

Amazon And Google Employees Busted In Asian Sex Trafficking Sting

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Several Seattle employees of both Google and Amazon were busted after using their corporate accounts to send emails to local brothels and pimps looking to purchase services from sex workers trafficked from Asia, according to emails obtained by *Newsweek*.



"[E]mails obtained by Newsweek reveal another sordid corner of the tech sector's treatment of women: a horny nest of prostitution "hobbyists" at tech giants Microsoft, Amazon and other firms in Seattle's high tech alley."

Many of the emails were swept up in a 2015 sting operation which targeted online chat rooms and message boards in which customers rate sex workers - resulting in the arrest of 18 of these "prostitution hobbyists," **including several high level Amazon and Microsoft directors** - two of which are currently scheduled for trial in March.



Seattle brothels had been catering to Microsoft employees through several "backpage.com" ads located nearby the company's Redmond, WA headquarters, in what is becoming a booming business.

A study commissioned by the Department of Justice found that **Seattle has the fastest-growing sex industry in the United States**, more than doubling in size between 2005 and 2012. **That boom correlates neatly with the boom of the tech sector there.** It also correlates to the **surge in high-paying jobs**, since this "hobby" (the word johns use online to describe buying sex) can be expensive: some of these men spent **\$30,000 to \$50,000 a year**, according to authorities.

The tech sector has not only employed a significant number of men who pay for sex with trafficked women, **it has also enabled traffickers to more easily reach customers and to hide their business from cops by taking it off the streets and into computers and ultimately, hotel rooms, motels or apartments.** In one 24-hour-period in Seattle, an estimated 6,487 people solicited sex on just one of the more than 100 websites that connect buyers with sellers, according to a 2014 study.

Of note, Backpage.com shut down its adult sections in [January](#), citing government pressure following a 2016 Senate report on commercial sex services fingered the website as a hotbed for criminal activity, and stating that "Backpage officials have publicly acknowledged that criminals use the website for sex trafficking, including trafficking of minors."



Backpage.com CEO Carl Ferrer (Texas AG)

In October, 2016, Backpage CEO Carl Ferrer [was arrested](#) in Houston and the company's Dallas headquarters searched. NPR reported at the time that Ferrer, 55, was charged with pimping a minor, pimping and conspiracy to commit pimping. Two controlling shareholders of Backpage — Michael Lacey and James Larkin — also are charged with conspiracy to commit pimping."

The prostitutes trafficked from Asia typically don't speak much English, relying on translation apps to offer services such as "girlfriend" experiences and "Nuru" (nude massage). Many of the women are working their way out of debt bondage, and feared for their lives or those of their

families - according to one pimp interviewed during the 2015 sting.

A spokesman for Microsoft said of the emails "Microsoft has a long history of cooperating with law enforcement and other agencies on combating sex trafficking and related topics, and we have employees who volunteer their time and money specifically to combat this issue as well. The personal conduct of a tiny fraction of our 125,000 employees does not in any way represent our culture. No organization is immune to the unfortunate situation when employees act unethically or illegally. When that happens, we look into the conduct and take appropriate action. Microsoft makes it clear to our employees they have a responsibility to act with integrity and conduct themselves in a legal and ethical manner at all times. If they don't, they risk losing their jobs."

Amazon told *Newsweek* it's investigating the matter, and that "It is against Amazon's policy for any employee or Contingent Worker to engage in any sex buying activities of any kind in Amazon's workplace or in any work-related setting outside of the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings or business-related social events.' When Amazon suspects that an employee has used

company funds or resources to engage in criminal conduct, the company will immediately investigate and take appropriate action up to and including termination. The company may also refer the matter to law enforcement."
