Know the Warning Signs of Job Scams

During this last tax season, consumers heard frequent warnings of tax scams including fraudulent tax filings, identity theft, and attempts to steal individuals’ personal information. However, another type of scam is equally as serious and occurs all year: job scams. Unfortunately, no age group is immune to job scams, and sometimes college students are targeted. The best way to prevent being a victim of a job scam, though, is to be aware of them and know what to look for.

If a job seems too good to be true, then it could be a fake. CBSMoneywatch reports, “For every one legitimate job that’s available, there are at least 60 scams” (http://www.cbsnews.com/news/8-warning-signs-of-a-job-scam/).

Potential Signs of Job Scams
Although many advertised jobs are legitimate, job seekers need to be aware that job scams exist. The following are some signs that may indicate it is a scam—

1. The company/employer asks YOU to pay.

You should never have to pay to get a job. If the company requests that you make an investment or pay for things like training materials, work-at-home kits, or software, this could be a pretense for getting you to reveal your banking or social security information.

According to Forbes, “The Federal Trade Commission has refunded more than $2 million to 90,000 individuals who were hooked by a work-at-home scam (operating under the names Google Money Tree, Google Pro and Google Treasure Chest). These people paid for $4 shipping fee for a “work from home kit,” but weren’t told that by ordering it, they were also disclosing their account information and would be charged an additional $72.21 each month” (http://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2014/12/10/how-to-steer-clear-of-the-latest-job-scams/).

2. The company/employer asks you to provide a credit card, bank account, or other financial documents.
Don’t give your credit card or bank account information over the phone or in email to a company that is offering you a job. As the Federal Trade Commission warns, “Anyone who has your account information can use it” (http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0243-job-scams).

3. The company/employer gives you upfront money.

An example of this type of scam occurs when the employer gives you a check for “supplies.” The “employer” asks you to cash the check, purchase supplies, and wire the remaining money to the employer or to a third party. After you transfer the money, however, you discover the check this employer gave you is a forgery, and you are left without the money you transferred—as well as any overdraft charges. This is also referred to as “overpayment.” No legitimate company would overpay you and ask you to wire money.

4. The company/employer uses unprofessional communication in their contacts with you.

Most legitimate employers will not send applicants a text message to invite them to interview for a job, so if an employer is communicating with you only through text messages or chat services, be aware that this is not considered appropriate and may be a scam.

Other unprofessional communication methods may include documents riddled with grammatical errors and misspelled words. If the document is not correct and credible, then more than likely, neither is the company. Additionally, if the company uses a free email account such as Gmail or Hotmail, it probably is a scam.

Recently, a student received a letter from a company that never once identified its name anywhere in the letter. After a Google search, the student identified the company’s name and product. Even if that company was legitimate, because of its secretive behavior, the student decided it was too questionable and avoided it.

5. The company/employer offers high pay for little effort.

Regarding the secret company mentioned above, one aspect that initially interested the student was the high potential earnings and the fact that no experience was required. Additionally, if you’re offered a salary for doing very little work, then the job may not be legitimate.
How to Avoid a Job Scam

You can avoid job scams by conducting good research. Use the Internet to research companies. If you are not familiar with the company, enter the company name and the word *scam* into the search engine. If a recognizable company contacts you and asks you to apply on their website, make sure the URL is the correct, legitimate website and not a fake URL.


Through JobTracks on the Career Center's website ([http://careercenter.missouristate.edu](http://careercenter.missouristate.edu)), students and alumni may view full-time, part-time, and internship postings. If you see a position or receive communication from an employer that you suspect may be a scam, please notify the Career Center by calling 417-836-5636 or emailing careercenter@missouristate.edu.