a smart device, we may well see demand for accepting QR code-enabled payments increase in Canada.



Touchscreen Kiosks

Due to the importance of education in cannabis retail, touchscreen tablets or kiosks are also gaining in popularity as an alternative to face-to-face contact. When connected to the POS system to show real-time inventory and accurate pricing, these kiosks add even more value to the customer experience and increase sales.

Although the idea of purchasing cannabis through a vending machine is not new, most of these systems have only automated a portion of the transaction, due to the problem of confirming a person’s identity. Nevertheless, at least one company has announced the development of a fully automated vending machine. The machine uses biometric data to identify the person. Biometric data refers to unique characteristics of an individual that distinguish that person from others, such as facial features or fingerprints. In this case, the machine would use encrypted biometric technologies that can detect the pattern of an individual’s veins within their hand. Such machines would also need to be integrated with the POS system, to keep track of inventory and sales, as well as a payment processing system.

A recurring theme among the trends mentioned in this article is interconnectivity. A system or device on its own will not deliver the expected business value unless certain information is flowing back and forth. When talking to vendors or planning your budgets, don’t neglect the effort and investment required to obtain that interconnectivity.

The need and desire to minimize human contact will continue for the foreseeable future. Technology will continue to evolve to facilitate that goal. Your challenge as a savvy retailer will be to meet your customers’ evolving expectations through the adoption and implementation of the right technologies as they become viable. ▀

Rachel Bachmann is President and Founder of Akiri Consultants (www.akiriconsultants.com), an IT consulting firm. Her firm helps clients in manufacturing, distribution and retail choose and acquire the right technologies for their business.



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"When we had our inspection, they asked what our POS company was. We said 'Cova', and that was the end of the discussion."

Kia Ora Kannabis



West Coast Gifts™

West Coast Gifts

Based in Vancouver, BC, West Coast Gifts (WCG) is Canada's largest designer, manufacturer, and distributor of award-winning hand pipes, water pipes, vaporizers, and smoking accessories. Their brands and products, including their signature colour-changing glass pipes, have become widely recognized around the world. WCG's product offerings have expanded over the decades and continue to evolve based on industry trends and consumer demands. West Coast Gifts now offers over 5,000 high-quality products that are shipped internationally from a 20,000 sq. ft. warehouse, where a first-class team ships most orders within 24 hours.

Fuelled by Passion

West Coast Gifts had a colourful start when founder and dedicated Deadhead Howard Franklin first encountered chameleon-like glass pipes in the 1990s, while following his favourite band around the US.

"The first time I saw a pipe change colour it literally changed my life, just like the Grateful Dead did," says Franklin. "At the time everyone was smoking out of metal and wood, which really took away from the taste of the buds. The idea of colour-changing glass was so amazing, and the cannabis just tasted so much better through glass. Borosilicate glass is a relatively new art form compared to lime soda glass that has been around for centuries. Getting the glass to change colours was only known to a handful of glassblowers at the time (in the early 1990s), so I learned how to blow glass because I thought everyone should be smoking out of glass."



Extensive Product Selection

“Personally, my favourite piece is our patent pending GEAR Premium Sidekick,” describes Franklin. “It has a built-in lighter holder and comes in a nice box with a bunch of awesome swag! It’s like the Porsche of bongos, a timeless design.” WCG designs many of their own products in Canada and the US and has six in-house borosilicate glass brands: Red Eye Glass, Red Eye Tek, GEAR Premium, Cheech & Chong™ Glass, iRie, and Gravity-B. Other in-house brands carried include Retro Glass (soft glass), LIT Silicone, Rockit Vaporizers, Dab Bot E-Nail Kits, and My Dab Mats.

In addition to ready-branded items, WCG also offers the chance for private retailers to brand customized accessories for sale. “White label is catching on with all the new stores opening up,” says Franklin. “They’re all looking for ways to keep their name in front of their customers and what better way than putting their brand/logo on a high-quality bong or a pipe that we custom design for them. Currently we are offering white label glass and silicone hand pipes and water pipes.”

Exclusive Canadian Distribution

WCG also carries a wide variety of portable and plug-in vaporizers and is the exclusive distributor in Canada for the popular Puffco family of vaporizer products and the DynaVap battery-free vaporizers and accessories. The most recent exclusive Canadian distribution arrangement is with Summerland Ceramics.

“Our team of sales specialists are very hands-on and manage all aspects of their customers’ smoking accessory business needs,” notes Franklin. “Our sales specialists have extensive product knowledge, some have as much as 15+ years in the industry, and they take the time to listen to our customers’ needs and educate them on the best product assortment for their shop. In addition to our ‘best-in-class’ customer support, we have the best prices in the industry backed by our Price Match Guarantee!”

Launched in January 2020, the new website <https://westcoast.gifts> has special features such as live inventory, a quick add function, and the ability to search by brand, collection, product category, or product SKU. The website also has ‘back-in-stock’ email notifications, product favourites to make reorders easy, and a live chat function for customer support. Customers can also check the website weekly to see new product drops, Bong of the Week specials, and other great deals.

Check out their extensive line of products at <https://westcoast.gifts>.

Buying Quality Glass

Franklin moved to Canada from the US and continued to develop glass products. Quality glass is important if you want something to function properly or if you want it to last. Quality matters so much because some imported glass is not fully blown, and they drill the bowl hole in the glass. When you drill the glass, some tiny particles are left in the pipe, and if they don’t clean it out properly you could ingest them when inhaling. “Being in the industry for over 25 years, I have seen a lot of different glass products and quality levels,” says Franklin. “I find that our customers have a special bond with their pipes and want them to last forever. They remind them of good times with friends and family. It’s important to me that we continue to design and produce good quality pipes, so they last a long time. I love getting thank you emails from our customers with pictures of the Red Eye Glass or GEAR Premium bong or pipe they have had for 10 or 15 years and are still enjoying.”





Transportation Tips and Storage Solutions

by Cassandra Redding

You've jumped through all the hoops, received your retail cannabis licence, designed a modern and inviting store, and you feel ready to start selling to customers. However, before you open the doors you must confirm your store has a strategy that includes delivery and storage. With so much riding on the accuracy of your inventory, it's critical to have systems in place not only for compliance's sake but also to achieve the best sales possible.

From Licenced Producer to Your Store

Unless you're lucky enough to possess a retail store in Saskatchewan, you are dependent on the government-run wholesaler and distributor to get cannabis from the LP to a warehouse and finally to your store. In Saskatchewan, retailers can get supply directly from a wholesaler or LP that is registered with the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

Transportation Between Stores

In some provinces, retailers are allowed to transfer product between stores. For example, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario states that, "if a Licensed Retail Operator holds more than one Retail Store Authorization, cannabis may be transferred between their retail stores. Licensees must ensure that the



Theft is a huge concern while in transit.

transportation of cannabis is secure, and must maintain records of all movements of cannabis between stores."

With cannabis and its supporting products being such a delicate entity, great care has to be taken whenever the product moves from one destination to the next. Cannabis is in high demand on the black market and

theft is a huge concern while in transit. Careful consideration also has to be given to the vehicle's climate controls, especially concerning light, heat, and moisture issues.

Choosing a vehicle that can not only supply the right conditions to keep the product viable, but also keep it from being stolen is a huge undertaking. Some companies use armoured vehicles, some have unmarked trucks, and some will even use security guard escorts.

The Cannabis Tracking System monitors the flow of cannabis and ensures a designated amount of legal cannabis is in transport, so you should use a transportation company that offers security services that are tailored to the cannabis industry. They should offer climate control along with cannabis-specific insurance coverage. Do your research and find a delivery company that can also provide their clients with geo-tracking and e-reporting services to guarantee the protection and security of these high-value goods during transportation.

Transportation from a Government Store to a Retail Store

Every province has its own rules regarding delivery. For example, the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) states that once an order is “placed and confirmed, BC Cannabis Wholesale orders are shipped by unmarked transportation providers. BC Cannabis Wholesale Customers do not pick up orders at the BC Cannabis distribution centre; orders are delivered according to a delivery schedule. The time it takes for orders to arrive depends on the location of the retailer and order processing time.”

With varying times on delivery, it’s very easy to see why it’s vital to know your inventory. If you have to wait three days to get your next order of a popular strain, that could be three days of cash loss.

If you are lucky enough to develop a relationship with the delivery company, you may be better able to predict the times your store will get new product. This could be used as a marketing tool by telling your customers “new products come in on Wednesdays and Fridays.”

Securing Stock On-site

According to the LDB, “a licensee’s non-medical cannabis stock must be stored at their retail store and off-site storage is not permitted.” This means you will likely need a main vault in addition to several safes and controlled security cases. At the end of each day, the entire stock of cannabis must come off the floor and into your locked space.

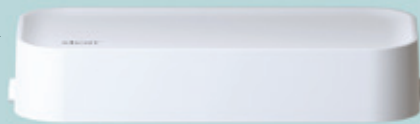


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Courtesy of Proforma Retail Space Solutions

As a retailer, it will be up to you on how to store cannabis to give it the longest life—there are literally hundreds of opinions on how to best store your cannabis in whatever form it may be, but keeping it in a cool, dark, dry place in a storage room is a common thought. Light, heat, and moisture will all contribute to a change in the cannabinoids of your cannabis, so having a temperature-controlled room will be the best-case scenario. Ideally, you want to keep the storage temperature between 32° and 68° F—anything hotter or colder than that can adversely affect the flowers.

Using dark glass containers will also protect your product from harmful UV rays, while letting non-harmful UV rays penetrate through. For other cannabis products, such as oils, edibles, and beverages, you will need to do some research as some will require refrigeration, while others may have a certain shelf life you will need to monitor.

Best Storage Practices

Once the minimum regulated requirements for security are met, a store can form its plan on the best storage practices.

On speaking to Mike Sovereign, Director of Sales for Proforma Retail Space Solutions, a company that has completed secure storage solutions for over 75 stores across Canada to date, he emphasized a store's need to plan out their storage vault with care and significant thought. Repeatedly, he has noticed that retailers are not giving

enough consideration to how much actual space in the store needs to be dedicated to vault storage.

“It is vital that the store uses storage wisely and scientifically if they want to keep up with demand and inventory. Everything in the cannabis store must be sold out of the storage room, thus the need for adequate storage capacity and an organized system. It has to be logical and systematic so a store employee can quickly go into the back and get the product for the customer. If the product can't be found quickly, then a sale could be lost.”



If the product can't be found quickly,
then a sale could be lost.

An organized vault needs adequate space for receiving and processing inventory as well as two storage components, a dispensary component with trays of 1's, 2's and 10's, and then a bulk component for overstock.

You don't want a large box sitting on the shelf with just one package in it.

Creating a high-density system for your secured storage could even double your storage capacity in an existing space. This will be important as you add more SKUs when more product becomes available to the market, such as beverages, edibles, and topicals. If storage is not organized, inventory counting could become time-consuming and unnecessarily difficult.

Growing your store's sales and inventory takes dedication and a lot of knowledge but having a storage strategy in place will be indispensable. ▀

ACCRES Report: The Green Tax

by Jaclynn Pehota



Despite large provincial variations in their business environments, cannabis retailers across Canada continue to struggle with major common difficulties. No matter what the geographic region or regulatory model looks like, retailers are all struggling with the so-called 'Green Tax', the not-so-subtle surcharge that is applied to anything and everything to do with legal cannabis.

Whether it's banking services, real estate acquisition, or professional services like legal and accounting, cannabis retailers are constantly being asked to pay more than equivalent businesses. Even municipal business licencing fees for cannabis retailers can be many multiples what it costs for a bar or liquor retail licence, above and beyond the often absurd provincial excise taxes on the cannabis itself.

The unfair treatment begins with banking, where licenced cannabis retailers continue to struggle to obtain even basic business banking services like a chequing account and point-of-sale (POS) services. Even when they are able to find a bank willing to take on a licenced retailer, cannabis businesses are expected to pay eye-watering monthly fees, which can be several hundred or even thousands of dollars a month for the most basic chequing services.

The dramatic effect that this lack of basic bank services can have on the success of cannabis retail can be easily seen when comparing the situations in Alberta versus British Columbia. In the former, the Alberta Treasury Board (ATB) is able to use their crown agency status to offer normal commercial banking services to cannabis businesses without difficulty, and consequently Alberta retailers have little difficulty with basic banking and POS services.

In the latter, the BC regulator that oversees credit unions recently passed along new guidance to credit unions, informing them that cannabis retail is to be treated as a "high risk" business category. As a consequence, many licenced retailers have lost existing bank services, and BC retailers have been forced to take measures as extreme as driving to Toronto in search of banking services. Retailers across BC

continue to struggle to find and maintain bank and POS services.

The rare cannabis retailer who is able to get service from a commercial bank or other service provider is often faced with account fees several times higher than what other businesses pay, with retailers unable to seek better rates elsewhere, held captive by their fear of being unable to find any alternative services.

Cannabis retailers who are able to open and maintain bank accounts often find that those accounts are quickly drained by unreasonable surcharging, which begins with real estate. Realtors, landlords, and leasing agents are notorious among the cannabis industry for jacking up rents and prices by significant amounts as soon as they hear the word 'cannabis'. Lease rates double, purchase prices increase by 30%, and counter-offers including aggressive and unusual demands for profit-sharing are common.

As a result, cannabis retailers in dense urban areas are left fighting over relatively few locations, and are often driven to overbid on the few available sites. Retail investment is consequently also driven into less dense and easier-to-site areas, leading to the phenomenon of intense over-investment in cannabis retail in rural BC and Alberta, while prime neighbourhoods in Greater Vancouver continue to be completely unserved.

The few prospective retailers lucky enough to find a supportive financial institution, an affordable location, and the capital needed to start their project, still face a never-ending parade of surcharging from lawyers, accountants, and other professionals, all of whom appear to think cannabis retail is a never-ending licence to print money.

If cannabis retail is to provide the economic spark that many had hoped for, it is important that government, financial institutions, and professionals begin treating it the same way they treat comparable industries like private liquor, rather than a mystical cash cow that can forever be milked for unreasonable profits. ▴

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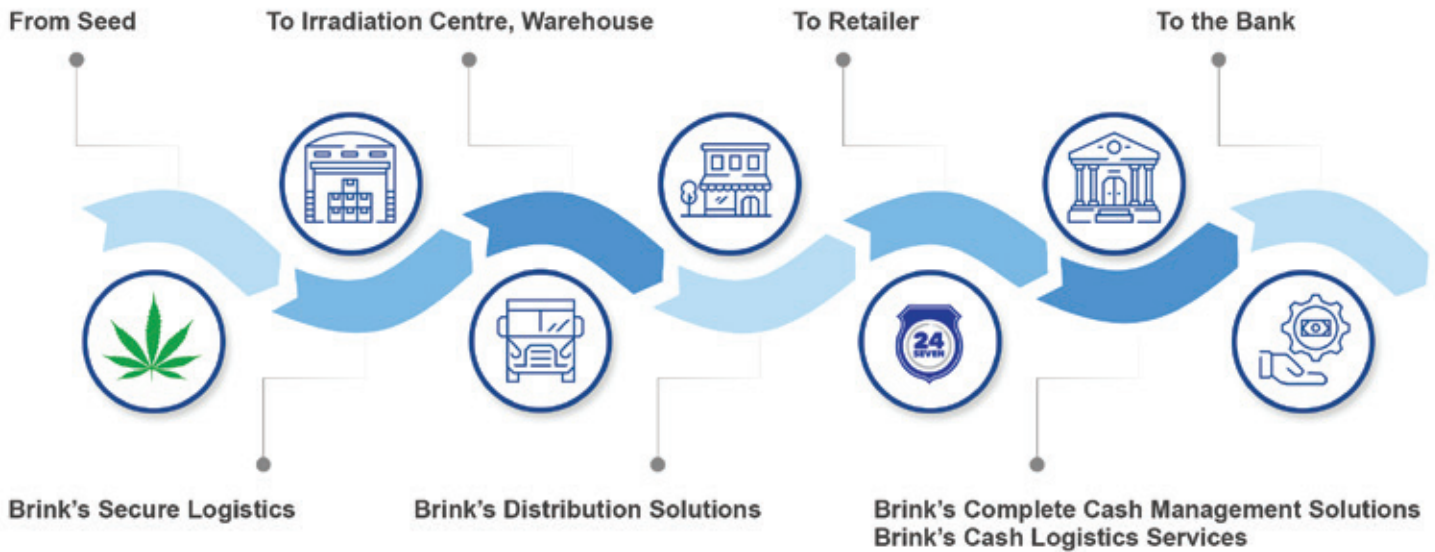
The legalization of cannabis sales in Canada in 2018 fostered an inevitable boom of innovation, with businesses from all sectors enthusiastically filling roles, offering solutions, and laying claim to an ever-growing world of opportunity. It is a once-in-a-lifetime moment in history, and it is remarkable to bear witness to it. When an industry is still in its infancy, there is no telling what needs might arise, but what is even more fascinating is to see who is stepping up to the plate to meet the new challenges that await.

There is no company more recognized than Brink's for secure transportation, with their iconic image of an armoured truck. What is not as recognized is the growing scope of what Brink's offers, particularly to the cannabis industry. "We are so much broader than just that truck," says Brita Lerohl, VP of Strategy and Marketing at Brink's Canada,

and she's not exaggerating. Brink's has developed a highly customizable system of services and solutions for cannabis companies all the way from seed to sale, and they don't stop there. Unique to Brink's is a highly digitized cash retrieval service called Brink's Complete that puts cash in your hands quickly and securely. "From a working capital perspective, nobody else can do that," notes Lerohl.

Leaders in Transportation

For Brink's, transportation goes beyond getting something from point A to point B. Understanding your customer's needs and becoming proficient in the logistics of their business is key to becoming a leader in the industry, and Brink's does this very well.



To many, that iconic armoured truck transports cold hard cash, but Brink's is renowned on an international scale for their secure transportation of highly valued goods, from priceless pieces of art to even a piece of rock from the moon. Security is only the starting point; Brink's streamlines operations every step of the way, from ensuring compliance to offering a cloud-based track and trace software that makes the entire delivery process transparent. With these systems already in place, it was a natural and effortless shift into the cannabis industry.

Integrating Solutions

Brink's Canada has been integrating transportation solutions in the cannabis industry for two years now, after being chosen as the supplier for Canopy Growth, meaning Brink's Canada has been mastering the nuances of safely and successfully transporting cannabis from seed to sale since day one of legalization. This includes transportation compliance across provinces, as well as understanding the product itself and the ever growing needs of businesses in this sector. "Once we established a standard, we simply adjusted as the industry adjusted," explains Lerohl. One of these adjustments is their current shift of focus from the transportation of product and cash, to a full logistical plan involving the product.

Brink's Complete

The process begins with insulated and temperature-controlled transport trucks, though the fleet is much more diverse than that, oscillating between a range of vehicles from armoured trucks to Sprinters to accommodate a wide range of cannabis cargo. "From dry goods to edibles to oils, each product has a different distribution practice, especially across provinces, and we have experience with each product line," says Lerohl. "We know how to navigate the market, and we already have the infrastructure in place." This is of great value, particularly to new businesses that can then lean into Brink's expertise in best practices for starting up, growing business, and breaking into new markets.

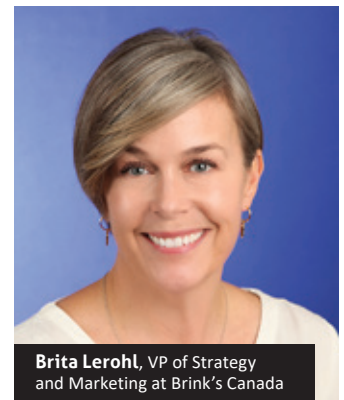
Warehouse and distribution solutions are available as well, with secured and ambient controlled storage facilities available. Plus at every point, the product is tracked, traced, and reported on, with a dedicated logistics support system available. The peace of mind that comes with such a transparent and all-encompassing suite of solutions is hard to beat. The supply chain doesn't end at the retailer though. After the product is delivered, Brink's does what they do best: get money into the bank safely, and in a hurry.

In its totality, Brink's helps retailers to reduce costs, improve access to working capital, automate internal processes, and gain unprecedented visibility into their cash flow near real-time.

Digitizing Cash

Cash is still paramount in the cannabis industry, and according to Lerohl, "offering consumers a choice of payment is important."

Many new retailers are shocked when they discover how much cash ends up in their hands at the end of the day, and with cash, there is always risk. The digital capacity of the innovative cash solutions available from Brink's allows cannabis retailers to continue to offer these types of transactions to their consumers, while keeping their business and staff safe while accessing their cash in a remarkably fast turnaround. "We make cash as digital as a credit card can be," boasts Lerohl. "And we are changing the business model in a way no one else is doing in the armoured transportation industry."



Brita Lerohl, VP of Strategy and Marketing at Brink's Canada



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Creating Brand Ambassadors & Influencers Starts with Your Staff

by Wayne S. Roberts

Influencer marketing is a widely deployed, and often well justified investment in growing your business by growing your brand community. By recruiting recognized social media personalities as ambassadors, hopefully with large, engaged audiences of their own, you might expand your store's awareness with their "endorsement."

But like all things social, there are risks.

First, if you pay them, the endorsement is tainted, and when readers or viewers find out, the value might be lost. This means a spontaneous endorsement is more useful and believable.

Second, what if they fly off the handle and slur a group of people, use language and imagery that does not conform to your brand character, tone or narrative—and post

something to help build their audience first with little regard for yours? Not good. Ever. Let's also not forget the regulatory reality

These trusted folks should become stewards, guides and highly valued ambassadors.

of cannabis product testimonials, in general. They are forbidden by Health Canada. Period.

But Wait, There's More Bad News

And if all that is not enough to have you seriously questioning this popular tactical option, consider two more issues:

1. There are plenty of influencers and reviewers out there who will cobble together a post without ever having stepped into

your store or visited your website. These people work for content marketing outfits (copywriting mills) that get paid to populate the web with content, however dubious, in the belief that more is better. It's not.

2. And lastly, here's the big thing countless employers, retail or otherwise, miss when it comes to getting their story out there: ignoring the opportunity to enlist their own staff!

Sometimes the Answer is Hidden in Plain Site

You have qualified and talented people you've taken the time to recruit, train, and pay to serve your customers, or work in some other important capacity in your business. Why not encourage them to share the story of your store?

When you look at your brand as a community, you'll quickly see that your employees are essential residents. Apart from making their living from it, these trusted folks should become stewards, guides and highly valued ambassadors of your vision, and share in the positive outcomes to stimulate further growth.

Employee activation is all about motivating your employees to share content with their social networks and it will increase reach and engagement to your target audiences in an authentic and impactful way.

It Doesn't Mean Everyone

When you motivate just a small portion of your staff (6%) to share content on social, customer engagement increases by 60%. With 10% active employees, you're looking at the potential for a 100% increase. And there's more:

- **Improved reputation** - Increased brand advocacy from employees can lead to a 43% more favourable public image.
- **Boost in sales leads** - For employee sharing on LinkedIn, research shows sales leads increase by as much as 58%.



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- **Easier to attract top talent** - Employees are trusted 3 times more than your organization's CEO by potential recruits. When they are visible on social media as brand representatives, it's a lot easier to attract quality hires.
- **Increased employee retention** - Companies with active social engagement are 20% more likely to retain talent
- **Better brand storytelling** - Want more authentic content? Get it from the people who are the heart of your business by inviting them to share their voice. The World Wildlife Fund in the UK says, "The theory is that people who have the stories to tell are on the ground. If you're really going to do social well, you need to make the connection with those who have the best stories to tell."

You need to make the connection
with those who have the best
stories to tell.

Culture, Culture, Culture

Creating advocates and ambassadors from your staff starts with recruiting individuals who want a pleasant, supportive working environment that offers opportunity for growth and advancement. Meaning, you have to create a positive culture.

Staff meetings are one simple and effective way to do this. At those regular sessions:

- Encourage everyone to share their positive outcomes from the week before.
- Invite staff to share customer anecdotes where a particular skill set that an employee used was useful in creating an even better customer experience.
- Share that week's content calendar and hot topics for those keen to share on social.
- Remind everyone of the power of their advocacy and of the rewards you're offering to help show your gratitude for their efforts.

Most importantly, be a place your staff feels part of by regularly sharing your brand's mission and core values, while asking for insights and suggestions on how to better deliver on them. And act on those suggestions so your staff sees more than just platitudes - they see results.

Focus on Brand When You Onboard Staff

When new people are onboarded, share with them more than just procedures and processes. Share your brand vision and mission for your store. Keep it simple and memorable so your staff can "own" it and share it with customers using some of their own language, so they never sound like they're reading from a script.

Your onboarding should also include a session devoted solely to the brand. Walk your people through your positioning and communication strategy, share your brand's competitive edge, its core values, and the brand character and narrative that needs to be shared with the market to differentiate your enterprise from the competition.

Part of your onboarding should also include this topic of Brand Ambassadorship Through Employee Activation. Be upfront about what it is and why it's important, and provide helpful tips for how to use this information on the floor and in social platforms.

It's Good for Business Because It's Good for Everyone

The cannabis retail environment, like every such setting, is challenging, competitive, and evolving. Having great products and a convenient location is simply not enough to ensure growth.

You need motivated people who will not only represent the brand well in-store, but take that experience out into the social sphere and enthusiastically share it with their own community.

By harnessing the potential of the people who know your brand better than even your most devoted customers, you can tap into a rich source of brand advocacy and fuel growth.

Incentives are useful, no doubt. But enlisting your staff into your brand's values and motivations, its messaging and meaning, is an even more powerful approach that will create a better culture and a more sustained effort to get the word out. ▀

Wayne S. Roberts is Principal at Blade Creative Branding. He brings award-winning experience to Blade's clients, including those in the cannabis sector where Blade was instrumental in the branding and launch of MedReleaf.

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>ALBERTA LIFTS MARKET CAP

Now that Alberta has reached a whopping 527 stores, approximately half of all stores in Canada, Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) has decided to remove the cap limiting companies to 37 stores. AGLC announced that starting November 1, it will be removing the cap put in place by the previous government that set the maximum number of retail locations owned by a single company to 37, or 15% of the total number in the province. Now that the market is starting to settle in, AGLC believes it is stable enough to stand on its own, and so is moving to reduce some of the red tape.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/alberta-lifts-market-cap/>



>WHY AREN'T PEOPLE WORKING IN CANNABIS RETAIL?

In a new report released by Indeed, Canada's leading job search site, the novelty of working in the cannabis industry is wearing off. In anticipation of legalization in 2018, jobs in the cannabis sector peaked, representing 0.54% of all job postings in Canada, holding steady until July of 2019. After that, the number of postings declined as much as 40%, only making up 0.32% of job listings by March 2020. That number dropped even more after WHO declared a global pandemic, decreasing by 29%, however, it has since rebounded back to 0.38%. At the moment, cannabis jobs have a share similar to hospitality and tourism jobs.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/why-arent-people-working-in-cannabis-retail/>



>CANADIANS SPENDING MORE ON CANNABIS

Statistics Canada released the results of a new retail commodity survey for Q2, showing promising numbers for the cannabis industry. While total retail commodities are down approximately 15% from the second quarter of 2019, the cannabis retail trade increased 55.4%, from \$252.2 million in Q2 2019 to \$565.8 million in the same quarter this year. In the second quarter of 2019, cannabis only represented 0.16% of all retail commodities in Canada, however, a year later, it now accounts for 0.41% of the total.

That's because Canadians are spending more on legal cannabis.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/canadians-spending-more-on-cannabis/>



>MILESTONE QUARTER FOR ONTARIO CANNABIS STORE

Recently released numbers show the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS) reaching new highs in their success. Not only has the average price of legal cannabis dropped below that of the illicit market, but sales are higher than ever and retail locations have more than doubled.

In the new report, Chief Commercial Officer Cheri Mara calls it a "milestone" achievement that the OCS has managed to lower the average price per gram of dried flower by \$1.42 to \$7.05, versus the illegal mail-order sites selling cannabis for an average of \$7.98 per gram. In fact, some of the OCS's larger-format value products come in as low as \$4.20 per gram.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/milestone-quarter-for-ontario-cannabis-store/>



>HOW VALUE BRANDS CONNECT WITH CONSUMERS

As this tumultuous year is winding down and we approach the two-year mark of legalized recreational cannabis, Canadian's shopping patterns are beginning to emerge. What's one notable category that's hot lately? Budget brands.

According to a new report from Brightfield Group, value brands have surged in recent months in every way. Customers are finally recognizing their brands and buying them—loyally!

COVID has been rough on many pocketbooks and customers aren't in a place financially to treat themselves with new things, so they want what value brands are selling: more cannabis for less money.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/how-value-brands-connect-with-consumers/>



>CANNABIS NB GROWS AS PRIVATIZATION LOOMS

Sales at Cannabis NB have nearly doubled in the last year, according to its second-quarter report. Since September of last year, total sales of legal recreational cannabis have increased 87.1%, leading to sales of \$20.1 million in the second quarter of 2020. That's a 23% increase since Q1 this year.

Cannabis NB reported \$3.3 million in profit for the second quarter, for a total of \$4.6 million in profit so far this year from only 20 stores and online sales. After decreasing operating expenses by 24.1% (\$2.1 million) and driving up profits 81.4% (\$6.1 million), the EBITDA growth year over year for the company is reported at \$8.3 million.

Continue reading: <https://cannabisretailer.ca/2020/cannabis-nb-grows-as-privatization-looms/>



Could Container Deposit Solve Waste Woes?

by *Jacquie Maynard*

It's no secret that the cannabis industry has a massive carbon footprint. Between the water, soil, and energy consumed growing indoors, the use of environmentally damaging additives like palm oil, and greenhouse gas emissions from trucking the product all over the country, the industry has a long way to go before it can be truly "green".

One of the major issues brought up by consumers is the abundance of packaging.

When cannabis products first started hitting the shelves in 2018, customers were aghast at how large and cumbersome packaging was compared to the quantity of product. Containers holding 3.5 grams of cannabis appeared to be three-quarters empty, leaving consumers wondering not only why containers had to be so big, but also wondering what to do with them once they were empty. After all, most flower is sold in 3.5-gram or 7-gram formats, leaving the customer with five to eight empty containers


if they choose to buy in bulk.

This complaint is not lost on the industry, though, and luckily there is a solution, but it may take a little bit of effort.

In 2017, Canopy Growth launched its Tweed x Terracycle program, which accepts all cannabis packaging, not just from Canopy Growth brands. There is a recycling

It's not enough, though. The Alberta Bottle Depot Association (ABDA) thinks the best way to solve this problem is to add a deposit to cannabis packaging.

Typically, beverages in approved containers like glass, plastic, and aluminum are sold with a \$0.05 or \$0.10 deposit that the consumer gets back once they bring the containers



It's no secret that the cannabis industry has a massive carbon footprint.

receptacle at the door of around 200 Tweed, Tokyo Smoke, and third-party retailers, and so far the program has saved over 6 million pieces from ending up in landfills. Consumers can even return their packaging through the mail if they aren't close to a drop-off location.

to the depot. It provides an incentive for consumers to recycle, and according to the Beverage Container Management Board (BCMB), which regulates the beverage container recycling industry in Alberta, around 82% of Albertans already use this service.



But why does there need to be a deposit? Surely Canadians can simply toss the plastic or cardboard packaging into their recycling bin and be done with it? Not so fast. Most recycling facilities do not take mixed-format packaging—AKA containers that are made of more than one material.

That’s where the deposit comes in, and the effort. If Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC) and the ABDA decided to put a deposit on cannabis containers, then licensed producers would be legally required to create packaging that adhered to the approved materials, which are glass, plastic, or aluminum.

“A large benefit of our current system is the regulatory control around product registration, in that containers can only be registered if they are recyclable, and the resulting large quantity of sorted and highly recyclable material collected by depots and

the CSA, equal to over two billion containers a year,” says Blaire Charlton-Gaalaas, President of the BCMB. “Manufacturers, such as those manufacturing cannabis containers, would need to develop an effective stewardship plan and could not assume that those containers can be mixed with our current beverage container material streams, as mixing them may jeopardize the high-quality material that the system is able to ensure gets recycled.”

According to AGLC spokesperson Heather Holman, the AGLC is in ongoing talks with regulators and LPs to address the issue, but nothing has been ironed out yet.

Unless you’d like to spend the time peeling the labels off of your cannabis containers, a deposit on packaging could be just the thing to address the heaps of plastic accumulating around the industry. ▲

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Diversity & Inclusion

by Sara Parchello and Archana Ravichandradeva

Growing and encouraging a diverse and inclusive workforce can make a more productive workplace environment, attract top-talent, and bring reputational and financial advantages to a company. Many top candidates consider factors such as the diversity of executive and management leaders or a commitment to environmental, corporate and social governance (ESG), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) ideals when choosing a job. Investors are also looking for ESG and CSR commitments when making investment decisions. Human rights legislation and requirements are minimum means through which baseline diversity and inclusion is enforced in the workplace. That said, to benefit from true inclusion, organizations need to champion the authentic welcoming of diverse viewpoints, personalities, life experiences, and strengths. Failing to do so can be costly, from a reputational and financial perspective.

Q: What are an employer's responsibilities towards hiring a diverse workforce?

There are few specific legal requirements that set out employer responsibilities towards employment equity in the private sector. There are requirements for employers under federal jurisdiction, or who have secured contract services with the federal government, to engage in proactive employment to increase representation of women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, and visible minorities.

Canadian law has not evolved in the same manner as the US, where diversity and inclusion has historically been promoted through more prescriptive affirmative action policies.

In Canada, public companies may have reporting requirements under securities legislation to provide disclosure on certain ESG issues, such as the representation of women on boards and in senior management positions.

In addition, provincial and federal human rights and accommodation legislation act as a minimum driver for diversity and inclusion, as they prohibit discrimination based on protected grounds such as race, gender or gender expression, age, disability, family or marital status, etc. Employers must comply with applicable human rights legislation in all phases of the employment relationship, including recruitment, promotions, dismissals, and terminations.

Q: How Does Human Rights Legislation Protect Employees?

During recruitment, all job requirements set out in advertisements or postings must be reasonable and for a bona fide purpose. Employers must also ensure a fair hiring process. Human rights legislation prohibits employers from asking questions that directly or indirectly classify or indicate qualifications based on a protected ground, other than for special programs. Recently, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal ordered Imperial Oil to pay nearly \$125,000 in damages to a prospective employee (who was never hired by the company) because of a requirement that he be able to "work in Canada on a permanent basis", and prove his status through a Canadian birth certificate, citizenship certificate, or permanent residence card. The individual lied on his application about his ability to work permanently in Canada, which the employer relied upon as a basis for not proceeding with the employment relationship. The Tribunal found that the applicant's lie was negated due to the illegality of the Company's stated job requirement, as it unfairly disqualified applicants based on citizenship. Although the applicant found alternative employment, the Tribunal awarded him with \$101,363.16, equivalent to 4 years of wages with Imperial Oil. An additional \$15,000 was awarded for compensation to dignity, injury, and self-respect.

During the employment relationship, employers are required to accommodate employees with disabilities (whether physical, mental, or psychological) to the point of undue hardship to the employer because of significant costs of the accommodation or health and safety concerns that may arise. Some provinces, including Ontario, have accessibility legislation, which establish additional accommodation requirements. Accommodation can range from modified job duties, providing more breaks during the workday, or providing alternative work. Employers are also required to ensure their employees are protected from discrimination during the employment relationship. For example, in 2013, a downtown Toronto restaurant was held liable for \$100,000 in damages due to discrimination against Muslim employees, who were forced to eat pork by the restaurant owners despite being forbidden to do so by their religion. Similarly, an employer was fined around \$250,000 in damages in a civil action for poor treatment of a deaf employee.

Q: How Can You Build True Diversity and Inclusion

As seen above, human rights laws act as a base-level deterrent force for the protection of employees made vulnerable due to their protected grounds. However, to benefit from what diversity and inclusion can bring to a workplace, employers need to move beyond merely protecting employees against discrimination. Instead of paying lip service to diversity goals, employers need to craft inclusive workplaces, which allow their employees to be their full and authentic selves in the workplace. This allows employers to benefit from diverse viewpoints and experiences. Specific training should also occur on key concepts, such as what "diversity" and "inclusion" mean, and how to identify or evaluate one's own unspoken bias(es). Employers should maintain safe spaces for real questions and conversations, which helps promote trust, unity, and a cohesive culture with buy-in from all levels of the organization. Employers may also need to question what exactly 'fit' and 'culture' mean for their workplace, determining whether they may unintentionally be excluding individuals from being authentically themselves. Human rights laws act as a base-level protection for employees. Other than the fact that it is the right thing to do, moving beyond the bare minimum can be extremely advantageous for employers in all facets of their business. ▀

Sara Parchello is a Partner at Bennett Jones LLP. She has an employment and labour focused legal practice, with considerable understanding of the retail, hospitality, and mining industries.

Reviewing the Federal *Cannabis Act*

by Lisa Holmes



The scheduled three-year legislative review of the Federal *Cannabis Act* in October 2021 will be another exciting milestone on Canada's adult-use cannabis journey. It is an essential opportunity to reflect on the fundamental goals established for the cannabis industry in the first place, to review what has been learned during the roll-out of legalization, and to offer solutions to ensure the application of these laws continues to be relevant and consistent.

Bill C-45, the *Cannabis Act*, and the regulatory frameworks created in 2018 were not perfect, but they were the first step that gave the Canadian cannabis sector a considerable advantage. It permitted the sale of cannabis within a legal regulatory system and clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities that each level of government would hold regarding cannabis retail sales and production. It allowed us to build from the ground up and to access a significant amount of capital investment. Canadian companies grew rapidly and thrived, were able to attract world-class talent from areas such as agriculture, security, public affairs, academic research, human resources, education, and training. The achievements made were only possible because the cannabis industry was federally regulated.

There will be a chance for everyone involved in the cannabis sector, directly and indirectly, to be a part of this national conversation. With a piece of legislation as encompassing as this, there will be a lot of topics to cover. Here are some areas that we expect to be addressed:

Respect of the Cannabis Sector - Currently, Health Canada is responsible for oversight of the *Cannabis Act* with a focus on ensuring the continued health and safety of Canadians. Although revenue generation was not specifically outlined as an objective of the *Cannabis Act*, the sale and production of cannabis offer significant revenue potential. The cannabis sector is frequently excluded or restricted from participating in federal economic programs or grants. Any review should include consideration of moving the oversight of cannabis into a federal ministry that would include an economic mandate, such as Agriculture and Agri-Food, Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, or Economic Development.

Softening Restrictions on Marketing - Right now, Canadian businesses cannot market their products or retail stores to Canadian consumers. As US-based companies continue to market and promote their products using marketing channels and methods that are accessible by Canadians, we will find it more challenging to control the narrative about cannabis product availability and safety in our own country. Time and experience have shown that it is possible to allow cannabis brand development while supporting the initial legislative goals around health and safety. It will be important to emphasize changes to ensure that regulations are common-sense, applied more consistently, and clearly understood.

Reducing the Size and Reach of the Illegal Market - Although different measures of success will be used to determine the success of the roll-out of legal cannabis in Canada, the current reality is that the illegal cannabis market in Canada continues to thrive. We need to allow people to interact with and access cannabis products in the way that they want to. Whether that be in person within a private retail store or purchasing from their preferred private retailer online and having the product delivered to their home, if consumers cannot access cannabis in a legal way that is convenient and comfortable for them, they will continue to purchase from the illegal sources that offer that convenience and comfort. This review will allow us to encourage lawmakers to expand market access for private retailers, reduce barriers, and streamline processes to transition legacy operators to legal, and further reduce the stigmas associated with cannabis.

Details surrounding the review have yet to be announced by the Government of Canada; however, no matter the process, it will be important for all members of the cannabis community to participate in this process. The past three years have shown that legalizing cannabis for recreational purposes while restricting youth access, protecting public health and safety, and ensuring access to legal, regulated product is possible and has been successful. The next three years should be focused on maximizing the economic benefits that the sector offers, embracing opportunities for innovation and growth, and marketing our policy and industry expertise to the world. ▲

RESEARCH

by Paul Armentano

Seniors' Usage of Cannabis

Seniors' use of cannabis and their support for its legalization has risen dramatically in recent years.

Some of this change in attitude is arguably a result of more seniors having first-hand experience with cannabis. According to data published in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*, the percentage of Americans ages 65 or older reporting having engaged in past-year cannabis use has risen over one-thousand percent in the past decade and a half.

Why are increasing numbers of seniors turning to—or in some cases, returning to—cannabis? For starters, the law has changed. Medical cannabis is now legally available throughout Canada and in 33 US states, providing many older adults for the first time with safe, above-ground, uninterrupted access to an array of cannabis products. Since the majority of seniors prefer non-herbal, non-smoked cannabis preparations, such as cannabis-infused capsules or edibles, they are largely reliant on these above-ground licenced stores for their access, as such product varieties are typically unavailable in the illicit marketplace.

Furthermore, seniors are becoming more familiar with and accepting of cannabis' therapeutic properties. Not only are increasing numbers of seniors becoming aware that cannabis can mitigate many of the health-related symptoms that come with older age, such as chronic pain, but they also understand that it can do so with fewer side-effects than many prescription drugs, like opioids.

According to survey data compiled by the cannabis chain Verilife, nearly three-out-of-four baby boomers (those born between the years of 1946 and 1964) define their cannabis use as 'medical.' And an increasing body of literature finds it is safe and effective for them.

Specifically, data from Israel—where medical cannabis is available by prescription—finds that over 90% of seniors engaged in cannabis therapy report improvements in their symptoms. Nearly one-in-five Israeli seniors surveyed also reported either ceasing or reducing their use of opioids, while the majority of respondents said that cannabis significantly improved their overall quality of life.

Studies from elderly patients in the US show similar results. For instance, data compiled in 2019 by researchers affiliated with the University of Colorado School of Medicine reported that past-year cannabis use among those aged 60 and older "improved overall health, quality of life, [and] day-to-day functioning." Separate data



presented at the annual meeting of the American Geriatrics Society reports that more than half of seniors surveyed reported reducing their use of opiates following the initiation of medical cannabis.

Most recently, data published in August in the journal *Clinical Gerontologist* assessed seniors' use of medical cannabis on health-related outcomes over a one-year period. Investigators reported a "strong positive association" between subjects' frequency of cannabis use and self-reported improvements in pain, health-care utilization, and overall health-related quality of life. Participants failed to report any statistically significant association between medical cannabis use and adverse events.

They concluded, "[We] identified a strong positive association between higher frequency of cannabis use and improvement to HRQL [health-related quality of life] and HCU [health-care utilization] scores... Our regression modeling also identified a strong positive relationship between higher frequency of cannabis use and self-reported improvements to pain symptoms. The positive relationship between near-daily use and improved reports offers further evidence of the perceived value of medical cannabis as a therapeutic approach for pain management."

This shift in the demographics with respect to who is consuming cannabis, and their reasons for using it have significant political implications. It galvanizes support amongst arguably the most reliable and powerful voting block—seniors. As their attitudes continue to evolve on cannabis, expect to see many municipal politicians shift their views as well and start allowing licenced stores in their cities. ▀

*Paul Armentano is the Deputy Director of NORML—the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws—and he is the co-author of the book *Marijuana Is Safer: So Why Are We Driving People to Drink?* (Chelsea Green, 2013). Additional information about NORML and its efforts are available at www.norml.org.*

Education is Key to Removing Stigma Around Cannabis

by Sandra Thomas

Vancouver realtor Hindy Ratner believes that with more education, many baby boomers would substitute cannabis in place of their over-the-counter and prescription drugs. “A lot of them drink too much, too,” says Ratner. “I think it’s a lot healthier to substitute some of that alcohol with cannabis.”

Ratner buys her cannabis from Atheneum Cannabis, which opened in Kerrisdale May 2, despite delays caused by COVID-19. Ratner says not only have staff at the store been helpful in her education around cannabis, her children also encouraged her to explore its many health benefits. Ratner uses cannabis oils and supplements to help ease the aches and pains common to baby boomers, and to help her sleep. “Most of the people I know are using sleeping pills to sleep,” says Ratner. “I don’t have to.”

Ratner wants to encourage her friends to at least give cannabis a try before writing it off. “It’s like wine,” she says. “You need to be able to try different products before you find one that works for you.”

Keith Blasius, general manager of Atheneum Cannabis, agrees education is key to lowering the stigma around cannabis use and adds the shop is seeing more and more older customers coming in with questions.

“We have a lot of new customers—or customers who haven’t consumed cannabis since they bought it on the black market way back when—who need help,” says Blasius. “That’s why a well-educated staff and staff training are so important.”

Blasius notes the technology in the vaping industry has become so sophisticated, the temperature can be controlled to match the cannabis strain in order to produce the best results. He adds, that’s one reason it’s so important to watch the training videos created by licenced producers about their products.

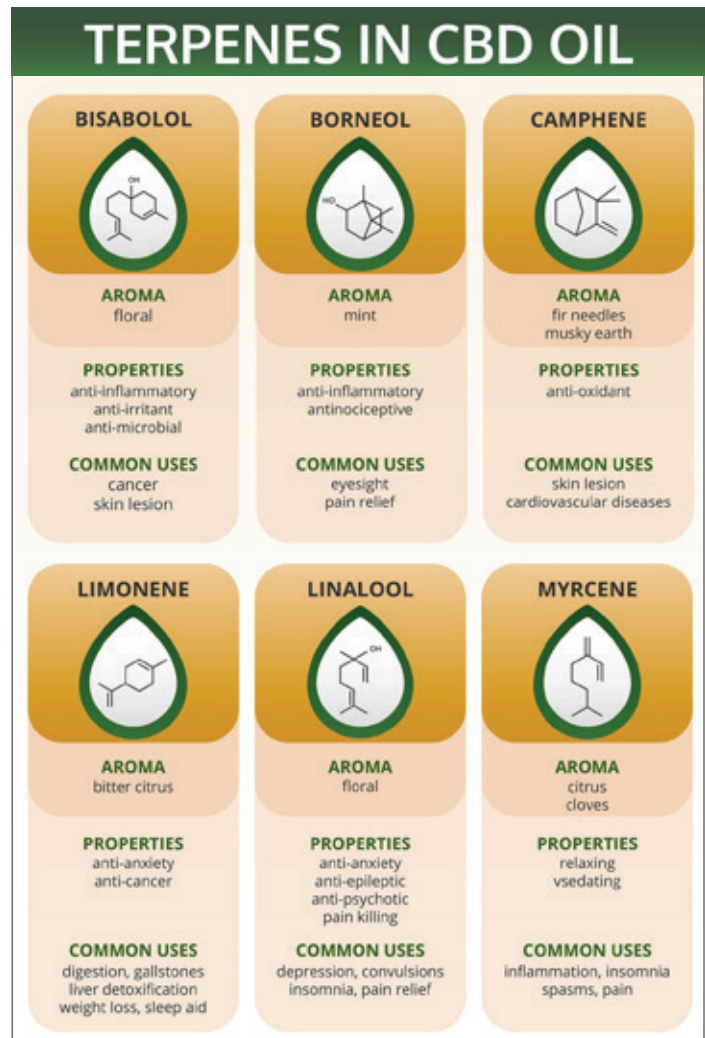
“The quality is improving and the pricing is coming down,” says Blasius. “But the education needs to be there, too.”

Blasius says when Atheneum Cannabis first applied to the City of Vancouver for a business licence—and word of its impending opening began to spread—there was some push back from the community. Those protests were mainly made via letters to the city. “But we wanted to get rid of the stigma of a cannabis shop and we knew eventually they’d come around.”

To that end, the shop is well lit, the music is a mix of easy listening and jazz, the décor is clean and bright and, instead of the smell of cannabis, customers are greeted with the scent of aromatherapy.

“You’re not going to see any Bob Marley posters in here,” says Blasius. “We want to prove that we are good corporate neighbours who care about our community.”

Those policies seem to be working. Blasius says two new customers to Atheneum Cannabis are a man and woman in their eighties who wandered in searching out alternatives to pharmaceuticals.



Blasius notes not every municipality in Greater Vancouver is on board with allowing retail cannabis shops. To date, the City of Surrey has no bricks and mortar cannabis businesses.

In response to a request from *Cannabis Retailer* for an update on where that city stands on the issue of legalized cannabis shops, Surrey’s bylaws department responded with an emailed statement, which said in part, “that the production, distribution, and sale of cannabis is restricted under the City of Surrey’s zoning bylaws.

“If an entity wishes to propose the production, distribution, and/or sale of cannabis in Surrey, they are required to submit a rezoning application for Surrey council’s consideration. Accordingly, Surrey council has granted approval on one such rezoning application to date.”

That application was made by a local company for the production of cannabis infused beverages.

“The final product is sold (wholesale) to the Province of BC,” the email continued. “If a consumer wishes to purchase the product, they may do so at a Province of BC approved cannabis retail store, none of which operate in Surrey at present.”

Meanwhile Blasius says with more research into the health benefits of cannabis, comes more possibilities. “It’s so exciting. So many people I’ve talked to in the business really believe this is good for society,” says Blasius. “They’re truly in it for the right reasons.” ▲



Testing your Cannabis Knowledge

by Afshin Mousavian

In order to help you understand your organization's state of awareness, here is a 10 question quiz that you and your colleagues can take to test your cannabis knowledge.

1. How long can the effects of smoking cannabis or consuming edibles last?

As per Health Canada, the effects of smoking cannabis can be felt within minutes and can last for up to 6 hours. The effects of edibles start 30 minutes to 2 hours after consuming and can last up to 12 hours. When cannabis is ingested, it takes much longer for it to be absorbed into the bloodstream and for its effects to be felt by the brain and body.

2. If you don't have a safety-sensitive job, but use cannabis, should you disclose this to your employer?

If you don't have a safety-sensitive job, you don't have to disclose your cannabis use if it will not cause a safety risk at work.

3. If you disclosed that you have a medical cannabis authorization to your employer, can you consume cannabis at work?

An authorization for medical cannabis does not entitle cannabis consumption during work. If an employee requires the use of cannabis during work hours, they must disclose this to their employer and discuss the possibility of accommodation.

4. If you need to consume medical cannabis during work, is your employer required to review your accommodation request to modify work duties?

The employer is required to review accommodation requests from employees who have a medical cannabis authorization, but can deny the request if it causes undue hardship.

5. If you use cannabis for pain management, does your employer have a duty to accommodate even if you do not have a medical cannabis authorization?

Unlike medical cannabis, employers do not have a duty to accommodate recreational cannabis use.

6. Can employers deny an accommodation request if the request causes a health and safety risk or is costly?

Employers can deny accommodation requests if it causes them undue hardship. Human rights laws do not provide a standard definition of undue hardship. Courts typically review: (a) cost of the accommodation; (b) change to the structure of work; and (c) resulting risk to health or safety.

7. As part of the accommodation review process what may your employer ask a medical professional about?

To review an accommodation request, the employer needs access to information. The required information must balance between an employer's need to maintain a safe workplace environment and an employee's privacy. The employer is not entitled to receive the diagnosis or treatment plan but is entitled to receive the results of a "fit for duty" assessment, which indicates if the employee is able to perform the job safely under their working conditions.

8. What should you do if you see your co-worker may be impaired?

Employees are required to report health and safety concerns, including their own.

9. If you have a safety-sensitive job, can your employer perform a drug test?

According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, employers can test an employee for drugs if they work in a safety-sensitive position after a near miss or actual safety incident or accident, and as part of a return to work agreement.

10. If you have a safety sensitive job, can your employer ask you for a random drug test?

If the employer has demonstrated drug abuse is a common issue amongst employees then random drug testing of employees in safety-sensitive jobs is allowed in narrow circumstances.

Learn more about cannabis education at thercu.org/CannEd.

Afshin Mousavian is CEO at Responsible Cannabis Use.

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