

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MARKETING YOUR

# **CANNABIS BUSINESS\$**

IN 2026



**BY DECATER COLLINS**

CANNABIS MARKETING DONE RIGHT

# **The Complete Guide To Marketing Your Cannabis Business in 2026**

**By Decater Collins**

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Please send all queries to: [doc@hoodcollective.com](mailto:doc@hoodcollective.com)

Cover Design by Decater Orlando Collins.

Edited by Rebecca Partington

Non-Fiction, Marketing, Cannabis.

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# Introduction

If you're reading this guide, it means you're serious about cannabis marketing—something that sets you apart from many cannabis business owners who often overlook branding and promotion. That's great news for you because there's a huge opportunity for those willing to commit to a strong marketing strategy and invest in their brand.

This guide is designed to help you understand the key principles of marketing and branding, specifically within the cannabis industry. While it's not an exhaustive manual, it's a practical resource for both newcomers and those with marketing experience in other industries.

Cannabis growers, processors, dispensary owners, and auxiliary service providers in legal markets across the U.S. will find this guide especially useful. Keep in mind that while we cover general marketing strategies, state regulations change frequently. Every cannabis business should have a dedicated compliance officer to stay on top of local and national rules.

The content is broken into clear, accessible sections, so feel free to jump around as needed. However, I strongly encourage you to read the chapter on building a marketing plan. Too many businesses—inside and outside of cannabis—dive into marketing without a clear strategy, wasting valuable time and money. Don't let that be you.

Of course, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out. You can find us on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#), as well as via email at [doc@hoodcollective.com](mailto:doc@hoodcollective.com). The reason we founded The Hood Collective was to bring much needed marketing expertise to the cannabis industry, and help businesses just like yours succeed.

With that said, thanks for purchasing our 2026 Cannabis Marketing Guide. Good luck with your company and I wish you all the success!

# The State Of The Cannabis Industry

Legalization of recreational cannabis is now more than a decade old, but the landscape has transformed dramatically since weed first hit the shelves in Colorado and Washington. Every state has its own story, but one thing shared by individual state markets across the country is the extreme volatility that makes forecasting from year to year nearly impossible.

The Hood Collective has been in business for 10+ years and it is both amazing and tragic how many companies have come and gone in that time. For business owners, the regulatory environment remains challenging. You're forced to invest hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, to get your business licensed and fully compliant, for a state market that is completely closed off from the rest of the country. Your business is liable for a huge tax burden due to IRS Section 280E restrictions, and traditional financial and banking services remain largely off limits—though federal rescheduling efforts may soon change this landscape.

No wonder so many businesses fail in the first year.

For instance, Brian MacMahon, the founder of Expert DOJO, regularly works with technology startups in addition to cannabis companies. He predicts that cannabis startups will exceed the 97% failure rate found in the tech sector.

This scenario is already playing out in states across the country. After the first five years of legal cannabis, it was reported that nationwide, the failure rate had reached 70%. In Oregon, where there's no cap on state licenses, the fail rate has been particularly high, with the boom and bust cycles weeding out a majority of businesses over the last few years (multiple puns warning!). In Colorado, while there is no statewide cap, there are restrictions on the number of licensees in many counties and municipalities. This may explain the more benevolent fail rate of 40% after the first few years.

But no matter where you are located, starting a cannabis business is a huge gamble. With stiff competition, heavy regulation, and restricted markets, everything has to go just right for your company to survive its first five years. This makes it all the more stunning that so many business owners take such a lackadaisical approach to marketing.

## **Federal Developments: Rescheduling and Hemp Regulation**

The cannabis industry is entering 2026 at a pivotal moment. On December 18, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order directing the Attorney General to expedite the rescheduling of marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act. While this order doesn't immediately reschedule cannabis—it still requires completion of the administrative rulemaking process—it signals a major shift in federal policy.

If rescheduling is finalized, cannabis businesses would gain immediate relief from IRS Section 280E, which currently prevents them from claiming normal business deductions and exposes them to effective tax rates far higher than other industries. This change alone could save cannabis companies millions annually. However, rescheduling would NOT legalize recreational cannabis federally, nor would it resolve banking restrictions without additional legislation or regulatory changes.

Simultaneously, the hemp industry faces a dramatic contraction. In November 2025, Congress enacted legislation that fundamentally redefined "hemp" by changing the THC measurement from delta-9 THC only to total THC (including THCA and other

cannabinoids). The new law also imposes a strict 0.4 mg total THC limit per container for finished hemp products and excludes synthetic or converted cannabinoids like delta-8 THC, delta-10 THC, HHC, and THCP from the legal definition of hemp.

These changes take effect in November 2026 and will effectively ban most intoxicating hemp products currently on the market, potentially impacting a \$30+ billion segment of the industry. Products that no longer qualify as "hemp" under the new definition may be treated as Schedule I controlled substances, creating significant compliance and enforcement risks for businesses.

### **Current Legal Status by State**

As of early 2026, recreational cannabis is legal in the following 24 states plus the District of Columbia:

Alaska Arizona California Colorado Connecticut Delaware District of Columbia Illinois Maine Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Missouri Montana Nevada New Jersey New Mexico New York Ohio Oregon Rhode Island Vermont Virginia Washington

It should be noted that recreational sales are not yet operational in all these jurisdictions. Virginia has legalized possession but has not established retail sales, and some states are still developing their regulated markets.

Medical cannabis is currently legal in approximately 40 states, the District of Columbia, and several U.S. territories:

Alabama Alaska Arizona Arkansas California Colorado Connecticut Delaware District of Columbia Florida Hawaii Illinois Iowa Kentucky Louisiana Maine Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska (low-THC CBD only) Nevada New Hampshire New Jersey New Mexico New York North Dakota Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Pennsylvania Rhode Island South Dakota Utah Vermont Virginia Washington West Virginia

Additionally, several states operate low-THC, high-CBD programs for limited medical purposes: Georgia, Iowa, Texas, and Wisconsin allow CBD products with minimal THC content under specific medical circumstances.

### **The Hemp Landscape**

Hemp production was legalized at the federal level through the 2018 Farm Bill, which removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act and delegated regulation to individual states. However, the November 2025 legislation has dramatically altered this landscape.

Beginning in November 2026, the new federal definition will:

Measure total THC (not just delta-9 THC) with a 0.3% limit on a dry-weight basis

Impose a 0.4 mg total THC limit per container for finished products

Exclude synthetic cannabinoids and converted cannabinoids from the hemp definition

Require FDA to publish lists of naturally occurring cannabinoids within 90 days

This means that many products previously considered legal hemp—including THCA flower, delta-8 products, high-potency CBD products, and hemp-derived edibles and beverages—will no longer qualify as federally legal hemp and may revert to being controlled substances.

The hemp industry has one year to reformulate products, adjust business models, or prepare for market withdrawal. Some advocacy groups are working to repeal or amend these provisions, but the outcome remains uncertain.

# Why Marketing Matters

Many businesses overlook marketing, but it is essential to businesses of all sizes. The average company spends 7% of its annual revenue on marketing. If you don't have a marketing budget, it's time to start planning one.

Marketing can help your business in a number of ways, including building brand awareness, boosting sales and increasing the value of your product. It can also help you learn more about your customers.

"Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room," says Jeff Bezos, CEO and founder of Amazon.com. Branding is essential for conveying what your company stands for and how you want customers to feel about your business.

How does marketing help improve your branding and why does this matter? By building relationships with customers, you can create trust, loyalty, and referrals. Trust influences purchasing decisions, loyalty influences repeat purchases, and referrals are another form of free advertising.

Branding also impacts your bottom line. A recent study by the Brand Finance Institute found that the value of a brand has a direct impact on a company's revenue growth. And because people are more likely to choose products they recognize over those they don't, brand recognition helps companies get customers through their doors or onto their website, whether they're B2B or B2C.

Another benefit of effective marketing is it will help increase your business's customer base, especially if you include a promotional call to action in your campaigns.

For example, you might promote a free trial period or a discount on a customer's first purchase. Make sure the offer is unique and only available through a marketing campaign, so you can track how many customers are responding.

You should also track the cost of your marketing campaign and compare it to any new sales generated. That way, you can see whether your marketing budget is delivering an acceptable return on investment (ROI).

Speaking of ROI, marketing may seem like a huge expense, but the truth is that companies that invest in premium branding and marketing actually end up making more money in the long run, especially compared with competitors that skimp on marketing.

Marketing can accomplish this kind of efficiency by making sure your company's message and brand are consistent across all channels, so you're not wasting money on duplicate efforts or mixed messages. An accomplished marketing agency can help you understand what kinds of advertising perform best and where — i.e., if you're spending money on billboards but no one is seeing them because they're located on roads people don't drive on very often, you'll know to reallocate those funds.

The goal of an effective marketing campaign is to make sure all employees are "on brand" and spreading the same message about your company's products or services. That way, customers won't receive different information about your company depending on who they talk to.

Whether you want to build your own online brand and sell your cannabis online, or you're looking to start a brick-and-mortar dispensary, the fact of the matter is that you need to get the word out. Without marketing, it doesn't matter how good your product is — it's not going to sell without people knowing it exists.



# **Why Marketing Matters In The Cannabis Industry**

Marketing is an essential part of any business, and it is especially important in the cannabis industry for several reasons.

First, the cannabis industry is highly regulated, which means that companies have to be very careful about how they promote their products. Marketing in the cannabis industry is restricted by laws and regulations that vary by state, and companies must follow strict guidelines when it comes to advertising and promoting their products. This can make it challenging for cannabis businesses to reach their target markets and stand out in the crowded marketplace.

Second, the cannabis industry is highly competitive, with many companies vying for market share. Marketing is crucial for cannabis businesses to differentiate themselves from the competition and communicate the unique value of their products to potential customers.

Third, the cannabis industry is still relatively new and many consumers are unfamiliar with the different products and brands. Marketing is an effective way for companies to educate consumers about the various types of cannabis products and their benefits, as well as to build brand awareness and loyalty.

Fourth, the cannabis industry is rapidly changing and evolving, with new products and trends emerging all the time. Marketing is a way for companies to stay current and relevant in the market and to keep up with changing consumer preferences.

Overall, marketing is an essential part of the success of any business, and it is especially important in the cannabis industry due to the unique challenges and opportunities that the industry presents. By developing a strong marketing strategy and implementing effective marketing tactics, cannabis businesses can effectively reach and engage their target markets, differentiate themselves from the competition, educate consumers, and stay current and relevant in a rapidly evolving industry.

# **Marketing 101: How to Create and Execute a Marketing Strategy for Your Business**

Whether you're a small business owner, or managing the marketing for a larger company, you can't afford to waste your marketing budget on ineffective campaigns. You need to be strategic about your marketing efforts in order to get the most bang for your buck.

Here's a crash course in marketing 101. We'll cover the basics of crafting a marketing strategy and give you some practical tips for execution. We'll also go over the basic terms that you need to know if you're brand new to marketing.

## **What Is a Marketing Strategy?**

Your marketing strategy is the roadmap that will guide your marketing efforts. It should be based on your business goals and objectives.

A marketing strategy is the plan that a company creates to effectively promote and sell its products or services to its target market. A marketing strategy includes a variety of tactics and activities, such as advertising, public relations, social media marketing, and content marketing, that are designed to reach and engage customers.

Your marketing strategy will answer the following questions:

Who is your target market?

What are your marketing goals?

What are your marketing objectives?

What marketing mix will you use? (more on this later)

What are your key marketing messages?

What is your budget?

What metric will you use to measure success?

## **What's The Difference Between Advertising And Marketing?**

So what do we mean by the terms advertising and marketing, in particular in the cannabis industry? Is there a meaningful difference between the two? At the most basic level, advertising is when you promote your products and services through paid advertising channels, such as television commercials or magazine ads. Marketing, on the other hand, is the action of promoting your business by a variety of means, whether paid or not. This means that advertising is one form of marketing.

So when we talk about cannabis marketing, that includes cannabis advertising. Of course, because the cannabis industry is so heavily regulated, and is still very illegal at the federal level, there are many traditional advertising channels that are not open to most cannabis businesses. You won't be seeing your neighborhood dispensary advertising during the Super Bowl, though maybe that time is not too far off in the future.

Marketing Terms You Need To Be Familiar With:

When you are just starting out in the marketing field, there are a lot of terms that you may not be familiar with. This can be overwhelming and make it difficult to understand what people are talking about. To help you out, we have compiled a list of essential marketing terms that you should know, with easy to understand definitions. By becoming familiar with these terms, you will be able to hold your own in conversations with experienced marketers and have a better understanding of the field as a whole.

### **A/B Testing**

A/B testing is a method of comparing two versions of a web page, ad, or app to see which one performs better. This can be done by splitting traffic between the two versions and measuring metrics such as conversion rate or click-through rate.

### **Above the Fold**

The phrase "above the fold" comes from the newspaper industry. In the days of print newspapers, the most important stories and headlines were placed "above the fold" on the front page, meaning they were visible to readers without having to flip the page over. This location was considered prime real estate because it was the first thing people saw when they picked up the paper. The phrase has been carried over to the digital age and is now used to refer to the portion of a webpage that is visible without having to scroll down.

### **AIDA**

AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. It's a model that's often used to define the steps required to create a successful marketing campaign.

### **Awareness**

The first stage of communication is awareness, during which the receiver becomes aware of the existence of a message and starts to process it.

### **Banner Ad**

A banner ad is a digital advertisement that appears on a web page. Banner ads are typically rectangular in shape and can be static or animated.

### **Big Data**

Big data refers to large datasets that can be used to uncover trends and patterns. This data can come from a variety of sources, such as social media, web analytics, and market research.

### **Blog**

A blog is a website or online platform where people can share their thoughts and opinions on a variety of topics. Blogs are typically written in an informal or personal style.

### **Brand Identity:**

A brand identity is the visual and verbal elements that a company uses to communicate its brand to consumers. These elements include the company's name, logo, color palette, and brand messaging.

**Conversion Rate**

The conversion rate is the percentage of website visitors or marketing leads that take a desired action, such as making a purchase or filling out a form. A high conversion rate is an indication that a marketing campaign is effective at converting leads into customers.

**CPA (Cost Per Action)**

CPA is a pricing model in which advertisers pay for each specified action that's taken by users, such as making a purchase or filling out a form.

**CRM (Customer Relationship Management)**

A CRM is a system that's used to manage customer data and interactions. It helps businesses foster better relationships with their customers and improve customer retention.

**CTA (Call-to-Action)**

A CTA is an instruction or message that encourages users to take a specific action, such as clicking a button or link.

**Customer Journey**

The customer journey refers to the series of interactions and experiences that a customer has with a company or brand, from awareness to consideration to purchase and beyond.

**Customer Personas**

Customer personas are fictional, representative characters that a company creates to help it understand and empathize with its target audience. Each persona represents a segment of the target market and is based on real data and research about that group.

**Customer Segmentation**

Customer segmentation is the process of dividing a market into smaller groups of consumers who have similar needs and characteristics. Segmentation allows companies to tailor their marketing efforts to specific groups of consumers, rather than trying to appeal to the entire market.

**Engagement**

Engagement refers to the extent to which a customer or user interacts with a company or brand's content, products, or services. Engagement is a way to measure the level of interest and involvement that a customer has with a brand. There are many different ways that companies can measure engagement, such as through social media likes and comments, website traffic, email open rates, and customer feedback.

**Funnel**

A marketing funnel is a visual representation of the customer journey, from initial awareness to the final purchase decision. At each stage of the funnel, the number of potential customers decreases as some drop off and others move on to the next stage.

### **Growth Hacking**

Growth hacking is a process of rapid experimentation across marketing channels and product development to identify the most effective, efficient ways to grow a business. Growth hackers use data and analytics to test and optimize marketing strategies in an effort to achieve sustainable and scalable growth.

### **Inbound Marketing**

Inbound marketing is a customer-centric approach to marketing that focuses on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. The goal of inbound marketing is to attract visitors, convert them into leads, and then close them into customers.

### **KPI (Key Performance Indicator)**

A KPI is a metric that's used to measure the success of a marketing campaign or initiative.

### **Landing Page**

A landing page is a standalone web page, created specifically for the purpose of a marketing or advertising campaign. The goal of a landing page is to convert website visitors into leads or customers.

### **Lead Generation**

Lead generation is the process of attracting and converting strangers and prospects into someone who has indicated interest in your company's product or service. This can be done through various marketing tactics, such as content marketing, social media marketing, and email marketing.

### **Local SEO**

Local SEO refers to the process of optimizing a business's online presence to increase its visibility for geographically-related searches. This includes optimizing a business's website, as well as its listing on directories such as Google My Business and Yelp, to make it more likely to appear when someone searches for businesses in a specific location.

### **LTV (Lifetime Value)**

LTV is a metric that represents the total value of a customer to a business over the course of their relationship.

### **Marketing Mix**

The marketing mix is the combination of elements that a company uses to market its products or services. The four main elements of the marketing mix are product, price, place, and promotion.

### **Noise**

Anything that interferes with the communication process and prevents the message from being accurately received and understood.

### **Outbound Marketing**

Outbound marketing is a traditional marketing approach that involves actively reaching out to customers through tactics such as cold calling, direct mail, and advertising. Outbound marketing is often used to interrupt consumers and draw their attention to a product or service.

### **Positioning**

Positioning refers to the way a company differentiates its product or brand in the market and in the minds of consumers. A company's positioning strategy is based on the unique value it offers to its target market.

### **ROI (Return on Investment)**

ROI is a measure of the efficiency of a marketing campaign or strategy. It is calculated by dividing the profit gained from the campaign by the cost of the campaign, and expressing the result as a percentage. ROI is an important metric for businesses to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of their marketing efforts, as it helps them determine the value that they are getting from their marketing campaigns. By calculating the ROI of different marketing strategies, businesses can make informed decisions about which tactics are most effective and allocate their resources accordingly.

### **SEO**

SEO stands for "Search Engine Optimization." It is the practice of optimizing a website or webpage to improve its ranking in search engine results pages (SERPs) in order to increase the amount of organic traffic it receives. This is done by making changes to the website's content and structure to make it more attractive to search engines. The goal of SEO is to increase visibility and traffic to a website by improving its ranking in search engine results pages.

### **Target Market**

A target market is a specific group of consumers that a company wants to reach with its marketing efforts. A target market is identified through market research and segmentation.

# How To Create a Marketing Plan

One of the biggest challenges facing a small- to medium-sized cannabis business is identifying what the best platforms and avenues are for advertising their products and services. When you don't have the budget to plaster your name, image, and content absolutely everywhere, it's imperative that you choose where and when to spend money wisely.

Before you actually start paying for ads and such, you should take the time to work out a cohesive strategy. Identify who your customers are, what's the best way to connect with them, and how best to frame your products and services in a way that they will be engaged.

What too many business owners do when they are just starting out (especially growers and sellers who have spent a long time on the black market) is spending a little bit of money here, some money there, without having a plan in place. While it's great to experiment and see what works, the reality is marketing yourself before you have a clear strategy is a great way to waste money.

As already mentioned, a marketing strategy is a plan that a company creates to effectively promote and sell its products or services to its target market. An effective marketing strategy is based on a deep understanding of the target market, a unique value proposition, and a well-planned mix of tactics and activities.

The first step in creating an effective marketing strategy is to define the target market. This involves conducting market research and segmentation to understand the needs, preferences, and behaviors of the target audience. For example, a company that sells eco-friendly cleaning products may identify its target market as health-conscious, environmentally-conscious consumers who are willing to pay a premium for natural products.

Once the target market has been defined, the next step is to develop a unique value proposition that clearly explains how the company's product or service meets the needs of the target market in a way that is better than the competition. This could be based on factors such as quality, price, convenience, or customer service. For example, the eco-friendly cleaning product company may differentiate itself by offering a wider selection of natural ingredients, a satisfaction guarantee, and a recycling program for used bottles.

The marketing mix, or the set of actions that the company will take to promote its product or service, is then determined. The four main pillars of the marketing mix are product, price, place, and promotion.

For the product, the company needs to consider factors such as the features and benefits of the product, the packaging, and any warranties or guarantees. The price of the product should be based on the value it provides to the customer and should be competitive with similar products in the market. The place, or distribution, of the product should be based on the preferences of the target market and could include online, brick and mortar stores, or a combination of both. Finally, the promotion of the product should be based on the

preferences of the target market and could include advertising, public relations, social media marketing, and content marketing.

The final step in creating an effective marketing strategy is to establish performance metrics, or key performance indicators (KPIs), that will be used to measure the success of the marketing efforts. These metrics could include things like website traffic, conversion rate, and customer retention rate. It is important to regularly review and adjust the marketing strategy as needed, based on the performance of the tactics and the evolving needs and preferences of the target market.

An effective marketing strategy is essential for a business to succeed in today's competitive market. By understanding the target market, developing a unique value proposition, and implementing a well-planned mix of tactics and activities, a company can effectively promote and sell its products or services and achieve sustainable growth.



## More About Value Proposition

I'd like to write some more about the value proposition, because I think it lies at the heart of how a brand can compete in a highly volatile marketplace. Basically, every consumer, when making a purchasing decision, especially one involving a new brand or product, is asking the company why your product is better than your competitors. You need to make that answer clear in the way you package your product and how you market it.

As I go into greater depth of how to identify and define your company's value proposition, I'll follow the same guidelines discussed above on how to create a marketing strategy, in order to emphasize the link between your strategy and your value proposition.

A business's value proposition is a statement that explains how a business's products or services will benefit its customers and how it differentiates from its competitors. Here are some ways a business can identify, define, and promote its value proposition:

**Identify the unique features of your product or service:** A business should identify the unique features of its products or services that are of most value to its customers.

**Understand your target market:** A business should understand its target market and what problems or needs its products or services can solve for them.

**Define your value proposition:** A business should use the information gathered above to define its value proposition in a clear and concise statement.

**Communicate your value proposition:** A business should communicate its value proposition in all of its marketing materials, including its website, social media profiles, and advertising campaigns.

**Test and improve:** A business should test its value proposition by seeing how it is received by its target market and make adjustments as needed.

**Use customer testimonials and case studies:** A business should use customer testimonials and case studies to demonstrate the value of its products or services to potential customers.

**Use metrics and analytics to measure success:** A business should use metrics and analytics to measure the success of its value proposition and make adjustments as needed.

**Continuously gather customer feedback:** A business should continuously gather customer feedback to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its target market.

By following these steps, a business can identify, define, and promote its value proposition in a way that resonates with its target market and helps it stand out from its competitors. To further illustrate the point, here are a few examples of how companies have defined and marketed their value proposition:

**Amazon:** Amazon's value proposition is to offer customers "Earth's biggest selection" of products at low prices, with fast shipping. They communicate this value proposition through their website, advertising campaigns, and customer reviews. They also use their vast selection and competitive prices to differentiate themselves from other online retailers.

**Zappos:** Zappos' value proposition is to offer customers the best possible service, including free and fast shipping, free returns, and a 365-day return policy. They communicate this value proposition through their website, customer service and their social media campaigns. They are also known for their exceptional customer service.

**Tesla:** Tesla's value proposition is to offer electric cars with long ranges, cutting-edge technology, and sleek designs. They communicate this value proposition through their website, advertising campaigns, and showrooms, highlighting the benefits of electric cars, such as reduced environmental impact and lower operating costs.

**Dollar Shave Club:** Dollar Shave Club's value proposition is to offer men high-quality shaving products delivered straight to their door at an affordable price. They communicate this value proposition through their website, advertising campaigns and social media, emphasizing the convenience and cost savings of their subscription service.

**Patagonia:** Patagonia's value proposition is to produce high-quality outdoor clothing and gear while also promoting environmental sustainability. They communicate this value proposition through their website, advertising campaigns, and social media, highlighting the environmental benefits of their products and the company's commitment to sustainability.

These are just a few examples of how companies can define and communicate their value proposition in a clear and compelling way. By focusing on what sets them apart from their competitors and highlighting the benefits that their products or services can provide, these companies are able to attract and retain customers.

But since we're here to talk about cannabis, how about a few examples of how companies in the cannabis industry have successfully defined and communicated their value proposition:

**Cookies:** Cookies built their brand on exclusivity and cultural credibility. The value proposition is that you're not just buying cannabis—you're buying access to limited genetics tied to hip-hop culture and streetwear hype. They communicate this through scarcity (limited drops), celebrity collaborations with founder Berner, and retail stores designed like high-end boutiques where only the connected shop.

**STIIIZY:** STIIIZY's value is simplicity meets power. Their proprietary vape system eliminates guesswork—pop in a pod, press a button, get consistent potent hits. The sleek hardware and minimalist branding position vaping as a premium lifestyle choice, not a sketchy activity. Once customers invest in the battery, they're locked into an ecosystem that rewards loyalty with reliability.

**Wyld:** Wyld promises authenticity in an industry full of artificial ingredients and vague claims. Real fruit comes first in their gummies, not chemical flavoring. They list strain-specific terpenes, partner with identifiable Oregon farms, and provide transparent dosing information. Customers know exactly what they're consuming and can feel good about choosing natural wellness over mystery ingredients.

**Jeeter:** Jeeter offers maximum indulgence without apology. While competitors position themselves as medicinal or wellness-focused, Jeeter celebrates getting extremely high. Kief-covered, diamond-infused pre-rolls deliver potency with zero effort—no grinding, no rolling, just light up. Celebrity partnerships and bold packaging tell customers this is luxury consumption for people who enjoy excess.

**Green Thumb Industries:** GTI sells trust and consistency. Their RISE dispensaries look like Apple Stores, not head shops. Rythm flower delivers the same quality whether you buy it in Illinois or Pennsylvania. Extensive lab testing and professional staff training communicate that this is a legitimate operation in an industry full of sketchy players. For nervous or new consumers, that reliability is everything.

**Kiva Confections:** Kiva provides control and sophistication. Their Camino line doesn't just get you high—specific tins deliver sleep, energy, or social effects through targeted cannabinoid ratios. Premium chocolate ingredients and elegant packaging position edibles as artisan confections for discerning adults who want intentional experiences, not unpredictable chaos.

These are just a few examples of how companies in the cannabis industry can define and communicate their value proposition in a way that resonates with their target market. By highlighting the unique features, quality and benefits of their products, these companies are able to differentiate themselves from competitors and attract customers.

# **The Challenges Of Marketing Cannabis**

The cannabis industry is growing rapidly, but cannabis marketing comes with a unique set of challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the fact that cannabis is still illegal at the federal level in the United States, which means that many traditional forms of advertising, such as television and radio, are off-limits. Additionally, cannabis businesses are not able to deduct their business expenses on their taxes, which makes it harder to compete with other businesses that are able to do so.

Another major challenge is the lack of consumer data available for the cannabis industry. Because cannabis is still illegal at the federal level, many companies are not able to collect consumer data, which makes it difficult to target specific demographics and understand consumer behavior. Additionally, many cannabis consumers are hesitant to share their personal information with cannabis companies, which further limits the amount of data that is available.

Another obstacle is the lack of understanding among the general public about cannabis and its potential benefits. Many people still associate cannabis with negative stereotypes, such as laziness and drug addiction, which can make it difficult to market the product to a broader audience. Additionally, the lack of education about the different types of cannabis products and their uses can make it difficult for businesses to communicate the value of their products to potential customers.

In addition to these challenges, cannabis businesses also face stricter regulations than other businesses. Many states have strict rules about how cannabis can be marketed, such as not allowing the use of cartoon characters or other imagery that might appeal to children. Every state is different, and some are more lenient, while others have a long list of very specific rules that licensed operators must follow. These restrictions can make it difficult for businesses to create effective marketing campaigns. Make sure that you or someone on your team is always up-to-date on your state and local regulations and ensure that you are following the rules at all times, because the penalties for failing to stick to the rules can be expensive.

But the most common reason I hear from business owners hesitant to invest in any real way in marketing is that, unlike traditional businesses, it's not possible to write off marketing as a business expense when you're selling cannabis products. It's likely that as long as cannabis is listed as a Schedule I drug, companies in the cannabis industry can't take advantage of many common tax deductions, including deductions for marketing and advertising expenses.

I agree this is lousy. But it's a hurdle that is shared by every cannabis licensed business (at least until rescheduling goes into effect), and so it doesn't change anything fundamental about the necessity of marketing. If you think you can (or must) get away without a real marketing budget, then the reality is you're going to be outcompeted by companies that do make the investment, of both time and money, in their branding and advertising.

So stop complaining and start marketing.

# **The Impact Of The IRS Code 280E On Cannabis Companies**

The federal government's classification of cannabis as a Schedule I drug puts significant restrictions on the industry. One of the most significant of these restrictions is Internal Revenue Code Section 280E. Essentially, Section 280E disallows cannabis companies from deducting most business expenses from their taxes. This means that cannabis companies are taxed at a much higher rate than other businesses.

Let's take a look at how Section 280E impacts cannabis companies and what you can do about it.

## **What Does Schedule I Mean?**

Schedule I drugs are those that have been determined to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use. Examples of Schedule I drugs include heroin, LSD, and ecstasy. These drugs are considered to be the most dangerous and are tightly regulated by the government.

However, cannabis has also been listed as Schedule I in the United States since 1970, meaning that it too is considered to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use. This classification has been controversial for decades, and there have been many efforts to change it. The absurdity of placing cannabis alongside heroin has left experts and advocates questioning this designation for years.

## **The Rescheduling Timeline**

In August 2023, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommended that cannabis be rescheduled from Schedule I to Schedule III. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) then initiated a formal rulemaking process, which included public comment periods and administrative review throughout 2024 and 2025.

On December 18, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order directing the Attorney General to expedite completion of the rescheduling process. While this order doesn't immediately move cannabis to Schedule III—the administrative rulemaking still needs to be finalized—it signals strong federal support for the change and dramatically increases the likelihood that rescheduling will be completed in 2026.

## **What Rescheduling Means for Cannabis Businesses**

The shift from Schedule I to Schedule III would have immediate and profound financial implications. Most significantly, it would eliminate the burden of IRS Section 280E, which currently prohibits cannabis businesses from deducting normal operating expenses like rent, salaries, and marketing costs. This arcane tax rule has forced cannabis companies to pay effective tax rates of 70% or higher, strangling cash flow and limiting growth.

With Section 280E eliminated, cannabis companies would suddenly have access to dramatically larger marketing budgets. Money currently paid to the IRS could instead fund national advertising campaigns, celebrity endorsements, comprehensive digital marketing

strategies, and brand-building initiatives that have been financially impossible under Schedule I. The industry would finally be able to compete on a level playing field with alcohol, tobacco, and other legal consumer goods.

Beyond marketing, rescheduling would make the cannabis industry far more attractive to institutional investors and traditional lenders. As new capital flows in, brands could expand operations, invest in product innovation, and pursue interstate commerce opportunities. The financial freedom created by rescheduling could fundamentally transform the industry's competitive landscape.

### **What Rescheduling Does NOT Change**

It's crucial to understand what rescheduling would NOT accomplish. Moving cannabis to Schedule III does not legalize recreational cannabis at the federal level. It would remain a controlled substance, and state-by-state legalization would continue to dictate where recreational sales are permitted. Federal agencies could still enforce prohibition in states without legal programs.

Rescheduling also does not automatically resolve banking restrictions. While some financial institutions might become more willing to work with cannabis businesses, full banking access would likely require separate legislation like the SAFE Banking Act. Interstate commerce would remain prohibited unless additional regulatory changes are made.

Still, rescheduling represents the most significant shift in federal cannabis policy since prohibition began. As we move through 2026, cannabis businesses should prepare for a new era where marketing budgets can finally match their ambitions and where federal policy—while still restrictive—no longer treats cannabis like heroin.

### **What is IRS Code 280E?**

IRS Code 280E is a section of the US tax code that prohibits businesses from deducting expenses related to the sale of illegal drugs. This includes costs like advertising, rent, and employee salaries. The purpose of this code is to discourage drug trafficking by making it more difficult for illegal drug dealers to operate.

Code 280E was enacted in 1982 in response to the growing problem of drug trafficking in the United States. Since then, it has been a controversial provision of the tax code, with some arguing it unfairly targets legal businesses that sell marijuana and other drugs. Others argue it is an essential tool in the fight against illegal drug trafficking.

This has especially become an issue since states first began legalizing recreational cannabis in the last decade. Currently, the Internal Revenue Code 280E specifically prohibits any business from deducting "any amount for expenses incurred in carrying on any trade or business" if the trade or business "consists of trafficking in controlled substances ... which is prohibited by Federal law."

Because marijuana is still classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, businesses that sell it cannot deduct their business expenses from their taxes. This often puts them at a disadvantage compared to other businesses, who can deduct their expenses. Some have argued that this unfair tax treatment creates a financial

incentive for drug dealers to stay involved in the illegal market, rather than switch to the legal market.

In recent years, however, some have argued that 280E disproportionately impacts legal marijuana businesses, which are already struggling because they are restricted from selling across state borders and have highly taxed and regulated businesses with a great deal of overhead.

### **How does 280E impede cannabis companies from marketing their products?**

There are a number of specific ways that 280E impedes cannabis companies from marketing their products. For one, it prohibits them from deducting advertising expenses, which can be a significant cost for businesses. Additionally, it limits their ability to sponsor events and engage in other forms of marketing that would be beneficial for their business. As a result of these restrictions, cannabis companies often have to get creative in the ways they market their products.

Katye Maxon-Landis, a cannabis accountant with Indiva Advisors, has said that she advises her cannabis clients to do their best to limit any expense that isn't inventory related, since inventory is the only expense they can legally deduct. "Businesses subject to Sec. 280E should look to Sec. 471 to determine the proper inventory capitalization and valuation methods, allocation of expenses, and their impact on cost of goods sold."

This obviously makes it very difficult to enact and carry out an effective marketing and branding strategy as a cannabis company, since most marketing efforts are going to require a meaningful investment, and unlike most other businesses, you aren't able to use marketing costs as a tax right off. This is one of the primary reasons why cannabis marketing is not developing along with other aspects of the industry.

### **Other Challenges Facing Cannabis Companies Marketing Their Products**

As the cannabis industry continues to grow, so do the challenges faced by companies marketing their products. In addition to the restrictions placed on advertising by the federal government, cannabis companies must also navigate a complex web of state and local laws.

Compliance is always a top concern for any business, but it is especially crucial for cannabis companies. A misstep in advertising could result in a fine or even a license revocation. Given the high stakes, it is essential that cannabis companies work with experienced marketing partners who can help them navigate the ever-changing landscape.

In addition to the compliance challenges, cannabis companies also face the same marketing challenges as any other business. They must find ways to stand out in a crowded marketplace and reach their target consumers. However, the unique nature of the cannabis industry presents its own set of challenges. For example, many social media platforms will penalize accounts for cannabis companies with shadow bans or outright deletion. (See more in the social media section.)

### **How Cannabis Companies Can Mitigate The Impact Of 280E On Their Business**

280E is a significant hurdle for cannabis companies in what is already a highly competitive industry. It has been shown that 280E can raise a company's tax bill by 30% or more. This makes it extremely difficult for cannabis companies to survive.

There are a few ways that cannabis companies can mitigate the impact of 280E on their business. One way is to carefully track all of your expenses and allocate them accordingly. This includes everything from office supplies and rent to employee salaries and marketing costs. One of the biggest benefits of tracking your expenses is that it can help you save money. By knowing where your money is going, you can make adjustments to your budget and cut out unnecessary expenses. This can free up more money to reinvest in your business and help it grow. If you're not already tracking your company's expenses, now is the time to start.

Another factor that must be considered is your business structure. Your business structure has a big impact on your tax liability. For example, sole proprietorships have the lowest tax liability, while S-Corporations have the highest. This is because sole proprietorships are taxed as personal income, while S-Corporations are taxed as business income. Of course, there are many other factors that go into determining your tax liability, such as the type of business you have, your location, and your revenue. But your business structure is one of the most important factors. So if you're looking to lower your taxes, it's worth considering how your business is structured.

Remember, while the impact of 280E is significant, it doesn't have to be fatal for cannabis companies. Although it's unfair that legal cannabis companies are taxed so heavily, it's a level playing field within the industry, so all of your competitors are facing the same obstacles. The best advice I can give any prospective cannabis entrepreneur is to create an extremely conservative business plan that makes your branding and marketing a priority. That way you'll be able to outpace the competition in boom times and in bust.



## **How Will The Potential of Rescheduling Cannabis Impact Your Marketing?**

The IRS Section 280e provision has long been the bane of the cannabis industry, treating state-licensed operations as if they were drug traffickers. Under this tax code, cannabis businesses have been unable to claim standard deductions, impacting their profitability and hindering reinvestment into marketing efforts. If you've ever wondered why your favorite cannabis brand isn't running prime-time TV spots or billboard campaigns, you can largely thank Section 280e for that.

However, the rescheduling of cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III could spell the end of this onerous tax rule. With this financial burden lifted, cannabis companies will have a stronger cash flow, enabling them to allocate more resources to marketing. Expect to see the emergence of more sophisticated, data-driven campaigns that capitalize on both online and offline channels.

Not only would the removal of Section 280e increase marketing budgets, but it would also make the industry more appealing to external investors. As new capital flows in, cannabis brands could take their marketing strategies to the next level—think national advertising campaigns, celebrity endorsements, and even international market penetration. With more financial freedom, the sky's the limit for cannabis marketing in 2026.

One of the most exciting prospects of cannabis moving to Schedule III is the subsequent inflow of new capital into the industry. Previously, the high-risk nature of cannabis investments deterred many potential investors. But with cannabis's rescheduling, the tides are turning. The risk for investors significantly lowers, attracting a new wave of financial backers eager to take part in this growing market.

This newfound capital means that cannabis companies can invest in more expansive and creative marketing campaigns. Imagine Virtual Reality experiences that allow you to "walk through" a cannabis grow operation from the comfort of your own home, or AI-driven recommendation systems that curate personalized cannabis products just for you. These aren't just pipe dreams; they could very well be the marketing realities of 2026 for forward-thinking cannabis companies.

Moreover, as capital becomes more accessible, the competition for consumer attention will intensify. Brands will need to differentiate themselves not just through quality products but also through memorable and impactful marketing strategies. In a post-280e world, marketing won't just be an expense—it'll be an investment into a brand's long-term viability and market share. So, whether you're an entrepreneur in the cannabis sector or an enthusiast eager to see what the industry has up its sleeve, get ready for a marketing revolution fueled by fresh capital.

As the cannabis industry continues this push towards moving from Schedule I to Schedule III, the public's view of the substance is destined for an overhaul. This official nod from the government sends a message far beyond legal jargon—it tells the masses that cannabis isn't the villain it was once portrayed as. This significant shift opens up new avenues for marketers, freeing them from the shackles of stigma that have long constrained creative campaigns.

Imagine marketing campaigns that seamlessly integrate cannabis with lifestyle branding, perhaps sponsoring athletes, musicians, or even culinary experts without raising eyebrows. The shift in perception allows cannabis to transition from the fringes of

counterculture into the mainstream market. Gone will be the days of marketing solely to the cannabis faithful; brands can now appeal to a much broader audience, tapping into diverse demographics previously hesitant to engage with cannabis products.

As the narrative around cannabis changes, so too will the strategies employed to market it. Expect campaigns that focus on wellness, lifestyle, and social responsibility, capitalizing on the new, more favorable public perception. For instance, collaborations with eco-friendly or social justice initiatives could become a powerful marketing tool, amplifying a brand's reach and reputation simultaneously. It's not just about selling a product anymore; it's about crafting a narrative that aligns with increasingly progressive consumer values.

With the monumental potential rescheduling of cannabis, the regulatory landscape is bound to evolve. One can anticipate changes in advertising rules, labeling guidelines, and even in the types of marketing channels available for cannabis businesses. For instance, while digital advertising platforms have been notoriously restrictive about cannabis-related promotions, the shift from Schedule I to Schedule III might prompt them to relax their guidelines, providing cannabis brands with more options and reach.

The alteration in cannabis scheduling could also mean an easing of the currently stringent compliance protocols surrounding marketing. As of now, cannabis businesses need to navigate a labyrinth of regulations, varying not just state-by-state but even county-by-county. This complexity often hampers creative expression and strategic outreach. However, a unified, less restrictive federal stance could simplify compliance, enabling marketers to invest more time and resources into impactful, creative campaigns rather than parsing legalese.

As compliance measures adapt, cannabis businesses may find more freedom in partnership opportunities. Whether it's co-branding with mainstream products or sponsoring high-profile events, relaxed regulations could break down the walls separating cannabis from established industries. This new horizon not only amplifies the marketing playbook for cannabis businesses but also signifies a growing acceptance and normalization of cannabis in society—a win-win scenario that can't be overstated.

The recent advocacy for cannabis rescheduling comes as a breath of fresh air for the many cannabis companies currently listed on lesser-known exchanges. Often relegated to the Canadian Securities Exchange due to stringent federal regulations, U.S.-based cannabis businesses have had limited exposure to large-scale investors. The shift to a Schedule III classification has the potential to dramatically alter this landscape, opening doors to more prestigious exchanges like the Toronto Stock Exchange or even, optimistically, U.S.-based exchanges such as the NASDAQ and NYSE.

It's crucial to note that the potential migration to larger, more prominent exchanges isn't just a vanity metric; it comes with tangible financial benefits. A listing on a larger exchange improves the liquidity of a company's shares and attracts institutional investors who previously shied away from the industry's perceived riskiness. The newfound attention from big players can drive up share prices and provide the kind of capital infusion that can accelerate growth and expansion projects.

The opening of these bigger stages for public trading sends a powerful message to the market at large: Cannabis is no longer a fringe or speculative industry but a legitimate and fast-growing sector of the American economy. As a result, we could see more nuanced, targeted marketing strategies emerge that aim not just at consumers but also at potential

investors, widening the scope and sophistication of cannabis marketing campaigns.

### **Banking Reform: The Long Wait Continues**

While cannabis rescheduling represents a major shift in federal policy, it doesn't solve all the challenges facing the industry—most notably, the ongoing issues with banking and finance. Currently, most traditional banking institutions still avoid dealings with cannabis companies due to lingering federal illegality. The SAFER Banking Act (Secure And Fair Enforcement Regulation Banking Act), which evolved from the original SAFE Banking Act, aims to rectify this issue, but its path to becoming law has been frustratingly slow.

The SAFER Banking Act passed the Senate Banking Committee in September 2023 with a bipartisan 14-9 vote—marking the first time cannabis banking legislation ever cleared a Senate committee. However, despite this historic milestone and repeated passage in the House (seven times), the bill has yet to receive a full Senate floor vote as of early 2026. Former Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer sat on the legislation for 15 months without bringing it to a vote, and the transition to Republican control of Congress has not accelerated its progress.

The continued failure to pass banking reform means cannabis businesses remain largely cash-dependent, exposing employees and customers to violent crime, making tax compliance unnecessarily complicated, and preventing business owners from accessing traditional loans, credit cards, and payment processing. Some state-chartered financial institutions and specialized banks like Herring Bank have stepped in to serve the cannabis industry, but their services come with high fees and intensive compliance requirements.

### **What SAFER Banking Would Change**

If passed, the SAFER Banking Act would provide federal safe harbor protections for financial institutions serving state-legal cannabis businesses. Banks could offer checking accounts, loans, credit cards, and merchant services without fear of federal penalties or losing their deposit insurance. The legislation also includes provisions to expand access for minority-owned businesses and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that serve marginalized communities.

The implications for cannabis marketing would be significant. Access to traditional business loans and payment processing solutions would enable larger, more efficient marketing campaigns. Cannabis companies could finally use credit card processing for e-commerce, invest in digital advertising platforms that currently ban cannabis businesses, and secure equipment financing for expansion—all tools that mainstream businesses take for granted.

### **The Interplay Between Rescheduling and Banking**

Rescheduling cannabis to Schedule III does NOT automatically resolve banking restrictions. Even as a Schedule III substance, cannabis would remain federally controlled, and financial institutions would likely continue requiring explicit legislative protection before fully embracing the industry. This is why passage of the SAFER Banking Act remains critical regardless of rescheduling progress.

However, the momentum from rescheduling could help push banking reform across the finish line. With federal agencies acknowledging cannabis has accepted medical use and lower abuse potential than Schedule I drugs, the political argument for banking access becomes much stronger. Congressional champions could leverage this shift in federal posture to finally bring SAFER Banking to a Senate floor vote.

### **Beyond Banking: The Bigger Picture**

The SAFER Banking Act is only the beginning. Assuming its eventual passage and the political goodwill generated by rescheduling, we could see more progressive legislation come into play. Bills aimed at interstate commerce, complete federal legalization, or comprehensive social justice reforms related to cannabis could dramatically shift market conditions and public perception.

This would allow cannabis marketing to enter mainstream channels previously considered off-limits—from large-scale television advertising and streaming platform sponsorships to major sporting event partnerships and national retail campaigns. The industry would finally compete on equal footing with alcohol, tobacco, and other legal consumer goods.

For now, cannabis businesses must continue operating in a challenging hybrid environment: state-legal but federally restricted, with some banking access but at premium costs, and with rescheduling on the horizon but banking reform stalled in Congress. The businesses that thrive in 2026 will be those that plan strategically for both scenarios—preparing for expanded opportunities if reforms pass while maintaining operational discipline for the cash-heavy reality that persists.

# **How Much Should You Be Budgeting For Cannabis Marketing?**

Cannabis businesses are quickly learning that in order to stay ahead of the competition, they need to be putting a fair amount of money into marketing. But with such a new and rapidly growing industry, it can be tough to figure out exactly how much you should be budgeting and where you should be spending that money. Here we will outline some basic cannabis marketing tips and give you a few pointers on how to allocate your marketing budget.

Cannabis advertising is still in its infancy, so there are many gray areas when it comes to what's acceptable and what's not. However, that doesn't mean that businesses shouldn't be preparing for future regulation changes. And it also is no reason to throw up your hands and ignore marketing altogether. Those companies that invest in their brand and create a strategic marketing approach will be the ones that connect with their customers and earn loyalty and recognition in the marketplace, which will be invaluable assets no matter what the future brings.

## **The First Step Is Defining Your Goals**

Before you can create a marketing budget, you need to first determine your business's goals. What do you want to achieve with your marketing efforts? Increased brand awareness? More website traffic? Greater customer engagement? Once you know what your goals are, you can then start allocating funds to the various channels that will help you reach them.

For example, if you want to generate more website traffic, you might allocate more funds to online advertising or search engine optimization. If you want to increase brand awareness, you might invest in social media marketing or content creation. Determining your goals is essential in helping you focus on the tactics and strategies that are most likely to help you meet your objectives.

## **The Rule Of Thumb When It Comes To Marketing Budgets**

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, as the amount you should spend on marketing will vary depending on your industry, business model, and other factors. However, a good rule of thumb is to allocate somewhere between 8 and 12 percent of your revenue to marketing.

This will allow you to allocate enough funds to effectively market your business, while still leaving room for other important expenses such as employee salaries, rent, and product development. And remember that you should always adjust your marketing budget as needed, depending on how your business is performing.

It should be noted that this figure is for companies selling directly to consumers. For businesses that are primarily B2B, such as cannabis services companies or farms that sell flower through dispensaries, that figure might be lower, as low as 2-5 percent of your

revenue. This number is also targeted at companies in their first five years of operation. Over time, that number will be likely to decrease over time, hopefully as your revenue grows and your brand becomes better established.

Obviously, these numbers are drawn from businesses across every industry and may not address the specifics of the cannabis industry. But there should be several important takeaways as you develop your own marketing strategy. Number one, when you're just starting out, it's imperative that you invest heavily in your marketing, and that you figure the cost into your business plan from the outset. This should be obvious, but a failure to account for marketing in the early going is probably the biggest mistake I see on a regular basis.

Second, farms and producers that sell through dispensaries are in a unique situation. Because the legal cannabis market is so new, and so many customers are either unfamiliar with cannabis altogether or are used to the legacy market in which there was really very little choice, there is a huge dependency on budtenders and dispensaries to educate them on what products are most desirable. This means that your real customer may be the dispensary, rather than the end consumer. This can impact both your marketing strategy and how you budget for it.

This bleeds into the next important realization, which is that because the cannabis market is so new, we're still in the process of figuring out what business models are most effective, what the consumer will respond to, and more. The hard and fast rules of traditional marketing will not necessarily apply to cannabis. This means ideally, you should be creative, try a bunch of different things, and see what works and what doesn't. Of course, for many new businesses, every penny counts, so you won't have this luxury of experimentation. In this case, you'll want to plan and research carefully and figure out an approach that seems likely to work, but don't just assume that what works for a traditional business will work for you.

Ultimately, while the specifics of your marketing plan and the exact percentage of your budget you choose to invest in marketing can vary, if you fail to take marketing seriously and put your money where your mouth is, then you're setting yourself up for failure.

## **Tactics To Stay Within Your Marketing Budget**

One of the most important aspects of staying within your marketing budget is creating and adhering to a main budget. This budget should be made up of smaller, more manageable budgets that you can keep track of and adjust as needed. This could include things like social media, website design and development, online advertising, and so on. Within each of these categories, you can then create more specific budgets that fit your needs.

Within your main budget, it's important to consider your overall marketing goals and allocate funds accordingly. For example, if you want to focus on increasing website traffic, allocate more money toward digital ads. Or, if you're looking to improve brand awareness, put more money into PR and content marketing.

An important way to stay within your marketing budget is to assign a specific amount to each campaign in advance. This will help you to avoid overspending on any one campaign and will force you to be more strategic in your spending. Additionally, it's important to

track your ROI closely so that you can determine which campaigns are the most successful and allocate more money to those in the future (see more on marketing ROI below).

Another keyword in marketing is FREE. There are a number of marketing tactics that can be used at little or no cost. Researching and leveraging these tactics is essential for small businesses that want to compete with larger companies.

Some low-cost marketing tactics include using social media, content marketing, and email marketing. These tactics can be very effective when used correctly, and they don't require a lot of money to get started. Additionally, businesses can use competitively priced marketing vendors to help with their marketing efforts. This can be a huge money saver when compared with trying to do everything in-house. You may think that hiring a professional marketing agency is expensive, but when you compare it to the cost of hiring your own marketing lead, or trying to do everything yourself, you'll find working with an agency on a part-time basis can be much more cost effective.

It also helps to avoid having to pay twice for something. A lot of new businesses balk at the cost of a fully functional website or professional logo design, and so they turn to a budget option. It usually isn't long before they realize they should have invested in the professional to begin with, and now they need to spend more to fix the problem than if they had just made the investment to begin with.

At the end of the day, it's essential that before you start spending money on marketing, you have a plan, and you have a reasonable idea of how that plan can be successful. Then keep track of where you spend your money, figure out how effective each approach is, and when you don't get the results you were hoping for, be ready with a plan B.

# What About Cannabis Branding?

No matter what type of business you have, branding is one most important elements of your marketing strategy. In fact, it should be the first thing you consider. Your brand is the face of your company, what people will associate with you when they think about what you do and how you compare with your competitors. Having a brand that helps you stand out is invaluable, especially in the cannabis space where everything is so new and fluid.

When setting out to establish a new brand, whether at the very start of your company's inception, or when considering a rebrand, the number one goal is to ensure that your customers will recognize your products, or in the case of a services company, will remember your reputation. An effective branding campaign will increase sales and add value to your overall business. When it comes time to seek new investors or sell your company, having a well recognized brand with a strong and loyal customer base is one of the most valuable things you can have.

A lot of different elements go into a good brand. Of course, your logo, your company colors, your typefaces, and your overall aesthetic are a big part of your brand. But it's also the values you project out into the world. If you're a dispensary, having well-trained, friendly budtenders that make people feel comfortable is an aspect of your brand, just like having non-responsive budtenders who offer ill-informed advice and seem uninterested in serving your customers might also reflect strongly (in a heavily negative way) on how people view your store.

Having a strong brand makes all of the above marketing and advertising strategies easier to pull off successfully. If on the other hand your brand identity is unclear, contradictory, or non-existent, it will be significantly harder to have an impact in the heavily crowded cannabis marketplace.

Before you start down the path of cannabis advertising and marketing, it's highly recommended that you take the time to establish your brand. Understanding your company and how you want to project your image makes it so much easier to craft effective market strategies. It helps you identify your desired customers and craft messaging that will resonate with them while ringing true to who you are as a company.

Plus, when your customers have a clear impression of what values you stand for, it becomes much less work to form a meaningful connection. While establishing a brand can seem daunting at the beginning, taking the time to decide what type of brand you want to have is a great place to start.

## What Is Cannabis Branding?

Cannabis branding is the practice of creating a unique name, identity, and/or story around a cannabis product or company in order to differentiate it from others in the industry. A successful cannabis branding strategy can help a business attract and retain customers, as well as set itself apart from the competition.

Cannabis branding is one of the most complex and misunderstood branding niches in the world. Because cannabis is federally illegal in the United States, companies in the cannabis industry have to take several extra precautions to ensure that their brand doesn't fall afoul of the law.



This has led to a great deal of creativity in the cannabis branding world, as companies try to find ways to toe the line between legality and edginess. Some common themes in cannabis branding are naturalism, minimalism, and a focus on the positive effects of the drug.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer for branding, as the best approach for your company will vary depending on your place in the industry, the types of products or services you are offering, and your target audience. When done correctly, a strong identity will ensure your branding is consistent across all platforms. Your website, social media accounts, and marketing materials should all be using the same fonts, colors, and messaging. This will help create a unified brand identity that your customers will recognize and trust.

And before you get started on your branding, it's essential that you know who your audience is. This will allow you to target your audience accurately. It's not about guessing or taking a stab in the dark. You need to have a good understanding of not only who they are, but what they want, need and desire. Only then will you be able to create messaging that resonates with them.

## **Elements Of A Successful Cannabis Brand**

There are many elements to a successful cannabis brand. Above all, the most important factor is trust. Consumers need to trust that the product they're buying is safe and will deliver the desired effect. They also need to trust the brand's values and mission.

This starts with a strong and effective branding strategy. The logo, name, and overall look and feel of the product and packaging should be consistent and reflect the company's values. The tone of voice and messaging must be on point, too. Cannabis companies can be fun and playful, or serious and professional, but they must always be consistent. And remember that you must maintain the same level of professionalism at every possible customer touchpoint. One hastily composed social media post can undo months or even years of hard work forming a positive relationship with your audience.

A lot depends on establishing your brand voice. This is the personality that you give your company. It's the way you talk to your customers, the words you choose, and the attitude you put behind them. Developing your brand's voice is one of the most important things you can do for your company. It helps customers connect with your brand, establishes trust, and makes you stand out from the competition.

Think of your favorite brands. If I mention a company like Nike, Apple, or Old Spice, a very clear image of who they are and what they represent as a company comes to mind. The same is true in the cannabis industry. In fact, because the cannabis space is so new, there is a tremendous opportunity for new brands to establish themselves quickly. Decide what you want your voice to be, how you want to be viewed by your customers, and then invest in creating an aesthetic, from your logo, to your brand colors, to your social media presence, that supports this overarching vision.

## **Cannabis Branding Do's And Don'ts**

Cannabis branding is a tricky business. You want to make sure that you don't offend customers, but you also want to make a statement. How do you find the right balance? And what are the dos and don'ts of cannabis branding?

To answer these questions, we first need to take a look at what makes a successful cannabis brand. There are a few key factors:

1) The brand needs to be authentic. It needs to reflect the values of the company and the people who work there. The company must believe in its mission and have a commitment to achieving it. The stakeholders need to feel invested in the company and make an emotional connection with its goals.

The brand not only needs to be authentic to make consumers connect with it emotionally but being authentic is pivotal for brands if they want to endure a long life. A study done by Harvard Business School found that over a 20-year span fewer than 90 companies said their brand name was purely original, which indicates that authenticity encourages long-term brand building.

2) Your brand has to be meaningful – great brands are built on purpose. Without purpose, businesses cannot create an emotional conversation with stakeholders (customers), and any acquisition through marketing would be short-lived.

A brand with meaning is a brand that people can connect with on a deeper level. It's a brand that people feel good about supporting. And it's a brand that people are loyal to.

3) Your brand needs to be consistent in its messaging and design. Consistency is key when it comes to branding. Your customers need to be able to recognize your brand immediately, and they need to know what to expect from you.

If your brand is all over the place, your customers will be confused and they won't know what to expect. But if your brand is consistent, your customers will know what to expect and they will be more likely to buy from you.

So with all of that in mind, let's look at some key do's and don'ts for creating a successful cannabis brand.

### **Do your research**

Cannabis is a rapidly growing industry, and brands are popping up left and right. But before diving in headfirst, it's important to do your research.

Creating a cannabis brand is not as simple as coming up with a clever name and cool logo (although those are important, too). You need to understand the legal landscape, the competition, and most importantly, your target audience.

Research is the first step in creating a cannabis brand because it will help you make informed decisions about everything from your business structure to your marketing strategy. By taking the time to understand the industry and your place in it, you'll be able to make informed decisions about your brand.

On the other hand, creating a cannabis brand without doing any research is like driving with your eyes closed – you're bound to crash and burn. So take the time to do your homework before you launch your brand, and you'll be on your way to success.

### **Don't be afraid to be different**

Differentiation is key in any industry, but it can be especially important in the world of cannabis. Your company's brand is what sets you apart from your competitors and makes you recognizable to your target audience.

There are a lot of ways to differentiate your brand, but one of the most effective is to create a distinct visual identity. Your logo, color scheme, and overall design should be unique and reflect your company's personality. But this is just the beginning.

Another key aspect of your brand's identity that needs to be all your own is your tone of voice. Your tone of voice is a clear differentiator for your brand. It's how you communicate your brand's personality, and it helps you stand out from your competitors.

A strong, consistent tone of voice will make your brand more memorable, and it will help you build trust with your audience. When your tone of voice is on point, people will know what to expect from your brand, and they'll be more likely to do business with you.

To create a strong tone of voice for your brand, start by defining your brand's personality. The language you use on your website, in your marketing materials, and in your social media posts can have a big impact on how your brand is perceived. If you want to come across as a high-end, professional brand, use language that is polished and sophisticated. On the other hand, if you want to project a more laid-back, approachable image, use language that is more conversational.

Of course, this is not a hard-and-fast rule; there are always exceptions. But in general, the language you use should be aligned with the overall tone and personality of your brand. Remember, don't be afraid to be different from your competition. Embrace your company's uniqueness and use it to your advantage.

### **Do create a brand style guide**

A brand style guide is a document that outlines the specific visual elements that should be used to represent your cannabis company. Your brand style guide should include information on your company logo, color palette, typefaces, and other design elements. It should also provide guidance on how to use your brand assets in different situations, such as mixing typography with photography.

Having a brand style guide is important for several reasons. First, it helps to ensure that your branding is consistent across all touchpoints. This is critical for building trust with your audience and establishing a recognizable brand identity.

Second, a brand style guide can help to streamline your internal communications and design processes. By having a clear set of guidelines to reference, you can save time and avoid costly mistakes.

If you don't have a brand style guide, the problems that can arise are numerous. It's more likely that your marketing materials will look unprofessional, your website will be inconsistent, and your overall brand will be weakened.

The bottom line: a brand style guide should be created early on in the life of a company, and it should be updated regularly. I'll write more later on about how to create an effective style guide for your cannabis business.

### **Don't forget your customers**

The most common branding mistake is ignoring your customers. Creating a brand strategy starts with understanding your customer's point of view. What does your customer want? What does your customer need? What does your customer care about?

Your customer's point of view should be the foundation of your brand strategy. Once you understand your customer, you can start to build a brand that meets their needs and wants. Too many companies approach their branding and marketing from the point of view of what they want their audience to know, instead of focusing on what the potential customer actually wants.

If you focus on the latter, you'll be amazed at how much more effectively you can communicate your message and attract long term customers.

### **Do make sure everyone is on the same page**

It is essential that your whole team is in agreement with your company's branding. Your brand is what makes your company recognizable and sets you apart from your competition. If your team is not on the same page, it will be difficult to maintain a consistent brand identity.

Your team should be involved in the branding process from the beginning. This way, everyone will have a say in how the brand is developed and will be more likely to buy into it. Once the brand is established, it is important to keep everyone on the team updated on any changes. This will help to ensure that everyone is using the same voice, the same style, and the same messaging.

If you're not consistent in your brand messaging, people will get confused about what your brand is about. Your messaging will be all over the place, and you'll likely lose customers as a result. Being consistent in your brand messaging is essential if you want to build a strong, recognizable brand.

### **Don't neglect your website and online presence**

When it comes to launching a new cannabis brand, your website and online presence are just as important as your brick-and-mortar location. In fact, in today's digital age, they may even be more important.

Your website is often the first interaction potential customers will have with your brand. It's your chance to make a good impression and give them a taste of what your brand is all about. Likewise, your social media channels are a great way to connect with customers and create a community around your brand.

Unfortunately, many cannabis brands neglect their website and online presence, thinking that they are of secondary importance. But whether you are a farm, a dispensary, or a B2B service provider, your digital brand is only going to grow in importance over time.

Branding is essential for any business, and that is especially true for cannabis businesses. Next, let's look at how to create an effective cannabis style guide that will make it easier to put all of the above into practice.

# How To Create A Cannabis Brand Style Guide

As the cannabis industry matures and moves towards federal legalization, an increasing number of entrepreneurs are looking to get involved. But with a crowded market and ever-changing regulations, how do you go about developing a successful cannabis brand?

The first step is to do your homework. Research the industry, your target market, and the competition. Once you have a clear understanding of the landscape, you can start to develop your brand strategy. This will include everything from your branding and marketing to your product line-up and company culture.

Next, you'll need to come up with a logo. When it comes to marketing, your logo is one of your most important assets. It's the first thing people see, and it sets the tone for your brand. A great logo can help you attract new customers and solidify your brand's identity.

A cannabis logo needs to be eye-catching and memorable. It should also be representative of your company's values and mission. Here are a few tips to help you create a killer cannabis logo:

Keep it simple. A complex logo will be difficult to reproduce and may be confusing to customers.

Really think through your brand colors. These will most likely be developed as part of your logo, and the colors you choose will go a long way towards establishing the style and tone of your brand

Use modern typography. It's amazing how a poorly selected font can ruin a website or brand.

In order to really ensure your brand is on point, you need a style guide. This visual document will outline your brand's voice, tone, and visuals. A style guide is what makes it possible to maintain consistency across all of your marketing materials.

There are a few key things to keep in mind when [creating a style guide](#) for your cannabis company. First, make sure to include specific guidelines for logo usage, color palette, typefaces, and writing style. You'll also want to outline specific rules for photography and video, including what kind of images you'd like to use, what color backgrounds should be seen in product shots, and more.

Basically, the more detailed you can be with your style guide, the more your brand will resonate with your audience.

## Mistakes To Avoid When Branding Your Cannabis Company

When creating a cannabis brand, it's important to avoid making common mistakes. The first thing we see a lot of is companies not doing their research. This is perhaps the most important mistake, as it can lead to all sorts of problems down the road. Make sure you know everything there is to know about the cannabis industry, your customers, and your competitors before starting your brand.

Another mistake is focusing too much on the typical stoner stereotypes. If your brand relies on these stereotypes, it will likely turn off a large portion of the population. Keep in mind that not everyone who uses cannabis is a 'stoner' or identifies that way. Forward-looking cannabis brands want to reach new customers, among the cannabis curious, rather than limit themselves to the heaviest consumers.

Also, be sure to do your research to make sure your branding is compliant with state and local regulations. For example, most states have a policy that strictly forbids marketing to minors. What does this regulation look like in your state? Is an animated pot leaf something that might set off alarm bells? It's essential that you make sure all marketing and advertising is in compliance with state regulations to avoid (often costly) problems down the road.

Instead of saving money by hiring a cheap designer, invest in a professional logo design from a reputable firm. We are constantly getting asked why our design services are so expensive. Prospective clients will point out they can get a logo design online for less than \$50. That's certainly true, but then you will be stuck with a \$50 logo. Cheap logos will always look cheap, and customers will be able to tell that you didn't invest in a good logo. What does that say about your products?

## **The Future Of Cannabis Branding**

What does the future hold for cannabis branding? How can businesses make sure their brands stand out in a crowded and ever-changing market? Here are a few things to keep in mind.

First, many companies are moving towards a minimalist, modern aesthetic. This sleek and sophisticated look is appealing to customers and conveys a sense of professionalism and legitimacy.

Another trend in cannabis graphic design is the use of natural elements. While incorporating a pot leaf into your logo may be considered cliché, many brands are using images of plants and flowers in their designs, as well as earthy tones and muted colors, to evoke the natural origins of their products.

Finally, after the last couple years we've suffered through, people are looking for optimism. In a market that is often associated with gritty and dark visuals, some brands are beginning to experiment with brighter, more optimistic designs. While this can take many forms, and might even involve a more vintage look, or the natural outdoorsy tone mentioned above, think about a brand style that can offer a breath of fresh air.

# Creating An Effective Cannabis Website

Creating an effective website for your business is crucial in today's digital age, as it serves as the primary point of contact between your business and potential customers. A well-designed and optimized website can help to attract new customers, increase sales, and improve your business's online presence. In this section, I will discuss the key elements that are necessary for creating an effective website for your business.

First and foremost, your website should have clear and compelling content that accurately reflects your business and its offerings. The content should be easy to read and understand, and should be written in a language that is appropriate for your target audience. It's important to ensure that the information on your website is up-to-date and relevant, and to regularly update it with new content and features.

Secondly, the design of your website should be user-friendly, with a clean and intuitive layout that makes it easy for users to navigate and find the information they need. The design should be visually appealing, but it should also be easy to use and easy to understand. A good design can help create a positive first impression, and to make it more likely that users will stay on your website for longer.

In today's digital age, more and more people are accessing the internet on mobile devices, so it's essential that your website is optimized for mobile viewing. A mobile-responsive design ensures that your website will look and function correctly on all devices, regardless of screen size. This will help to improve the user experience, and make it more likely that users will return to your website in the future.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is another essential aspect of creating an effective website. SEO involves optimizing your website so that it can be easily found by potential customers through search engines such as Google, Bing, etc. This can be achieved through the use of relevant keywords, meta tags, and other techniques. By optimizing your website for search engines, you can increase the visibility of your website and make it more likely that potential customers will find it.

Strong calls to action (CTA) are also important in creating an effective website. CTAs are buttons or links that encourage users to take the next step, such as contacting your business, making a purchase, or signing up for a newsletter. CTAs should be clear and prominent, and should be placed in strategic locations on your website.

In addition to the above, using high-quality images and videos can help to make your website more engaging and visually appealing. Images and videos can help to break up large blocks of text, and can be used to showcase your products or services in a more interesting and dynamic way.

It's also important to make it easy for customers to contact you by providing clear contact information, including your phone number, email address, and physical address. This will help to build trust and make it more likely that customers will feel comfortable doing business with you.

Security is also an important aspect to consider when creating an effective website. Your website should be secure to ensure customer's data is protected and to gain customer trust. This can be done by using SSL Certificates, encryption, and other security measures.

Finally, your website should load quickly, as users tend to leave slow-loading websites. This can be achieved by optimizing images, minifying code, and using a content delivery network (CDN).

Creating an effective website for your business is essential in today's digital age. A well-designed and optimized website can help to attract new customers, increase sales, and improve your business's online presence.

## **The Unique Challenges For Cannabis Websites**

Cannabis businesses face unique challenges when creating their websites, due to the complex and ever-changing legal landscape surrounding the cannabis industry. Some of these challenges include:

**Compliance with state and federal laws:** Cannabis is still illegal at the federal level, and the laws and regulations surrounding the cannabis industry vary greatly from state to state. It's important for cannabis businesses to ensure that their websites comply with all applicable state and federal laws, and to stay up to date with any changes to these laws.

**Limited advertising options:** Many traditional advertising channels, such as Google and Facebook, have restrictions on cannabis-related advertising, making it more difficult for cannabis businesses to reach potential customers through these channels.

**Payment processing:** Many payment processors and financial institutions are hesitant to work with cannabis businesses due to the federal prohibition of cannabis, making it difficult for these businesses to accept credit card payments and other forms of electronic payment on their websites.

**Age verification:** Many states require that cannabis dispensaries verify the age of customers before allowing them to purchase products on their website. This can be a difficult process, and businesses need to ensure that they have a robust and secure age verification system in place.

**SEO:** SEO is a challenge for the cannabis industry, due to the fact that the industry is still in its infancy, and the legal landscape is constantly changing. Cannabis businesses need to be mindful of the keywords and phrases they use, as well as the legal restrictions that may affect their SEO efforts.

**Security concerns:** Due to the sensitive nature of the products and services offered by cannabis businesses, it's important to ensure that their website is secure and that customer data is protected. This can include implementing SSL certificates and encryption to protect customer information.

**Content restrictions:** Many states have strict guidelines on what can be advertised, and what type of content can be shown on cannabis-related websites. This can make it difficult for cannabis businesses to create engaging and informative websites that accurately reflect their products and services.



To overcome these challenges, cannabis businesses should work with experienced web developers and legal professionals to ensure that their websites comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Additionally, they should explore alternative advertising channels, such as social media influencer marketing and email marketing

# Website Options For Dispensaries That Need Online Sales

Cannabis dispensaries building an online store for in-store pickup or home delivery have more sophisticated platform options than ever before. These platforms provide comprehensive solutions that help dispensaries manage their online store, inventory, orders, and customer data, making it easier to run their business effectively in an increasingly competitive market.

It's important to note that traditional e-commerce platforms such as Shopify and WooCommerce still have significant restrictions when it comes to cannabis businesses. While Shopify now allows hemp-derived CBD products containing less than 0.3% THC under the 2018 Farm Bill definition, merchants cannot use Shopify Payments and must instead integrate third-party payment processors like Square or specialized high-risk processors. Importantly, Shopify and WooCommerce do NOT support sales of THC cannabis products—only compliant hemp and CBD. These platforms have strict policies against the sale of intoxicating cannabis, and they may suspend or terminate accounts that violate these policies. This is because THC cannabis remains federally illegal, and these platforms do not want to risk running afoul of federal laws or regulations.

Additionally, traditional e-commerce platforms lack the necessary features to handle the unique requirements of licensed cannabis dispensaries, such as state-specific compliance reporting, seed-to-sale tracking integration, age verification at checkout, real-time POS synchronization, and delivery zone restrictions. Therefore, licensed cannabis dispensaries need to use specialized platforms that are specifically designed for their industry, such as Dutchie, Jane, and others, which are compliant with all the laws and regulations required for cannabis businesses.

## Dutchie

Dutchie remains the dominant platform for cannabis e-commerce, having evolved from a simple menu solution into a comprehensive retail technology suite. In August 2025, Dutchie launched E-Commerce Pro, a next-generation platform that combines advanced SEO capabilities, AI-powered product recommendations, and deep integration across point-of-sale, payments, loyalty, and marketing automation.

E-Commerce Pro provides dispensaries with an omnichannel shopping experience that works seamlessly across web, mobile app, in-store kiosks, and POS systems. The platform includes AI personalization features like StrainBrain's AI Budtender (which recommends products based on customer preferences in under 30 seconds) and Moodi Day's video review integration (which displays user-generated video reviews alongside products). Dutchie reports that retailers using E-Commerce Pro generate 50% more online sales than the industry average and grow 10% faster.

For dispensaries seeking even more customization beyond the out-of-the-box solution, Dutchie's Certified Partner Program connects retailers with vetted design agencies and

developers who specialize in cannabis e-commerce. Partners like CannaPlanners, PufCreativ, and Range Marketing can create fully custom experiences while maintaining the platform's compliance and integration capabilities.

Dutchie also offers comprehensive payment processing solutions (including ACH "Pay by Bank" options that avoid credit card fees), built-in loyalty programs, and robust analytics that track performance across all channels. With over 6,500 retail partners across the US and Canada, Dutchie has become the infrastructure backbone for cannabis retail operations.

## **Jane Technologies**

Jane Technologies has positioned itself as the industry's leading e-commerce provider, powering over 2,500 dispensaries and brands across 39 US states and Canada. Jane differentiates itself through its Universal Product Catalog (UPC), which contains over 1.7 million brand-verified products with automated, centralized product data. This means dispensaries inherit accurate product information, professional images, and millions of verified consumer reviews without chasing down brands for assets.

Jane's platform offers several unique features that set it apart. Their location-first shopping allows customers to search for a product across all of a multi-location dispensary's stores and see which locations have it in stock—reducing friction in the customer journey. Jane also offers a comprehensive POS system that integrates seamlessly with their e-commerce platform, providing true omnichannel retail operations.

In 2025, Jane launched Jane Gold, the cannabis industry's first brand-funded cash-back rewards program. This patented technology allows cannabis brands (which cannot ship direct-to-consumer) to offer exclusive cash-back rewards to shoppers across Jane's dispensary network. As of early 2026, Jane Gold has already distributed over \$1 million in cash back to consumers, with one in ten online shoppers enrolled.

Jane's Digital Merchandising program allows brands to advertise directly on dispensary menus by featuring their products at the top of search results—creating a new revenue stream for dispensaries while giving brands better visibility. The platform also supports in-store kiosks, iOS mobile apps, comprehensive analytics, and integrations with delivery logistics platforms like Cannveya.

## **Other Platform Options**

Several other specialized platforms serve specific niches within cannabis retail:

**Tymber:** A newer player focused on flexible, customizable e-commerce solutions with strong WordPress integration capabilities, appealing to dispensaries that want more design control.

**TreezPay:** Works seamlessly with the Treez POS system, making it the obvious choice for dispensaries already using Treez for point-of-sale operations. The tight integration ensures menu accuracy without compatibility headaches.

**Weedmaps:** While primarily known as a discovery platform, Weedmaps also offers e-commerce and menu management tools, particularly valuable for dispensaries that want to leverage Weedmaps' massive consumer audience.

**Alpine IQ:** Specializes in customer data platforms and loyalty programs that integrate with various e-commerce solutions, providing deep customer insights and retention tools.

### **Choosing The Right Platform**

Cannabis dispensaries should evaluate platforms based on their specific needs and growth stage. Key considerations include:

**Integration requirements:** Does the platform integrate with your existing POS, payment processor, and delivery management systems?

**Customization needs:** Do you need an out-of-the-box solution or extensive design customization?

**Compliance capabilities:** Does the platform automatically handle age verification, purchase limits, and state-specific regulations?

**Analytics and reporting:** Can you track performance across online and in-store channels with unified data?

**Total cost:** Beyond monthly platform fees, consider transaction fees, payment processing costs, and implementation expenses.

The cannabis e-commerce landscape has matured significantly since the early days of legalization. Today's platforms offer sophisticated tools that rival mainstream retail technology—with the added complexity of cannabis-specific compliance built in. Dispensaries that invest in the right e-commerce infrastructure position themselves to compete effectively as the industry continues to professionalize and consolidate.

# What Types Of Cannabis Marketing Are Relevant In 2026?

So let's talk about the specific types of marketing and advertising that are most relevant to cannabis businesses. For what I hope are obvious reasons, we won't be discussing commercial ad buys, radio spots, or (for the most part) PPC advertisements. Keep in mind that not all businesses in the cannabis space are created equal. There's a huge difference between a licensed cannabis producer or retailer and an ancillary business, such as an accountant or a marketing company.

That's not to mention hemp and CBD. Whereas cannabis is a Schedule I drug at the federal level, hemp (cannabis plants with less than .3 percent THC) is now federally protected thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill. This means there's a gray area for many hemp and CBD products. It also means policies and enforcement around hemp and CBD are spotty at best, and there's no telling what is permissible from any moment to the next.

With that said, the following are the most popular forms of advertising and marketing for cannabis companies:

**Digital Ad Buys**

**Print Ad Buys**

**SEO**

**Content Marketing**

**Email marketing**

**SMS Advertising + Geofencing**

**Out-Of-Home Advertising**

**Event Marketing**

**Paid Search + Social**

**Cannabis Branding**

**Social Media Marketing**

Let's take each one in turn, and explain what they are and what types of businesses will most benefit from them.

## Cannabis Marketing Option #1: Digital Ad Buys

When we think about advertising for a small business in the 21st century, online banner ads and digital display ads will probably be near the top of the list, especially in the cannabis industry. But there are two significant barriers that must be considered before you launch a digital ad campaign.

First, in most states, there are rules in place that restrict licensed cannabis businesses from marketing themselves in a way that might appeal to minors. This usually includes wording that you cannot advertise in any kind of content or format that might include a significant audience of people under 18 or 21. While this would obviously forbid advertising on websites for Nickelodeon or the Cartoon Network, there's a lot of gray area as to how this standard should be applied and enforced.

If you have a compliance officer on your team, it's their job to mitigate risk, and they will probably advise you to be extremely cautious about advertising through any web portal that might be interpreted as appealing to an underage audience. Complicating the matter is that many digital ad networks will populate across a myriad of websites, so it would be imperative that you have some control over where your specific ads show up, and preferably the ability to target specific age groups.

On the other end of the spectrum, the most popular digital advertising platforms are closed off to cannabis companies anyway. For most small (and medium and large for that matter) businesses, the go-to choice is Google when it comes to serving up digital ads across the internet. Google doesn't allow cannabis companies to advertise on their display platform, nor does the Facebook Audience Network, so the options become severely limited.

Therefore, cannabis companies that want to run digital ad campaigns have two options. They can secure the services of a programmatic advertising platform that caters directly to cannabis companies (two specific examples include [MediaJel](#) and [Safe-Reach](#)), who will populate your ads using targeting data to help reach your potential customers in a more effective manner while ensuring that your ads are legal and compliant. Or, they can advertise directly on cannabis specific platforms. These can include weed directories (WeedMaps, Leafly) or cannabis magazines (Dope, Grow).

While digital ad buys can be extremely effective in terms of allowing cannabis companies to reach targeted audiences and actually achieving a good ROI, it's also easy to waste a lot of money without seeing any appreciable results, or worse yet, not knowing whether the amount you spent was worth it. Digital ad buys have a major advantage in that they allow for excellent, in-depth analytics regarding who has seen the ads and how effective they were at achieving the desired results. But if you're a cannabis business owner who doesn't have a degree in marketing or data analytics, then you can often feel like you are being bombarded by meaningless numbers with no way of understanding what it all means.

The best way to avoid this is to go in with a plan, and to partner with a company that is transparent and takes the time to explain exactly what they are doing, how to connect the dots between the amount that's being spent and how it's impacting your bottom line. This

is a lot easier said than done. So while there are tremendous opportunities that come with digital ad buys, it's not the best option for the inexperienced.

What cannabis businesses can most benefit from digital advertising? Companies with a specific geographic region, and with a specific desired outcome (either an increase in sales or foot traffic, for example). If that sounds like dispensaries and online product retailers, you'd be correct. Digital ad buys especially make sense for dispensaries that are able to take online orders, making it much easier to keep track of an ad's effectiveness. Digital ad buys also make sense for CBD and hemp retailers who have a national footprint, as there are more options open to you when it comes to programmatic advertising. But you would be best served having a full time marketing person on your staff who understands digital marketing before you jump in.

## **Cannabis Marketing Option #2: Print Ad Buys**

When it comes to print ad buys, many cannabis marketers encounter a Catch-22. They want to target consumers who may be cannabis curious or casual consumers, but the main option that will accept ad buys for cannabis companies are the dedicated cannabis magazines that tend to appeal to the most dedicated consumers. What's not to like about marketing directly to the heaviest weed consumers? Well, all of your competition is going to be targeting the same small subset of consumers, meaning you really need to have a strong grasp on your branding and value proposition if you want to be noticed.

Another hurdle when it comes to advertising in print publications is that when compared to digital marketing, there's a dearth of reliable information regarding how effective your ads are. You have no idea how many people have even seen your ad, let alone how many took action because they saw it. With digital advertising, you know exactly how many times your ad was served up, and how many people clicked on it, and how many of those clicks led to a desired outcome, such as a sale or email signup. With print advertising, you get none of that information, which is why the magazine industry is in such dire straits.

But if you do want to directly reach cannabis consumers, weed-specific publications are one of the best options. Magazine ads are a great way to accentuate your brand and get your name out there, especially if you stick to the most prominent publications. Of course, running ads in a premium magazine can be expensive, not to mention the cost of designing the ad, so for many smaller cannabis businesses, this option is out of reach.

A cheaper option is to target boutique publications. These are usually local magazines that are distributed in a specific state or city. The audiences are smaller, so ads are cheaper. And you've likely noticed that a lot of the ads that run in these publications are simply not very good. In this environment, it doesn't take a lot of investment to stand out in a positive way.

Just keep in mind that even if these ads are working, it's hard to know for sure. One growing trend to overcome this obstacle is to include a QR code in your ad, that will allow readers to directly link to your website simply by pointing their phone at your ad. This will allow you to directly track an ad's effectiveness, in particular if you use different QR codes for different ad runs.

Print ad buys make the most sense for companies that have a monthly marketing budget and who are specifically interested in boosting or reinforcing their brand image. Individual farms or dispensaries should probably look elsewhere, but dispensary chains or vertically integrated growers and retailers can effectively rely on magazine ads to build name recognition in their region.



## Cannabis Marketing Channel #3: Search Engine Optimization

Everybody talks about SEO but very few people are doing it right. Your web designer probably talked about making your website SEO friendly. You're probably getting bombarded by people talking about keywords and metadata and SERP results. There are all kinds of people willing to tell you how they are going to help you rank better on Google to increase your organic reach. It all likely sounds fantastic and extremely confusing.

Here's the truth about cannabis SEO: It's extremely hard to do well. And it's extremely important, because it's one of the most reliable options for advertising a cannabis business while there's still so much ambiguity at the federal level as to what's allowed and what isn't allowed in cannabis advertising. Both these things can be true at the same time.

That means you want to be extremely discerning about who you partner with, not only for your SEO specifically, but everything that is SEO adjacent, such as blog writing, web design, social media, and more.

Here's the conundrum. In order to have effective SEO, you need to be showing up on the first page of first returns. That means at most ten businesses are going to be first page ranking of any given keyword. And Google has gotten very good at learning how to interpret searcher intent and returning sites that are both highly relevant and highly respected. So you're competing against the biggest names in your industry, most of whom probably have a huge head start in establishing themselves in the cannabis space. And while the difference between ranking number 1 and number 2 is significant in terms of traffic, the difference between ranking on the first page and second page is like competing for customers in Times Square when your store location is on the moon.

SEO is a brute force problem. The more time, effort, and money you put into it, the more results you'll get back. If you're competing for the first page of a popular term like Seattle Dispensary, it's going to be extremely hard and require a concentrated effort with significant financial investment. But you can bet the payoff will be worth it. That's why it's so competitive.

And the good news that a lot of companies aren't investing in SEO, or they are going about it the wrong way. That means there are opportunities for the cannabis companies that approach it in the right way.

First, let's take a look at keywords. If you only focus on the most popular keywords, you're going to have a tough go of it. Instead, concentrate on ranking for less popular keywords that won't be as competitive, and therefore easier to gain traction in. Take a broad approach, especially in the beginning, and look at keywords that your more well-established competitors may be ignoring because by themselves, these keywords aren't worth much. But in the aggregate, they can quickly add up, and over time, the effort will also help your ranking in more lucrative keywords you eventually want to target.

For instance, go ahead and check out [Cannabis Event Photography](#). Guess who ranks number one. Yours truly! This was one of the first keywords we ranked number one in. Of course, not a lot of people are searching for Cannabis Event Photography, but when they do, the first business they see is The Hood Collective. And we can point to a lot of other similar keywords, such as Cannabis Event Videographer and Cannabis Video Production, that we have focused on and now rank first page on.

This has allowed us to relatively quickly increase our search ranking for more lucrative terms, such as Cannabis Graphic Design, Cannabis Product Photography, and Cannabis SEO Marketing. But this begs the question: how to increase your ranking in the first place?

I'm going to make this very easy for you. There are two main aspects to SEO. First of all, effective SEO is based on content marketing. High quality, relevant content on your website that is regularly updated and added to is how the Google algorithm knows what your site is about and how it judges how worthy your site is of attention. Google wants to know that you are an authority on the subject. If someone is searching for information about CBD for instance, the more pages and blog posts you have that discuss various aspects of CBD (without being repetitive), the more of an authority they will judge you to be.

This means, the more content you have, the better your SEO. See below for our tips concerning how to approach content marketing for your cannabis business.

The other important aspect of SEO is how many links are pointing to your website. Google assumes, correctly, that the more links you have coming in, the more of an authority you are on the topic. Of course, these links need to be from relevant websites and pages. Spammy links won't work, as Google has long ago been able to figure out the difference. So while it might be tempting to purchase link packages from some of the companies that offer to build links to your website, the reality is there's no quick fix to this problem.

This means that link building is largely out of your hands, other than to generate content that people will view as valuable and want to link to (again, see below). What you can do (and what should definitely be a part of your overall marketing strategy) is look for partners in the industry that have complementary businesses or services and might be interested in doing blog exchanges or co-sponsor an event with you. If you're a farm, look to create marketing partnerships with the dispensaries where you sell your products. Likewise, a dispensary should be working with all the farms it sources from to help build up its digital reputation. It can be as simple as reaching out to your peers in the industry and saying you'll include a link on your website to them if they reciprocate.

Thinking even bigger, do whatever you can to get digital stories or positive reviews about your business. This may be hard in the beginning, but as you put more effort into your branding and creating a reputation in the industry, the easier it's going to be to get the kinds of relevant links that will build up your SEO. The best strategy is to incorporate this kind of thinking into all of your marketing, so that you are focused on the kind of brand building and partnerships that will bear fruit in a number of different ways.

There's one last thing with regards to SEO you need to keep in mind. If you have a physical location that is visited by customers on a regular basis (ie a dispensary or cafe) then you **MUST** be focused on local SEO. This is a specific form of SEO that is tied to your geographic location and is particularly relevant when someone is doing a search for local services. The most common example is someone searching on their phone for "dispensary near me." There are a lot of actions you can be taking to boost your SEO, starting with hiring us to perform a Local SEO blast.

The bottom line is that no matter what kind of cannabis business you are, if you have a website, you will want to invest heavily in cannabis SEO.

## **Cannabis Marketing Option #4: Content Marketing**

In pretty much every industry, more and more companies are turning to content marketing as a core part of their marketing strategy. While a big reason for this has to do with SEO (as explained above) it is far from the only benefit of creating great content. It is becoming increasingly attractive to use meaningful, high value content to create a lasting connection with your customers. Whether this is via regular posting to social media, in depth educational content, entertaining or funny memes, or an all of the above approach, content shifts the focus away from trying to convince potential customers to pay attention to you, towards a more customer-centric paradigm where the goal is to grab as much of your audience's attention as possible.

That's what people mean when they talk about the attention economy. Your customers only have so much time to spend, and the more of that time they spend interacting with your content, the deeper the bonds are.

Now that's all well and good if you're a content company, such as Warner Brothers or ESPN. But why would a cannabis company invest in creating content?

One reason is there's a huge need for high quality educational and informative content in the cannabis space. Cannabis has lived in the shadows for so many years that many people still have a negative opinion of the plant and its consumers. Even people who are lifelong consumers cling to outdated and incorrect information and stereotypes about cannabis. The most obvious is the extremely prevalent belief in the Indica/Sativa dichotomy, which research is starting to disprove, but which is still readily promoted in dispensaries around the country.

In such an environment, brands that invest in educating their customers will have a leg up over the competition. Not only will you have the opportunity to create brand loyalty, but you'll be able to reach entirely new segments of the consumer base. Or better yet, create new segments that weren't even part of the consumer base previously because of hesitation or a lack of reliable, trustworthy information. This kind of content will benefit pretty much any kind of cannabis business, but is obviously extremely beneficial to companies that deal with CBD, medical marijuana, lifestyle products, and the like.

B2B businesses, on the other hand, will want to focus on educating their customers about the types of services they provide. Again, there is a real knowledge gap in the industry because of the legacy of the black market. In this case, it's because cannabis growers and sellers never had the ability to run a legal business out in the open, and so they may not be familiar with basic business principles and concepts, particularly when it comes to accounting, payroll, compliance, law, human resources, and yes, marketing. Businesses that offer these services can build trust and attract customers by taking the trouble to answer questions and provide useful information, whether via social media or a blog.

So what kind of content is best for content marketing? There's no one answer to this question. The primary categories revolve around written content, video, and infographics. If you can manage to combine all three, even better. The main thing to keep in mind is that you should develop a strategy around how you will disseminate that content. The best, most exciting, most valuable video or blog post in the world is useless if nobody sees it.

That means an integral aspect of any content marketing strategy is how to get your content in front of the right people, ie your prospective customers.

## **Cannabis Marketing Option #5: Email Marketing**

Email marketing, while popular in many other industries, is an often overlooked option for cannabis organizations. This is likely to change, as more and more business owners realize the tremendous benefit of having an active, thriving list of potential customers who have chosen to opt in to receive your communications.

The first thing that needs to be stated is that we strongly discourage companies from simply purchasing an email list. I'm sure your inbox is filled with people looking to sell you their 'valuable' list of cannabis contacts. You probably get annoyed by such emails, which is exactly why you should not purchase said list, as the vast majority of people on it have no interest in what you have to say, or sell, to them. The only exception is for businesses that are invested in direct sales, who are comfortable with conducting high volume cold calls. In that case, you may be able to profit from having a high-quality list of cannabis contacts in a new market, such as a state that has recently come online.

For most businesses, email marketing starts with convincing your customers, website visitors, or people curious about your company to opt-in to your mailing list. It might be possible to incentivize people to do so, with discounts or some kind of free giveaway. Others rely on cleverly placed Call-To-Actions on their website. However you do it, getting your customers to sign up for your mailing list is only half the battle.

Anyone who has run a mailing list knows that one of the biggest issues is attrition. Invariably, some people will opt out again as soon as the first message hits their inbox. This is to be expected. But it puts a major onus on you and your content creator(s) to generate meaningful, relevant messages that your followers will actually want to receive. Many of the same principles apply that we discussed with regards to content marketing.

While it's tempting to blast out an email every time you have something you want to share, you should always consider your mailing list from the perspective of your customers first. What value are you providing them when you hit send? If you aren't giving them a reason to read your messages, at best they'll just let your email go unread. At worst, they'll unsubscribe and stop buying your products.

On the plus side, direct email marketing is one of the best ways to circumvent all of the restrictions placed on cannabis marketing. You aren't restricted by rules like you are on social media, and you can promote your sales and specials without fear of repercussion. The kinds of images or promotions that aren't allowed on banner ads or in magazines are fair game.

What types of businesses can make best use of email marketing? Pretty much any type of cannabis business, but any company that is selling products or services, whether in a B2B or B2C capacity, should definitely explore email marketing. All you'll need to do is find a mail platform that is tolerant of cannabis (Hint: MailChimp is not cannabis friendly, but there are plenty of options out there that are). Whichever one you choose, it should be a platform that doesn't charge out of the gate, but only starts asking for a fee when you reach a certain threshold in terms of your subscriber base.

One growing platform is Substack, which even makes it easy to monetize your actual mailing list. With Substack, you can charge a monthly subscription fee for people to receive your emails. Obviously, this will only apply to educational companies or advocacy

organizations that are providing extremely rich content or using their mailing list as a way to raise funds.

## Cannabis Marketing Option #6: SMS And Geofencing

The future is mobile. We've been hearing it for years, but the future is now. I can probably cram some more cliches into this paragraph, but I think you get the point. If you need a little bit more convincing, here's some data on the growth of mobile in recent years:

**As of 2019, there were nearly 270 million active mobile users, and almost 450 million wireless mobile subscribers in the United States.**

**In 2023, 92% of all Americans (311 million) used their phones to access the internet!**

With that in mind, it's no wonder that mobile advertising and SMS advertising are crucial to any forward-looking cannabis marketing strategy. But the state of SMS advertising is still very much in its infancy, and as mobile users yourselves, you probably know how annoying it can be to receive intrusive, unwanted notifications on your phone that you haven't opted in for. That's why it's important to tread carefully in this space.

First of all, no matter what kind of cannabis business you are, you need to ensure that your website is mobile friendly. In fact, when we design websites, our first consideration is always mobile, and desktop design is second. Fortunately, the Wix platform we build most of our websites on is extremely mobile friendly and makes it easy to build a website that will look good on any device. But we make sure any websites we build in WordPress perform just as well, if not better, on mobile.

When it comes to SMS marketing, the approach should be similar to email marketing, with a focus on creating an opt-in list of customers that have agreed to receive your content. You should respect your customers and strive to always serve them highly valuable content that will be useful for them. When done correctly, SMS marketing can boost customer loyalty and encourage repeat business.

Geofencing is a new kind of digital marketing that relies on a virtual fence that is put in place around a physical location. Whenever a consumer enters that space, an action is triggered, such as a notification being sent to their phone. The technology depends on GPS or RFID location data. The action that gets triggered is up to you. Possibilities include collecting data, serving up an ad, offering a reminder, and more.

One of the most common ways to utilize geofencing technology is via a dedicated mobile app, but it's not required. Remember, if you are targeting mobile users with geofencing ads, privacy can be a big concern, so don't be overly aggressive or intrusive. There are a number of companies you can work with for geofencing, with Sprout being one of the best known examples.

While SMS and geofencing marketing won't be for every cannabis business, if you are a dispensary, it is definitely something to look into.

## Cannabis Marketing Option #7: OOH

OOH stands for Out-Of-Home advertising. In the cannabis industry, this basically means billboards. Of course, depending on the state you're based in, it may also include ads on taxi cabs, buses, public benches, and more. Or, you may not be allowed to advertise cannabis on any of the above.

With so many traditional advertising channels, such as television and radio spots, off limits to cannabis businesses, OOH is a huge category in places where it is allowed. For instance, here in Oregon, cannabis billboards can be seen pretty much everywhere, from alongside major interstates to downtown Portland.

If OOH advertising is allowed in your location, there are some additional guidelines you'll need to follow (even if it isn't specifically spelled out in your state code). Be very careful to make sure that the location you're posting isn't near a school, park, or other place frequented by minors. Absolutely don't depict consumption anywhere in your ad, and don't make any kind of health claims or statements about the efficacy of your products, especially as it pertains to medical issues. And make sure to add your state's required disclaimer so that it's in plain view.

This may all be spelled out by the advertising company that owns the billboards, but it may not, especially if you're located in a more rural area where commerce tends to be less regulated.

Another thing to bear in mind when using OOH advertising, in particular billboards, is that you'll want to design an ad specifically to be seen from a distance. There shouldn't be a lot of detail or fine print (other than the disclaimer) and one bold image should be enough. Absolutely do not simply reproduce an ad you've created for digital or print and think it will work just as well on a billboard or the side of a bus. These are completely different media and need to be treated as such. Partner with a graphic designer who understands the demands of creating billboard ads.

Other than that, the most important thing to pay attention to is ROI. It's tough to measure exactly how effective cannabis billboard advertising is. Some companies prefer to mention a specific URL on their OOH ad, so they can track how many people visit their website. Another option is to have your customers fill out a survey and ask where they heard about you, with a billboard as one of the options. This is a great way to learn more about your customers and to gain more data on the efficacy of your advertising, but it can also be viewed as an annoying chore and should only be used in the right circumstances.

If nothing else, keep track of your sales before and after the billboard is live. And then if you discontinue the ad, how do your sales react after it's gone? While this kind of information is not to be treated as gospel, it does help you have some idea if you're seeing any benefits from your OOH advertising.

When it comes to OOH advertising, for the most part, it's particularly tied to location. If you're a dispensary with a billboard nearby, it probably makes a lot of sense to advertise on it. Or if you're a product manufacturer or farm who has products for sale in that dispensary, that billboard has a lot of value for you compared to other billboards. But before advertising on prime real estate near a dispensary, check in with them first to make sure they are ok with it. They may even be willing to split the cost if you run a promotion that highlights both your products and their dispensary.



## **Cannabis Marketing Option #8: Event Marketing**

While event marketing could refer to the marketing of an event or series of events, in this case we're talking about the practice of marketing your cannabis business at or during an event. This can be as simple as buying a ticket to a local trade show and walking from booth to booth handing out business cards. This can be a way to connect with lots of cannabis businesses in a short period of time, and is a great place to start when you're an up and coming B2B company.

But there's a certain measure of authority that is automatically inferred upon businesses that have a dedicated booth at a cannabis event. This might be participating in a vendor day at a local dispensary you sell your goods in (and in some cases you may be the only outside business presenting your products on a given day), or could be a state or regional trade show where you can connect with buyers and partners in your immediate market. National events like MJBizCon in Las Vegas bring prominent cannabis executives and celebrities together from all over the world, drawing over 30,000 attendees annually. However, if you're focused on building local or regional traction, you're often better served by state-specific events like Hall of Flowers in California (which runs events in both Palm Springs and Santa Rosa), NECANN (New England Cannabis Convention) in Boston and other Northeast cities, Lucky Leaf Expo in Minneapolis and Philadelphia, or CannaCon regional shows in cities across the Midwest. These regional shows allow you to meet the specific buyers, regulators, and partners who matter most to your immediate business goals without the overwhelming scale and expense of a national conference. Depending on the scale of your business and your geographic priorities, local vendor days, regional trade shows, or national conferences may be appropriate for your consideration.

Taking event marketing one step further, you might consider sponsoring an event. This can have an even more profound effect on your branding and draw more attention, but make sure that your prospective customer base matches well with the event you are sponsoring. If you are a farm looking to get your weed into dispensaries around the state, you probably don't want to sponsor an event that's targeting hemp farmers and ancillary businesses. While this is an obvious example, make sure you do your homework about an event and who will be attending before you agree to a sponsorship deal.

If you do choose to attend a trade show, either at a booth or as a sponsor, think about how you can leave an impression on attendees and draw people to your booth. This starts with investing in signage that is quality and on brand (not just a black and white print out with your company name on it). Another tried and true approach is to offer free swag. Everybody likes to get free stuff, but if you want your freebies to stand out with attendees, think beyond stickers or buttons. Give away something people will actually have a use for, whether it's stationary, t-shirts, or a grinder.

But the best event booths usually have some kind of interactive element. Giving away grinders or t-shirts can get expensive quickly, but if you add a raffle or contest element to the giveaway, you can create engagement with people walking by and ensure that you won't have to buy hundreds of whatever your top prize is. Examples I've seen include spinning a wheel, trivia questions, rolling dice, or other games of chance. I've also seen booths with fun activities such as photo booths, or even a karaoke machine. Be creative,

and make the event experience fun for everyone involved. It will definitely make it easier to leave a positive impression.

Another way to increase your visibility at a cannabis event is to get invited to be a speaker. Whether you are a grower, a retailer, a marketer, or other type of service provider, being able to lend your expertise as a keynote speaker or as a member of a panel is a great way to establish your thought leadership in the industry and generate positive word of mouth about your brand.

Along those same lines, when participating in a cannabis event, whether as a speaker, a sponsor, or by renting a booth, remember to leverage your involvement for future marketing endeavors. This means you might consider hiring a photographer or videographer to document your interactions with customers or your panel talk. This will allow you to amplify your participation and increase the value of your investment in the event. In 2026, this content becomes even more valuable as you can repurpose it across social media platforms that are increasingly friendly to cannabis content, use it in email marketing campaigns, and feature it on your website to demonstrate industry credibility.

This leads me to the latest trend in event marketing, which is experiential marketing. Also known as engagement marketing, an experiential approach to cannabis marketing is designed to give your prospective customers a more immersive and intimate experience that will leave a more lasting impression. The most common example, related to events, is hosting your own event, such as a product launch party or 420 music show. Rather than participating in someone else's event, this gives you full control of the experience and ensures that attendees will directly connect your brand to the occasion.

Cannabis brands in 2026 are getting increasingly sophisticated with experiential activations. Consumption lounges are now operational in approximately 14 states (including Alaska, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York), creating new opportunities for brands to host tasting events, product education sessions, and social experiences that were impossible when consumption had to remain private. Massachusetts just approved its consumption lounge regulations in December 2025, with the first lounges expected to open in 2026. New Jersey's first lounges opened in late 2025 and early 2026 in Atlantic City. California updated its laws in 2025 to allow lounges to serve food and host live entertainment, making them more viable business models.

Brands are partnering with restaurants for cannabis-paired dinners, hosting wellness retreats that combine cannabis with yoga or meditation, and creating pop-up experiences at music festivals and cultural events like the Emerald Cup (Santa Rosa, California in August 2026) or National Cannabis Festival (Washington DC, April 18-19, 2026).

There are many benefits to experiential marketing, including more personalized engagement, a deep bond with your customers, and increased shareability of your event and the potential to go viral. As just one possible example, if you are an edibles company that produces infused oils and condiments, you might consider hosting a cannabis cooking competition. You could partner with a licensed consumption lounge or create a THC-infused menu at a participating restaurant, making it a memorable (and tasty) experience that will allow you to reach all new customers in a more authentic way. With consumption lounges now operational across multiple states, the barrier to creating these experiences

has dropped significantly, making experiential marketing more accessible than ever for cannabis brands of all sizes.

*Note: Event info may be out of date by the time you read this.*

## **Cannabis Marketing Option #9: Paid Search Or Paid Social**

Google and Facebook are the biggest names in digital advertising. Google Ad Words and the Facebook Audience Network (now the Meta Audience Network) are pretty much ubiquitous and you'd be hard pressed to find an owner of a small or medium sized business who doesn't have a deep understanding of what they are and how they work. But in the cannabis industry, these two platform goliaths are pretty much off limits.

According to Google's ad policy, you're not allowed to create "ads for substances that alter mental state for the purpose of recreation or otherwise include 'highs'." The same goes for ads on Facebook and Instagram, though cannabis businesses are seeming to have more luck running ads on LinkedIn, and if you are a B2B company, then you should definitely be increasing your presence on LinkedIn, and perhaps even consider paid ads.

However, when it comes to CBD, there is much more of a gray area as to what is and what isn't allowed. This means you might be able to get away with marketing your CBD products on Google or Facebook. Or you might not. It really does seem like they make decisions on a case by case basis.

We won't get into all of the things you need to know about running a PPC campaign via search or social here, because in this ever-shifting environment, it's really difficult to advise anyone on best practices. But it is something that hemp and CBD businesses should look into, especially if you are looking to market at a national level.

# **Cannabis Marketing Option #10: Marketing Your Business On Social Media**

## **Cannabis Marketing On Instagram In 2026**

In 2026, Instagram's diverse and evolving user base makes it a pivotal platform for cannabis brands to establish their visual identity and connect with their audience. The platform's demographic, spanning from millennials to older generations, requires a nuanced understanding of varied content preferences and behaviors. Brands in the cannabis industry must therefore tailor their content to cater to these diverse groups, aligning with the latest trends while navigating the industry's unique challenges and regulations.

Instagram's restrictions on cannabis content have tightened significantly in recent years. Meta updated its terms and conditions in December 2024, leading to widespread account suspensions and shadow bans for cannabis businesses throughout 2025. While Meta's policy allows cannabis-related lifestyle and educational content to be shown to users 18 and older, the platform strictly prohibits direct sales, pricing, promotions, or any language that facilitates transactions. Even compliant content now faces algorithmic suppression—the platform actively deprioritizes posts that reference cannabis explicitly in captions or hashtags, even when those posts follow community guidelines. Many brands saw engagement plummet after using hashtags like #cannabiscommunity or #420 in 2025, while others noticed lower reach when product names appeared in captions.

Creating content that resonates with the cannabis audience on Instagram requires walking a tightrope between visual appeal and compliance. This involves using color schemes, imagery, and design trends that attract attention while focusing on lifestyle, culture, and education rather than commerce. Brands must avoid any appearance of facilitating sales—no prices, no "DM to buy," no direct links to product menus. Consistency in brand aesthetic and thematic alignment in content plays a crucial role in building brand recognition and trust, but cannabis businesses must regularly check their Account Status in Instagram settings to monitor for content removal, recommendation eligibility, and potential violations that could tank visibility for months.

The platform offers various content formats like Stories, Reels, and standard feed posts, each providing unique opportunities for engagement when used compliantly. Stories allow for engaging, ephemeral storytelling about brand culture and values—perfect for behind-the-scenes content, team introductions, or day-in-the-life narratives that humanize the brand without showcasing products. Reels are perfect for short, captivating content that showcases lifestyle rather than products—think cultivation techniques, packaging unboxings (without prices), or cannabis education broken into digestible 30-60 second videos. Standard feed posts remain the cornerstone for high-quality brand imagery, whether that's aesthetic product photography, flat lays, or lifestyle shots that communicate

brand values. For cannabis brands, these formats can be strategically used to build community and brand story without crossing into prohibited territory. The key is to creatively present content while adhering to the legal and regulatory framework specific to cannabis marketing—and accepting that even perfect compliance doesn't guarantee protection from shadow bans or account suspension.

Leveraging influencer partnerships and community engagement on Instagram is essential for amplifying a brand's reach while sidestepping some platform risk. Many cannabis creators have already built trust with their audiences and understand how to navigate content guidelines, making it often more effective to partner with influencers who can showcase products and drive engagement without putting the brand's own account in jeopardy. This strategy involves selecting the right influencers, fostering genuine relationships, and measuring the impact of these collaborations. Beyond influencer marketing, engaging with the wider Instagram community through interactive content, user-generated content campaigns, and responsive communication fosters a sense of community and loyalty, crucial for long-term brand success—even as the platform continues cracking down on cannabis content.

#### Cannabis Marketing On TikTok in 2026

TikTok's future in the U.S. has stabilized following a tumultuous year. After a brief shutdown on January 19, 2025, when the platform complied with a federal ban requiring ByteDance to divest U.S. operations, TikTok returned to service following President Trump's executive order extending the deadline. On January 22, 2026, TikTok finalized a deal creating the TikTok USDS Joint Venture LLC, with Oracle, Silver Lake, and UAE-based MGX each holding 15% stakes, while ByteDance retained 19.9%. While ByteDance still licenses the recommendation algorithm to the U.S. entity, the deal satisfied legal requirements and allowed TikTok to continue operating.

For cannabis brands, TikTok's content guidelines remain among the strictest of any major platform. The platform prohibits any cannabis content—including showing plants, smoking, or even holding products—under its "Controlled Substances" policy. While educational posts about cannabis history or policy may occasionally survive, promoting products or use in any way risks immediate content removal and account suspension. TikTok's automated moderation systems flag cannabis content faster than ever in 2026, leaving virtually no room for the kind of product-focused or lifestyle content that thrives on Instagram.

Despite these restrictions, some cannabis businesses have found limited success on TikTok by creating purely educational content about industry trends, business operations, or policy discussions without showing any cannabis products or consumption. However, this requires extreme caution and offers far less marketing value than other platforms. For most cannabis brands, TikTok simply isn't worth the risk of investing time and resources into content that will likely be removed.

Given TikTok's strict policies and the ongoing uncertainty around platform ownership and governance, cannabis businesses are better served focusing their short-form video

efforts on Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, or emerging alternatives where content guidelines are more predictable and enforcement is less aggressive.

### **Cannabis Marketing On LinkedIn In 2026**

LinkedIn remains uniquely friendly toward cannabis companies and content, making it a vital channel for networking and B2B marketing in the cannabis industry. Its professional focus and receptive stance towards cannabis-related discussions provide a conducive environment for businesses to connect with industry professionals and other businesses. This platform allows cannabis brands to establish their presence in a more formal business community, facilitating connections that are crucial for growth and collaboration—and it's the only major platform where discussing cannabis still carries professional credibility rather than compliance risk.

Creating content on LinkedIn that showcases industry knowledge and company achievements is essential for cannabis brands looking to establish credibility and authority in the field. Content that highlights insights, research findings, and advancements within the cannabis sector can position a brand as a thought leader. Sharing company achievements, milestones, and case studies further reinforces the brand's expertise and success, attracting potential business partners, investors, and industry influencers. This type of content not only informs but also builds trust and respect within the professional community.

Leveraging LinkedIn groups and company pages for targeted networking is another strategic approach for cannabis brands. Participating in relevant LinkedIn groups provides an opportunity to engage in industry-specific conversations, share expertise, and stay updated on market trends and regulatory changes. It's a platform for initiating discussions, answering questions, and building a network of industry peers and potential clients. Company pages, on the other hand, serve as the official face of the brand on LinkedIn. They should be utilized to share updates, industry news, and content that reflects the brand's mission and values. These pages are instrumental in building a professional brand identity and attracting followers who are interested in the cannabis industry.

For cannabis companies operating in the B2B space—think software providers, consultants, design firms, cultivators, or manufacturers—LinkedIn is an underutilized gem. Founder posts, behind-the-scenes content about operations or R&D, product development updates, and policy analysis often generate high-quality engagement without the risk of takedowns. It's also the ideal platform for recruiting top talent, announcing partnerships, and establishing your company as a serious operator in a maturing industry.

LinkedIn's role in the cannabis industry extends beyond just networking; it's a platform for establishing thought leadership, showcasing achievements, and engaging in meaningful industry conversations. For cannabis brands, LinkedIn offers a unique opportunity to connect with professionals and businesses in a more formal and receptive environment, enabling them to expand their reach and influence in the B2B sector of the cannabis market.

### **Cannabis Marketing On Facebook And X In 2026**

In the rapidly evolving social media landscape of 2026, the strategic value of different platforms for cannabis brands has become clearer. X (formerly Twitter) has

emerged as the most cannabis-friendly major platform for paid advertising, while Facebook remains highly restrictive despite being under the same Meta ownership as Instagram.

X made history in February 2023 by becoming the first major social media platform to allow paid cannabis advertising in the United States. The platform permits certified advertisers who are licensed by appropriate state authorities to promote branding and product-specific content, including packaged cannabis products, and link directly to owned websites and e-commerce pages. However, the policy comes with significant restrictions: ads cannot include pricing, offer promotions or discounts, promote giveaways, show products in use, make health claims, or target users under 21. Advertisers must be pre-authorized by X, maintain proper state licenses, and ensure landing pages are age-gated.

While X's cannabis advertising policy represents a major step forward, adoption has been mixed. The platform requires advertisers to subscribe to X Premium (formerly Twitter Blue) at \$8/month for individuals or X Verified Organizations at \$1,000/month for the gold checkmark—the latter being prohibitively expensive for many smaller cannabis businesses. Additionally, some brands have reported challenges with X's ad tracking systems, geographic targeting parameters, and customer support response times. Despite these hurdles, X remains the best option for cannabis brands seeking legitimate paid social media advertising, particularly for reaching engaged audiences interested in cannabis culture, policy, and products.

The platform's user base and algorithm favor real-time conversation, trending topics, and community engagement, making it ideal for brands that can participate authentically in cannabis discourse without relying solely on ads. Brands should ensure profiles clearly state licenses and age-gate content, use clean product photography and straightforward copy to avoid flags, and engage with the community rather than just broadcasting. Leveraging trending topics to insert brand voice in real-time conversations can dramatically increase visibility.

Facebook, despite being owned by Meta, follows essentially the same restrictive policies as Instagram. Cannabis lifestyle and educational content is theoretically allowed, but direct sales, pricing, promotions, and transaction facilitation are strictly prohibited. The platform's user demographics trending older could make it relevant for cannabis brands targeting mature audiences or hosting events, but the heavy-handed enforcement and lack of paid advertising options limit its utility. Many cannabis businesses maintain Facebook pages primarily for local event promotion, community building with older demographics, and business legitimacy (having a Facebook page signals you're a real company), but few invest significant resources given the restrictions and limited ROI compared to other channels.

Creating content that aligns with brand identity and audience preferences requires a nuanced approach, particularly in the cannabis industry. For instance, a brand that emphasizes natural wellness might focus on creating content that showcases their products in serene, natural settings, using a calm, soothing tone in their messaging. On X, this could



include threads discussing terpene profiles, cultivation practices, or the science behind different cannabinoids, with links back to educational blog content. Similarly, a brand targeting a more recreational audience might adopt a vibrant, energetic style, participating in cannabis culture conversations, sharing user-generated content, and engaging with trending topics like #420 or strain reviews.

Navigating the legal landscape of cannabis marketing on social media involves staying current with regional laws and platform-specific regulations. For example, a brand operating in a state where cannabis is fully legal should still avoid making direct health benefit claims on any platform, which could violate both platform policies and FTC guidelines. Instead, they should focus on sharing customer testimonials, educational content that discusses general uses and experiences with cannabis, and community-building initiatives that don't make specific medical claims.

Understanding and complying with each platform's policies on cannabis-related content is essential. While X allows direct cannabis advertising with proper authorization, brands can also create organic content that focuses on lifestyle and community aspects associated with their products. This could include sharing stories of how the brand was founded, behind-the-scenes looks at cultivation or product creation, highlighting community events and initiatives the brand supports, or engaging in policy discussions about cannabis legalization and social equity. On LinkedIn, brands can share more direct industry insights, such as articles on market trends, new research findings, detailed discussions about cultivation techniques, or analysis of regulatory changes across different markets.

Effective content creation in cannabis marketing involves tailoring the style and substance of the content to both the brand's identity and the audience's preferences, while carefully navigating the complex legal and policy environment of social media platforms. By using specific strategies like lifestyle-focused content on Instagram, paid product advertising on X, educational and community-oriented posts on Facebook, and industry-focused discussions on LinkedIn, cannabis brands can engage their audience effectively while staying compliant—or at least minimizing the risk of enforcement.

### **Measuring Social Media Success in 2026**

For cannabis brands, effectively measuring the success of social media campaigns in 2026 is crucial for optimizing engagement and ROI. This involves a focused approach using the internal analytics tools provided by the platforms themselves, particularly Instagram, X, and LinkedIn, which offer valuable insights into campaign performance.

Instagram provides a rich set of analytics through its Insights feature, available to business accounts. These insights give detailed information on post engagement, including likes, comments, shares, and saves. They also offer data on audience demographics, such as age, gender, and location, as well as when followers are most active. Critically, Instagram now provides Account Status information that shows if posts have been removed, whether

the account is eligible for recommendations (Explore, suggested accounts, hashtags), and any active restrictions. For cannabis brands, tracking recommendation eligibility is essential—being shadowbanned can devastate reach even when content appears to perform normally. Brands should use these insights to determine which types of posts (educational content, lifestyle images, behind-the-scenes stories) receive the most engagement without triggering restrictions, and adjust posting schedules based on when their audience is most active.

X's analytics are equally robust for business accounts. They offer a deep dive into post performance metrics such as impressions, engagements, link clicks, and profile visits. For paid campaigns, X provides detailed reporting on ad performance including spend, impressions, engagement rate, and cost-per-result. These metrics are invaluable for understanding how well content resonates with the audience and whether paid advertising is delivering acceptable ROI given the platform's premium costs for cannabis businesses. For example, tracking engagement rates on educational threads versus product announcements can help brands understand what content formats drive the most meaningful interaction and community building.

LinkedIn analytics focus on professional engagement metrics like post views, clicks, reactions, comments, and follower demographics. For B2B cannabis companies, tracking which types of content (industry analysis, company updates, thought leadership articles) generate the most engagement from decision-makers, investors, or potential partners is critical for refining content strategy. LinkedIn also provides detailed analytics on Company Page followers, including seniority, industry, company size, and function—data that helps B2B cannabis brands understand exactly who they're reaching and whether it aligns with their target market.

Additionally, all platforms provide insights into follower growth over time, which can be a key indicator of the overall health and growth of the brand's social media presence. Tracking these trends can help brands understand how different content strategies, platform policy changes, or external events (like account suspensions or viral posts) affect their ability to attract and retain followers.

By focusing on these internal metrics, cannabis brands can get a clear, real-time picture of how their content is performing, who their audience is, and what types of content drive the most engagement without triggering platform enforcement. This information is essential for making informed decisions about content strategy, ensuring that resources are being used effectively, and continually refining approaches to maximize engagement and ROI while navigating the complex compliance landscape. Leveraging the built-in analytics tools of platforms like Instagram, X, and LinkedIn offers cannabis brands a direct and cost-effective way to measure the success of their social media campaigns, understand audience behavior, track compliance risks, and adjust their strategies for improved results in an increasingly restrictive environment.

# Artificial Intelligence and Cannabis Marketing in 2026

AI writing tools have revolutionized the way businesses create content by offering a quick, efficient, and cost-effective solution for generating high-quality copy. The Hood Collective recognizes the value of these tools and has incorporated them into their cannabis marketing strategies. AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, are powered by advanced algorithms that can generate content on various topics, often with minimal input from the user. These platforms save time and effort by eliminating the need for extensive research, while still providing error-free and well-structured content.

In the cannabis industry, where finding knowledgeable and affordable writers can be challenging, AI writing tools have become a game changer. The Hood Collective utilizes AI writing tools primarily for blog writing and SEO purposes. By employing platforms like ChatGPT, they can quickly generate content that is not only engaging but also tailored to improve search engine rankings and boost the online presence of their clients.

The process typically starts with outlining the main points, followed by an introductory paragraph. Depending on the project, AI-generated content may be used to write entire articles or simply to fill in specific sections. The Integration of AI writing tools into The Hood Collective's marketing strategies has allowed the company to offer a more affordable and efficient service to its clients, without compromising on quality. As more businesses in the cannabis industry recognize the potential of AI-generated content, it is clear that these innovative tools will play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of cannabis marketing.

AI technology has also made its mark in the field of logo design, offering time and cost savings while generating a multitude of creative ideas. The Hood Collective has found value in using AI-generated logos as a starting point for design inspiration, and in some cases, even as the final product. The advantages of using AI for logo creation are apparent. In just a few seconds, logo design tools can generate dozens or even hundreds of options, allowing designers to quickly sort through various ideas and identify potential concepts.

While many of these generated logos might not be suitable for use, occasionally, a gem will appear that captures the essence of the brand. It is crucial to note that AI-generated logos may not always meet the desired quality standards. In some cases, they can be too derivative or lack originality. Designers using AI logo generators should be prepared to work with the generated concepts and further develop them into a polished final product. This might involve combining different elements, refining the concept, or even using the AI-generated ideas as a springboard for an entirely new design.

AI logo generators can be a valuable tool in the logo design process, particularly when used in tandem with experienced graphic designers. The Hood Collective's approach showcases the potential of AI technology in the cannabis industry, demonstrating that it can both streamline the design process and contribute to the creation of compelling brand identities.

The cannabis industry can benefit significantly from AI-driven design platforms that make creating visually appealing content more accessible and efficient, especially for small businesses. Platforms like Canva and Simplified have begun to incorporate AI features, streamlining the design process and allowing users to generate attractive content with

ease.

Canva, a widely recognized design platform, might not yet be the best example of AI integration, but it is likely that some of their templates have been generated by AI. Other platforms, such as Simplified, are already incorporating AI-driven writing and design tools, offering users a more comprehensive experience. As AI technology continues to evolve rapidly, it's only a matter of time before major design platforms like Canva fully embrace AI capabilities. This integration of AI across various design tools will create a one-stop solution for businesses seeking to enhance their marketing efforts without breaking their budget.

These AI-driven design platforms are particularly beneficial for small businesses in the cannabis industry. For entrepreneurs who possess some design experience but lack the time or resources to hire professional designers, partnering with AI platforms can significantly expand their creative capabilities. By leveraging AI tools, small business owners can produce high-quality, visually appealing content that effectively captures their target audience's attention. AI-driven design platforms offer immense potential for the cannabis industry, providing affordable and efficient solutions for creating engaging marketing materials. As these platforms continue to evolve and integrate AI technology, small businesses will be better equipped to compete with larger organizations in terms of quality and creativity.

The emergence of AI art generators, such as Midjourney, is set to revolutionize cannabis marketing in 2026. These innovative tools can create stunning, mind-blowing art in a matter of seconds, allowing businesses to develop unique and eye-catching visuals for their branding and marketing endeavors. Midjourney, an AI art generator, enables users to create master-level art in various styles, including photography, architecture, and even 3D designs. The rapid generation of such high-quality art has the potential to significantly enhance social media and branding efforts for cannabis businesses. However, to fully harness the potential of AI-generated art, businesses must work with professional designers who can seamlessly integrate these visuals into their overall branding strategy.

Simply adding a logo or text to an AI-generated design using a basic design tool, like Canva, can result in a mismatched and amateurish appearance. By partnering with a skilled design team, businesses can ensure that their AI-generated art complements and elevates their branding, whether it's for social media, website design, or print advertisements. The introduction of AI art generators like Midjourney has made it possible for small and medium-sized businesses to access top-tier visual assets that were once reserved for large corporations. By leveraging these cutting-edge tools and working with professional design teams, cannabis businesses can create striking and memorable marketing materials that effectively capture their target audience's attention, all at an affordable price point.

While it's difficult to predict the exact trajectory of AI's growth, it's clear that technologies like inventory management, accounting, business planning, and strategy will increasingly incorporate AI-driven solutions. One area where AI is already making significant strides is customer service, with chatbots being trained to handle customer interactions. Soon, even small businesses will be able to leverage AI chatbots to provide efficient and personalized customer support, reflecting their unique brand identity. As an entrepreneur in the cutting-edge cannabis industry, embracing AI technology is crucial for overcoming challenges and elevating your brand to a professional level without incurring the high costs associated with traditional corporate solutions.

# **Dispensary Marketing Ideas: 10 Ways To Market Your Dispensary**

As the legal cannabis industry continues to grow, dispensaries are popping up all over the place. If you're a dispensary owner, you may be wondering how you can make your business stand out in a sea of competition. And when it comes to cannabis marketing as a whole, dispensaries occupy a particular space that's different from other sectors, such as growers, processors, or professional service providers.

The good news is that there are a number of dispensary marketing ideas that can help you succeed. In this section, we're going to look at ten options that will help you attract new customers and grow your business.

## **The Marketing Challenge Facing Cannabis Dispensaries**

Cannabis dispensaries have a unique challenge when it comes to marketing their business. Unlike other types of businesses, they are not able to use traditional marketing channels such as television, radio, or print advertising. This is because most of these channels are regulated by the government and do not allow cannabis-related businesses to advertise.

Making matters worse, dispensaries in most states are faced with huge tax bills, only made worse by 280E, a federal law that makes it impossible for legal cannabis businesses to write off their marketing expenses. This is especially tough for single dispensaries that already have extremely low margins.

So how can cannabis dispensaries reach their target market? The answer is by getting creative with their marketing. There are a number of alternative channels that dispensaries can use to reach their audience. These include online advertising, word-of-mouth marketing, and event marketing.

By using these alternative channels, dispensaries can reach more customers and continue to grow their business, without breaking the bank.

## **It All Starts With Your Dispensary Branding**

In the cannabis industry, one of the most important investments a dispensary owner can make is in their branding. Branding can make or break a business in this industry, and with the right branding, a dispensary can become a top destination for customers.

Good branding will make a dispensary stand out from the competition and attract customers. It will also help build trust and loyalty among customers, which is essential for

any business. dispensary owners should invest in good branding from the start, and it should be a top priority for their business.

There are many ways to approach branding for a dispensary, and the best approach will vary from business to business. But there are a few things that all successful dispensary brands have in common. They have a strong visual identity, they tell a story, and they connect with their customers.

And while it's best to have your brand identity established before opening, it's never too late to improve your brand presence. Learn more information on cannabis branding [here](#), or earlier in this book.

## **Create A Standout Website For Your Dispensary**

In recent years, the number of dispensaries has grown exponentially. This is good news for patients and customers who have greater access to medical and recreational marijuana. However, it also means that dispensaries must work hard to differentiate themselves from the competition.

One of the best ways to do this is to create a standout website. Your website is often the first impression potential customers will have of your dispensary. It's important to make sure that your website is well-designed, informative, and easy to navigate.

If you're not sure where to start, there are plenty of web design companies that specialize in creating websites for dispensaries. Investing in a good website is a worthwhile investment that will pay off in the long run. Remember, even if you are in a state that doesn't allow online sales or deliveries, your website will still be the first point of contact for many of your potential customers. Make sure to leave a good impression with professional [cannabis web design](#).

## **The Power Of Word-Of-Mouth Marketing**

One powerful marketing tool that dispensaries can use is word-of-mouth marketing. According to a report by Nielsen, 92% of consumers say they trust recommendations from friends and family more than any other form of advertising. This makes word-of-mouth marketing one of the most effective marketing tools available, especially in the cannabis industry.

One way to boost word-of-mouth is to start a [YouTube channel](#) to talk about the industry, post educational videos, and show people how to consume cannabis products safely. Similar channels have been a huge success, and word-of-mouth marketing from happy customers helps dispensaries reach a wider audience.

Starting a YouTube channel is a great way to build trust and credibility with potential customers. By posting educational videos, your dispensary can position itself as a trusted source of information about the cannabis industry. And, when happy customers share your dispensary's videos with their friends, you'll be able to reach a much wider audience than you would have otherwise.

If you're a dispensary owner, consider starting a YouTube channel to take advantage of the power of word-of-mouth marketing.

## **Create A Strong Social Media Presence For Your Dispensary**

Cannabis dispensaries are increasingly turning to social media to reach potential customers and build their brands. In a highly competitive industry, a strong social media presence can give dispensaries a major advantage.

Social media provides an excellent way to connect with potential customers and create a strong relationship with them. By engaging with potential customers on social media, dispensaries can build trust and credibility. Additionally, social media provides an opportunity to educate potential customers about the products and services offered by the dispensary.

A strong social media presence can also help dispensaries to stand out from the competition. In a crowded marketplace, a dispensary that is active on social media and provides valuable content will be more likely to attract new customers.

If you are considering opening a cannabis dispensary, or if you already have a dispensary, it is essential to create a strong social media presence. Unfortunately, the social media platforms are mostly hostile towards cannabis content, making it difficult to gain traction. Check out our cannabis guides to succeeding on social media for [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) which even includes how to avoid shadow-banning!

## **Your Dispensary Should Develop A Customer Loyalty Program**

As the cannabis industry continues to grow, dispensaries are looking for ways to differentiate themselves from the competition. One way to do this is by developing a customer loyalty program.

A customer loyalty program is a great way to show your customers that you appreciate their business. It can also help you build a long-term relationship with your customers and keep them coming back to your dispensary. There are a few things to keep in mind when developing a customer loyalty program for your dispensary.

First, you need to decide what type of loyalty program you want to create. There are many different types of loyalty programs, so it's important to choose one that best fits your dispensary. You also need to decide what kind of rewards you want to offer your customers. Some dispensaries offer discounts on certain products, while others offer points that can be redeemed for free merchandise.

Of course, check with your local regulations to make sure your loyalty program doesn't violate any cannabis-specific laws in your state.

## **Sponsor Local Events**

As a cannabis dispensary, you may be looking for ways to increase brand awareness and build goodwill in your community. One way to achieve this is by sponsoring local events.

Sponsoring local events is a great way to show your support for the community and to get your name out there. It's also a great way to build relationships with other businesses and organizations. When you sponsor an event, you're showing that you're invested in the community and that you care about making it a better place.

There are a number of different events you can sponsor, from art shows to concerts to festivals. You can also sponsor community gatherings and meetups. Whatever type of event you choose to sponsor, make sure it's something that aligns with your brand and your values. Of course, you need to be aware of the prohibition against marketing to minors that exists in most states, but a sponsorship is not the same thing as putting up a billboard or running an ad, which is why it's a great option for dispensaries.

### **Advertise Your Dispensary In Local Publications**

Opening a cannabis dispensary is a big undertaking, and there are many factors to consider when it comes to advertising your new business. You'll want to reach out to your local community and let them know you're open for business. One way to do this is by advertising in local publications.

Cannabis dispensaries can advertise in a variety of local publications, including newspapers, magazines, and online publications. You'll want to choose the publications that reach your target audience. Then, you'll need to create an advertising plan that outlines your budget, your goals, and your preferred placement in the publication.

Advertising in local publications is a great way to reach out to your community and let them know about your new cannabis dispensary. With a little planning, you can create an advertising campaign that helps you reach your goals and grow your business.

### **Local SEO For Your Dispensary Website**

If you have a dispensary website, then you need to make sure that you are doing everything you can to optimize it for local SEO. Local SEO is a crucial part of any dispensary website's marketing strategy, as it helps to ensure that your website is appearing in search results for people who are searching for dispensaries in your area.

There are a few things you can do to optimize your dispensary website for local SEO. First, make sure that your website's NAP (name, address, and phone number) are prominently displayed on your website and that they are consistent with the NAP on your business's listing in local directories. Second, create local content on your website, such as blog posts about local events or news stories related to the cannabis industry in your area.

Finally, make sure to claim and optimize your business's listing in directories like Google My Business, as well as cannabis-specific directories like WeedMaps and Leafly. Learn more about [Dispensary SEO](#) here.

### **Give Away Branded Merch**

Your dispensary is up and running, and now it's time to start attracting customers. One great way to do this is by giving away branded merch. People love free stuff, and if your merch is high quality, they'll be more likely to remember your dispensary when they need weed.

There are a few things to keep in mind when giving away branded merch. First, make sure the quality is good - you don't want your dispensary's name to be associated with cheap, crappy merchandise. Second, be strategic about where you give it away. Handing out t-shirts at a concert is a great way to reach a lot of potential customers at once. Finally,



don't forget to follow up! If you give someone a t-shirt, make sure to get their contact information so you can follow up with them later.

Finally, giving away swag with your name on it helps to fill in the gap created by the rules found in many states that prohibit giving away free weed. A free hat or hoodie is the next best thing.

## **Work With Influencers**

When it comes to promoting your cannabis dispensary, working with social media influencers can be a great way to reach a larger audience. Influencers can help to spread the word about your dispensary and its products, and they can also help to attract new customers.

Of course, not all influencers are created equal. You'll want to work with influencers who have a large audience that is interested in the type of products you sell. You'll also want to make sure that the influencers you work with are reputable and have a good relationship with their followers.

If you're not sure where to start, we can help. We have connections with a lot of influencers in the cannabis industry, and we can help you find the right influencers for your dispensary and your online platform.

So that's ten ideas for marketing your dispensary. As you may have noticed, they overlapped with many of the general marketing approaches we outlined earlier, which makes sense. But it also gives you an idea of how it's necessary to tailor the principles of marketing to your specific business's needs.

# How To Succeed As A Cannabis Influencer In 2026

A crucial step to becoming a successful cannabis influencer is choosing a specific area of expertise within the industry. By focusing on a particular niche, you can set yourself apart from other influencers and demonstrate your in-depth knowledge of a specialized subject. This expertise will not only make your content more valuable to your audience but also help you establish credibility and authority in the cannabis community.

Some popular niches within the cannabis industry include cultivation, edibles, wellness, medical applications, legal aspects, and cannabis tourism. For example, if you have a passion for cooking and a deep understanding of cannabis-infused recipes, you could choose to focus on edibles. Alternatively, if you have a background in horticulture, you might decide to share your expertise on cannabis cultivation and growing techniques.

To ensure long-term success and a genuine connection with your followers, align your chosen niche with your personal interests and skills. Pursuing a niche that you are passionate about will help you stay motivated and produce authentic, high-quality content that resonates with your audience. This alignment also allows you to showcase your unique perspective and share your passion with others, further strengthening your position as a trusted voice in the cannabis community.

Staying up-to-date on cannabis industry trends and news is essential for creating engaging and informative content that resonates with your audience. Keep a close eye on the latest developments, breakthroughs, and regulations in the industry, and share this information with your followers. For example, you could discuss the implications of new cannabis legalization policies, report on emerging cannabis strains, or review innovative cannabis products entering the market.

Mixing various content formats, such as blog posts, videos, podcasts, and social media updates, can help you cater to different audience preferences and keep your content fresh and exciting. For instance, you could create a video tutorial on how to make cannabis-infused edibles, write a blog post detailing the latest cannabis research, or host a podcast featuring interviews with industry experts. Experimenting with different formats will allow you to reach a wider audience and maintain their interest over time.

Collaborating with other influencers and experts in the cannabis industry can provide additional perspectives, insights, and exposure for your content. For example, you could invite a cannabis cultivation expert to contribute a guest post on your blog or collaborate with a fellow influencer to create a joint video discussing the therapeutic benefits of cannabis. Such collaborations not only help you expand your reach but also enhance your credibility by showcasing your connections within the industry.

Sharing personal experiences and stories related to cannabis can make your content more relatable and authentic. By offering insights into your own journey with cannabis, whether it's discussing your experience with medical cannabis, the challenges you faced while starting your own cannabis business, or your adventures in cannabis tourism, you can create a deeper connection with your audience. These personal stories can help humanize your brand and foster a sense of community among your followers.

Selecting the right social media platforms is crucial for building and nurturing your online presence as a cannabis influencer. Each platform has its own unique features,

demographics, and content preferences, so it's important to choose those that best align with your niche and target audience. For example, Instagram might be ideal for sharing visually appealing content like photos of cannabis strains or edible creations, while LinkedIn could be better suited for networking with industry professionals and sharing thought leadership content.

Creating a consistent and professional brand identity is essential for standing out among the many cannabis influencers vying for attention. Develop a cohesive visual and messaging style that reflects your niche and personality, and ensure that your branding is consistent across all your social media platforms and content formats. A strong brand identity will help you attract more followers and make it easier for people to recognize and remember your content.

Engaging with your audience and responding to comments is vital for fostering a sense of community and building strong relationships with your followers. Make an effort to reply to questions, acknowledge feedback, and participate in conversations related to your content. This engagement will not only encourage loyalty but also provide valuable insights into your audience's preferences and needs, which can inform your future content strategy.

Utilizing analytics to optimize your content strategy is crucial for ensuring consistent growth and success as a cannabis influencer. Monitor performance metrics, such as engagement rates, follower growth, and content reach, to identify which types of content resonate most with your audience. Use these insights to refine your content strategy, focusing on the topics and formats that generate the best results, and continually experiment with new ideas to keep your content fresh and engaging.

Connecting with cannabis-related businesses and brands can open up valuable partnership and collaboration opportunities for you as an influencer. These partnerships can enhance your credibility, provide additional resources for your content, and expose your brand to new audiences. For example, you could collaborate with a reputable cannabis brand on a sponsored content series, review their products, or co-create educational material for their audience.

Participating in events, webinars, and conferences is essential for networking with industry professionals and expanding your reach as a cannabis influencer. By attending these events, you can stay current with industry trends, learn from leading experts, and develop valuable connections that can lead to future collaborations or business opportunities. For instance, you could speak at a cannabis conference, host a workshop at a local event, or join a panel discussion during a webinar.

Collaborating on product launches, giveaways, and promotions with cannabis-related businesses and brands can create exciting content for your audience and strengthen your relationships with industry partners. For example, you could partner with a cannabis brand to launch a limited-edition product, co-host a giveaway contest, or offer exclusive promotions to your followers. These collaborations not only provide unique experiences and opportunities for your audience but also demonstrate your commitment to the cannabis community and further establish you as a trusted voice in the industry.

Understanding the legal landscape of the cannabis industry is crucial for ensuring compliance with regulations as an influencer. Familiarize yourself with the laws and regulations that apply to cannabis in your jurisdiction and any other regions you may discuss in your content. This knowledge will help you avoid potential legal issues and

ensure that your content is both accurate and reliable. For example, be aware of the specific advertising guidelines for cannabis products in your area, as well as any restrictions on discussing certain aspects of cannabis use, such as medical claims or product endorsements.

Ensuring proper disclosure and disclaimers in your content is essential for maintaining transparency and building trust with your audience. Clearly communicate any sponsored content, affiliate links, or business affiliations in your posts, videos, or podcasts. For example, if you are reviewing a cannabis product that was provided to you by a brand for free or as part of a paid partnership, disclose this information to your audience upfront. This transparency will help you maintain credibility and show that you prioritize honesty and integrity in your content.

Avoiding misleading claims and misinformation in your content is vital for establishing yourself as a trusted source in the cannabis community. Ensure that any information you share is accurate, up-to-date, and supported by credible sources. For example, when discussing the potential health benefits of cannabis, rely on reputable research studies and avoid making exaggerated or unfounded claims that could mislead your audience. By providing reliable and accurate information, you can help promote responsible cannabis consumption and contribute positively to the industry's growth and credibility.

Now for the fun part! Exploring various revenue streams, such as sponsored content, affiliate marketing, and merchandise, can help you monetize your influence in the cannabis industry. Diversifying your income sources will not only provide financial stability but also allow you to continue creating high-quality content for your audience. For example, you could partner with a cannabis brand for sponsored content, earn commissions through affiliate marketing by promoting products you genuinely recommend, or even launch your own line of cannabis-themed merchandise.

Setting fair and competitive pricing for your services is crucial for attracting clients and maintaining credibility with your audience. Research the market rates for similar services in the cannabis industry and consider factors such as your level of expertise, audience size, and the value you provide. By offering reasonable rates for sponsored content, consulting services, or other influencer-related offerings, you can foster a reputation for professionalism and fairness in your business dealings.

Balancing authenticity and monetization is essential for maintaining the trust and loyalty of your followers. While it's important to generate income from your influence, avoid compromising your integrity or over-commercializing your content. Be selective about the brands and products you promote, ensuring that they align with your values and niche. Transparently disclose any sponsored content or affiliate relationships to maintain an open and honest relationship with your audience. By striking the right balance between monetization and authenticity, you can build a sustainable and rewarding career as a cannabis influencer.

# CBD Marketing in 2026

When it comes to CBD marketing, one-size-fits-all solutions are a recipe for mediocrity. The intricacies of this industry—like customer demographics, product types, and rapidly evolving trends—demand a marketing approach that's tailored to its unique needs. A digital marketing agency that specializes in CBD marketing can dig deep into industry insights to craft a strategy that aligns perfectly with your brand's objectives. Our team is continually up-to-date with the latest CBD trends, ensuring your brand stays ahead of the curve.

Specialization allows for a granular approach to marketing, ensuring that each facet of your strategy, from SEO to in-store collateral, is perfectly tailored. Take our client CBD American Shaman, for instance. We generated not just SEO-friendly content, but CBD-specific SEO strategies. From in-store sales collateral that speaks directly to CBD consumers, to iHeart Radio spots that encapsulate the essence of the brand, we cover the spectrum in specialized CBD marketing services.

## **The Importance of Multi-Channel Strategies**

In today's digital age, relying on a single channel for marketing is like putting all your eggs in one basket. That's why a diversified multi-channel approach is not just advisable—it's essential. An agency that specializes in CBD marketing understands the unique platforms and channels that work best for this industry. At The Hood Collective, our suite of services is comprehensive, ranging from social media graphics designed to resonate with your target audience to customized email and SMS campaigns that engage and retain customers.

For example, working with CBD American Shaman, we didn't just focus on one aspect. We provided them with a complete package, including eye-catching social media graphics for all their franchises, compelling radio spots, and a targeted SEO strategy. When you work with an agency that knows the CBD landscape inside and out, you get a multi-channel strategy that works in harmony to achieve your business objectives. This comprehensive approach maximizes reach, enhances customer engagement, and drives ROI.

## **Understanding Your Unique Brand Identity**

One of the most crucial aspects of any marketing strategy is to understand and promote your unique brand identity. A generic marketing campaign won't cut it in the competitive CBD market. With an agency that specializes in CBD marketing like The Hood Collective, you get a team that takes the time to understand the DNA of your brand, differentiating you from the competitors and aligning your marketing strategies accordingly.

We offer custom-designed in-store sales collateral, among other services, that highlight your brand's uniqueness. When it comes to CBD branding, our experience spans the entire gamut, from photography and video production to graphic design. This ensures your brand stands out in an increasingly crowded marketplace. Your branding should tell a story, capture your ethos, and appeal to your specific target audience. When all these

elements are in place, your CBD business not only draws attention but also builds long-lasting relationships with consumers.

### **Expertise in SEO Geared Towards CBD Business**

Search engine optimization (SEO) is more than just a buzzword; it's a necessary component for any successful digital marketing strategy. However, not all SEO is created equal. When you're in the CBD industry, you need an agency that has specific expertise in CBD SEO. The Hood Collective specializes in this unique sector, providing tailored solutions that drive organic traffic to your website, increasing both visibility and credibility.

SEO in the CBD sector is not just about ranking high in Google searches; it's about making sure you appear in the right kind of searches. It's about understanding customer intent, keyword trends, and how to align your business goals with what people are actively seeking. Remember, an agency that specializes in CBD marketing can offer insights that generalist agencies simply cannot. They'll know how to craft content that not only informs but also engages and converts visitors into customers.

### **Crafting Effective Social Media Strategies**

Social media is a powerful tool for any business, but it can be particularly effective for CBD brands looking to build trust and engage directly with their customer base. The Hood Collective offers specialized social media services, developing graphics and content that resonate with CBD users. With the industry's constant evolution, having an agile and adaptable social media strategy is essential for staying ahead.

Take, for example, our work with CBD American Shaman. By crafting franchise-specific social media graphics and campaigns, we've been able to maximize reach and consumer engagement. These targeted approaches not only elevate brand awareness but also contribute to a cohesive brand message across all platforms.

Navigating the social media landscape as a CBD business comes with its own set of rules and opportunities. A digital marketing agency that specializes in CBD marketing, like The Hood Collective, will know how to work within the constraints and possibilities of each platform, from Instagram to LinkedIn, to create a social media presence that drives business objectives while maintaining brand integrity.

### **Email and SMS Campaigns: The Direct Line to Your Customer**

Email and SMS campaigns remain one of the most effective ways to directly engage with your customer base. However, it's not just about sending a message; it's about sending the right message to the right people at the right time. A digital marketing agency specializing in CBD marketing can create targeted and timely campaigns that resonate with your audience.

In the CBD industry, where customer education and product quality are paramount, having a direct line to your audience is invaluable. Whether you are nurturing leads or educating your existing customer base, your email and SMS campaigns should be an integral part of your overall marketing strategy.

### **Social Media Graphics: Catching Eyes and Converting Clicks**

In an era where scrolling through social media feeds has become second nature,

visually appealing graphics are a non-negotiable aspect of any marketing strategy, especially in the vibrant world of CBD. An agency that specializes in CBD marketing understands the visual language that engages this specific market and tailors content accordingly.

The advantage of professional social media graphics goes beyond the immediate impact on the viewer. Well-designed graphics are more likely to be shared, meaning your reach extends organically, taking your CBD brand further than you could have imagined. This ripple effect is a digital word-of-mouth that's invaluable for growing your online presence.

### **SEO: A Holistic Approach to Online Visibility**

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) isn't just about placing keywords in your content; it's about crafting an online presence that Google and your audience love. An agency that specializes in CBD marketing knows the landscape well, ensuring that your CBD business doesn't just show up in search results but stands out.

Let's face it, the CBD market is crowded, but that doesn't mean you can't stand out. By targeting the right keywords and creating quality content around them, you can gain an edge over competitors and capture the attention of people genuinely interested in what you have to offer. And when your SEO is dialed in, every click to your website is more likely to convert into a customer, making it a long-term investment in your brand's future.

### **The Importance of Understanding CBD Products & Market Trends**

When it comes to marketing, knowledge is power. The CBD industry is dynamic and ever-changing, which makes understanding the landscape crucial for success. A digital marketing agency that specializes in CBD marketing brings in-depth market research capabilities that generic marketing firms often lack. With constant innovations in CBD formulations, methods of consumption, and emerging medical research, an agency that focuses on this niche is better equipped to position your brand in an advantageous way.

Partnering with an agency that specializes in CBD marketing also gives you access to a range of services, from SEO to email/sms campaigns, all tailor-made to enhance your brand's visibility and customer engagement. With their extensive service offerings, including CBD branding, CBD SEO, CBD Graphic Design, CBD Photography, and CBD Video Production, you are looking at a one-stop solution for all your marketing needs.

### **Optimizing Brand Awareness Through Targeted Channels**

Having your brand noticed in a crowded CBD market is a significant challenge. An agency that specializes in CBD marketing is adept at channeling your brand through the right mediums to the correct audience. These agencies have a deep understanding of where your potential consumers frequent online, whether that's specialized forums, social media platforms, or other digital spaces.

Agencies can excel in this arena by deploying a multi-channel approach that's more than just throwing ads into the digital ether. By crafting tailored social media graphics, they not only attract eyeballs but also succinctly communicate your product's unique selling points. The agency further amplifies your reach with its bespoke services in SEO and email/SMS campaigns, ensuring your brand doesn't just gain attention but retains it. Digital

agencies' strategic approaches ensure that your brand not only reaches your target audience but also resonates with them, leading to better ROI for your marketing budget.

### **Marketing THCa: The End of an Era?**

THCa (tetrahydrocannabinolic acid) emerged as one of the most significant marketing opportunities in cannabis over the past few years, particularly in states where cannabis remained illegal or was subject to strict regulations and high taxes. Thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill, which legalized hemp-derived products containing less than 0.3% delta-9 THC by dry weight, THCa flower became a popular alternative in both restricted and legal markets.

For consumers in prohibition states, THCa offered a legal workaround, allowing access to cannabis-like products without violating state laws. Meanwhile, in fully legal states where cannabis was heavily taxed and regulated, THCa appealed to budget-conscious consumers looking for a more affordable option. With fewer compliance hurdles and a lower cost structure, brands positioned THCa as a compelling alternative to dispensary cannabis, particularly in states with high excise taxes and strict product limitations.

However, this opportunity has reached its expiration date. On November 12, 2025, President Trump signed H.R. 5371 as part of legislation to end the government shutdown. Buried in Section 781 was the most significant change to federal hemp policy since the 2018 Farm Bill: a complete redefinition of "hemp" that effectively bans THCa and most other intoxicating hemp products.

The new law makes three critical changes that will eliminate the THCa market when they take effect on November 12, 2026:

**1. Total THC Standard:** Hemp is now defined as cannabis with no more than 0.3% "total THC" on a dry-weight basis—not just delta-9 THC. Total THC includes delta-9 THC, THCA, and any other cannabinoids designated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as having similar effects. This change alone eliminates virtually all THCa flower, since most contains well over 0.3% THCA even if delta-9 THC levels test below the threshold.

**2. Container Limits:** Any final hemp product intended for consumption cannot contain more than 0.4 milligrams of total THC per container. This extraordinarily low limit will eliminate most edibles, beverages, tinctures, and even some full-spectrum CBD products that contain naturally occurring trace THC.

**3. Synthetic Cannabinoid Ban:** The new definition excludes any cannabinoid that is not naturally produced by the cannabis plant or is synthesized outside the plant. This bans delta-8 THC, delta-10 THC, HHC, THCP, and other converted cannabinoids that were created through chemical processes even when starting with legal hemp-derived CBD.

Once these changes take effect in November 2026, products that no longer qualify as "hemp" will be treated as Schedule I controlled substances under federal law—the same category as marijuana, heroin, and LSD. This means selling or possessing THCa flower, high-potency edibles, or converted cannabinoids will become a federal crime unless the products are reformulated to comply with the new limits.

The hemp industry has mobilized to fight back. A bipartisan group in the House introduced legislation to repeal Section 781, and industry groups are lobbying for amendments in the 2026 Farm Bill or future appropriations packages. However, with



Senator Mitch McConnell championing the restrictive language and Senator Rand Paul's amendment to strip it failing to gain traction, the prospects for repeal remain uncertain.

For businesses currently operating in the THCa space, the one-year transition period provides a narrow window to pivot. Companies have until November 2026 to:

- Reformulate products to comply with the new 0.3% total THC and 0.4 mg per container limits (which will likely eliminate product efficacy)
- Transition into state-licensed cannabis markets where THC products remain legal
- Exit the cannabinoid market entirely and pivot to other product categories
- Continue operations and hope for legislative relief before the deadline

The reality is stark: the federal government estimates this legislation will eliminate approximately 95% of the current hemp market, affecting a \$30+ billion industry that supports over 320,000 jobs and generates \$1.5 billion in state tax revenue. For THCa brands specifically, there is no viable path forward under the new regulations. THCa flower fundamentally cannot comply with a total THC limit of 0.3% because THCA is what gives the product its effects when decarboxylated through heating.

States will respond to this federal change in different ways. Some may ban THCa products entirely to align with federal law. Others may choose to regulate former "hemp" products within their existing state-licensed cannabis frameworks, creating new opportunities for brands willing to pursue proper licensing. A few states may attempt to maintain their own hemp programs with different standards, though this creates significant interstate commerce and banking complications.

For cannabis marketers, the message is clear: THCa is a dying category with less than a year remaining before federal prohibition takes effect. Any business still operating in this space should be developing exit strategies immediately rather than investing further in growth. The "loophole" era of intoxicating hemp products has ended, and the November 2026 deadline is approaching fast.

Brands that pivoted early into state-licensed cannabis markets or maintained dual operations will weather this transition. Those that built their entire business model on THCa or other intoxicating hemp products face an existential crisis. The smart money is already moving into compliant CBD products, state-licensed THC operations, or entirely different industries.

The THCa gold rush is likely over.

## Hiring An In-House Marketer

Hiring an in-house marketer for your business can be a great way to ensure that your marketing efforts are tailored to your specific needs and goals. However, there are also some potential drawbacks to consider. In this section, we will explore the benefits and detriments of hiring an in-house marketer for your business.

One of the main benefits of hiring an in-house marketer is increased control and flexibility. When you have a marketer on staff, you have more control over your marketing strategy and can make adjustments as needed to better suit your business. This can be especially beneficial for businesses that have unique marketing needs or that operate in a fast-paced industry. Additionally, having a marketer on staff allows you to respond quickly to changes in the market or in your business, allowing you to stay competitive.

Another benefit of hiring an in-house marketer is that they can become an expert in your business and industry. They will have a deep understanding of your target audience, products, and services and can create marketing strategies that are tailored to your specific needs. This can help you to reach the right people with the right message and increase the effectiveness of your marketing efforts.

Moreover, hiring an in-house marketer allows for better collaboration and communication within the company. The marketer can work closely with other departments such as sales and product development, to ensure that all marketing efforts are aligned with the overall goals of the company.

However, hiring an in-house marketer also has its drawbacks. One of the main drawbacks is the cost. Hiring an in-house marketer can be more expensive than hiring an agency or freelancer, especially if you are a small business. You will have to pay for their salary, benefits, and other expenses. Additionally, you will need to provide the necessary tools and resources to allow them to do their job, such as marketing software and subscriptions to marketing services.

Another drawback is that in-house marketers may lack the specialized skills and experience that an agency or freelancer can offer. Agencies and freelancers often have more experience working with a variety of businesses and industries, and they may have specialized skills and knowledge that your in-house marketer may not have. This can make it more challenging for your in-house marketer to create effective marketing strategies, especially if your business is in a niche industry.

In conclusion, hiring an in-house marketer for your business can be a great way to ensure that your marketing efforts are tailored to your specific needs and goals. However, it also comes with some drawbacks such as cost and lack of specialized skills and experience. Business owners should weigh the pros and cons and make a decision based on their specific business needs and budget.

## Working With Freelancers

Working with freelance marketers for your cannabis business can be a great way to get the marketing support you need without the commitment of hiring an in-house employee. However, there are also some potential drawbacks to consider. In this section, we will explore the benefits and drawbacks of working with freelance marketers for your business.

One of the main benefits of working with freelance marketers is cost-effectiveness. Freelance marketers typically charge on a project basis, which can be much more affordable for small businesses or businesses with limited marketing budgets. Additionally, you only pay for the services you need, which can save you money in the long run.

Another benefit of working with freelance marketers is the flexibility they offer. Freelance marketers can work on a project-by-project basis, which allows you to scale your marketing efforts up or down as needed. This can be especially beneficial for businesses that have seasonal or cyclical marketing needs. Additionally, working with a freelancer allows you to bring in specialized skills and experience as necessary, rather than having to build those skills in-house.

Moreover, working with freelance marketers can provide a fresh perspective on your business, marketing strategy, and campaigns. They are not tied to the day-to-day operations of your business and can provide objective advice and suggestions that an in-house marketer may not be able to.

However, working with freelance marketers also has its drawbacks. One of the main drawbacks is the lack of consistency. Freelance marketers may not be available at all times, and you may have to work with different marketers for different projects. This can make it difficult to maintain consistency in your marketing efforts and can also make it challenging to build a long-term relationship with your marketing partner.

Another drawback is the lack of control over the process. When working with a freelancer, you may have less control over the scope and direction of the project, and you may have to rely on their expertise to guide the process. This can be a problem if you have a specific vision or goal in mind for your marketing efforts.

In conclusion, working with freelance marketers can be a great way to get the marketing support you need without the commitment of hiring an in-house employee. However, it also comes with some drawbacks such as lack of consistency and lack of control over the process. Business owners should weigh the pros and cons and make a decision based on their specific business needs and budget. It's important to have clear communication and expectations established with the freelancer, to ensure that the project runs smoothly and the desired outcome is achieved.

# Working With A Marketing Agency

Working with a marketing agency can be a great way for businesses to gain access to a wide range of marketing expertise and resources. However, there are also some potential drawbacks to consider. In this essay, we will explore the advantages and disadvantages of working with a marketing agency for your business.

One of the main advantages of working with a marketing agency is the level of expertise and experience they can bring to the table. Marketing agencies typically have a team of professionals with a variety of specialized skills and experience, which can help businesses to develop and execute effective marketing strategies. Additionally, agencies often have access to the latest tools, technologies, and best practices in the industry, which can give businesses an edge over their competitors.

Another advantage of working with a marketing agency is that they can provide a fresh perspective on your business and marketing efforts. Agencies are not tied to the day-to-day operations of your business and can provide objective advice and suggestions that an in-house team may not be able to. Additionally, agencies often have experience working with a variety of businesses and industries, which can provide valuable insights and ideas that can be applied to your business.

Moreover, working with a marketing agency can save time and resources. Agencies handle all the marketing efforts, from planning to execution, which can free up time for the business owners and internal teams to focus on other aspects of the business.

However, working with a marketing agency also has its drawbacks. One of the main drawbacks is the cost. Agencies typically charge a higher rate than freelancers, and the costs can add up quickly. Additionally, businesses may be required to pay for additional services or resources that are not included in the initial contract.

Another drawback is the lack of control over the process. When working with an agency, businesses may have less control over the scope and direction of the project and may have to rely on the agency's expertise to guide the process. This can be a problem if the business has a specific vision or goal in mind for their marketing efforts.

In conclusion, working with a marketing agency can be a great way for businesses to gain access to a wide range of marketing expertise and resources. However, it also comes with some drawbacks such as cost and lack of control over the process. Business owners should weigh the pros and cons and make a decision based on their specific business needs and budget. It's important to have clear communication and expectations established with the agency before you begin.

# Working With The Hood Collective

We've now reached the part where we talk about ourselves.

The Hood Collective is a full-service marketing agency that specializes in cannabis marketing. By working with The Hood Collective for all or some of your marketing needs, your cannabis company can benefit from the following:

**Industry expertise:** The Hood Collective has extensive experience in the cannabis industry and is well-versed in the unique challenges and opportunities that come with marketing a cannabis business.

**Comprehensive services:** The Hood Collective offers a wide range of services, including branding, graphic design, photography, video, social media, SEO, drone content, and copywriting, which will allow your cannabis company to have a consistent and cohesive marketing strategy that covers all aspects of their marketing needs.

**High-quality content:** The Hood Collective's team of professionals are experts in our respective fields and create high-quality content that stands out in a crowded market. This will help your cannabis company build a strong brand and attract more customers.

**Increased visibility:** The Hood Collective's SEO and social media strategies will help your cannabis company increase its visibility and reach a wider audience.

**Better ROI:** By working with The Hood Collective, your cannabis company can be sure that you are getting the most out of your marketing budget. Our experts will help to create an effective marketing strategy that will drive sales and increase ROI.

**Compliance:** The Hood Collective understands the legal and compliance aspect of cannabis marketing and is well-versed in the rules and regulations surrounding cannabis marketing.

**We care about your success:** The Hood Collective has one goal: help cannabis companies succeed. In fact, we will frequently turn down jobs because we don't believe we're a good fit. Unlike other agencies, you'll have regular contact with our team, and we're extremely responsive to your needs, in particular when circumstances change and a new approach is needed.

Working with The Hood Collective for all of your marketing needs can help your cannabis company build a strong brand, increase visibility, and reach a wider audience, and drive sales and increase ROI, all while staying compliant with the industry's legal and compliance regulations.

[Get in touch](#) today to learn what we can do for your company.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to all of our readers for taking the time to read *The Complete Guide To Marketing Your Cannabis Business in 2026*. We hope that the information provided in this book has been informative and helpful in your efforts to market your cannabis business. Remember, as a cannabis business owner, you have a great product or service that deserves to be seen and experienced by as many people as possible. Be proactive in your marketing efforts and never be afraid to try new things.

Thank you again for choosing our guide, and we wish you all the best in your business endeavors. And to learn more about The Hood Collective and our team of cannabis marketers, please visit our **[website](#)** today!

## About The Author

Decater Collins is the founder and business director of The Hood Collective, a cannabis marketing firm based in Portland, Oregon. After more than a decade spent in corporate PR, working with clients such as GM, Amazon Web Services, and Microsoft Research, Doc finally decided it was time to follow his passion. He has spent the last 12 years in the world of video and online marketing, focusing on content creation, social media strategy, and branding. In 2017, he co-founded The Hood Collective, and has focused exclusively on the cannabis industry ever since.

He's also produced and directed a number of short documentaries and films, including two series for the XRay TV platform (Fair Use and The Party). He's passionate about the environment, and continues to work on video projects that highlight environmental concerns in the Pacific Northwest, with partners such as Portland Audubon and the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon.