

How to Build a Successful and Profitable Cannabis Grow Operation

How Cannabis Cultivators Can Build Profitable Operations by Vetting Vendors, Validating Genetics, and Prioritizing Compliance

As the cannabis industry matures and competition intensifies, some operators longing for the “good old days” must confront an uncomfortable truth: they were doing it wrong all along. Despite years of experience and access to advanced cultivation equipment, many growers are still losing money due to preventable mistakes, according to panelists at MJBizCon’s “Cultivating Success: Building and Scaling a Profitable Grow” session.

Preventable Mistakes in Cultivation Are No Longer Hidden

Nostalgia for higher prices and beefier margins often masks errors that now directly impact profitability. Cory Desloge, director of cultivation operations at Harbor House Collective in Massachusetts, noted, “Fifteen years ago a lot of people built everything wrong. Now we have vetted people who can help, but you still have to vet who you’re working with.”

In competitive markets, mistakes that once could be absorbed by rising prices or limited competition now directly affect the bottom line.

Vendor Discipline is a Key Financial Strategy

Panelists emphasized that vendor selection should be treated as a financial strategy, not a relationship obligation. Tony Flute, general manager at Native Nations Cannabis, said, “Don’t take it personally – it’s business. Get price quotes. You’d be surprised how much money you can save that becomes backend revenue.”

Eden Williams, general manager at Vertical People Dispensary in Illinois, added that operators often overspend due to outdated supplier habits, advising growers to consider mainstream agricultural suppliers for better pricing. Missteps in choosing partners can go beyond cost, as unqualified personnel can compromise entire operations.

Pathogens and Genetics Are Silent Profit Killers

Even seemingly well-managed grows can fall victim to hidden pathogens like hop latent viroid, which are undetectable through visual inspection. Panelists stressed the importance of sourcing from vetted nurseries and performing thorough intake checks to prevent costly losses.

Operators must also ensure cultivators understand the genetics they are growing in their specific environment. Transitioning from small-scale or hobby operations to commercial grows requires precise adjustments to

inputs and conditions. Williams emphasized, “Genetics don’t perform the same everywhere. Know who’s growing for you and whether they actually know how to grow in your environment.”

Compliance is the Real Bottom Line

Profit is meaningless without compliance. Desloge reminded attendees, “We’re in the business of profit and compliance. If you’re not compliant, it doesn’t matter how much weed you can grow.” Panelists recommended integrating compliance into daily workflows rather than treating it as a final step. This proactive approach reduces risks, avoids costly remediation, and protects long-term margins.

Key Takeaways for Profitable Cannabis Cultivation in 2026

Panelists agreed that success in cannabis cultivation is rooted in fundamentals. Operators who thrive will:

- Vet vendors and suppliers rigorously to protect finances
- Validate genetics and adjust cultivation practices to suit the environment
- Integrate compliance into everyday operations rather than treating it as an afterthought
- Treat cultivation like a disciplined, repeatable manufacturing process rather than experimentation

By tightening these fundamentals, cannabis operators can build sustainable, profitable cultivation operations that withstand market competition and regulatory scrutiny.

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