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What are the most common job scams at present and how can we tackle them?

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Job scams may not be a recent issue, but experts are warning that the practice is becoming increasingly sophisticated.

"It's a very lucrative operation," says Haydn Simpson, Commercial Director at online brand protection specialist, NetNames. "Scammers choose to operate this kind of fraud because it's working – they are successfully conning people out of money."

And, as Clare Flower, Head of Compliance Policy at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) points out, both recruitment agencies and candidates can fall victim to scams. "Scammers who use recruitment activity to elicit money are not legitimate recruiters and do not represent the industry," she says.

Figures from SAFERjobs, a not-for-profit organisation set up by the Metropolitan Police to combat and raise awareness of recruitment fraud, provide valuable insights into the extent of the problem. Whilst several years ago the site was attracting just under 1,000 visits per month, now monthly traffic is reaching up to 70,000.

"We've seen numbers skyrocket in the past few years," explains Chair of SAFERjobs, Keith Rosser. "ActionFraud say between 50–100,000 job scams are reported to them a month, but we feel that's a gross underestimate. Most fraud goes unreported, so it's really the tip of the iceberg."

According to Rosser, advance-fee scams, where candidates are needlessly charged for pre-employment checks and services are some of the most common fraudulent practices. The candidate, believing they are about to start a job, will be contacted by a fake employer and directed to a third party, who, they are told, will process their documents for a fee. The third party, says Rosser, is an additional ploy to add credibility. Identity theft is



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also a growing concern with many fraudsters posing as employers persuading candidates to hand over personal information such as bank statements, passport details and driving licences.

Rosser remembers a particularly sad story of Leeds man who was offered a £30k job as a gas engineer. "He quit his real job and then realised his new one didn't exist," Rosser recalls. "He subsequently found out that someone had bought a brand new car under finance in his name."

And during student holidays, SAFERjobs often see a spike in money laundering and working from home scams, with students and their families losing eye-watering amounts of money. "They want a job so badly, they just want to believe it's real," Rosser explains.

Yet Simpson argues that 'company cloning' is by far the biggest job scam issue of all, referring to what he calls, 'the long con': "In the past, fraudsters would send millions of spam emails asking for \$250 to put a candidate's CV in front of the queue, it was very hit and miss. But now, they are able to operate very sophisticated attacks by cloning large multinational companies."

Multinationals like Shell are particularly attractive to fraudsters because of their wide audience base and how easy their brands are to replicate. Typically, fraudsters will register a domain name similar to the target multinational company, set up an identical website, copy a legitimate job advert and lure the victim from a social media platform like LinkedIn.

"It's a three-way trap to create a web of trust," Simpson explains. "A profile set up on a social media platform lures the victim from a trusted environment to an environment in which the scammer has complete control. Emails sent will use a registered domain which will closely match the company they are cloning. They may even stage video interviews and appear in a suit and tie."

Rosser warns that social networking in particular is aiding fraudsters in becoming head-hunters. With access to entire career histories and personal profiles, fraudsters can tailor the ideal job for their target victim. And, as Richard Whalley, Partner at HRC Law firm warns, scammers are also cloning identities of recruitment agencies: "They farm CV data and make false promises of employment, all whilst charging a fee for their 'services'."

Yet recruiters themselves are also at risk from scammers, as IC Resources recently discovered. IC Resources were approached by a multinational defence company with a pre-prepared list of 'candidates' for two high-level roles.

"They seemed very genuine. Communications were letter-headed and they even had a secretary who answered our calls," Daniel Nash, Director at IC Resources recalls. "But we became suspicious at how compliant and quick the process was, especially for a global defence company." When they confronted the client and 'candidate' with information they'd subsequently discovered, including incorrect contact details and their named contact not actually existing on the internal company's register, the client disappeared.

So what can be done to tackle such a growing area? HRC's Whalley believes it's a case of prevention being better than cure, with recruiters putting a statement on their website making it clear that they will never seek payment from jobseekers. And for recruiters themselves, Samantha Hurley, Operations Director of the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO) recommends verifying the identity of any new client and to check they work for the company they claim to represent.

"As with any criminal enterprise, job scammers use sophisticated means to create a façade of authenticity. However, recruiters can effectively protect themselves from falling victim to this type of fraud with a little extra vigilance," she says. "A false sense of security, or pressure to rush through contracts, should never be an excuse for poor due-diligence."

Candidates should also 'press to meet', Rosser advises. Fraudsters prefer to keep online, so candidates invited for a telephone or Skype interview should request a face-to-face interview instead. Often, the fraudster will disappear. "And it's always worth contacting the employer directly to check," he adds.

In fact, SAFERjobs announced just last month that they have teamed up with National Trading Standards eCrime Team (NSeCT) to share intelligence and take further action against recruitment fraud. According to Rosser, joining SAFERjobs – an entirely free service – is one of the most effective things a recruiter can do to tackle the issue. Job scam alerts are circulated to all members on a regular basis so fraudulent vacancies can be removed quickly and both candidates and recruiters can benefit from advice and support.

"Job scams are a growing issue," Rosser adds. "but the more members we have taking

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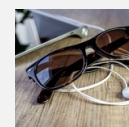
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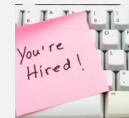
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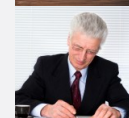
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