

## Client Spotlight



**Company Name:**

Pennsylvania Options for  
Wellness/DBA Vytal Options

**Name & Title:**

Chris Hinnershitz, Chief Security  
and Compliance Officer

**Location:**

Duncannon, PA

**Industry:**

Medical Marijuana

**Website:**

PAOFW.com



**I know that IntermixIT  
always has our best interests  
in mind from a business  
perspective, and that is a  
huge source of peace for me.**



## “Security-Wise, It’s The Same As A Pharmacy”: Navigating The Complexities Of The Medical Marijuana Industry With IntermixIT’s Expertise

**T**he medical marijuana industry, legal in 41 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, depends on providers like Pennsylvania (PA) Options for Wellness to connect patients with essential treatments under the careful supervision of a doctor. However, the industry’s novelty, coupled with its legal complexities and stringent security requirements for patient data, meant it took time for PA Options for Wellness to fully establish itself.

Tom Trite, the founder, started the business in 2014, but it wasn’t until 2019 that he secured the proper licenses to sell medicinal marijuana. During those five years, significant groundwork was laid to prepare for future operations, including

cultivation, processing, and sales. In 2017, Chris Hinnershitz joined the team as Chief Security and Compliance Officer. "In 2019, we were awarded a clinical registrant license," Chris shares. "With that, we established a 10-year research agreement with the Penn State College of Medicine."

For Chris and the PA Options for Wellness team, the research and educational aspects of the medical marijuana industry are top priorities. "We're super aware of the impact we're having on the community, and we always want it to be positive," Chris mentions. To further uplift the surrounding community, the company has focused on job creation, employing much of its growing and processing facility workforce from Duncannon, an economically distressed area.

### **Rapid Growth And IT Challenges**

Once PA Options for Wellness received its license, the company experienced rapid growth, with 50–60 employees joining almost overnight. This sudden expansion quickly overwhelmed their existing IT setup. "We were with another IT provider at the time, but going from supporting a team of four people to a team of 60 is a huge jump. They just couldn't keep up," Chris admits. During this chaotic period, Chris decided to partner with IntermixIT, a decision that has paid off significantly over the past five years.

### **One Seminar Changed Everything**

After realizing the need for new IT support, everything seemed to align for Chris. "We actually got an invite from IntermixIT because they invited us to a cybersecurity seminar they were hosting," Chris recalls. Impressed by IntermixIT's risk mitigation strategy, Chris introduced himself to Jason, and the partnership took off from there. With PA Options for Wellness growing rapidly, IntermixIT stepped in to onboard new employees into the system and upgrade the technology at the physical dispensaries.

As the partnership developed, it became clear that while the two organizations operated in very different fields, they shared similar values. "Our entire leadership team was committed to working with vendors that shared our values and aligned with our culture," Chris explains. "With IntermixIT, we aligned on how we value our internal employees, how we approach customer problems, and especially how we aim to improve our communities." This alignment has allowed the two organizations to work seamlessly together.

### **Opening Day: No Room For Error**

Even after six grand openings, each new dispensary opening is critical for Chris and his team. "There's so much that can go wrong, and so many eyes on it," Chris notes. At PA Options for Wellness, dispensary openings are major events, complete with vendors, food, media, and even appearances by Jim Belushi. But with so much at stake, even a minor issue could cast a shadow over the entire day.

"It's not just the media presence and new clients that make opening days busy," Chris says. "We have operational inspections, inspections with the Department of Health, and of course, we're testing a newly established computer

system with each new opening." To ensure everything runs smoothly, Chris counts on IntermixIT to be on-site and ready to address any tech-related issues that may arise.

But IntermixIT doesn't just wait for opening day to start preparing. Weeks in advance, their team reviews unresolved technology needs, creates a plan for each opening, and executes that plan for a seamless grand opening every time. "There's a high level of trust between us," Chris shares. "I know that IntermixIT always has our best interests in mind from a business perspective, and that is a huge source of peace for me."

While most grand openings go off without a hitch, there have been instances where issues occurred. "We've had internet issues on opening day, as well as hardware problems with our point-of-sale machines," Chris says. "But each time, IntermixIT has fixed things within minutes—don't even think most people noticed the interruption because of how well they were handled."

### **A Custom Backup To Combat Unreliable Internet**

Persistent issues can be the hardest to resolve, and for PA Options for Wellness, unreliable internet in some locations has been a challenge. Without the internet, operations grind to a halt, preventing online orders and in-store transactions while frustrating customers. To combat this, IntermixIT proposed a custom solution: a cellular internet backup.

"At first, I didn't know what Jason was talking about," Chris admits, "but then he explained that the cellular backup functions like a backup generator for the electricity—automatically kicking in if the primary internet connection fails—and I thought, this is exactly what we need."

Since implementing the backup, the dispensaries have experienced no downtime, and most employees aren't even aware when the cellular backup takes over—it's that seamless. When other dispensaries in the area are offline due to internet issues, PA Options for Wellness continues to operate smoothly, all thanks to IntermixIT's proactive approach.

### **A Future Full Of Uncertainty But Steady IT Support**

In an industry as dynamic as this, uncertainty is a constant. While it's unclear how the potential legalization of recreational marijuana in Pennsylvania might impact PA Options for Wellness, Chris and his team remain committed to serving their clients and community. To maintain operations, protect patient data, and keep people employed, reliable IT is essential.

"Our business transformed when we brought IntermixIT into the fold. That's one thing we have no plans to change," Chris says with a laugh. Due to the significant impact IntermixIT has had on PA Options for Wellness, Chris frequently recommends Jason and his team to other dispensaries. What began as a partnership founded on shared values has grown into something greater than the sum of its parts, and that won't change anytime soon.

To learn more about an MSP that's ready for anything, visit [www.IntermixIT.com](http://www.IntermixIT.com).