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How to Build a Sustainable Cannabis Packaging Solution

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PACKAGING



Introduction

According to [NielsenIQ](#), 92% of consumers say sustainability is important when choosing a brand today. Packaging can play a significant role in helping brands meet their sustainability goals and attract eco-conscious consumers. Designing and manufacturing sustainable packaging requires a holistic approach that includes understanding the actual container, the manufacturing process, transportation and energy requirements, carbon footprint, and government regulations.

When it comes to the cannabis industry, packaging solutions must also meet requirements around child resistance, tamper-evidence, opacity, resealability, label design, and more. Despite the complexities, sustainable cannabis packaging can be compliant, functional, and beautiful. Cannabis brands have many eco-friendly pathways to consider.

**The brands mentioned in this report are trademarks of their respective owners. Inclusion of these brands in this report is not meant to imply an association with or endorsement from the respective trademark owners.*

Compostable

Compostable packaging refers to packaging that will decompose into nutrient-rich organic matter, CO₂, and water in a controlled environment in the home or commercial composting facility.

According to the U.S. [Composting Council](#), compost diverts waste from ending up in landfills, conserves water, improves soil health, promotes plant growth, and combats climate change. Because of their organic composition, cannabis products are an emerging application for compostable packaging made from hemp and other plant-based materials.

Compostable products must meet strict testing [requirements](#) for decomposition, such as specific environment, specific time frame, environmental toxicity, etc. **Compostable should not be confused with biodegradable packaging, which has no such requirements and may contribute to greenwashing.** Berlin Packaging partners with several cannabis packaging suppliers who offer sustainable solutions, including those made with plant-based resins and accelerated degradation materials.





Recycled Materials

Beyond using recyclable packaging, today's brands are increasingly using recycled materials like post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastics, ocean-bound plastics, and recycled paperboard to demonstrate a commitment to the environment. **Post-consumer recycled content in packaging contributes to a circular economy by extending material life cycles. According to the [US Plastic Pact](#), it reduces landfill waste, conserves natural resources, saves energy, and lowers greenhouse gas emissions.** Adding PCR content to packaging decreases its carbon footprint (reduced energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, extraction of finite natural resources, and landfill disposal) compared to using 100% virgin materials, helping brands meet their sustainability goals.



In addition to consumer demand, government regulations are also driving the use of PCR materials. New York introduced requirements for PCR plastic use in cannabis packaging. **The Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act ([MRTA](#)) states, “cannabis product packaging cannot be made of any plastic, unless that plastic contains a minimum 25% post-consumer recycled content.”** Given the ever-changing legislative landscape, partnering with a packaging supplier like Berlin Packaging who understands the latest cannabis packaging regulations and sustainable packaging laws is increasingly important.

Reusability

Reusable shopping bags, refillable water bottles, and metal drinking straws are just a few reuse initiatives people have worked into their everyday routines over the past several years. **Reusability reduces single-use packaging waste and promotes a circular economy.** Consumer packaged goods brand owners – including those in the cannabis industry - are beginning to capitalize on the growing refill and reuse mentality by introducing reusable packaging.

Reusable cannabis packaging can be refilled with more cannabis or used for other purposes. **Material selection is essential to ensure reusability is practical and sustainable. Glass containers and high-quality, durable plastics are long-lasting and well-suited for reuse.** Food-safe packaging solutions provide added functionality and additional usage occasions. [Dockside Cannabis](#) dispensaries feature seven ways to repurpose old cannabis containers.





Shipping Efficiencies

For a packaging solution to be truly sustainable, it needs to perform at every stage of its journey, from the warehouse to the consumer. Shipping is a big part of a package's journey and an important part of its carbon footprint. **According to the EPA, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation account for about 29% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.** When it comes to transportation – and cannabis - size matters. Sizing is an essential factor when selecting the proper cannabis packaging, as it can impact the quality of the product. However, right-sizing your package to ensure it's not larger than it needs to be can reduce the environmental impacts of shipping.

Light-weighting - reducing the weight of your package by rethinking the size, material, or unneeded components – can also make a difference. Efficient packaging can reduce fuel consumption and emissions associated with shipping. **Berlin Packaging's sustainability team conducts lifecycle analyses (LCA) to help our customers quantify their product's environmental impact over the course of its entire lifecycle.** With LCAs, we can calculate a product's environmental footprint, including its carbon footprint (greenhouse gas emissions) and water, mineral resource, and fossil fuel use.



Paper, Inks & Labeling

Secondary packaging, label components, and decoration can also play a role in a brand's sustainability story. Using [Forestry Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) certified paper for shipping cases, secondary cartons, and inserts helps protect healthy, resilient forests. Several cannabis brands use FSC paper for their rolling papers. Inks may not be top of mind when considering eco-friendly packaging, but even seemingly minor details can have a significant impact. **Inks, dyes, and coatings can inhibit recyclability and/or reusability, so using soy-based, water-based, or vegetable-based inks contributes to the lifecycle of a package.** [Soulshine Cannabis](#) uses paper sourced from sustainable PNW forests and prints with vegetable-based inks as part of its commitment to be an environmentally conscious cannabis company.

When it comes to sustainable cannabis packaging, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Brands should consider a variety of tactics, including pack material, size, weight, decoration, and more. **Berlin Packaging's dedicated team of sustainability experts is here to help you find the most effective and impactful package for your cannabis products.** Because Berlin does not manufacture packaging components, our product offerings are not limited by material or technology platforms. We provide our clients with unbiased, fact-based sustainability consultation and a wide variety of packaging options.



The image shows a red box of Soulshine Cannabis. The box features the brand name 'Soulshine' in a white, cursive font, with 'CANNABIS' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. A yellow leaf graphic is positioned below the brand name. The text 'CANNABIS FOR A HIGHER PURPOSE™ SATIVA' is visible on the box. A clear window on the front of the box shows the cannabis product inside. A yellow diamond-shaped icon with a green leaf and '21+' is located at the bottom left. A circular logo at the bottom right says 'BLISSFULLY FOCUSED' and 'NARNIA TRAINWRECK X JACK'. Surrounding the box are six icons with corresponding text: a recycling symbol for '100% RECYCLABLE CARDBOARD', a trash can for 'FULLY COMPOSTABLE WINDOW', a tree for 'SOURCED FROM SUSTAINABLE PNW FORESTS', a leaf for 'PRINTED WITH VEGETABLE BASED INKS', a padlock for 'COMPOSTABLE ZIP-LOCK BAG INSIDE SEALED FOR FRESHNESS', and a paw print for 'A PERCENTAGE OF RETAIL SALES GO TO PET RESCUE'.



We Believe Anything Is Possible[®]

With over 100 years in the packaging industry, more than 2,000 packaging professionals and a global network of suppliers and warehouses, we offer 50,000+ SKUs of plastic, glass, and metal containers, closures, and dispensing systems across all markets for customers just like you.

Our Business Model

Berlin Packaging combines the best elements of manufacturing, distribution and logistics, and value-added service providers to deliver cost-effective packaging solutions to our customers. Our mission is to improve our customers' net income through packaging products and services. We are the world's largest Hybrid Packaging Supplier[®].



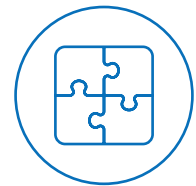
Best Elements of
a Manufacturer

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- Inventory Management Services
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