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November 29, 2006

Editorial: Crafting little 'white lies'

Business capitalizing on adults' transgressions makes no excuses for its success

It shouldn't come as any surprise that Las Vegas' now-famous "What happens here, stays here" advertising campaign lures fibbers along with fun-seekers.

It also shouldn't be surprising that someone has found a way to capitalize on liars' needs to have someone cover their tracks. According to a recent story by the Las Vegas Sun, an Illinois-based company called The Alibi Network sets up clients with phony travel documents so that the client's loved ones think they are in one place when, in reality, they are someplace else. And Las Vegas is that place about 20 percent of the time.

An Alibi Network employee told the Sun's Abigail Goldman that for \$75 to \$1,500 his company can create fake airline itineraries, hotel reservation confirmations, telephone answering services and even fake work seminar documents, from registration confirmations to certificates of completion.

As one would expect, about half of the company's clients are hiding marital infidelity. One woman told the Sun that she paid the company to make certain that her husband would think she was visiting Los Angeles, rather than visiting Las Vegas with her boyfriend. Another client, who described himself as a recovered gambling addict, used the service to keep his wife from finding out about his trip here to play blackjack and place sports bets.

Las Vegas is a city that invites its tourists to participate in adult mischief, but that doesn't make such deceptions any less disturbing. The Alibi Network isn't making these people lie; it simply is cashing in on the type of behavior that also has provided Las Vegas with one of its most successful marketing campaigns.

In reality, an addict who pays strangers to lie about his gambling trips probably isn't "recovered." And a woman who pays someone to cover the tracks of her affair probably isn't thinking that those fake hotel reservations could make it impossible to quickly find her in the event a family member suffers a real tragedy. But people will pay big bucks to perpetuate an illusion. And, evidently, our economy isn't the only one that counts on it.

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