

Avoiding job scams, and finding a job you love

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As the working year unfolds alongside Valentine's season, many South Africans are seeking a different kind of love— a fulfilling career, despite persistently high unemployment figures. Just like the dating world, the task of finding the perfect match can be challenging as scammers find new and sophisticated ways of taking advantage of job seekers, says Carey van Vlaanderen, CEO of [Eset Southern Africa](#).



Carey van Vlaanderen, CEO of ESET Southern Africa

The digital era has revolutionised job hunting, as more people turn to career portals and social media platforms like LinkedIn. "While the online job market offers unprecedented access to opportunities, including short-term side gigs and remote work, it also opens up avenues for cybercriminals to exploit eager job seekers. Given the number of unemployed South Africans is [estimated](#) at 7.8 million and with the cost of living continuously rising, many job seekers are desperate to find any work that could help make ends meet," notes Van Vlaanderen.

Being vigilant about potential red flags and having a strong grasp of digital security best practices is crucial at the very outset of the job search process, "Securing your online presence is as important as perfecting your CV. Ensuring your LinkedIn profile and other job-seeking platforms are fortified with strong privacy settings is the first line of defence against potential scams. This includes using strong, unique passwords and being mindful of the personal information that is displayed publicly," explains Van Vlaanderen.

A key aspect of a safe job hunt is recognising warning signs. [According to the Skills Development Act](#), charging a job seeker a fee to be placed in a job is prohibited. Any upfront fees to be represented by a recruiter is also unlawful. Van Vlaanderen says there is a notable increase in the sophistication of job scams where deceptive tactics often involve replicating job descriptions from legitimate companies, utilising authentic company logos, and sometimes even posing as company recruiters or HR staff. In more elaborate schemes, scammers might create counterfeit websites and LinkedIn profiles, meticulously designed to mimic official company pages, with the aim of attracting unsuspecting job seekers.

"Offers that promise high rewards for minimal effort, vague job descriptions, or requests for payment to secure an interview are glaring red flags. If a job offer or recruiter seems to evade direct questions or pressures you for personal information prematurely, it's a sign to proceed with caution," Van Vlaanderen adds.

Online job platforms and professional networking sites like LinkedIn are not immune to fraudulent activities as scammers create counterfeit profiles or impersonate legitimate companies to deceive job seekers. "It's important to scrutinise the profiles of recruiters – check their connections, endorsements, and the consistency of their online presence," advises Van Vlaanderen. "In addition, cross-referencing job offers with official company websites can help verify their authenticity. Regardless of an organisation's size, its contact information should be readily available online to allow potential candidates to reach out to a company representative for additional details about the available position."

How to stay safe while searching for your dream job

1. Conduct extensive research on potential employers and verify job offers through multiple sources.
2. Use LinkedIn's privacy and security settings effectively to control the visibility of your profile.
3. Be cautious with the amount and nature of personal information shared during the initial phases of job hunting. Leave

your ID number off your digital CV. Legitimate companies will not ask for your financial details for the purposes of a credit check. Never provide your banking login details to anyone or respond to SMS messages that request your one-time pin (OTP).

4. Report any suspicious activities or profiles to the platform administrators for further investigation.
5. Trust your instincts and remember that if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. If you come across any job scams or illegal employment activities, cut all communication immediately.

“Finding and applying for the perfect job should be an exciting and rewarding journey, not a situation that compromises your security or your personal finances. By staying alert and informed, it’s possible to navigate online job hunting safely and successfully,” says Van Vlaanderen.

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