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Canna Group Consulting LLC, is bringing Payment Solutions to the Hemp, Cannabis and MJ Industries, and High Risk Merchants

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CEOCFO: *Mr. Spiezio, what is the idea behind Canna Group Consulting, LLC, today?*

Mr. Spiezio: The company was conceived on the concept of bringing solid viable solutions to the merchants in the merchant processing industry. I have been in the industry since 1992 and with that had been placing hard to place merchants for several decades now, at this point.

My vision was to take all of the aspects of the industry that I did not like, confront them in a transparent discourse with merchants and offer honesty and education to help his clients understand the complex industry of electronic payments. In a world of sales tactics and sub-par service, Sami wanted to bring a company to market that has an ethos of truth and service in the ever-changing high-risk market space to provide payment processing solutions to merchants who were hard to place due to the type of products and/or industries they serviced.

Canna Group's 2 core pillars that define our business ethos are honesty and transparency. With the current climate of the American business market, greed and competition trump all as business men and women are chasing their ever-increasing production expectations with hitting budget as their first priority, not servicing their client. We have all been in a situation in which we have been "sold" something that later turned out to not be what we expected. No one likes to be treated this way and manipulated into a bad decision. It is with this old school mentality of a person is only as good as their word that Sami and the Canna Group team offer their merchants 100% honesty and transparency with all their business dealings. It is better to lose a sale now through honesty of which will then create a long-term client when we can then call them back at a later date with a solution that truly fits their needs.

CEOCFO: *What are the challenges you see and understand that perhaps others do not?*

Mr. Spiezio: Some of the challenges that many merchants encounter is in dealing with the federal regulations. Some of the products that we service, such as cannabis, MMJ, recreational, and CBD are still somewhat regulated. However, as a pioneer in this industry I have been able to remove some of those challenges with some of the relationships that I have and develop solutions for those merchants that they can use, as an end use for their consumers.

People in this day and age are tired of robotic phone calls and lack of customer service. We want to return to the days of "mom and pops style business" where our merchants get hands on quality customer service. Canna Group will strive to offer the hands-on customer service to merchants that lacks in the industry. Too many sales people only touch their merchants 1 time to get the application and then pass the buck to the processors and banks to handle the rest. We will take the opposite approach and that is to stay with the customer all the way through the process until the account is activated and work on their behalf communicating with the processors and banks to ensure a seamless transaction.

CEOCFO: *How do your solutions work?*

Mr. Spiezio: Our solutions work on many different platforms, depending on the type of industry. If they are selling CBD we have four solutions that are available; anything from eCheck and eWallet, up to traditional solutions. If they are selling MMJ, depending on whether they are selling it in a dispensary or some type of delivery service, those solutions are going to vary as well. In the four different verticals that we address, there are about nine different solutions within those verticals. Each one is going to be dictated by how they are processing, what they are selling, who they are selling it to, and what state they are in. Therefore, there are many variables that have to deal with in order to make sure that we are providing a solution that is sustainable. Unlike many processors and many of the things that have happened in the market just recently, many of the merchants that have been provided these solutions have lost their solutions, because they have been brought by companies that are not sustainable.

CEOCFO: *How do you stay ahead of the regulatory atmosphere, let alone the technology that you need to get this going?*

Mr. Spiezio: That is a good question. Part of my job over the last twenty some years has been somewhat of a visionary, to make sure that we are ahead of the current and make sure that we are addressing what new technologies are coming to the landscape and how we can then position ourselves to provide that to, again, our consumers. With that, we have been able to position ourselves with some of the larger banks in the country that are looking at this; some of the “paradigm pioneers,” as we call them, that are allowing us to provide these solutions that others are not. At this point, we are actually being given beta test solutions that other companies are being provided, just so we can implement them into the system and make sure they are working properly before others do.

As a student of my industry, part of my responsibilities to my corporate entities over the years has been that of a leader with a very clear understanding of what the future was to hold for the payment industry, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve and therefore the competition. The first 2 hours of my day is spend reading what’s changed in the industry since I laid my head down to rest the night before.

“Being one of the first people to bring ATM’s to market, I have always been a leader constantly raising the bar and being an innovator in the industry. With the current state of the Hemp and Cannabis markets in some ways resembling the wild, wild west; I continue to push forward, forging the way for others and I am committed to leading the movement to give entrepreneurs in these dynamic industries the ability to receive fair financial treatment and help bring these new industries to market that have the potential to change the world!”- Sami Spiezio

CEOCFO: *How does the cost factor for a merchant compare with or against the benefit of not accepting credit cards?*

Mr. Spiezio: Obviously, not being able to accept credit cards or electronic payments at the Point-of-Purchase is going to somewhat hinder their business growth considerably. Now unfortunately, we are dealing with the “it is what it is” type of message. That is, because of the types of products they are selling they are, unfortunately, subject to higher pricing, especially startups. We have seen startups being priced anywhere up to seven or eight percent of their business, but they also know that is the cost of doing business.

As this landscape starts to become more acceptable and you see more traditional banks getting involved, those prices will start to come down. Right now, the challenges are just getting them an account in the first place, be it a bank account, or a merchant services account; anything of that nature. Those are the challenges that we are able to get over with the merchants through consulting, showing them and leading them through the gamut of things that they have to comply with.

CEOCFO: *We have done a fair number of interviews with companies related to cannabis and CBD. There are so many players moving so quickly. How do you vet a company that might be a client?*

Mr. Spiezio: One of the things is that we have been dealing with people that have been vetted for a long time in this industry, not people who are just popping up, because there are many people that are getting into this industry which should not be getting into the industry. We have partnered ourselves with people that have been in this industry for some time. They know the industry, they know what it is going to take in order to provide solutions that are going to, and I will use this word, be sustainable for the merchant. That is because the last thing you want to deal with is having to set up an account, be processing for two or three months, find out that they are no longer able to process because of things the

processors set up improperly, things that they did wrong. Therefore, we have positioned ourselves with the processors that have been doing this for some time and not just within the last year or so. The main bank that we have been dealing with has been doing this for almost a decade.

Canna Group's 2 core pillars that define our business ethos are honesty and transparency. I also look for companies who also have this same business mentality as we decide who we wish to work with. It is very easy to identify those companies who embody this approach to their consumers and those who do not. We do not need to do business with everyone!

CEOCFO: *How are you reaching out to potential clients?*

Mr. Spiezio: We are reaching out through multiple verticals. First would be through press releases that we are doing. We also have a relationship with the Cannabis Chamber of Commerce, and they are doing a great deal of mailings for us. We are also members of the National Hemp Association, which is something that adds credibility. We are Better Business Bureau members and we take that very proudly in the fact that we are accredited by the Better Business Bureau.

We also reach out through other verticals such as Card Payment Options and other companies such as those that do unbiased reviews. That is how people are finding us. They are finding us quite often. Actually, we have had forty leads come in just last week, alone. Therefore, people are coming to us almost as quickly as we want them to!

CEOCFO: *Are you staffed for the volume of business? Where are you in the growth process? I know you just started this, but it has been in the works a long time.*

Mr. Spiezio: It has. As you said, I actually founded the company back in 2015 and just kind of kept it going on the back burner, if you will, to see where this environment, where this industry and space was going to go. We took it to a corporate level in March of this year. Therefore, on the surface, it is like we may be brand new, but we are not, with regards to cannabis.

CEOCFO: *Then you are ready?*

Mr. Spiezio: We are ready! We are ready! We have been positioned for some time. As I said, I have been doing this for thirty years. I know what it takes in order to create this company and take it to the market. I have done it multiple times in the past. We are just doing it in a different space right now and that is the high risk cannabis space. Therefore, I do not see anything different. I have got representative all across the country that work with us that are poised and ready to take on any leads of any volume.

In the merchant service industry, the current culture is every person for themselves. Agents are all independent sales reps that can operate independently and for many different companies without much loyalty. The Canna Group however is quite the opposite. Although our reps are still independent agents, we work as a cohesive team, sharing emails and sales tips, assisting each other with clients and doing what it takes to bring accounts into the company, realizing that if the company succeeds, we all succeed. We have constant open lines of communication and weekly meetings with the reps and management to foster open discourse between the entire team. We have built a solid team of individuals that are more than able to service our clients and the volume of business that is coming our way.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us about charge back protection? Is this somewhat unusual in the higher risk industries?*

Mr. Spiezio: No, it is almost a requirement in the high-risk industries, because of the risk of a charge back. There are many products being bought and returned, with people saying they did not buy it just out of for whatever reason. When you have a situation where there is a card not present, and you are not able to take acceptance of that card through chip and pin technology, you are going to be subject to charge backs.

We have a threshold of two percent. Once a client does reach that threshold, they are subject to being shut down and we investigate it as to why. Therefore, there are things that we have to deal with and charge back protection obviously helps to avoid that.

CEOCFO: *Are you seeking funding, investment or partnerships as you move forward?*

Mr. Spiezio: Any smart business would be open to that, especially if you want to grow to the magnitude that we want to, so yes, without question, we are entertaining new partnerships and investment opportunities.

CEOCFO: *Is the investment community looking at this side of the cannabis industry or still not quite ready yet?*

Mr. Spiezio: They are. In fact, one of the social media platforms that we use is called Leafwire, which has close to sixteen thousand likeminded professionals and many of those are investors. Probably out of that sixteen thousand, twenty or maybe twenty five percent of those would be considered in the investor category. Therefore, without question, there are many people looking at this and many people looking to get into it. Most people do not know how, so there are many opportunities through stock to actually buy into companies where the future is bright.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned as you have gone from concept to a product available? What might have changed in your approach or your thinking as you moved along?*

Mr. Spiezio: That is a good question. Being in the industry for so long, I learned a lot of what we needed to do, prior to getting into this, so there has not been a very large learning curve. The only thing I have learned is that there is uncertainty in the fact that there are certain players getting into this that should not be and that is what we need to be concerned of. You saw this in the payment processing space, where players Square and PayPal came into this space and somewhat diluted and muddied the waters. With that, we are starting to see that in the high-risk space, which is something I was not prepared for.

CEOCFO: *What is the plan for the next six months to a year?*

Mr. Spiezio: We are doing well, with all the recognition we have been getting and the press releases that we have seen. In addition, we have been working on SEO now, in creating that whole entire internet presence. Therefore, we are just going to stay the course. Things are looking good for our future; as I mentioned it looks bright.

CEOCFO: *Why should people look at Canna Group Consulting? What sets you apart?*

Mr. Spiezio: It is experience and integrity for the most part. One of the things that we have a policy of is that we provide information to the customers that is accurate and factual; not so much as to what they want to hear. Our integrity is first and foremost. We would rather not do business with you than to do improper business with you. We are almost brutally honest with people.

I say to people, "You may not like what I have to say, but you can take it to the bank; it will cash." That is how we are addressing things and people are refreshed by that. We are having people tell us, "Thank you for being honest with me. We are not used to that. We have grown accustomed to people blowing so much smoke. We appreciate your honest." Therefore, that is where we are trying to stand aside from everyone and that is that we do not need your business to the point that we have to lie to get it. Plain and simple.

I've always coined myself a "paradigm pioneer" trailblazing new ideas and embracing the changing times as technology skyrocketed and changed the face of the merchant services industry over his illustrious 30 year career. Being one of the first people to bring ATM's to market, I have always been a leader constantly raising the bar and being an innovator in the industry. With the current state of the Hemp and Cannabis markets in some ways resembling the wild, wild west; I continue to push forward, forging the way for others and I am committed to leading the movement to give entrepreneurs in these dynamic industries the ability to receive fair financial treatment and help bring these new industries to market that have the potential to change the world!