

The 7 Signs of a Scam

By Sharon Davis

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It's a shame that there are so many people out there trying to rip off the work-at-home job seeker. It's even more disheartening to see them targeting the stay-at-home mom, the retiree, and the disabled. But the fact remains; they're out there trying to capitalize on your desire to stay home and earn an income. And they're making good money while they're at it, because there's no shortage of people who want so badly to believe their claims of easy income and instant wealth.

So how are we supposed to separate the scams from the real jobs? The legitimate business opportunities from the schemes?

Your number one guide should always be your common sense (why would a lawyer in South Africa select you to handle his billion dollar account, I mean let's be honest!). There are always warning signs, and here are the top seven.

1. Advertisements for "envelope stuffing", "mail processors" and "home typists".

In all my experience in online recruiting, I have never come across a legitimate job for an envelope stuffer. Nor have I ever, in my life, met someone who was an envelope stuffer. (And could you really say with any measure of pride that you are a professional envelope stuffer?)

These advertisements are always the same. They charge you a certain amount of money so that they can send you detailed instructions of how to advertise for envelope stuffers. You're selling the very same packet that you just paid 30 bucks for, but you only get \$3. There's no product, just their self-perpetuating ads to sell more \$30 packets.

Home Typists? What company needs 5,000 home typists? If a company needs some typing done, they're not going to advertise it on the internet where they're going to get 10,000 replies. They're going to hire an administrative assistant who can type a report and hand it to them- while greeting clients and answering the phones.

That's not to say that there aren't legitimate Data Entry jobs available. Companies often find a need for specialized skills that can be done by a freelancer on a contract basis. Some examples would be database work, research projects and seasonal billing needs. But the key is that they involve a specialized skill that their existing employees don't have.

2. They're asking for a fee.

If it's supposed to be a job, how on earth do they justify charging a fee? I've seen ads that say, "We have to charge a fee to make sure that you're serious". Why don't they just post their job on E-Bay and give it to the highest bidder? Imagine going for an interview and the employer says, "Have a seat. Now, before we get started, I'm going to need \$39.95 from you. We have to make sure you're serious." Would you pay them? Of course not! So why would you pay someone who is claiming to be hiring just because it's on the internet?

Now, a business opportunity is different. You have to expect start-up costs for any business- but that's a story for another day\85

3. Job listings with typos and ALL CAPS.

These telltale signs should raise a flag right away. Do you really want to work for someone who can't spell?

4. The job description says, "no skills or experience necessary!"

Really? Why not just have their kids do the job for 50 cents an hour? Managing remote employees is extremely challenging. Employers who hire and supervise telecommuters want highly skilled, experienced employees that they can trust. They have to be confident that they can perform their jobs with little or no supervision. This is why most telecommuters are required to work on-site for a certain period of time before they're allowed to work from home.

5. Vague or non-existing job description.

The more vague a job listing is, the more likely it is to be a scam. There's nothing more aggravating to a recruiter than getting bombarded by resumes from unqualified candidates. This is why most legitimate job listings read like a novel. They want to be sure that only the ones that meet their criteria respond.

This leads me to an important bit of advice for telecommute job seekers. Never, ever respond to a job listings that you are not fully qualified for. I spend a lot of time recruiting companies that have telecommute policies to post at my site. Many of them are reluctant to post their listings online because they are inundated with responses from people who aren't remotely qualified. It gives all of us a bad reputation and cuts down on the number of jobs that are advertised. I just can't stress enough how important this is.

6. No contact information.

If you can't reach someone to ask a question, or ask for a reference, then there's something wrong. A real employer wants to get the position filled, and if you are qualified, they want to convince you to work for them. You should be able to reach them (or someone in their company at least) directly.

And the number one sign of a scam...

7. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

A case in point: A company posted a job listing for U.S. Representatives. Seems they needed people to accept shipments of computers and electronics and then ship them to international destinations. They were offering an outrageously high salary and reimbursement for shipping. They allegedly had offices in the United States, so why would they need John Smith in Hoboken, New Jersey to handle their shipping? Sounds fishy, right? It was. They had people ship the computers all right, but never paid them.

Many people rely on the website that carries the listing to screen out fraudulent listings, but the truth is that most of them don't have the resources to screen every post. In fact, most sites carry a disclaimer stating that it is the job seeker's responsibility to screen potential employers.

The bottom line is that you should let common sense be your guide. If something seems not quite right, don't bother. At the very least, check out any company thoroughly before making any commitment.

Below are some excellent resources:

ScamWatch

<http://www.scamwatch.com>

ScamBusters

<http://www.scambusters.org>

The Better Business Bureau

<http://www.bbb.org>

The Federal Trade Commission

<http://www.ftc.gov>

Sharon Davis is the Mother of two girls, the owner of <http://www.2Work-At-Home.Com> and the Editor of the site's monthly ezine, America's Home. In her spare time she reminisces about what it was like to have spare time.

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