

**SPRING 2023**

# WHITE PAPER

**TAKEAWAYS FROM 2023 NOCO HEMP EXPO  
THOUGHT LEADERS**

The world of CBD/Hemp is full of misconceptions and stereotypes. How do you protect your brand?

Building customer loyalty, positioning yourself as an industry leader, and creating a resilient brand are all keys to setting your brand apart from the crowd.

The M&C Communications team lives by these principles, and based a survey on them for the 9th Annual NoCo Hemp Expo.

**The NoCo survey questions focused on the "M&C Three" pillars of Brand Protection PR:**

- Building Customer Loyalty
- Insider Media Relations
- Creating a resilient CBD/Hemp Brand

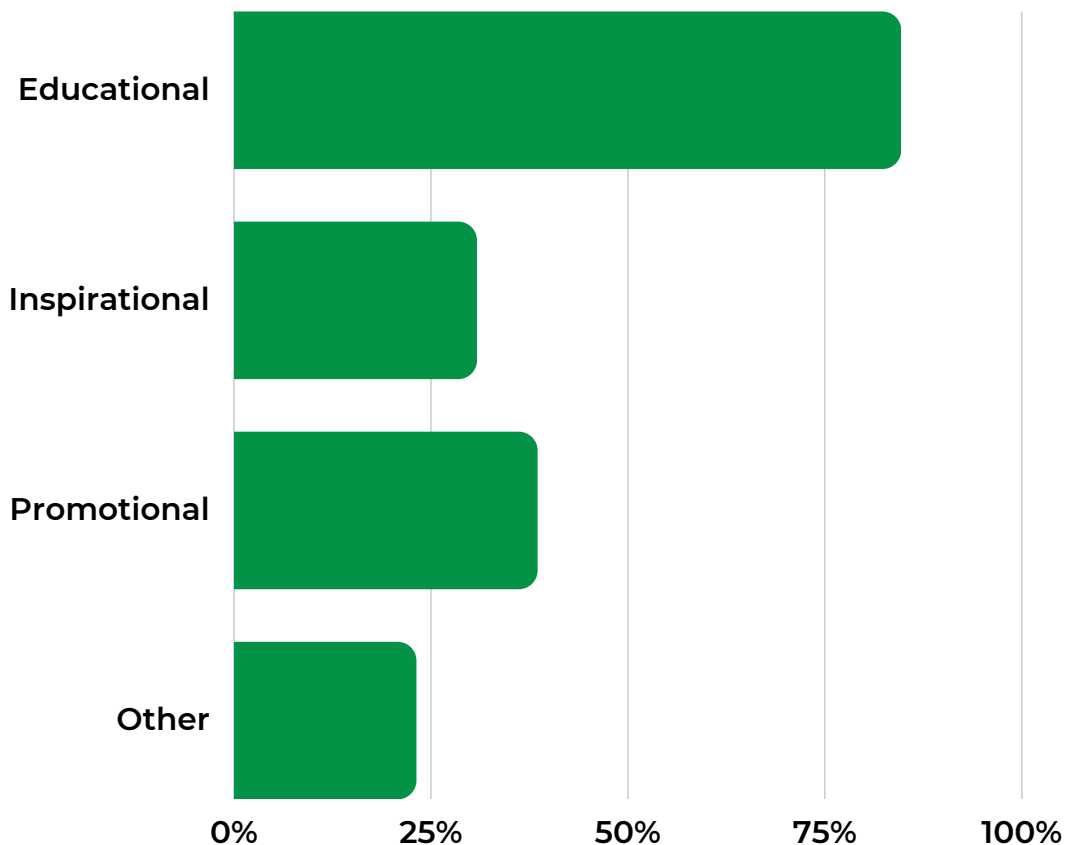


# BUILDING CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Staying ahead of the competition is key to boosting your business goals. Social Media is one way to showcase your business and expand awareness about your brand

## SURVEY QUESTION ONE

**Are most of your social posts...**



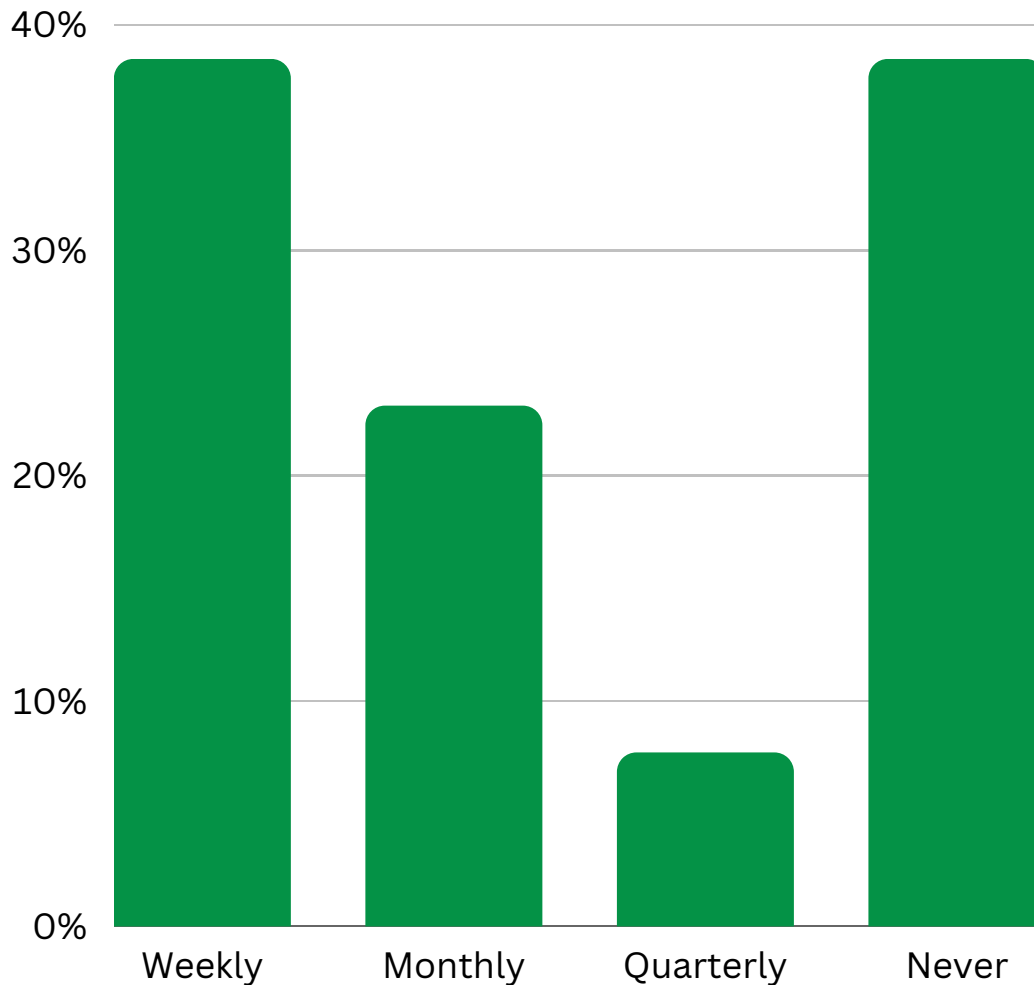
### Social Media makes a difference

- Having a mix of social posts can help "pull back the curtain" on your brand and allow you to be more authentic with your customers.
- Consumers love hearing your stories.
- Share what motivates you!

# BUILDING CUSTOMER LOYALTY

## SURVEY QUESTION TWO

How often to you share industry updates or hold educational sessions with your employees?



### There's a real opportunity here!

- Making sure all of your employees - whether they're assigned spokespeople or not - are educated on the latest CBD/Hemp news solidifying your brand's expertise to enhance customer loyalty.

# INSIDER MEDIA RELATIONS

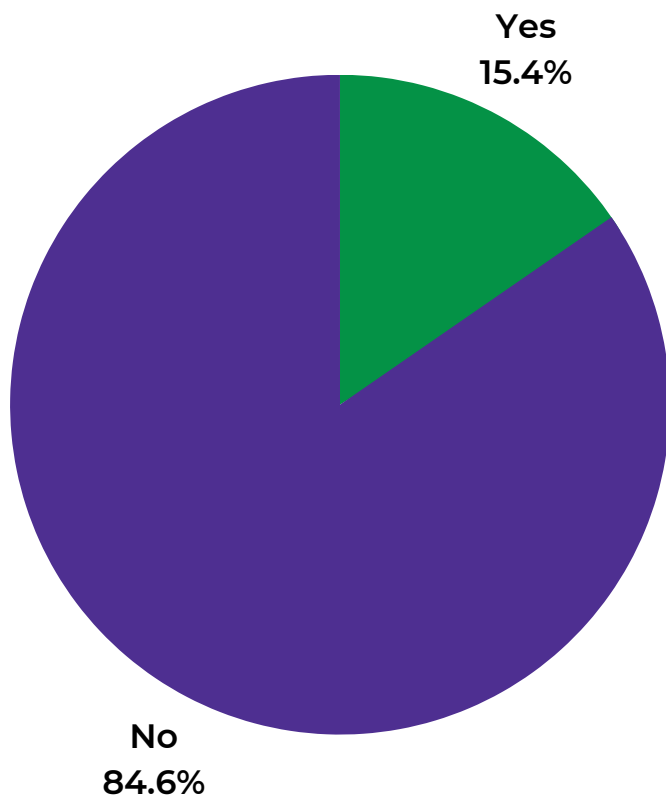
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At M&C Communications, we're all former journalists. We understand how the media thinks and how decisions are made inside a newsroom.

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## SURVEY QUESTION THREE

Do you have a "holding statement" - a message ready for the media during a crisis?



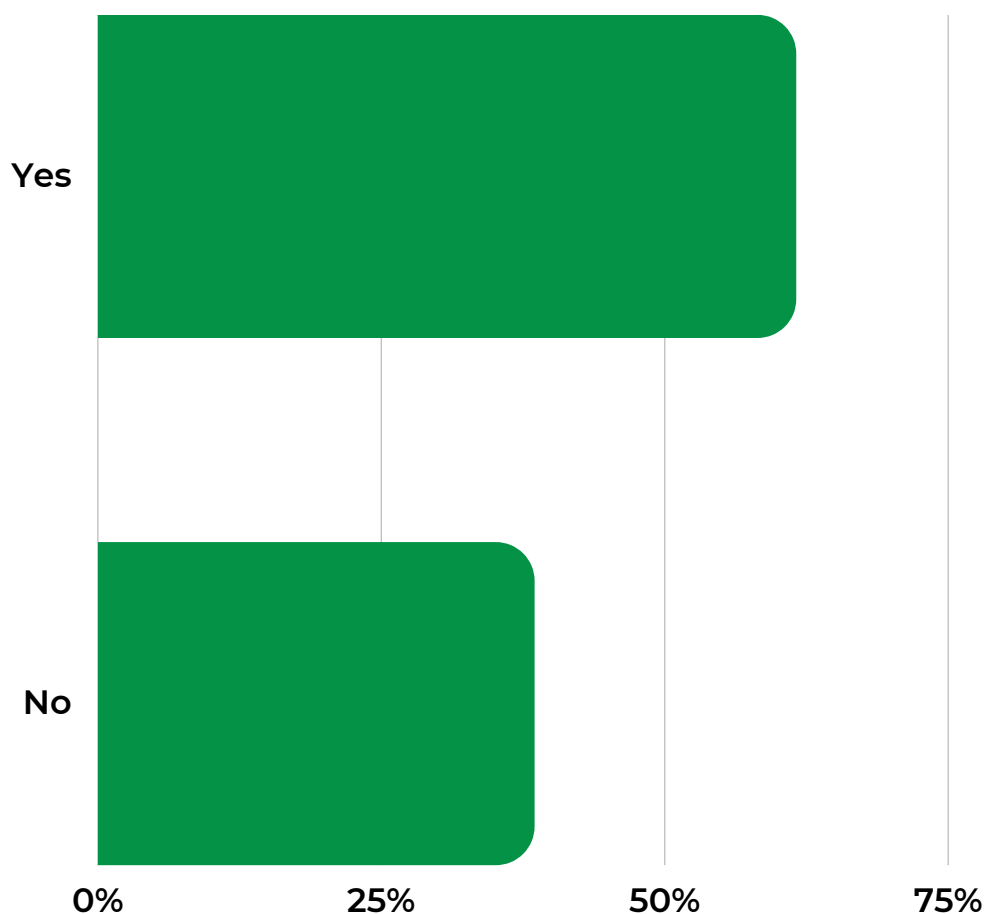
### **This simple step can keep you ahead of the competition!**

- A "holding statement" is a statement template on file that can be quickly tweaked and released to the media in the event of a crisis.
- Crafting the message beforehand will save you heartburn later and serves as a positive team-building exercise for your leadership team.

# INSIDER MEDIA RELATIONS

## SURVEY QUESTION FOUR

Do you have a positive relationship with at least one reporter - who would call you first when an industry story breaks?



### Building relationships builds trust

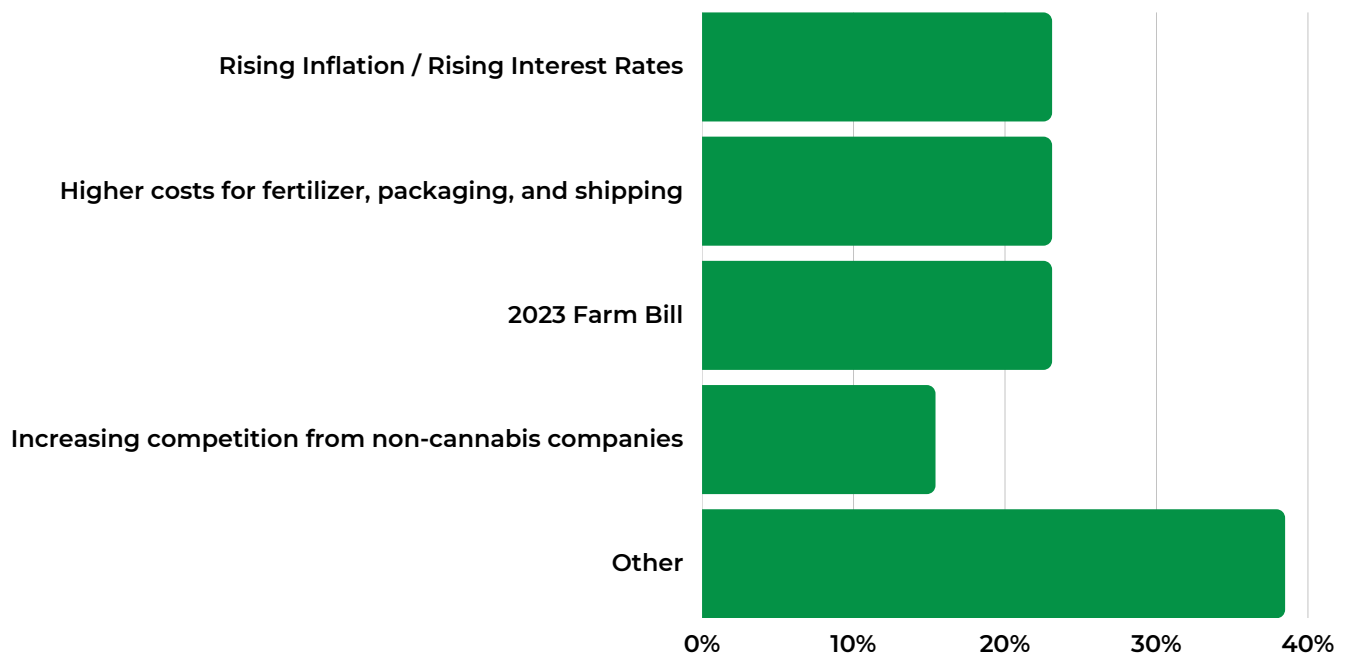
- Building relationships with reporters sounds scary, but it'll give your brand the upper hand.
- Being the go-to source on a local or national story can set you up as a thought leader in the industry.

# CREATING A RESILIENT BRAND

Finding opportunities in every challenge and preparing for the unexpected can help you build a resilient brand

## SURVEY QUESTION FIVE

Which industry challenge will most impact your business in the next three to six months?



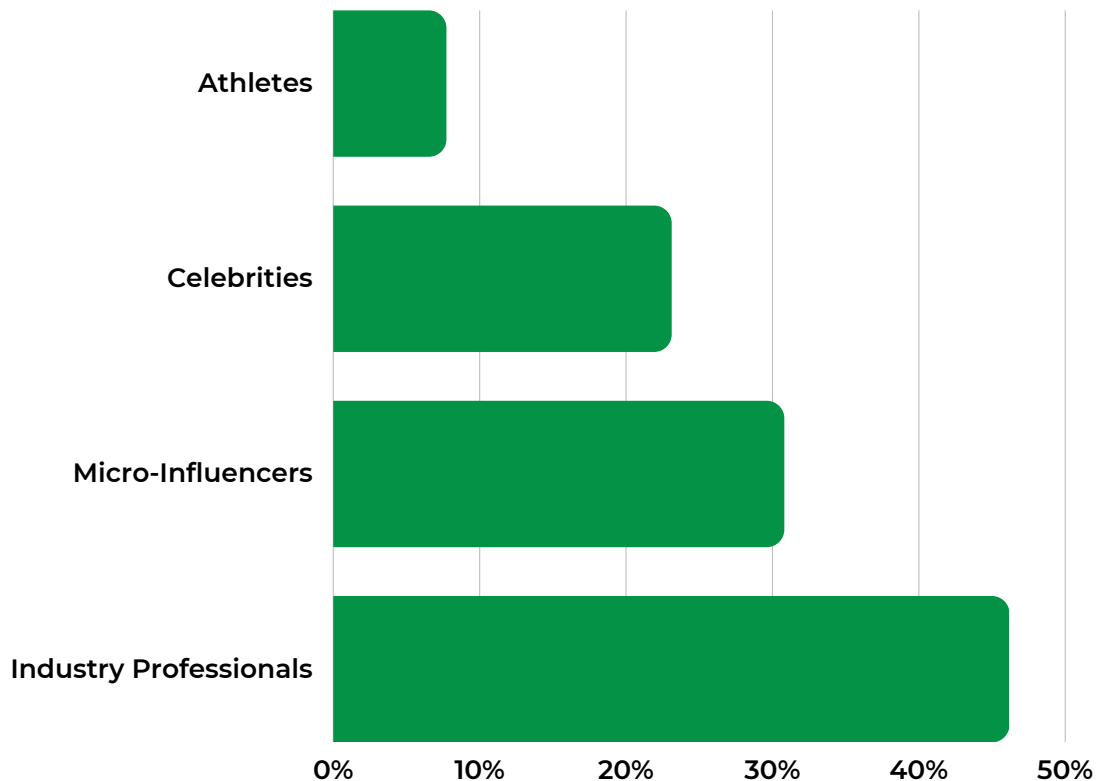
Those "other" concerns accounted for nearly 40% of our answers. The pain points included:

- "Lack of Availability" - Isha Jagirdar/Weaving Vibes
- "People's changing habits" - Bart Eller/Paonia Soil Co.
- "Regulation at the state level" - Holt Davenport/Patsy's Candies
- "Bad Actors in the industry" - Haylie Fontes/Trojan Horse Cannabis
- "D8/D9 regulations" - Franny Tacy/Franny's Farmacy

# CREATING A RESILIENT BRAND

## SURVEY QUESTION SIX

### Who are your influencers?



#### The use of influencers is becoming a staple in PR plans.

- Influencers can raise your brand awareness and ROI.
- According to the American Marketing Association: "Influencer marketing is expected to grow to be worth \$21.1 billion in 2023, having quintupled in size over the last five years."

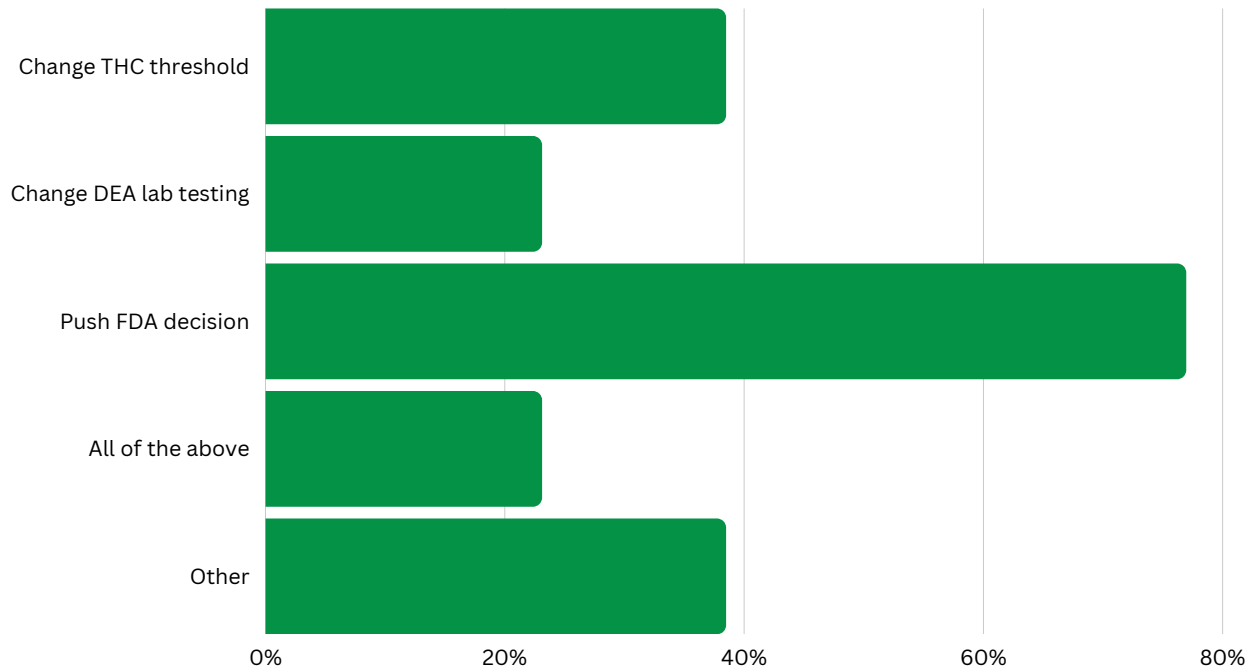
#### Micro-influencer use is on the rise in 2023

- They have fewer followers than mega-influencers but are often viewed as more authentic and genuine.
- According to a survey by Influencer Marketing Hub: "There is a strong preference for working with small (nano - 39% and micro - 30%) influencers ahead of expensive macro-influencers (19%) and celebrities (12%)."

# THE 2023 FARM BILL

## SURVEY QUESTION SEVEN

What do you want to see in the 2023 Farm Bill?



### The Options

- The THC threshold for hemp raised from 0.3% to 1.0%
- Streamlining or eliminating the DEA lab testing requirement for hemp
- Language to push the FDA to help regulate CBD
- All of the above

### Other

- \* "Separation of fiber crops & CBD"
- \* "Arsenic and composting regulations"
- \* "Ban Isomers"
- \* "Relaxing testing scrutiny for industrial hemp growers"
- \* "Grain and fiber exemption"



# CONCLUSIONS

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## **Communication is key!**

- Educating your customers, and the media, while positioning yourself as an industry expert will help you navigate an ever-changing landscape.
- A couple of hours of preparation for likely issues and crises including FDA indecision, political jockeying over the latest Farm Bill, and increasing competition will help you take advantage of opportunities and quickly respond to challenges in 2023.
- Companies can celebrate the growing body of research and increased awareness about the agricultural, environmental, and dietary benefits of hemp/CBD products.

**The bottom line is that trust is the bedrock of a sustainable and profitable business.**

## **The companies in our survey understood that:**

- Protecting their brand meant preparing for challenges
- Building relationships with the media is a wise investment
- Reinforcing their value as reputable companies will create or reinforce their trusted consumer base, the lifeblood of any successful business.

# SOME OF THE INDUSTRY LEADERS TAKING PART IN OUR DISCUSSIONS

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# ABOUT M&C COMMUNICATIONS

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We help CBD and hemp businesses navigate the complexity of the current regulatory environment, seize business opportunities, and weather vast unknowns by building brand resilience and an understanding of what motivates the media.

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**MOVE** *the*  
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