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How to know you're being scammed

IN recent years, Asia has witnessed a steep rise in online fraud, and Malaysia is no exception, especially when it comes to job scams.

Unfortunately, scammers often perceive jobseekers as vulnerable targets, exploiting those struggling to secure a source of income.

According to police statistics, a part-time job scam syndicate in Malaysia caused losses exceeding RM1.23 million between January and June this year.

As job scams continue to become more sophisticated, Malaysians can play a collective role in helping others identify red flags and preventing them from falling victim to the deceptive tactics employed by scammers.

In the past, scammers relied on fear tactics to get people to act impulsively, but today they are focused on building online trust as a means to trap their victims.

Some job scams are meticulously crafted to mimic authentic hiring procedures, creating a convincing illusion of a legitimate opportunity.

Here are the top 10 signs that a job offer could be a scam:

Repetitive phone calls

Scammers frequently make repeated calls, attempting to coerce you into accepting their offer. They often assert that you could miss out on a job opportunity if you do not respond or agree immediately to their terms.

Requests for sensitive information

Scammers seeking to obtain your information will often insist on having your details immediately. They may ask for documents, such as proof of residence or financial statements, promising immediate access to job opportunities.



However, reputable companies usually do not ask for such documentation until the interview or onboarding process.

Sketchy software or fake websites

A reputable employer will use standard and well-known software for online interviews. If they ask you to instal unfamiliar software, it could be a red flag indicating something is a miss.

Virtually, anyone can create and manage a website, so scammers frequently establish online platforms posing as fictional employers or fabricate channels for legitimate companies. A clear red flag with these accounts is their lack of substantial information or if the company is untraceable and has no online presence.

Unrealistic promises of job offers

If a job listing promises high salaries or benefits that sound too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers often use these enticing offers to lure unsuspecting victims, especially those in desperate financial situations.

Unprofessional communication

Pay attention to the language, grammar and overall tone of the communication. Legitimate employers usually maintain professional and polished communications, so if you notice numerous spelling errors, sloppy language or inconsistent communication, it may be a red flag.

No interview required

Have you secured a job without undergoing at least one job interview? If the hiring process excludes a job interview, and if the employer displays little interest in you, this could be a sign they are more interested in your wallet and you are being scammed. In a best case scenario, it could suggest that the employer does not place importance on your personality or how well you align with their company culture, in which case, it raises the question of whether you would still want to work there.

Providing malicious links

Be careful when clicking on links during the job application process as they may lead to fraudulent applications designed solely to extract your bank account or credit card information. Scammers can go to great lengths to deceive their targets, designing websites and mobile apps that appear professional and legitimate. If you are urged to only register as an applicant via a strange link, it could be a red flag.

Vague or incomplete job requirements and descriptions

Real job offers provide clear and detailed job responsibilities and requirements that closely match the position described.

Conversely, fake job offers and dubious recruiters tend to present ambiguous, vague and overly generalised job roles, duties and requirements, making it possible for almost anyone to qualify.

Requests for payment of placement or work equipment

Be wary if someone is asking for money. Ethical employers will never request an upfront fee for job placement, work equipment or training. Moreover, reputable recruiters, headhunters and recruitment agencies generally do not impose charges on potential jobseekers.

Accepting work abroad without employment visa

If you are considering a job abroad and the employer insists on you entering the country on a visitor visa instead of a valid employment visa, consider it a big warning sign.

It is not advisable to proceed with the trip under these circumstances even if the employer promises to cover your flight expenses. Do not get on the flight.

To address the increase and sophistication of job scams, employment marketplaces need to tap into technology to combat them, including expanding the use of Artificial Intelligence and machine learning to enhance fraud detection and prevention capabilities.

■ JobStreet, a subsidiary of SEEK contributed this article.