



Spotting Internet Job Scams

While the percentage of simpleminded people, falling for internet job scams, seems to have remained the same this year as before, according to USA News Online, the numbers have definitely gone up. The recession has caused increase in the numbers of desperate jobseekers, and similarly there has been a rise in the numbers of attempts for running internet job scams. Sometimes, these people are just looking for information to add you to a spam list, but mostly they are looking to relieve you of your cash.

The tragedy is that perfectly reputed citizens too, become obsessed with easy money and become scam artists. For example, recently in August, 2010, a former N.B.A. and Michigan State player, Jay Vincent, was indicted for bilking 20, 000 jobseekers out of \$2 million through an Internet employment scam.

Internet job scams have some pretty simple signs. Usually, it would be an unsolicited email. At other times, it would be a job advertisement, which asks for money to sign up in some form. Mostly it would be something too good to be true. For example, recently there were some scams offering up to \$40 an hour for mystery shopping. These people would be sending cheques for you to cash and wire back the money to their company account, just to test things out. By the time the cheques are caught to be fake, you have lost your money. In fact, the number of mystery shopping scams using even legitimate names have increased so much that well-known organizations like Confero, which actually uses mystery shoppers have gone public to warn people.

The downside of these scams is that besides harming simple job seekers, they also harm genuine businesses. For example, work-at-home offers have almost become synonymous with scams making it difficult for genuine companies that have work to do from home.

Usually, the simple method to find out about scams is to make a Google search about the company making the **job advertisement** and add "+ scam" to the search. So, if xy.com was making a job advertisement, I would run a search like xy.com + scam, and see if anything turns up. If nothing does, chances are looking better, but it also might be a new scammer that people are yet unwary of, or nobody took the pain to report anywhere.

A safe method is to search the web for news about the company, and if the only things that turn up are more job postings, that is something to feel concerned about. Any genuine company would have something more than job postings on the internet.



Another method to check the authenticity of an employer or website is to search the WHOIS database for contact names and particulars. If the listing is private and contact details are not available, you can at least find out for how long the domain name has been registered. If it is only for a year, and short-term, chances are, it would be risky business to release personal information to such people.

Another thing I would like to talk about is virtual or shared office addresses. With the onslaught of the recession, many startup companies are using business center addresses to run their operations, and while business center addresses do raise a question about the strength of the operation, it is certainly not a final indication of a company running a scam. There are certain people who tend to believe that having a business center address or a shared office address tantamount to risk, but you cannot judge that until you go into the details of the job advertised for.

However, it is safer to stick to well known companies and agencies in your **job search** and not try to grab opportunities that seem illogical and too good to be true.