

Columbus casino GM sets hiring schedule for thousands of jobs

Business First - by [Jeff Bell](#)

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Ameet Patel was named general manager of the Hollywood Casino Columbus earlier this year.

Ameet Patel could be excused for feeling a bit lonely as the first employee of **Penn National Gaming Inc.**'s Columbus casino, but the facility's general manager will have plenty of company soon enough.

Patel began his duties Monday at the casino site off West Broad Street on Columbus' west side. His top priority, he said Tuesday morning, will be hiring the 2,000 workers the casino expects to have in place when it opens in the fourth quarter of 2012.

"From Aug. 1 to Dec. 1, (2012),' Patel said, "we will go from one to 2,000."

For information about jobs at the casino, go [here](#).

The first hires will be vice presidents in charge of finances, human resources, marketing, building operations and gaming operations. Patel said he hopes to have those managers in place by January and expects to recruit them from within the gaming industry.

However, about 90 percent of the casino workers will be from Central Ohio, with hiring west-side residents a priority, Patel said.

Once the top casino managers are in place, they will hire the next level of employees, with more workers being added each quarter until the casino opens. Much of the hiring, including several hundred table-game workers such as blackjack dealers, will begin next summer.

Penn National (NASDAQ:PENN) is already talking with Central Ohio colleges to set up training programs for casino workers, Patel said. They include **Columbus State Community College**, **Franklin University**, **Central Ohio Technical College** in Newark and **Hondros College** in Westerville.

He said Penn National is looking for people who are passionate about their jobs and enjoy their work.

“Every casino is a building,” Patel said. “You make a casino special by the people you surround yourself with.”

Penn tapped Patel, 44, to be [general manager for its \\$400 million Columbus casino project](#) in June. He has worked for the Wyomissing, Pa.-based gaming company since 2001, most recently as general manager of the **Argosy Casino Hotel & Spa** in Riverside, Mo., near Kansas City.

Patel said about 100 construction workers are on the Hollywood Columbus Casino site now, but that number will grow to 3,500 by next year as the project moves toward completion.

The casino will have up to 3,000 slot machines, 70 table games. a poker room, parking garage and food and beverage areas that will include a buffet, steakhouse and entertainment lounge.

Jeff Bell covers public policy, utilities, energy and the business of sports for Business First.