

[Forbes Magazine concurs](#), while women earn 57 percent of undergraduate degrees [in the United States], only 18 percent of them are in technical fields. The numbers are even lower for women of color. Despite efforts to encourage school-aged girls to get involved in [STEM and STEAM](#), there remains a dearth of women in technical careers.

## Women Who Didn't Allow Trends to Influence Their Career Choices

In the cannabis industry, the numbers aren't much better, unfortunately. [Seventeen percent of women hold executive positions](#) in cannabis companies, and there are even fewer women on the tech side. Earlier this year, we interviewed [four trailblazing women who hold technical roles](#) in cannabis. Today, we're going to introduce you to five more women who are bucking the trend.

Krysti Rede

As Vice President of Product Management with [Flowhub](#), Rede is one of the few women in the cannabis industry who hold executive positions—in particular on the tech side. About her job, Rede stated, “I lead our product management and design team at Flowhub, where we focus on product strategy and vision for our products, developing roadmaps that align with our business drivers, as well as work closely with engineering on the delivery of those products.” She continued, “Our team recently launched the [Stash](#)™ app this summer, which is the first in the industry to streamline dispensary operations and reduce inventory management cycles all via a mobile solution.”

“As a Latina woman, I had heard there was a larger representation of people of color, but in my experience meeting other executives and in technical jobs, this has not been the case. My advice is to approach it like you would any other industry: do your research, understand the problems and opportunities, and bring forth your experience, creativity, and work ethic. As professionals from outside verticals who are crossing over into cannabis, we have an opportunity to use the innovations and technologies we've developed to influence the perception of cannabis and raise awareness of the broader social and economic benefits.”

Liz Conors

[Headset](#) in Seattle, Washington, is an analytics service provider for the cannabis industry. Said Liz Conors, Director of Analytics for Headset, “The tech side of the cannabis industry, like many other technical fields, is pretty male-dominated. It's never easy to look around a table and find you are the only woman in the room. There are some really awesome women in the industry, and I suggest finding one to help you navigate it.”

## Jill Ellsworth

If women comprise low numbers in technical and executive positions in the cannabis industry, you won't be surprised to learn how few are founders of cannabis companies. Jill Ellsworth is the founder and CEO of [Willow Industries](#). "As the CEO of Willow, my day-to-day consists of putting out fires (lots of fires!), managing our ever-expanding team, working closely with our investors, setting and driving the organization's strategic decisions, focusing on the IP process, working with state regulators across the country, and trying to stay as Zen as possible in a very chaotic industry."

Asking Ellsworth about her personal impact in the industry, she said, "I dreamed up a machine and a process for the industry that resulted in an important solution for a growing problem in cannabis: post-harvest contamination."

About the lack of women in the industry, Ellsworth said, "Even though women are the minority in this industry, I feel that I have always been respected by men in the industry. Being a woman on the tech side of the business definitely helps you stand out, and I feel it has been an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Sure, there are always those people (men and women) who do not respect others, but those experiences have been few and far between."

## Mallory Speakman

If you've ever wondered how to determine if the cannabis or CBD oil you consume are safe and efficacious, there are third-party labs that manufacturers use to ensure both. Mallory Speakman is the Laboratory Director for [CannaSafe](#), considered the best testing facility by [Emerald Scientific](#) and [Dope Magazine](#) while receiving the [Cannabis Cup from High Times](#). CannaSafe is ISO 17025 certified. Speakman's job is equal parts technical and managerial, responsible for—among other things—hiring, firing, mentoring, ensuring Quality and SOP (standard operating procedures) and overseeing safety standards within the lab and testing machines.

With dreams of becoming a forensic scientist, Speakman—who's been in the cannabis industry for seven and a half years—took a detour by breaking into the industry. Speakman says her experience has been decidedly "gender-neutral and that everyone is very accepting and supportive. Gender, race, or sexual orientation have not been factors in whether you are appreciated or moving up; work ethic, positive attitude, and drive for change are what matter."

## Jessamyn Stephanía

As the Chief Technology Officer for [NUG](#)—a manufacturer of cannabis products—Jessamyn Stephanía works with every department from seed to sale, building and maintaining communication between management and employees and using technology and logistics for seamless distribution and integrating products to market.

Stephania created NUG's specialized seed-to-sale track and trace system, and she works to ensure that the company remains in compliance with [METRC](#), California's state-mandated track and trace system. Stephania's background is in IT, and she joined NUG in 2014.

Regarding women working in tech jobs in the cannabis industry, Stephania, who is from Mexico (which of course created an added barrier), told me, "Before I started, cannabis was not as regulated as it is today, and before many joined the legalized space it was a male-dominated industry. For me, once I joined the industry, it also meant that I had to prove myself, work twice as hard to do that, and I had to believe in myself twice as much. Still, every now and then a big decision feels like the hardest one yet."

For any women who want to break into the cannabis industry, particularly in the tech side, Stephania offers the following advice: "I say go for it! Cannabis is a growing industry and one in which technology, science, and regulations are still evolving. It's important for women and gender non-conforming individuals to make their mark on the industry by shaping the space and introducing and advancing today's and tomorrow's technology."

[For Women Wanting to Break into the Cannabis Industry, There is a Seat at the Tech Table for You](#)

As the industry grows, the doors will inevitably continue opening for women to join the tech side of cannabis. It's an exciting industry, and while there are challenges, they're not insurmountable. Like these women, and so many others have found, the cannabis industry presents a unique opportunity for women to forge a career path in technology far more aligned with their core values.

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