

The Sex Worker Industry Is Still Booming In Silicon Valley Thanks to Google



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AP Photo/Jae C.

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The sex industry in the Valley is still huge, [Jessica Gynn of USA Today reports](#).

"Silicon Valley is like a military base: There are very few civilian women and lots of money," one Silicon Valley entrepreneur told USA Today on condition of anonymity.

That doesn't seem to be the case in other cities. [The Urban Institute released a report](#) in March that tracked the sex trade in eight big cities across the United States. In five cities, [the underground sex industry shrank between 2003 and 2007](#).

Sex workers have been flocking to the Valley for quite some time, Guynn writes:

At the height of the dot-com boom in 1997, the *San Jose Mercury News* called the technology industry a "prime target for trafficking" because of all the "lonely single men with money to burn."

And that still seems to be the how it is today. One sex worker interviewed by CNN last year says she's made [close to \\$1 million](#) .

[The sex workers even use technology](#) such as Square and social networks to help their businesses run more efficiently.

Last week, an alleged high-end prostitute named Alix Tichelman [was arrested on suspicion of killing](#) Forrest Hayes, a Google exec.

The Santa Cruz Sentinel reported that Tichelman and Hayes met on SeekingArrangement.com, a website for "sugar daddies and sugar babies seeking mutually beneficial relationships."

And that's not the only website of its kind.

"Before the Internet, clients didn't know where to find the prostitutes and prostitutes did not know where to find the clients. If you think about it in an economic sense, the Internet has removed a lot of the friction from the market," Scott Cunningham, an associate professor at Baylor University, told USA Today. "And when you reduce search friction, you get a lot more searching and a lot more of that activity."

The feds are trying to crack down on these anonymous websites; it recently shut down MyRedbook.com, and prosecutors are seeking \$5.4 million from the people allegedly behind that website.

But as soon as one website goes away, another crops up, according to local police departments.

"Now that everyone has a smartphone at their fingertips, men can go on the Internet and don't have to worry about being out in the open," Sgt. Kyle Oki of the San Jose Police Department Human Trafficking Task Force told USA Today.

But things might be changing. The end of MyRedbook.com means that the sex workers no longer get free advertising, thus making it harder for clients to find them. The site also screens potential clients; without the middleman, the sex workers are afraid to take on new people.

But some people have found an alternate way to make money.

"I think any possibility of the current tech boom trickling down to sex workers is limited, partially because clients are afraid of the FBI now, and partially because they can't find our ads. I personally have turned to porn as a more consistent option," Kitty Stryker, a former escort and media manager for TroubleFilms, a gay and lesbian porn company, told USA Today.

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