

# Meet the company behind MGM Springfield's online job portal Workplace

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In 2013, Mike Knapp, a former council president in Montgomery County, Maryland, and Jason Green, a White House counsel, launched SkillSmart, a business they hoped would change how companies and communities connect workers with job openings. Now, SkillSmart is on the front lines of one of MGM Springfield's most anticipated promises: To hire 3,000 workers once the downtown Springfield casino opens in September 2018.

"It's unique to Springfield. What we've been doing for the last two months is reaching out to community based organizations," Knapp said in an interview. "We're trying to tie those in so it's not just a tool that individuals can use."

MGM Springfield recently launched its online job platform, using SkillSmart as its platform. While applications will not be open until 2018, jobseekers can create profiles and see how they match up with about 80 positions, from the casino floor to administrative offices. "This will tell people what the positions will be when we ramp up," MGM Springfield Director of Training and Workforce Development Marikate Murren said earlier this week. "We're letting people know, hey, this is what you're going to need from a prerequisite perspective."

SkillSmart is also powering MGM's hiring for its National Harbor casino in Maryland. How a three-year-old startup became the job platform for the largest development project in Springfield's history started with a chance meeting, Knapp said. Green, the company's co-founder, was in Las Vegas, pitching SkillSmart to state officials for use in their economic development programs, when he started talking to an MGM Resorts International human resources executive, Knapp said.



## MGM Springfield launches online job portal

MGM Springfield has launched an online job portal, allowing jobseekers to check how their skills match up with thousands of positions that will be filled as the casino nears its Fall 2018 opening date.

"We were at a meeting where MGM was and we started with talking about our platform," Knapp said. "We realized they were getting started in Maryland, and one thing led to another."

MGM was starting hiring for its National Harbor casino and faced the challenge of filling thousands of positions from a working population that did not have much direct experience with gaming, Knapp said. So the company pitched its platform, which matches workers with job listings based on a detailed list of skills, rather than relying solely on a conventional resume.

"What we do is we really break down that job description to 15, 16, 18 skills, that a job seeker can look at and say 'Oh, I've done those things,'" Knapp said. "The employer can much more readily assess what they can contribute to their organization."

The MGM Springfield platform connects jobseekers with courses at local colleges like Holyoke Community College, Springfield Technical Community College and Greenfield Community College that are tailored to provide missing skills, Knapp said. SkillSmart and MGM have also met with community and labor organizations to spread word that the job portal is open.

MGM is the largest client for SkillSmart, a seven-employee company which has also contracted with DC-area hospitals and development corporations, Knapp said. And this week Knapp said he met with the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, and is pushing to expand his business in the Bay State.

"We just want to make sure that people know we're in the community," Knapp said. "It's a fundamental principal of us as an organization."