

Is Your Cannabis Business Leveraging Older Worker Talent?

The U.S. cannabis industry is contributing more than \$115 billion to the national economy in 2024 and employing hundreds of thousands across cultivation, retail, manufacturing, and distribution. But as the sector matures, it faces a workforce challenge that other industries have already encountered how to attract and retain older, experienced workers.

The workforce aged 65 and older is now the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. labor market, with over 11.8 million individuals currently employed more than double the number from 30 years ago. For cannabis companies navigating complex regulatory, compliance, and operational landscapes, this demographic represents an untapped well of knowledge, discipline, and stability.

Yet many cannabis businesses continue to focus their recruitment and culture-building efforts on younger workers, often overlooking the tremendous potential that older employees bring to the table.

It's time to rethink that.

Older Workers Are Thriving And Outperforming Expectations

Contrary to outdated stereotypes, older workers are not resistant to change or lagging behind in innovation. In fact, recent studies reveal that older employees are thriving both personally and professionally in today's workforce.

- **91% of older workers** report being satisfied with their current jobs.
- **87% say they feel engaged** in their work and connected to their company's mission.
- Among HR professionals who manage older employees, 74% report positive experiences, and 88% believe older workers perform better or much better than their younger counterparts.

In the cannabis industry where professionalism, compliance, and consistency are essential these qualities are gold. Older workers bring not only technical skills but also emotional intelligence, patience, and a balanced approach to problem-solving that are critical for regulated industries like cannabis.

Breaking Stereotypes: Older Workers Embrace Growth and Innovation

One of the most persistent myths about older workers is that they struggle to adapt to new technologies or resist change. But the numbers tell a very different story:

- **81% of older workers** express a strong willingness to learn.
- **79% show positive approaches to challenges** and continuous improvement.
- **60% demonstrate enthusiasm for growth**, including embracing modern technologies like **artificial intelligence and digital compliance platforms**.

In a cannabis business, where technology drives everything from seed to sale tracking systems to automated cultivation and digital marketing analytics, adaptability is key.

Older workers with their deep experience and professional discipline can adapt quickly when properly trained. They bring a long-term perspective that helps integrate new tools without losing sight of business goals, compliance, or customer experience.

The Cannabis Industry's Hidden Advantage: The Value of Knowledge Retention

The cannabis industry's rapid evolution means that institutional knowledge is one of its most valuable assets. Regulations shift constantly, compliance demands grow more complex, and brand reputation depends heavily on consistency and operational integrity.

That's where older workers play an indispensable role.

Yet research shows a concerning gap in how businesses retain knowledge when seasoned employees leave:

- **83% of HR professionals** say they document company policies.
- But only **32% document cultural norms** — the unwritten values that shape team cohesion.
- And just **43% capture client relationships** — which can take years to build.

This creates a serious knowledge retention risk if experienced employees retire without passing on critical insights.

In cannabis, where compliance missteps can cost millions, and customer relationships drive loyalty, losing such knowledge can set a business back years.

Forward-thinking cannabis companies are addressing this by creating mentorship programs, succession planning frameworks, and internal documentation systems that preserve both operational knowledge and company culture.

A Disconnect Between Generations and How Cannabis Companies Can Fix It

Interestingly, there's a growing disconnect between what younger workers *think* older workers need — and what HR departments *actually provide*.

For example:

- **55% of workers aged 18–54** believe flexible hours are essential for supporting older workers, yet only 32% of HR professionals implement flexible scheduling.
- **44% of younger workers** think companies should offer wellness programs addressing age-related health needs, but only 16% of organizations have such benefits in place.

For cannabis businesses that operate long retail hours, intensive cultivation shifts, and physically demanding warehouse work, these gaps are significant.

Creating age inclusive workplaces isn't just about benefits, It's about retention and performance. Companies that adopt flexible scheduling, ergonomic environments, and health-oriented programs for older workers see improved morale, productivity, and reduced turnover.

Why Cannabis Businesses Need Experienced Workers More Than Ever

As the cannabis market matures, it's becoming more complex not less. Regulations, insurance requirements, and compliance obligations continue to evolve at a rapid pace.

Older workers bring something that can't be easily trained: experience in navigating uncertainty. Whether they've worked in pharmaceuticals, agriculture, manufacturing, or finance, many older professionals transitioning into cannabis bring transferable skills that strengthen operational integrity.

Some of the key areas where older workers excel include:

- **Regulatory compliance and documentation**
- **Operations management and process improvement**
- **Customer relations and community engagement**
- **Mentorship and workforce training**

Their stability also helps anchor startups and new ventures that often face volatility and burnout in their early years.

In short experience is the new competitive advantage and older workers have plenty of it.

Building an Age Inclusive Cannabis Workforce

To unlock the full potential of older workers, cannabis businesses need to adopt inclusive hiring and management practices. Here's how:

1. **Design Flexible Work Options:** Allow part-time, hybrid, or consulting roles that suit the needs of older professionals.
2. **Provide Targeted Training:** Offer accessible, hands-on tech training to help employees adapt to new tools like AI-driven inventory systems or compliance platforms.
3. **Promote Mentorship Programs:** Pair older workers with younger employees for two-way learning and stronger team culture.
4. **Invest in Health and Wellness Programs:** Offer preventative care, ergonomic improvements, and wellness incentives tailored to older employees.
5. **Celebrate Experience in Hiring and Promotion:** Highlight veteran expertise as a strength in company branding and recruitment efforts.

When cannabis companies create inclusive environments that value experience, they don't just strengthen their workforce they future proof their business.

Experience Is the Key to Cannabis Growth

The cannabis industry thrives on innovation, but innovation doesn't only come from the young. It also comes from experience from people who know how to adapt, lead, and build resilience through change.

Older workers aren't just productive, they're engaged, adaptable, and ready to contribute. The real question is: is your cannabis business ready to leverage their talent?

By recognizing the value of experienced professionals, cannabis businesses can unlock new efficiencies, improve compliance, and build a culture that stands the test of time.

Because in cannabis as in any industry growth isn't just about new ideas. It's about wisdom, balance, and the people who bring both to the table.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why should cannabis companies focus on hiring older workers?

Older workers bring extensive experience, strong work ethic, emotional intelligence, and consistent performance all essential in compliance-driven industries like cannabis.

What unique advantages do older employees offer cannabis operations?

They excel in regulatory compliance, documentation, customer relations, operations management, and mentorship.

What challenges do cannabis companies face with an aging workforce?

The biggest risk is knowledge loss. Without proper systems for documenting procedures, cultural values, and client relationships, companies can lose critical operational insight when seasoned workers retire.

How can cannabis companies create age-inclusive workplaces?

Implement flexible scheduling, offer health and wellness programs, provide hands on tech training, build mentorship systems, and recognize experience as a core hiring strength.

If you need guidance building an age inclusive workforce strategy, strengthening compliance, or improving employee retention, our team is here to help.

Get in touch at: info@cannabisriskmanager.com

[Let's build the future of cannabis stronger, smarter, and more resilient than ever.](#)

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