

Home Working Scams

Facts

Home Working Scammers prey on people's greed but more often their desperation for additional income, especially when home responsibilities limit traditional working options. People are more likely to fall victim to the scams during periods of financial difficulty.

Conmen operate home-working scams by placing adverts and promotional literature in newspapers, magazines, shop windows, online and via email; luring in people who are attracted to the offer of good money for jobs that can be done easily from home.

The concept of making money for comparatively little effort with no training is not new. Adverts for anything, especially on the web can be very misleading and it can be difficult to spot a scam. There are many scams out there and many people fall victim to them.

Why Are These Scams So Successful?

It all comes down to psychology. Besides the "make money fast" dream that many Internet newcomers fall prey to, home-based "opportunities" exploit the following groups.

- The Sick, Disabled, or Elderly: If you are elderly, ill, or have a disability, you may have problems getting a traditional job.
- The Stay-At-Home Mother: Whether you have a spouse or you're single, you may be looking to supplement or create an income while raising children.
- The Low-Income or No-Income Family: You or your spouse may have just lost your job, and you feel desperate and anxious to find work.

In summary, these scammers are often preying primarily on the sick, the disabled, the elderly, the unemployed, parents, and people without a lot of money.

How to identify them

- Use common sense: If it looks too good to be true (£500 per day for completing questionnaires) it usually is.
- Beware of any job that demands you give them any money up-front, it is usually a scam.
- Home working scammers seldom tell you what is involved in advance of you paying them money.
- They stipulate that no training is necessary, but are very vague about the job role.
- "Start your own business" & "Be your own boss" type scams, where a "business opportunity" is sold either online or via classified ads to the potential homemaker, without any indication as to what the business is, is usually a scam.

The Golden Rule: You very rarely get something for nothing. You will not earn the money most scams advertise with little/no training and/or knowledge of the industry you will be working in.

How to test them – questions to ask yourself

- If they are a legitimate company, where are they located, Do they have an office?
- Can you speak to someone about the job offer?
- See if the company is registered on Companies House using the Companies House free online webcheck service. Does the address match the one you have been given?
- Ask them for more detail regarding the role e.g. will you be selling items over the phone? How much of the advertised salary is linked to ridiculously high performance targets?

Examples

Making things

This scam encourages you to assemble toys, dolls, or other craft projects at home with the promise of high per-piece rates. All you have to do is pay a fee up-front for the starter kit, which includes instructions and parts.

Once you finish assembling your first batch of crafts, you'll be told by the company that they "don't meet our specifications."

In fact, even if you were a robot and did it perfectly, it would be impossible for you to meet their specifications. The scammer company is making money selling the starter kits -- not selling the assembled product. So, you're left with a set of assembled crafts... and no one to sell them to

Business Opportunity

This type of scam is very common in various guises. One notable example is the selling of signed and framed celebrity photos. The scammer promises huge returns on this "great business opportunity". This can be advertised on the web through auction sites such as eBay. To obtain details of this business opportunity you just need to pay £6.99 to the scammer and you are sent an email with several Mbs of pictures of celebs (some of whom are no longer fashionable). The "business idea" is to print these out, frame them and then resell them on the web, through sites such as eBay.

Of course, aside from the legal implications of reproducing images, which undoubtedly carry a loyalty, there is a very small market for these "products" not least because of the number of people who have been scammed and who now have drawers full of unsold, framed photographs of the Cheeky Girls.

Mailing

These are examples taken from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

In one case a Citizens Advice Bureau client from London responded to a home-working scheme with the offer of earning £500 a month. The pensioner paid a joining fee of £39.95. He received

address labels but had to pay to photocopy a document and buy envelopes and stamps. He has never received payment and has been left £995 out of pocket.

In another case a client from West Yorkshire saw an advert in a national newspaper offering 'home-working from the comfort of your own home'. She paid an initial payment of £29 for her starter pack and then a further £99. She has never heard back from the company and is unable to get through to anyone to claim back the money she has paid.

A Citizens Advice Bureau client in Bedfordshire received a letter in the post offering extra income for carrying out mail shots. She returned her work to the company and they wrote to her to say that she would not be paid, as her work was unsatisfactory. Some of the labels were not centralised and the folds in the inserts were 2mm out. She subsequently lost her £40 joining fee and the £4.56 she paid for stamps.

Answering Questionnaires.

Whilst there are a whole host of review sites, which are quite legitimate, some of them promise a living wage for answering a few online questionnaires: This is complete nonsense. Whilst you are not necessarily asked to pay a subscription fee to start completing questionnaires (although if a fee were involved this is more than likely to be a scam) , you can easily find yourself completing half a questionnaire and then being suddenly kicked off because you do not meet the demographic the market research "client" is looking for.

The companies that operate these scams entice people to spend huge amounts of time for £1.00 per hour completing occasional questionnaires. The companies go on to sell this market data for a considerable profit, whereas the individual being scammed, will often have to accumulate £20 worth of credits before being sent a cheque. Whilst this scam may result in money, it certainly won't provide you with the promised £2000 per month salary advertised.

What to do if you are a victim

Contact Trading Standards via your local Council

Contact your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau

References

www.berr.gov.uk/

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

www.scambusters.org