Safety Tips for Your Online Job Search

The same technology that makes it easy to find jobs online also makes it easier for scammers to create fraudulent positions to take advantage of you. While your Career Services staff make every effort to screen employers and the positions they post, it is very important that you as a job seeker exercise common sense and caution. Read position descriptions carefully.

If a position or job offer seems to be too good to be true, if you feel uncomfortable with some of the information requested, or something just doesn't seem right – search elsewhere or proceed with extreme caution. Even if the original position description seems valid, if you receive follow-up e-mails, phone calls or job offers that seem unusual, proceed with extreme caution.

Here are some red flags – do not apply and/or cease communications if:

- You are asked to give credit card, bank or PayPal account numbers
- You are asked to send a payment by wire service or courier.
- You are offered a large payment or reward in exchange for allowing the use of your bank account - often for depositing checks or transferring money.
- You receive an unexpectedly large check (it's too good to be true department).
- You are asked to transfer money, including via e-Bay, PayPal or Western Union money orders
- You are asked for personal information such as your Social Security Number
- You are requested to send a photo copy of your ID, i.e., driver's license to “verify identity.”
- You are asked to do a background check before you can even be considered for a position.
- The posting appears to come from a legitimate company or organization, but the contact's e-mail address doesn't match the company's website domain (i.e., jdoe@gmail.com rather than jdoe@companyname.com)
- The job posting doesn't mention the responsibilities of the job; rather it focuses on the amount of money you will make.

In addition, you may receive a job offer in response to your application to a legitimate-appearing job description that is in reality just a marketing e-mail to sell you job search "help."

Some other tips:

- Be wary of postings for Mystery Shoppers, work at home, or virtual Administrative Assistants or Bookkeepers.
- If you are an entry-level candidate with little experience, be wary of an offer with a salary that is way out of range.
- Ignore any posting with multiple misspellings in the job notice.
- If the position listing is for an international opportunity, does it include travel expenses? Upfront program fees? Research the company and compare its program/benefits with other similar opportunities.
- If the ad mentions upfront fees, search elsewhere. You shouldn’t have to “pay to play.” BVU Career Services does not allow companies to recruit candidates if there is an initial investment required.
- If you are unfamiliar with a company name, “Google” the company and see what comes up.
- Verify that a URL listed in the ad goes to the internet domain of the company that listed it. For example, if the ad lists “www.company.com/hr” but when you click on it, it goes to “www.company.com.” it could be a scam.
- Read job board privacy policies to determine whether employers are screened prior to posting.
- The position initially seems to be a traditional job, but upon further research or contact, is actually an independent contractor or franchise opportunity.
If you encounter suspicious postings:

- Please report your experience to BVU Career Services careerservices@bvu.edu or 712.749.2440 and to The Internet Crime Complaint Center
- End all communication with the employer, and if personal information was disclosed, monitor your accounts over the next few days, to be on the safe side.
- Contact the police and report the fraud or scam.
- If you have sent money to a fraud employer, contact your bank or credit card company immediately to close your account and dispute the charges.
- If the incident occurred entirely over the internet, you may file an incident report with the FCC at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357) or at http://www.cybercrime.gov.

More Resources for Safe Online Job Searching:

- Job-Hunting/Job Scams from the Federal Trade Commission
- World Privacy Forum: Job Seekers’ Guide to Resumes: Twelve Resume Posting Truths
- Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: Avoiding Online Job Scams
- 6 Safety Tips for Online Job Seekers
- Monster.com: A Safe Job Search

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