

[This Digital Publisher Wants to 'Alter the Perception of Cannabis Users'](#)

Civilized aims to be the Vanity Fair of marijuana culture By [Sami Main](#)

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There are plenty of cannabis users who are productive and motivated, despite stereotypes. Instagram: @ericwilliamkaffine / @civilized.life

A sophisticated digital platform was missing from the world of cannabis publishing, so Derek Riedle and his wife decided to create one.

Riedle is the CEO and founder of [Civilized](#), a news and entertainment site that centers on cannabis culture. A "PR guy by training," Riedle worked in communications and developed shows for Canadian TV before creating the site in September 2015.

He can remember the night that he came up with the idea for Civilized. It was on his wife's birthday during a dinner in Venice, Calif. She was enjoying a glass of wine, while he was "behind the restaurant, next to a dumpster with my vape pen." Needless to say, Riedle became tired of "being in the cannabis closet."

Working with his wife, who he says is the "brains of the operation," they decided to start Civilized, which meant also starting a more adult and mature conversation around cannabis use.

The site, which aims to be the "Vanity Fair of cannabis culture," is a place for people to freely discuss the use of cannabis, trends or products that go along with it, as well as policy analysis surrounding the ever-evolving attitude of the law toward the legalization of weed, both medical or recreational.

"We want to alter the perception of cannabis users to include motivated and productive members of society," said Riedle.

"It's not just the slacker, stoner culture that's dominated [the conversation] for years," he said.

The new tone Civilized is taking toward cannabis culture has attracted a few veteran players from the media world, including Mitch Fox, the former publisher of magazines like Details and Vanity Fair.

"I took a trip to visit my brother in Colorado a couple years ago, and I was shocked at what I saw in the dispensaries there," said Fox. "Young, bright people carrying briefcases were picking up cannabis to enjoy later after work. You could tell people were starting to recognize that a change was coming in the industry."

"These are people that are not defined by their use of cannabis, but they are cannabis users," he said.

"All I'm doing is something that I perceive as less harmful than alcohol that helps me relax and enjoy myself from time to time," Riedle said. "Nobody is talking about their use of cannabis out loud, but they've been happy to whisper about it."

Civilized ended up launching around Canada's general election, when Prime Minister Trudeau was about to be elected. According to Riedle, Trudeau was in third place but was the only candidate with a pro-recreational cannabis platform. Within a month his party was swept into power with a 7 point advantage.

Since then, and especially since November's U.S. election, voters in more states have approved medical and recreational marijuana use. The fact that California approved Proposition 64 was a big deal to Riedle, as the state represents "the fifth largest economy in the world."

"Culture that emanates from here has a real impact," he said. "The opposition to cannabis is aging out."

According to Riedle, the cannabis demographic is a bit surprising. Research has shown, he says, that most marijuana users make a yearly income of \$150,000, have children, are married and own a home.

"If you put a 19-year-old and a 50-year-old executive in front of me, you'd be surprised who's the bigger enjoyer of cannabis," he said. "Civilized sees 25 to 55-year-olds as our sweet spot, but the reality is in the 35 to 55 range. They're older than you'd expect."

"The reality of this culture is that it's way more broad than the one small [group] that feels comfortable disclosing their use," said Riedle.

The bigger range of cannabis users is the quieter one, for now.

"Civilized is a model for the modern media company," said Fox. "They'll be able to generate revenue from native, custom and integrated ads in addition to its print and video capabilities."

"This is a safe environment for non-cannabis brands to advertise and partner because there's a low reputational risk," he argued.