

Question of the Day - 29 August 2023

Q:

The LVA paid-subscription model, Part 2

A: Continuing our responses to the comments in the recent Question of the Day on our planned transition to a paid-subscription model.

It's somewhat ironic that it will now cost us money to find out where we can park for free. And where the other good deals are, too.

You have four choices. 1) Find the good deals on your own. 2) Pay \$3 and get all the information you need for your trip, then cancel. 3) Pay \$36 for year-round information or \$50 for that, plus the coupons for the *really* good deals. 4) Stop coming to Vegas.

Heck, the entire digital edition of the LVRJ is only 99 cents a month.

Not exactly. The 99-cents-a-month is a *one-month* introductory offer. After the first month, you're charged \$89 for the full year: \$7.42 per month. Even the eight-page *Las Vegas Sun* charges \$8.99 per month or \$86.30 per year, with no introductory offer.

I'm still waiting for a book I ordered in December to see if it has any valuable info. So not eager to pay more now.

We presume you're referencing *The Ultimate Report* by James Grosjean. You should have received this book by now. As mentioned yesterday, you purchased on a pre-publication offer with a significant discount for your patience.

It's an easy decision to go to the MRB level, starting with 2024. Would I be paying for both, for the first eight months?

No. If you start with the \$3 offer, then upgrade to a full \$50 subscription, your subscription will start on that day for the year and your monthly fee will be canceled. Of course, if you keep the \$3 offer for eight months, then upgrade, it's the same process.

The [vexing/intrusive] advertisements have undoubtedly been a major source of income for this platform. The website appears rather outdated, particularly its forums. It's reminiscent of an unrealized childhood fantasy, stagnant and resistant to growth. This stagnation appears to be a result of sheer indifference from the owner(s).

Is advertising a major source of income for us? Hardly. The reality is that advertising generated from Google ads at LasVegasAdvisor.com wouldn't pay for a part-time employee. Additionally, we don't get paid by the casinos to promote them, distribute their coupons, or for any other reason. This advertising fortune we supposedly reap was brought up multiple times by commenters who obviously have no idea about website economics. Please don't continue to throw that uninformed statement at us. We derive revenue from the sale of our products. And information/expertise is a product.

On the other hand, we're the first to admit that the website looks outdated; the last time we upgraded it was in 2017. As for why, we think "sheer indifference" is a little exaggerated. Primarily, we've been focusing on the content, which we'll put up against any Las Vegas site anywhere anytime. With this move, we're funding a redesign and focusing on more exclusivity for our paying members.

Anthony has had these relationships for many years; there's no work involved with getting the coupons and the American Casino Guide now has many of these same deals available for free on their website and app.

We saved the best for last.

To begin with, sure, ACG has some coupons and you should definitely take advantage of them. Many of them are offers that we ourselves make available to everyone who sets up a free account on the website and we'll be doing more of that after the switcheroo. But we work very hard to get our members *exclusive* offers that *aren't* available anywhere

else; those are in the Member Rewards Book and only the MRB has them. Every year that we've provided the coupon book, using one or at most two coupons has returned the entire subscription price for the year. Using them all returns many multiples of it.

Secondly, "... no work involved with getting the coupons."

Oh yeah. No work whatsoever to getting coupons from the generous, big-hearted, obliging casinos. Why, they all sit around just *waiting* for the opportunity to call us and lavish us with their philanthropic benevolence and largesse! In fact, just dial the 800 number yourselves; operators are standing by to happily send you, personally, whatever discount deals your little heart desires.

Truth is, wresting coupons worthy of our members from the casinos is by far the most onerous, time-sucking, frustrating, fraught thing we do and that's saying a lot.

To elaborate on the "frustrating" part, Member Rewards is a well-conceived and executed program that fulfills many of the marketing objectives of the casinos, while also providing our members with a level of saving that far exceeds the membership cost. Hence, you're justified in thinking that the casinos should be rubber-stamping their participation in the MRB and yes, a few do, but that's far from the norm.

As for "having these relationships for many years," the hassles are in large part because of the revolving doors in and out of most casino marketing and publicity departments. Every year, we deal with people sitting in those chairs who 1) just got there two months earlier from UNLV or Tunica; 2) have no idea who we are; 3) have no authority to make a decision and are loath to bug their bosses; and 4) don't even know how to return emails or phone calls.

We have to inquire, then inquire again and again, then plead, cajole, and threaten before receiving a response from most of them, which is almost always "no," since it's so much easier to turn us down -- or ignore us completely -- than to step out on any limb and advocate for us. Then we have to go over their heads, often making enemies in the process. Then we have to inquire, plead, and cajole all over again.

We start the process around this time every year and we're lucky if we finish by the end of December.

The post-pandemic period, with casino companies raking in profits, has made it even more arduous. Station is no longer a locals company; once a mainstay in the MRB, they're done with *all* of us. Same with Boyd. MGM? Fuhgeddaboudit. Caesars? In our dreams. Thank goodness for the Palms, Downtown Grand, Binion's, Ellis Island, Emerald Island, El Cortez, et al. Without them, there wouldn't be any deals at all and we could all go away and never come back.

Finally, we *deeply* appreciate all the positive feedback we also received in the comments to that announcement QoD. You're the ones for whom we keep fighting the good fight.

In reality, this new model will be *much* better for you, our loyal customers, who will now get the information and the MRB discounts exclusively, without their being watered down by non-paying users. Sorry, but we don't see any logic breach in that.

Let the suckers show up here without a clue and catch as catch can. Let the hangers-on find their own sources of free information rather than paying -- gasp! -- \$3. We're making this (admittedly risky) move for those of you who recognize and appreciate the value you receive from us here at LVA and Huntington Press. We sincerely hope that when all is said and done, it's worth it for you and for us.