

# An Inside Look at Colorado's Money-Hungry Pot Industry

CADCA.org

Mar 13, 2014 | Drug type: [Marijuana](#)

*By Ben Cort, Board Member, Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM); Director of Business Development/CeDAR at the University of Colorado Hospital*

Last month I was honored to speak at [CADCA's National Leadership Forum](#) about marijuana legalization in my home state of Colorado. I wish I could say that I was caught off guard by the reaction I received but I wasn't. It's the same everywhere. When people hear what is going on, when they see the pictures and advertisements, the reactions are inevitable; shock, outrage, anger, even fear.

I live in Colorado, work inside of substance abuse treatment, am in recovery myself and I have three young children in public school, that's my platform.

Make no mistake about it, we did not just legalize weed in Colorado we christened the commercialization and industrialization of the marijuana industry in Colorado. We welcomed in a new industry that knowingly promotes an addictive and harmful substance SO THAT PEOPLE COULD MAKE MONEY. The business of business is to make money and when there is money to be made people will sign up no matter how messed up the means are. Let's take a quick look at how the money is and will be made inside of this industry.

As of this writing there are 47 stores in Colorado that can sell recreational weed, there are about another 300 in the queue. Already the competition is fierce and the marketing wars are heating up, imagine what will come next. Right now we have everything from free T-shirts with your weed purchase and take-out orders to home delivery and a \$1 joint when you show your ski pass for the day. For these businesses to continue making the huge money they are making they will need to do two things: 1) engage new users, 2) convert current users to more frequent users.

To differentiate themselves from the competition they will offer the most amount of THC they can for the lowest price possible, sound like some potential for trouble? Our weed in Colorado is so strong (20-30 percent THC in its smoked form) that we have a strain called "green crack." We also have a full range of edibles and concentrates, these businesses are diversifying and engaging with new (and younger) customers through new products.

Our concentrates, which are advertised aggressively, are 80-90 percent THC, and are often smoked on a super-heated needle and puts the smoker on their back with one hit. Our edibles come in gummies, fruit sodas, suckers, candy and yummy looking baked goods that are so potent that a single pot brownie in Colorado comes with a warning that it has to be cut into fourths before consuming.

I'm guessing the 2-year-old child who ended up in the ER a few miles from my house last month didn't read the label on the weed cookie she found before eating it.

A smart man learns from his mistakes, a wise man from the mistakes of others. Consider that old saying and the plight of Colorado when considering legalization in your home state.



Marijuana ad in the Denver Post. A  $\frac{3}{4}$  page full color advertisement using a cartoon character to sell weed, sound familiar at all? You would think that we learned our lesson with Joe Camel.