

Southeast Enterprises

Trimming Away Staffing Costs with Dependable Staff

by Clayton Stallings,

As the Missouri Cannabis Industry operational deadlines seem to be creeping slower and slower to commencement, with only three licenses in operation at the time of this writing in mid-August, anticipation for potential job opportunities continue to rise in sequence with job unemployment rates.

At the risk of bursting a potential job seekers bubble during these tough times of job searching, here's a word of warning from experienced eyes. Trimming may not be the job for you! After touring many cultivation facilities in other states, I've learned that each trimming room scene seems a mirror image of the other. Most are lackluster work environments — a mundane job resembling assembly-line work from yesteryear, but instead of hammers, screwdrivers, and wrenches, you'll have trim scissors. If you don't like repetitive work, this job may not be for you. However, a trimming position can lead to a step up the cannabis connoisseur's ladder. Keep this in mind on your job search in this emerging industry.

The extremely high numbers that leave the trimming room after day two or week two makes it the highest job turnover rate within the cannabis industry. A drawback with seemingly no answer for our 33rd State about to go medical — that is, until now.



A few weeks ago, I got a call from David Melton, an account executive with Southeast Enterprises in Independence, MO. They are one of 89 facilities in the state that provide jobs for adults with disabilities. Interested in getting Southeast involved in the cannabis industry, he invited me to tour their facility where I met their CEO, Lauren Hall (*photo on left*).

“The mission of Southeast Enterprises is providing meaningful employment opportunities for adults with developmental differences and helping them live life to the fullest,” Hall explained. “Our primary goal is to continue to develop and offer employment and programs that empower the individuals we serve. It is a powerful win-win partnership when customers are consistently satisfied by the service and quality received from self-confident, determined, and passionate people.”

As we went from station to station at the facility, each group of employees were doing many differently-styled tasks with two main similarities. One, they were all very monotonous tasks with a factory-line resemblance. Secondly, every single employee I met wore a BIG smile on their face and emitted a contagious positive energy-filled passion for each task they were doing.



“At Southeast Enterprises, we know we have uniquely skilled individuals who are exceptional. They are the ‘Intel Inside’ of what sets us apart,” Hall said. “Southeast Associates take deep pride in the quality of their work, attention to detail no matter how small or repetitious, with dependability and passion. Always looking for meaningful and sustainable productive work opportunities, we began exploring the hemp and new MMJ sector, working with State actors, attending conferences, and talking to industry entrepreneurs that aligned with our business development plan and the skills of Southeast associates. We know this sector is getting ready to explode and will need a reliable partner to meet demand. We will learn the

fundamentals, train, and appropriate Agent ID cards for Associates wanting to do this work to be ready to assist businesses in this sector.”

This is not only the solution to the trimming debacle for MO MMJ cultivation license winners but for many positions among MIP license winners. Packaging, labeling, assembling — Southeast associates were already doing it, love what they do, and are not only good at it but even better — happier about doing it. There is so much potential here, why stop with the medical side of cannabis when the Hemp industry could use its services too?

Halfway through the tour, I could see limitless opportunities and applications that will not only help both industries but simultaneously help those in need in our communities. In my mind, my sleeves were already rolled up as I asked, “Where do we start?”

Lauren then began to break down the process of developing a timetable trial, explaining that any time a new client approaches them with a new potential job, they first have one of their non-disabled staff members complete the task while timing them. Then they time a few of their disabled employees performing that same task. “We can customize a contract for an onsite ATM (Associates on The Move) team(s) by the hour per individual/team or a day rate for hours/days onsite, much like a staffing agency for the MMJ sector,” explained Hall. “Southeast will act as a staffing agency for MMJ clients. Our ATM teams are dependable, trained, detail-oriented individuals with Agent ID cards. Southeast not only provides reliable transportation but also a full-time supervisor for each team.”

I had to stop her there and ask, “How much extra are the transportation and the staff manager?” “We cover those costs,” said Hall. Not only does the whole team show up, you also have an extra manager for them onsite at no additional cost to the client. Almost too hard to believe, but I was past shocked at this point.

“Preferably, ATMs would train in-house at Southeast Enterprises working on perfecting skills needed to come ready with the fundamentals to be successful at work,” Hall said. “Additional skills will be taught and learned onsite. For hemp clients, Southeast can handle customers product in-house. We have a dedicated customer support person that always monitors in-house jobs, is involved in production meetings, and liaisons with our production director and floor manager. Southeast foresees handling hemp products in-house. Customer needs and requirements will vary [e.g., bud trimming, stripping, labeling, packaging]. We would provide a bid based on the service needed, which would require a couple days and some sample product to time-study the task required.”

So, all that was needed to get the ball rolling on developing a trimming timetable was a little Hemp to test the waters for this oceanic sized idea. Less than an hour later, I had secured the hemp flower from Michelle Poindexter’s farm in Adrian, MO, called MoCannExtracts. A few minutes later, more materials, like trimming scissors and trays, were donated by Happy Rock Farms owner Jason Davis. Everything fell in place so quickly and easily — it was as if the universe was just waiting to align us. Although the Hemp we secured is still growing

in Adrian, MO, the field, by the time you read this article, the timetable study will be near completion, allowing Southeast Enterprises to give accurate bids to any interested new clients.

Nate Ruby, an MO MMJ cultivation license winner, is not only ready to hire the first group of trimmers, but has offered his master cultivator, Adam Diltz, to help teach Southeast Enterprises staff proper trimming techniques. Additionally, Hemp Hill in Lexington, MO, plans to hire Southeast Enterprises to prepare all its packaging and labeling work in October.



The associates at Southeast Enterprises in Independence, MO, provide limitless opportunities to not only the solution of trimming help for MO MMJ cultivation license winners but also for packaging, labeling and assembling work. They love what they do, and happy about doing it.

If you would like more information about becoming a Southeast Enterprises client, visit www.southeastenterprises.org or call Lauren Hall or David Melton at 816.353.2704 to schedule a facility tour. They are open Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. They would love for you to meet the individuals they support who proudly serve businesses within the Kansas City region. 



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