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to people interested in buying grinders, rolling papers and other smoke products.

Sep. 08, 2015

Shifting attitudes about marijuana are proving to be a boon for businesses that cater to people interested in buying grinders, rolling papers and other smoke products.

"I think those of us who acted early and are already poised to take advantage of these societal changes will prosper," says Ryan Ward, co-founder with Brian Rudderrow of Weedshop.com (www.weedshop.com), an online store that promotes itself as a "smoke shop."

"The legalization movement is just going to grow, and with it, business is going to grow as well."

A recent Pew Research Center survey showed that support for legalization of marijuana has increased in the U.S., with 53 percent of Americans in favor. That's a huge difference from 1969, when Gallup first asked the question and just 12 percent favored legalization.

Perhaps even more telling, 57 percent say they would not be bothered if a store or business selling legal marijuana opened up in their neighborhood.

That would be a different business from what Ward offers, though. Weedshop.com doesn't sell marijuana, which remains illegal in most places, but the online head shop does carry numerous smoke-related products such as water pipes, vaporizers, rolling papers and grinders.

"We cater to smokers of all types," Ward says. "But we do see a much higher demand in states where marijuana is legal."

He is convinced that the trends favor the legalization movement and, with that, the

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the Silent Generation (those 70 to 87 years old.)

- **The future.** The movement continues to gain momentum and proponents are optimistic that more states eventually will legalize marijuana, though opposition remains. Voters in Ohio are the next to face the issue when they go to the polls in November.

Ward follows the legalization efforts with an eye toward what they might mean to his business and the overall business landscape.

“Even as you see the legalization happening, there is still a certain taboo about marijuana,” he says. “A lot of people are concerned about being seen going into a store or coming out of a store that sells these sorts of products, so the ability to be able to shop discretely online is huge right now.”

Ward honed his expertise in the world of online shopping while working at eBay. Determined to venture out on his own, Ward teamed with Rudderrow to launch Weedshop.com after it became clear the legalization movement would create business opportunities.

“We’re excited about what we’re doing and about the ability to be able to build something that’s lasting,” Ward says. “Our goal is for everyone to see Weedshop as the Amazon for this industry.”

Ryan Ward, an entrepreneur and former employee of eBay, is the co-founder of Weedshop.com (www.weedshop.com), an online store that sells smoke products, such as water pipes, vaporizers, grinders, rolling papers and much more. A native of Philadelphia, Ward earned his MBA in England and has spent time traveling the world.

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