

**Las Vegas Sun**

# For job recruiters, Vegas can be a tough sell

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If university regents feel rejected by the man they hoped would be UNLV's next president, Las Vegas' job recruiters can empathize. They are regularly rebuffed by professionals they try to lure to the area.

Lt. Gen. William Lennox Jr., West Point superintendent who was sought by regents to take charge of UNLV, decided to turn down the job because it wasn't a "good fit."

He didn't elaborate - it may have more to do with politics than aesthetics - but recruiters are familiar with the usual reasons why prized candidates balk on job offers.

The biggest challenge facing recruiters is overcoming the escalating costs of Las Vegas Valley housing - especially for candidates coming from less-expensive housing markets - and the reputation that Clark County schools are lackluster.

(Neither would have been a problem for Lennox, who was expected to have been paid \$400,000 a year and has no school-age children.)

The recruiters' suggestions on the housing market: Rent for a few months rather than rush into a decision. And as for schools: Some homework will help uncover the better ones - and there are a host of private schools in the valley.

But job prospects also are turned off by the presence of gambling and the sex industry, recruiters say. The area's image may be a plus in seducing some tourists, but can be one of the town's liabilities when trying to persuade professionals to move here with their families.

All the coaxing and cajoling that recruiters can apply in attracting job candidates to Las Vegas can fly out the window when, while driving around town, one of those adult cab advertisements scoots by.

To blunt the embarrassing moment, recruiter Rosie Saenz of Morgan Consulting Resources uses this stock response: "I've lived here 30 years, and the only time I see that is when I come to the Strip. Your kids are not going to be exposed to that unless you bring them to the Strip."

Doug Geinzer of Recruiting Nevada coined a line, too: "Those of us who live here, we drive 20 miles out of the way to avoid the Strip."

The smart recruiters quickly turn the subject to something more positive - such as Nevada has no personal income tax, or that it has a beautiful desert filled with opportunities for exploration and discovery, fine restaurants staffed by celebrity chefs and gorgeous weather, at least for nine months of the year.

"If you're a good salesperson you overcome objections," said Ed Koller of Howard-Sloan-Koller Group of New York City. Koller recruits for the Greenspun Media Group, which, like the Las Vegas Sun, is

owned by the Greenspun family. "There are all sorts of reasons why people don't want to take a job."

But because of its adult landscape, Las Vegas suffers from a perception that is more difficult to overcome than other cities.

"When you mention Las Vegas it's either, 'OK, it sounds OK, I want to learn more.' Or it's, 'I'm sorry, I can't go there because I have a family.' "

Even a candidate who initially is open to employment in Las Vegas might have second thoughts after consulting with a spouse or co-workers, recruiters say.

Donna Lattanzio moved here seven years ago from New York despite her friend's warnings. "Are you out of your mind?" they asked her. "You're just going to gamble there."

"I said it's a beautiful place when you see the neighborhoods," said Lattanzio, president of Millennium Staffing Services.

Now she's the recruiter, and has to address concerns about expensive housing and the quality of schools.

"The fact that 'affordable housing' now means a \$300,000 to a \$400,000 home, that's kind of scary for folks," Lattanzio said.

Other job prospects, like the actuary she tried to recruit from the high-end Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta, Ga., worry about the quality of education, she said.

"She was very concerned that the school system would not be up to par with her children's school in Georgia," Lattanzio said. The woman got cold feet and stayed there.

Some industries avoid the hurdles of recruiting employees to Las Vegas by promoting from within their own ranks - or from other companies within the local industry.

Business Bank of Nevada, according to spokesman Paul Stowell, encourages its own employees to recruit - by offering cash rewards when they successfully refer friends to jobs.

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