4 Leadership Lessons From A Female Extraction Expert



I pivoted jobs, pivoted again, and eventually came out on top. Here's how.

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My cannabis story begins in the hills of Humboldt County. Doing harvest trim work within the Emerald Triangle's larger-than-life forests and deep-rooted traditions of alternative medicine, I was exposed to large-scale cannabis farming and extraction for the very first time.

Catching the extraction bug

During my time in Humboldt County, I saw an unmatched demand

in the market for high-quality concentrates. I was beyond intrigued by the stainless steel and mechanics of closed-loop extractors, so I decided to invest in a small extraction set-up. I worked at a Prop 215-compliant company, CO2 Labs, before I found my stride and founded my own extraction brand, Lightning Moon Collective.

Of course, starting a business as a woman in Humboldt came with its challenges. Safety and security, both personally and in my work, were significant issues in the beginning. I was secluded in rural woods, working entirely off the grid and alone. Eventually, all of my worries materialized when I was robbed while distributing to local dispensaries.

I persisted through these challenges, and it wasn't until I was strong-armed out of my facility and brand that I realized it was time to start over. Again.

The early years took clever level-headed grit. When I sink my teeth into something, it's hard for me to let go without a fight. I knew I needed trustworthy allies who would stand beside me and treat me as an equal. Luckily, that's when I met my fellow Co-Founders of Sisu Extracts. Now, I'm the Head of Manufacturing, leading a team of 30 employees that I have grown by 3,500 percent in 13 months.

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As a female leader in cannabis, especially in the manufacturing field dominated by men, I'm a rare breed. I oversee two manufacturing facilities, processing 1,000 pounds of cannabis, and producing 35 liters of finished THC distillate per day. As I continue to deliver results, the respect from my peers follows. I'm looked square in the eye and greeted with firm handshakes far more than ever before. I have equal pay to my executive partners and unquestioned authority over the largest division of the company.

I paid my dues and had my fair share of moments when I had to

take a step back and start from scratch. When it comes to manufacturing and scaling a business, you'll have to start over plenty of times.

Here are a few ways to use those frustrating moments to your benefit when you're forced to go back to the drawing board:

1. Have the patience to get it done right

I learned and adapted quickly over the years, both holding on to what worked and letting go of what didn't. At Sisu, I've rearranged and rebuilt both of our facilities every two months to ensure that we exceed expectations from a quality and quantity perspective. Fluidity and patience to rework problems over and over is the only way to improve and scale processes at pace with such a volatile and dynamic market.

2. Understand that you can't control everything

Manufacturing is a game mainly spent fighting the nature of entropy. Machines fall apart no matter how much you maintain them and equipment manufacturers hyper idealize everything. Humans make mistakes every single day. It's all about how you respond to those mistakes that measure your forward momentum. This mindset is what helps me lead a team of 27 men and three women in the lab.

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3. Be open-minded to learning new

things

When life forces you to take a different path, it’s essential to have the right mindset. My career in cannabis blossomed when I decided to learn more about the plant, and I surrounded myself with women I admired. I have learned more mechanical skills than I knew existed. I learned how to follow the numbers and track ALL the data, which is something I never expected to learn during the early stages of my career on the farm.

4. Map out your priorities

Take some time to map out your next six months and set actionable goals for yourself. Then, start thinking about what you want to accomplish in one year or five years. When figuring out my next step, I had to establish what my priorities were with each ever-changing target. My ability in any given moment to discern, organize, and prioritize the most critical task at hand in a sea of endless action items and to-do lists keeps me ahead. This planning technique enables me to hit client deadlines, accommodate employee needs, and exceed the goals of growth we set for ourselves as a company.

Working your way up the ladder as a woman is a daunting feat, and accomplishing this in a new industry like cannabis comes with its highs and lows. Start-up companies are a dime a dozen, the rules change every day, and you’re sometimes forced to rethink your entire career. You might have to start fresh more than expected. These “resets” can be a blessing in disguise when you learn to embrace what they have to offer. During my journey of “starting over,” I leveraged this mindset of flexibility and acceptance to master the manufacturing process and scale California’s largest extraction lab.

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