



Not Just an Entry-Level Job: 5 Principles of Being a Great Budtender



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Not Just an Entry-Level Job: 5 Principles of Being a Great Budtender

Your friendly neighborhood budtender is the first face you see when you visit the dispensary and, if you're lucky, a "cannabis whisperer" of sorts who gives you the inside scoop on the latest and greatest products to hit the shelves.

Often seen as an entry-level job in the cannabis industry, Budtenders are far more than simply cashiers or door attendants. As Weedmaps put it, budtenders "are responsible for educating consumers about the effects, benefits, and overall experience of cannabis products."

Weedmaps added that while budtenders aren't trained healthcare professionals they "serve as important guides to using cannabis products, and tailor their customer and patient service to all levels of experience."

And it appears that as the industry expands, budtender salaries are becoming somewhat more competitive. From 2020, the median salary increased by 6% from \$37,200 to \$39,250, according to the findings of a survey by Canabizteam.

According to the Cannabis Staffing Agency Vangst, budtenders are "a vital part" of the customer experience and the face of cannabis businesses they work for. At the same time, Vangst said that budtenders have one of the highest rates of turnover in the industry, "so company culture and attractive benefits are more important than ever for retaining cannabis talent."

But what can budtenders do to help build a culture of safety and professionalism at the dispensary, and how can they use an entry-level job to start climbing the ladder in cannabis?

Here are five crucial components of the budtender position, and how they can help dispensaries and budtenders alike.



Be the Cannabis Gatekeeper

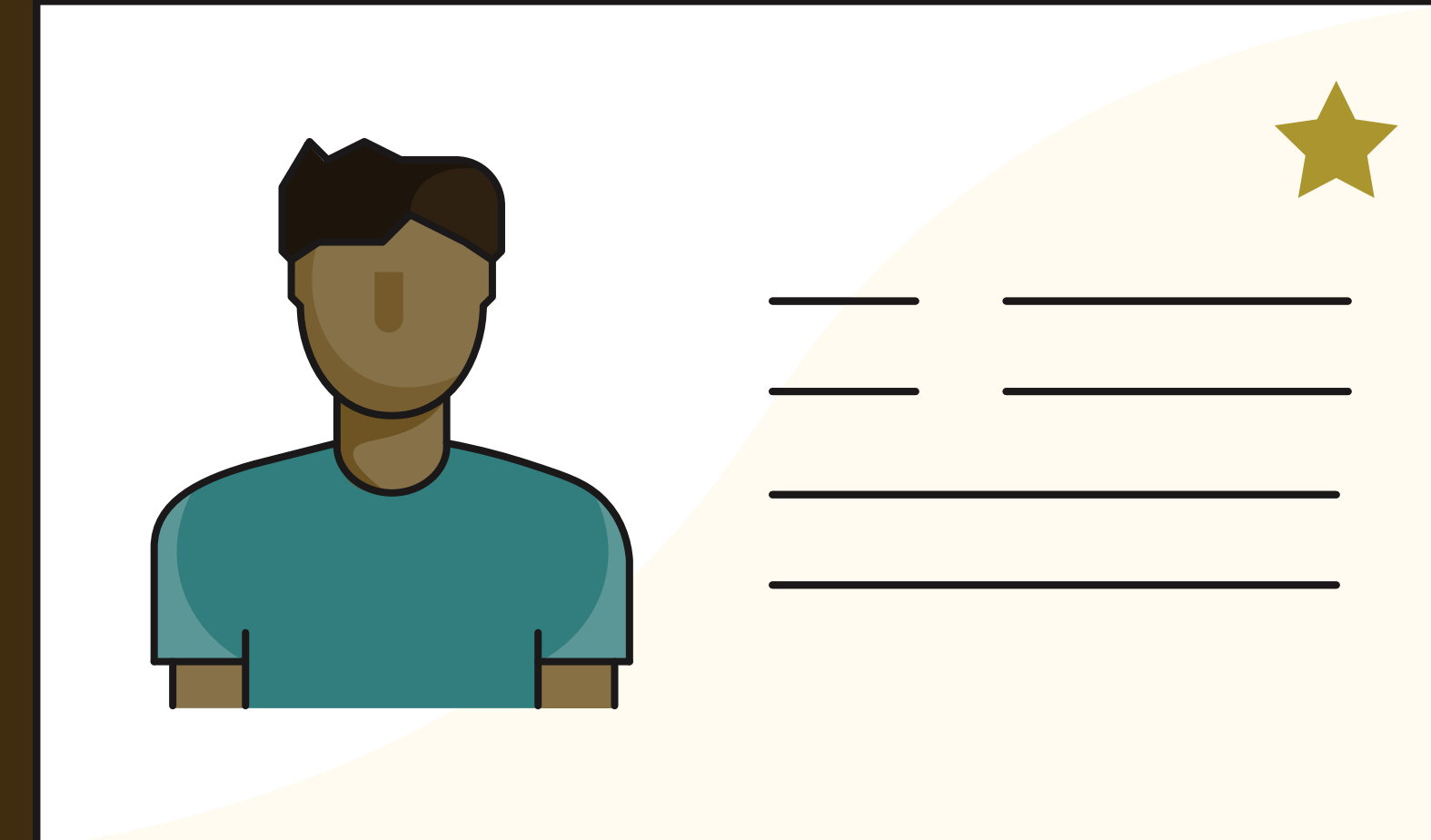
It may seem obvious, but one of the most critical aspects of the bartender's job takes place before the customer even steps into the dispensary.

In every state with legal recreational cannabis dispensaries, only adults over age 21 are allowed to make purchases.

Unless the dispensary employs a doorman, it is essential that budtenders check each and every guest's identification when they enter.

Upon entry, the budtender must confirm that:

- ✓ A recreational cannabis customer has a valid government-issued photo that shows they are over 21
- ✓ A medical cannabis customer must have a valid government-issued photo ID that shows they are at least 18 years old and possess a valid medical marijuana identification card or license.



If a guest's identification appears to be fraudulent or is expired, the dispensary employee must request that they leave the premises.

Properly checking ID can also protect a dispensary from "looping," the term used to describe when customers make multiple visits to dispensaries on the same day in order to skirt daily purchase limits.

While it's true that mistakes can happen – especially when the dispensary is busy or understaffed – you shouldn't count on the law to be forgiving when it comes to mistakes. Allowing an underage person to purchase cannabis products can spell severe fines, loss of license, and even arrest and jail time in some cases.

But budtenders aren't gatekeepers solely in the physical sense. They can also play a big role in encouraging a culture of responsible cannabis consumption among dispensary customers.

When customers enter a dispensary, they should encounter an environment in which cannabis consumption isn't portrayed solely as a means of getting as intoxicated as possible. Instead, the budtenders should greet them on their customer journey, and present them a more holistic approach to cannabis that explores not only the THC level of products, but also the wider terpene and cannabinoid profile, reported effects, and recommended usage, among other factors.

Be a Cannabis Concierge

Budtender isn't your typical sales position and cannabis isn't your average over-the-counter product.

Cannabis products can have various effects, potencies, intake methods, onset times, and effect durations.

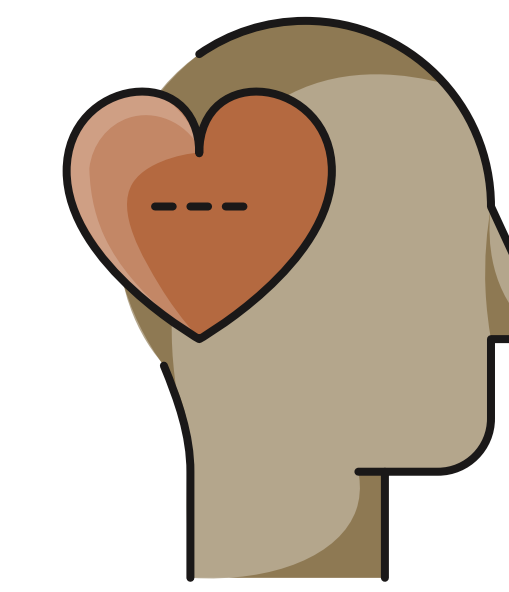
These products are by no means one size fits all, and it's also a mistake to paint cannabis customers with a single brush.

Some customers are looking for something to help them relax at the end of the day, some want an energizing high for their off-day, some wish to ease pain or anxiety, and many just want to have a good time. They also have all types of experience and knowledge of cannabis and what works for them.

And much like a hotel concierge, you should view your customers more as guests rather than merely a transaction.

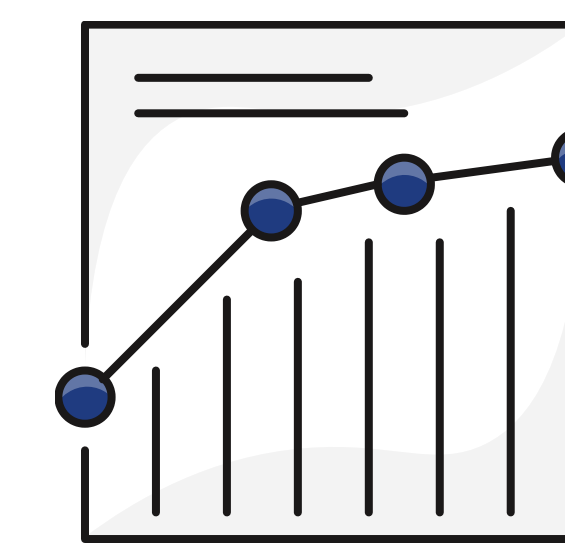
As a post on the National Cannabis Industry Association website wrote, "Terms like users, consumers and customers are words that don't exist in hotels. Their customers are guests. And here is why that is both useful and critical. Every person in every culture receives guests, not customers, into their homes. Your staff needs to be thinking that the dispensary is their home and they are receiving guests there."

Here are some key questions budtenders can ask when interacting with customers:



What is your intent?

Does the customer want something that will give them an energizing high, or do they want more of a "couch-lock" feeling to help melt away the stress at the end of the day? Are they looking for a daytime product or something that's better suited for nighttime? Their answers can make all the difference in helping you make the right recommendation.



What is your tolerance level?

A too intense cannabis experience can easily be too much of a good thing. At the same time, if you're looking for a more potent sensation, then a cannabis product that leaves you at the threshold can be frustrating as well. Ask your guest about their cannabis experience, the potency of the products they've used in the past, and how strong an effect they want.



Which products have you enjoyed in the past?

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Be Conscious of Compliance

Legal cannabis has been a blessing for countless people across the country, from medical marijuana patients to casual fans to people looking to build a career in the industry.

But it has also brought with it a dizzying array of cannabis regulations that vary from state to state and jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

These requirements are legion and they cover subjects as varied as:

- How to correctly render and dispose of cannabis waste
- How to carry out a mandatory recall
- The placement and operation of security cameras
- Inventory tracking and management
- Cash handling procedures

And much more.

While these regulations are by no means the sole responsibility of the budtender, retail staff play a crucial role in ensuring that their dispensary does not fall afoul of compliance.

Budtenders are the ones responsible for the compliance demands that deal with transactions, customer identification verification, and in many cases waste management and inventory management.

But they don't need to shoulder the burden alone.

Sophisticated digital compliance software like that provided by Rootwurks can formulate checklists, audits, and assessments that personnel can use to help them decrease the risk of noncompliance for all types of cannabis businesses.

These software solutions, combined with safety and training resources like the Rootwurks LXP can bolster employee knowledge of compliance, helping instill a culture of safety that is reinforced in real-time, as a central component of the dispensary staff's daily operations.

And for budtenders, developing a better awareness of the demands of cannabis compliance and an eye for safety can only benefit them as they seek out new opportunities in cannabis, including in dispensary and cannabis facility management.

Be Hesitant About Health Recommendations

Budtenders are typically not trained healthcare professionals, but many customers nonetheless turn to them for recommendations for cannabis products that can treat specific health conditions. And with the spread of the legal recreational cannabis market, many people are using cannabis to treat diagnosed health conditions without first obtaining a medical marijuana permit.

Budtenders must walk a very fine line. On the one hand, you want to help your customers find relief, but you also don't want to make a recommendation that you aren't medically trained to provide.

In addition, many forms of medication can have potentially dangerous interactions with cannabinoids, particularly cannabidiol (CBD).

If a customer asks for a cannabis product to treat a specific health condition, the budtender should inform them that they are not qualified to make that call and recommend they speak to their physician.

Instead of offering medical advice, budtenders could ask questions such as:



How do you want to feel?



What type of sensations do you want to avoid with your cannabis?



Which products have worked well for you in the past?

If your customer is describing a specific health condition, advise them to speak to a certified physician to provide medical marijuana prescriptions. In the meantime, you can help them find products like those that have already worked well for them.



Be a Cannabis Expert

Legal cannabis is an exciting, dynamic, and fascinating industry to be a part of. But learning the terminology can be challenging, even for more seasoned marijuana aficionados.

As legalization spreads, competition and innovation are at an all-time high as cannabis brands and cultivators look for new products and genetics that can help them stand in an ever more saturated market.

But where does this leave the consumer? On the one hand, marijuana consumers have more variety and options than ever before. On the other hand, this can lead to serious buyer's fatigue at the dispensary, as consumers feel lost amid the embarrassment of riches.

Budtenders can help them make sense of it all. Budtender can help consumers wade through a sea of products to find the ones that match their usage intentions and the intake methods they prefer.

By helping consumers create personalized cannabis shopping lists, bartenders can improve customer satisfaction and help them have more positive experiences with cannabis.

And while there can often be too much emphasis on potency, expert bartenders can help promote responsible cannabis use by guiding consumers towards products and cannabis flower that provide a variety of benefits beyond merely the THC content.

And it appears that cannabis consumers may also be evolving in their awareness of the intricacies of cannabis.

As the cannabis analytics firm BDSA stated in their 2022 cannabis market predictions, "we expect minor cannabinoids, cannabinoid ratios, terpene profiles, and beyond to replace strain and indica/sativa labeling."

As the market evolves, budtenders must also become savvier.

Good for...
inflammation
acid reflux
enlarged prostate

Embrace Education and Compliance Training for Budtenders and Dispensaries

For customers, budtenders can help provide a personalized cannabis experience and a better understanding of the intricacies of today's cannabis products. For the dispensary, a well-trained budtender can be an extra set of eyes and ears helping oversee compliance needs and a skilled customer service professional that can make a big impact on the bottom line.

But better cannabis education and safety and compliance training can also provide great benefits for budtenders. These resources can help them foster a deeper understanding of cannabis, a greater awareness of safety and compliance issues, and a culture of professionalism and safety that can make them much more rounded cannabis professionals for the day when they decide to step out from behind the counter.



Many a professional dream begins with a single footstep, and in cannabis, this can be the step that takes you behind the counter to work as a budtender. From there, sophisticated, expertly-crafted resources like the Rootwurks Learning Experience Platform can provide the insight and training to help you take charge of your own legal cannabis dream.

Discover the learning and compliance resources provided by Rootwurks today!

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