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NEWS



JOBS

- > Find a job
- > Post a job



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- > Find a home
- > Sell your home



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- > Buy a used car
- > Sell a car



CLASSIFIEDS

- > Personals

NEWS / HOME PAGE

- > COOK COUNTY
- > DuPAGE COUNTY
- > KANE COUNTY
- > LAKE COUNTY
- > McHENRY COUNTY
- > ILLINOIS
- > NATION / WORLD

BUSINESS

COMMITMENTS

- > ANNIVERSARIES
- > ENGAGEMENTS
- > WEDDINGS
- > PLACE A COMMITMENT

ENTERTAINMENT

- > COMICS
- > CROSSWORDS
- > SUDOKU
- > MOVIE TIMES
- > TV LISTINGS

FOOD

- > COUPONS
- > RECIPES

HEALTH & FITNESS

OBITUARIES

OPINION / EDITORIAL

REAL ESTATE

SPECIAL REPORTS

SPORTS

- > PREP SPORTS

SUBURBAN LIVING

TRAVEL

CONTACT US

- > ADVERTISING INFO.

Sex, lies and alibis

Burt Constable

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Human relationships have a long history of cheating, built on an ever-shifting foundation of lies and suspicions.

On their first night in the Garden of Eden, a distrustful Eve probably counted Adam's ribs just to make sure he was truthful when he assured her there was no "other woman."

In the millennia since, unfaithful partners and lies have brought down many a relationship. But as a character on the TV show "My Name is Earl" said during a recent episode: "It's not the lies that screws people up; it's the finding out."

That cynical outlook on relationships provides the justification for a new suburban-based business called the Alibi Network, founded by Leonard Brin of Wheeling and Jeffrey Irwin of Highland Park.

Want your spouse to think you're at a three-day business seminar in Orlando when you're really shacked up with a lover for a long weekend in St. Bart's? The Alibi Network can provide everything from fake airline tickets and doctored seminar photographs, to a virtual 24-hour hotel reception desk and phony receipts.

"We're not creating a marketplace. We're just filling a need that has not been filled," says Irwin, a 43-year-old married furniture-importer. "We don't condemn or condone."

After paying a \$35 annual fee, clients can order up lies and ruses from alibinetwork.com. Deceptions range from a \$10 e-mail confirming a phony reservation to elaborate schemes that cost hundreds of dollars and last for months.

"The technology is there, otherwise we wouldn't be able to pull this off," Irwin says,

One man in the midst of a "discreet affair," spent \$1,200 on an alibi that made it appear as if he was in Hong Kong on business, Brin says. His alibi included a Hong Kong phone number and Web site, a phony hotel receptionist and lots of counterfeit documentation. Some real businesses are hired to lend credibility, he adds.

When a call comes in to the Alibi Network's 24-hour call center, that person's alibi scenario pops onto a computer screen and lets staff know whether the caller is expecting a hotel operator in San Diego or a doctor's receptionist in Cleveland.

Brin and Irwin say their company will not do anything illegal. Brin says they turned away a client who wanted to ruin a romantic rival's reputation by making it appear as if he were having an affair.

The company can cover for someone on a job interview, supply a convincing sick day pretext or facilitate secret delivery of treatment for an embarrassing medical condition.

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- **A second chance to bring relief**

> SPORTS

- **Unfamiliar territory**
- **Victory ripped away from Blackhawks**
- **No match in sight with Prior, Tejada**
- **Wauconda rallies but Barrington survives**
- **Chandler working to get his game back on track**

> BUSINESS

- **Feelings of 'gemuetlichkeit'**
- **New home sales tumble after record**

- > ARCHIVES
- > GIVING GARDEN
- > N.I.E.
- > SUBURBAN MOSAIC
- > SUBSCRIBE
- > SUBSCRIBER SERVICES
- > YOUR TIPS

While testimonials include heart-warming stories about surprise engagement parties, keeping that perfect anniversary gift secret, and boosting a woman's business by making it appear as if she lives in Europe, infidelity and adultery provide the motivation for the business, Brin and Irwin admit.

And that's not as sleazy as it sounds, the men insist.

"The only reason they call us is because they want to save the relationship they have," says Brin, 35, who adds that his long-ago divorce had nothing to do with infidelity.

A momentary mistake by a cheating spouse can wreck marriages, families, careers and more, Irwin says, mentioning the devastating effect the truth could have on children.

"We want to play up the 'marriage insurance' angle. It has saved marriages," Irwin says, repeating the company's motto: "Keeping your affair discreet. Keeping your marriage alive."

Relying on friends or business associates to validate a lie makes a cheating spouse vulnerable to blackmail.

"In the old days, guys would cover for each other," Irwin says, recalling the guy code practiced by the celebrity Las Vegas set. "Consider us the 'Rat Pack' of the new millennium."

While similar services thrive in Europe, puritanical Americans don't want this, do they?

"Out loud they might say that," says Irwin, who notes Americans talk a better morality game than we play.

The Alibi Network has 1,600 clients and "we want to take it to the next level, saying this will help marriages more than hurt marriages," Irwin says.

So covering up adultery is a good thing?

"It's not good that it happens, but it's probably better that your spouse doesn't know," Irwin says.

"If you have a problem in your relationship, try counseling," Brin says. "And if that doesn't work, you can call us as a last resort."

And you could pull off the deception — unless your spouse finds an Internet site called exposingalibis.com

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