

Six commercial cultivators highlight their favorite strain to grow

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Renaissance WOMAN

**A diverse background helped Chanda Macias build
a successful dispensary in the nation's capital**

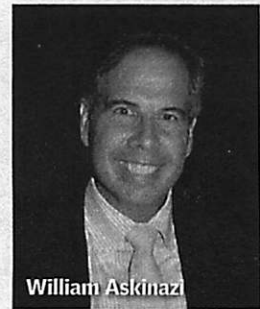
Experimental grow space
Startup lessons
Using speedy strains
Creating a 5-Star experience



Company: Askinazi Law & Business/Cannabis Law & Business

Business Roughly 25% of the practice – founded by William Askinazi – is currently devoted to the MJ industry, which is handled through the separately named entity Cannabis Law & Business. Non-marijuana clients have ranged from Fortune 500 companies to mom-and-pop businesses during past 34 years.

Headquarters: Potomac, Maryland



William Askinazi

Preventive Measures

"I don't think a Chinese wall would be exactly the right way to describe it, because a Chinese wall means you are going to compartmentalize your business because of conflicts of interests. I don't see my marijuana clients as having conflicts of interests with my other clients," Askinazi said.

He maintains a separate website for his MJ practice, Cannabis Law & Business.

"There are some clients out there who are looking for a lawyer who just does cannabis, so I want to reach them. On my regular website, I don't highlight the cannabis aspect, but I do mention it," he explained.

Still, he doesn't want traditional clients to think he is hiding that aspect of his practice.

"I am a firm believer in full disclosure," Askinazi said.

Past Mistakes or Notable Development

Askinazi and some partners are launching a 3,000-square-foot medicinal marijuana dispensary outside Washington DC. He insisted that being a partner in a dispensary will not be a conflict with others he advises in the industry. Askinazi said he is totally open about it with clients in and out of the MJ business.

Advice

Don't hide the marijuana side of your business from your non-marijuana clients. You don't want those in traditional businesses to learn from other sources that you have MJ clients, Askinazi advised. Be especially open and transparent with your non-MJ clients that you have forged business ties with an industry that remains illegal at the federal level, he added.

"Disclose, disclose, disclose. That should be your headline," Askinazi said. ♦

NO BIG DEAL

Ancillary companies with a foot in both the marijuana and non-MJ business often find their traditional clients are immensely curious, rather than apprehensive, about cannabis.

"If you walked into our office, right on our reception desk you would see our brochure about the cannabis side of our business and marijuana business publications are prominently displayed," said Richard Wortmann, founder of RW Group, an accounting firm in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

"What is interesting is when clients come in they don't pick up any of the journals of accounting or tax strategies. They go straight to the cannabis stuff."

Even his father, "who I joke made [President] Reagan look liberal,"

supports Wortmann's initiative to provide accounting services to the cannabis industry.

Maryland lawyer William Askinazi, with 34 years of practicing business law and providing advice to businesses big and small, also has found huge acceptance and interest from non-MJ clients.

"My clients give to charities regularly," said Askinazi, whose namesake law firm is based in Potomac, Maryland. "They raise money for cancer on walks. They give to United Way. They give money to AIDS research. They are pleased to see a lawyer step up to the plate and support medicinal marijuana."

Indeed, he contrasted the support for medical marijuana operations with

the fear engendered by the early days of the AIDS crisis.

"I'm old enough to remember in the early days of the AIDS issue when you couldn't find a lawyer who would help, because they were afraid of what people would think," Askinazi said. "Getting involved with medicinal marijuana is just the opposite of that."

Even though 75% of his clients are outside of the MJ business, he is so confident his reputation will not take a hit because he has become a partner in what he hopes will be among the first operating first operating medicinal marijuana dispensaries in Maryland, Potomac Holistics, outside Washington DC in Rockville.

– John Rebchook