The Green Industry Goes White Collar

As the cannabis industry changes so does the makeup of its workforce.

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With marijuana legalization spreading to Michigan, Utah and Missouri this fall, the cannabis industry is starting to become one of the nation’s top employers.

It’s happening quickly. Sales of marijuana in 2017 already exceeded sales of Oreo cookies, tattoos and organic produce. In the next couple of years, cannabis is projected to surpass annual sales at McDonald’s and Netflix, as well as sales of donuts, video games, firearms and ammunition.

All this means jobs. Lots of jobs. And these go far beyond the more entry-level positions of cannabis cultivator and budtender. Like any other money-making industry, marijuana is starting to attract college-educated professionals.

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How Many Jobs Are We Talking About?

The cannabis industry nationwide already employs between 125,000 and 160,000 people. That’s about the same employment rate as kindergarten teachers and more than librarians,

detectives, pilots and coal industry workers.

Estimates vary on how big the industry will grow and how fast. But Canada, which legalized marijuana nationwide this fall, offers an example of what's to come. The cannabis industry already has poached talent from more "traditional sectors of the economy," according to the *Washington Post*. That includes research scientists, marketers, attorneys and human resource professionals.

Alison McMahon, who works for cannabis-focused human resources firm in Canada, told the Post: "People see the end of cannabis prohibition and the industry that's going to emerge out of it as a green rush and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's a chance to be part of history."

What Type of Jobs?

Earlier this year, the online jobs site, Indeed, reported that job searches on the terms "cannabis" or "marijuana" quadrupled from 2017. They also reported that jobs listings in the cannabis industries tripled over the same period.

A search for cannabis jobs (with no specific location entered) in November 2018 turned up many professional jobs, all of which require at least a bachelor's degree (and in some cases, a master's degree is preferred).

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They are notable not just for the wide range of professionals needed, but also the variety of locations. Some are likely not in places you would expect. Here's a sample of those job postings.

- Project Analyst and Compliance Specialist at a cultivation facility in Ohio
- Legislative and Regulatory Strategist for a company in northern California

- Chief Financial Officer at a CBD-based pharmaceutical company in Dallas
- Inventory Control Analyst at a cultivation company in Hawaii
- Data Reporting Analyst for a cannabis testing lab in Massachusetts
- Cannabis industry analyst for an investment firm in Kansas

As legalization continues to spread, expect this trend to continue. Marijuana is on the verge of not only adding to its multi-billion-dollar market but also become a generator of thousands of more jobs for workers across a diverse spectrum of careers.

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