



Introducing ACG NJ's “Cannabis - After the High” Panelist

An Interview with
Ashesh (Alex) C. Shah
Founder and CEO
solo* sciences

*Conducted by Fred Feiner, Member, ACG New Jersey
President, Yankee Public Relations*



Alex Shah certainly never expected that his career path would take him, of all places, to the medical marijuana industry. By the time he was 27, Shah had been involved in four IPOs, served on a Presidential taskforce for the CIA, held top secret/special compartmentalized information security clearances, and had developed considerable intellectual property in software licensing, payment technology, psychographics, and consumer loyalty.

Applicable to all consumable goods, **solo*** sciences was launched in 2017 to provide the technology solution needed to vet, verify, and match products and consumers. The idea was to create something along the lines of the music smartphone app and website Pandora, but with application to anything consumable, including cannabis.

Cannabis has become the driving sector behind **solo***, but Shah expects the company to be active in many industries within the next year. Shah’s entry into the cannabis industry has become so extensive that he was recently asked to serve as special advisor to Jim Patterson, CEO of [Eaze](#), the first and largest on-demand medical marijuana delivery company in the country with some 700,000 customers. Eaze executives are expected to join Shah as guests at the ACG panel discussion.

“I always laugh when I tell people how I got pulled into this world,” said Shah. “A buddy of mine from Williams College, David Caplan, called me up and said, ‘my younger brother, Ben, is into cannabis. Can you help?’”

Never a marijuana aficionado, Shah’s thoughts turned to an intervention of some kind.

“Anything you need, I told him, just tell me where to be,” he recalled. “Dave laughed at me and said, no, idiot, he is a doctor, like dad. He also ended up going to Williams, and then Tufts Medical, to focus on pain management. Now he’s the Chief Medical Officer of Canna Care Docs, the largest medical cannabis doctor group with over a quarter-million patients. Everyone wants to work with him, but I think he needs your business experience to help him figure out how to do this right.”

“Given that endorsement,” Shah added, “I got together with his brother, Benjamin Caplan, M.D. Five minutes into my conversation, I realized that whatever I thought I knew about cannabis was either wrong or outdated.”

Shah began to research the industry and sought out the expertise of his friend Katie Flannery, who is now Head of Partnerships for **solo***. He dove into the nature of the exploding cannabis industry and realized the challenges the marketplace was facing. After speaking with Flannery, Shah realized he didn’t understand what, as she dubbed it, “future weed” looked like.

He quickly learned medical marijuana comes in all forms. It’s convenient, clean, strong, edible, smokable, vape-able, and drinkable. If you can imagine a way to consume cannabis, it’s probably being manufactured.

As Shah was learning about this rapidly growing industry, he realized that the sheer amount of information coming his way would likely be just as overwhelming to the general population. “How could the average consumer possibly figure out what to take, what to trust, who to believe, when there were tens of thousands of products and players rushing in to make a buck?” said Shah. “It was the Wild West, and information was scarce. The industry needed an independent third-party auditor with the technology, skills, and credibility to make a GIA Certificate, or Good Housekeeping® seal of approval, for the cannabis industry.”

Having decided to tackle this glaring need, Shah began forming a plan. “So, I knew bringing talent together to tackle this was the first step, and here we are. Our team recognizes that this industry is going to change the nation and, possibly, the world. Cannabis is here to stay and it’s going to shape people’s lives. And if we can change it, or influence it, or fix it, or keep it safer, then it’s worth doing. This is a huge part of the story.” He notes that **solo*** brought in experts from multiple other industries in order to bring a new approach to the challenges being faced by the cannabis industry, “Ultimately, we have a driven and passionate team with an expansive range of experiences from a wide breadth of industries. It gives us multiple layers inside the company to solve problems that most can’t. We can pivot faster, be more agile, and be more resilient than your average start-up.”

To address the issue, **solo*** sciences has created a patented independent verification mark, **solo***CODE™, linked to an app which provides consumers peace of mind about what they’re purchasing. It filters out products that do not meet high standards and ensures transparency on behalf of product makers. Additionally, the **solo*** proprietary machine learning feedback system matches consumers to products by learning about a person’s physiology, psychometrics, and previous experiences, and then predicting what a new product will do to or for them.

“Third-party validation for cannabis products simply does not exist,” Shah said. “And the need for it becomes more obvious every day. As an emerging mainstream industry, cannabis faces numerous actual – and perceptual – obstacles. Questionable products and a few bad experiences will easily derail something so promising. As an independent auditor of the product creator, **solo*** looks at data from labs, regulatory activity, and essentially how well a company does its work. This enables us to feel confident that the information provided will be meaningful and accurate.”

Shah, who was born in Brooklyn and has a brother living in Short Hills, N.J., knows technology is the key to making cannabis safe for everyone involved. Shah’s commitment to bringing trust to the cannabis industry was obvious when he discussed the new endeavor with his father, a retired cardiologist who helped create the [American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin](#) when he came to the U.S.

“He asked me if I was going to do it right and,” Shah recalled, “of course, I said, ‘Yes, I wouldn’t do it otherwise.’ That’s when my father told me that I owe it to the public to get involved.”

To learn more about **solo***, please visit solosciences.com.

Please join us on October 18 at The Westin Governor Morris Hotel, Morristown, NJ, to learn from Alex and our other guest speakers as they share their experiences and their expertise with you on “**Cannabis - After the High.**”

ACG NJ Morris Event
“Cannabis – After the High”

Thursday, October 18, 2018

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

The Westin Governor Morris Hotel, Morristown, NJ

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