3 Key Tactics Cannabis Brands Can Learn from Tech Startups

They've been there, done that. So why not learn from Silicon Valley's tried-and-true techniques.

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Many top cannabis brands — the ones scaling from zero to 7-plus figures — are following in the footsteps of high-growth technology startups that came before them. But just like their predecessors, they face a similar need to scale at near-lightspeed while selling an unfamiliar product. That's why smart canna-businesses, striving to win market share and become household names, can learn from the tried-and-true scaling techniques of successful tech startups.

Here are some valuable lessons.

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1. Find your niche

Tech startups like to talk about "product-market-fit" as a key indicator of growth potential. This term applies to that sweet spot your product fills an unmet demand among consumers in your territory. In other words, your business' niche.

There are plenty of ways to approach finding your brand's

position within the market. Your niche can be as specific as a product type or as broad as a price point marketed toward an underserved customer segment. An example: The edibles company 1906, which carved out a position for themselves in the crowded Colorado market by offering a line of 1:1 THC to CBD products targeting “high-functioning adults” and promising specific experiences like energy and relaxation.

2. Build the right team

Once you identify the specific customer need your product satisfies, it’s time to organize your company to scale and meet demand, ultimately owning that category as a name brand. The value of all-star team members cannot be underestimated. One of the biggest early investments of tech startups is building a strategic team that believes in the vision and is comfortable navigating uncertainty to build processes that will grow as the company scales.

Entrepreneurs at early-stage cannabis companies should focus on hiring a mix of talent representing both sales-savvy and deep-industry knowledge. It’s easy to fall prey to the desire to stack your team with industry experts, but without people to close those initial deals, it may be difficult to gain traction as you get started.

These early hires also need to possess a willingness to solve problems and build processes from scratch. There is a big difference between working at a defined job with a company that has been around for decades and forging your own path at a growing startup. Without processes in place, employees must be agile and ready to build the structure as they go, enabling them to slide seamlessly across functions to keep forward momentum.

Build a company that is ready for anything by hiring a team of

innovative self-starters who will create their own efficient workflows. Your end result? Teams that can grow with the company and adapt to regulatory changes, acting as informed and effective evangelists for your brand

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3. Get creative with customer acquisition

To get your cannabis brand off the ground, you'll need to be scrappy and adaptive with your initial client acquisition strategy. Without a huge marketing budget, entrepreneurs need to make an effort to got out and meet prospects where they gather.

Industry events are an easy jumping-off point to find potential leads. By attending conferences, trade shows, and meet-ups, you will not only grow your contacts, but you'll also meet potential company partners.

Another tactic is to find out which publications your prospects read and target them for stories. Build relationships with the editors of the most popular trade publications and provide them with exclusive content. At LeafLink, we've seen some of our best marketing success by creating pieces of proprietary content like LeafLink List, which ranks cannabis brands and products, and the Wholesale Cannabis Pricing Guide. Both these pieces have been picked up by various publications and continue to provide brand exposure months after publishing.

Plug yourself into the platforms people in your industry use, whether that's social media or the industry's standard tool for managing sales. By engaging with the same platforms your prospects rely on every day, you reduce friction between your

operations and make working together more seamless.

Also, actively participating in the cannabis network sets your company up to form strategic partnerships and attract strong talent. Your cannabis brand’s next big move could hinge on a valuable contact. Keep those business cards at the ready, and never underestimate the power of your network.

The early stages of launching a company are often the most difficult. If you’re looking for a place to start, stay focused on finding your niche, hiring smart, and being creative with customer acquisition, and you’ll set your brand up for likely future success.

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