

Lessons to learn from victims of fake job ads

Job hunting can feel like navigating a maze – and is often a full-time job itself. With many organisations conducting yet more rounds of layoffs, more people are seeking their next opportunity.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Among the legitimate vacancies lie deceptive scams in the form of fake job adverts. The last thing anyone needs when they are on the hunt for a new job, is to be deceived by the cyber criminals running these scams. Knowing how to spot a fake job advert helps stop these scams in their tracks.

Before diving into any opportunity, investigate the company offering the position, scrutinise their website, and search for reviews or testimonials from employees. Legitimate businesses have a digital footprint that reflects their credibility and reputation. Likewise, you can do some research on the alleged manager of the company, hiring manager or recruiter to see if they appear to be legitimate and credible.

Fake job adverts often entice applicants with promises of high salaries, rapid career progression, or extravagant perks. While ambitious goals can help take you far, be cautious of offers that seem too good to be true. Trustworthy employers focus on realistic expectations and transparent communication. Be wary of opportunities that make big promises while sharing few details.

Pay attention to the qualifications and skills required for the job. Fake adverts often lack specific job descriptions or include vague requirements.

Genuine employers should outline clear responsibilities and qualifications tailored to the position, ensuring a suitable match for both parties.

Cyber criminals use fake job scams to make money and harvest personal and financial data from victims. Legitimate job opportunities do not require applicants to make upfront payments for training, equipment, or background checks. Beware of requests for payment during the application process, avoiding jobs where you are told to pay a fee or purchase items with your own money. Before you share any personal or financial information with potential prospective employers, make sure you have verified that they are legitimate and trustworthy.

Intuition can be very powerful if we slow down enough to listen to it and value it deeply enough to pay attention to it. If something feels off or raises doubts during the application process, trust your instincts. Take the time to reassess the opportunity and, if in any doubt, seek advice from trusted mentors, friends, or peers.

Opt for reputable job platforms and networking channels when searching for opportunities. While social media can be great for networking, be wary of job opportunities that are only on social media platforms and especially any that come via messaging apps. Leverage reputable professional networks, credible industry-specific forums, and career fairs to explore valid job openings and connect with legitimate employers.

This is where a trusted network is so powerful. Building, contributing to and leveraging a network of trusted advisors, mentors, and industry peers means you can seek - and, in turn, provide - guidance and support. Draw on the expertise and insights of your network when evaluating job opportunities or navigating challenging situations. When someone is in the position of being scammed, sometimes just voicing doubts aloud can help them realise that they are being manipulated.

If you are worried you have been the victim of a scam, never feel ashamed. Pursuing opportunities and trusting others does not make someone stupid, it simply makes them human. Remember that the people operating these scams are frequently organised, criminal gangs. They refine their tactics and they share these tactics with one another, optimising their chances of success. They ruthlessly exploit people, often when we are at our most vulnerable.

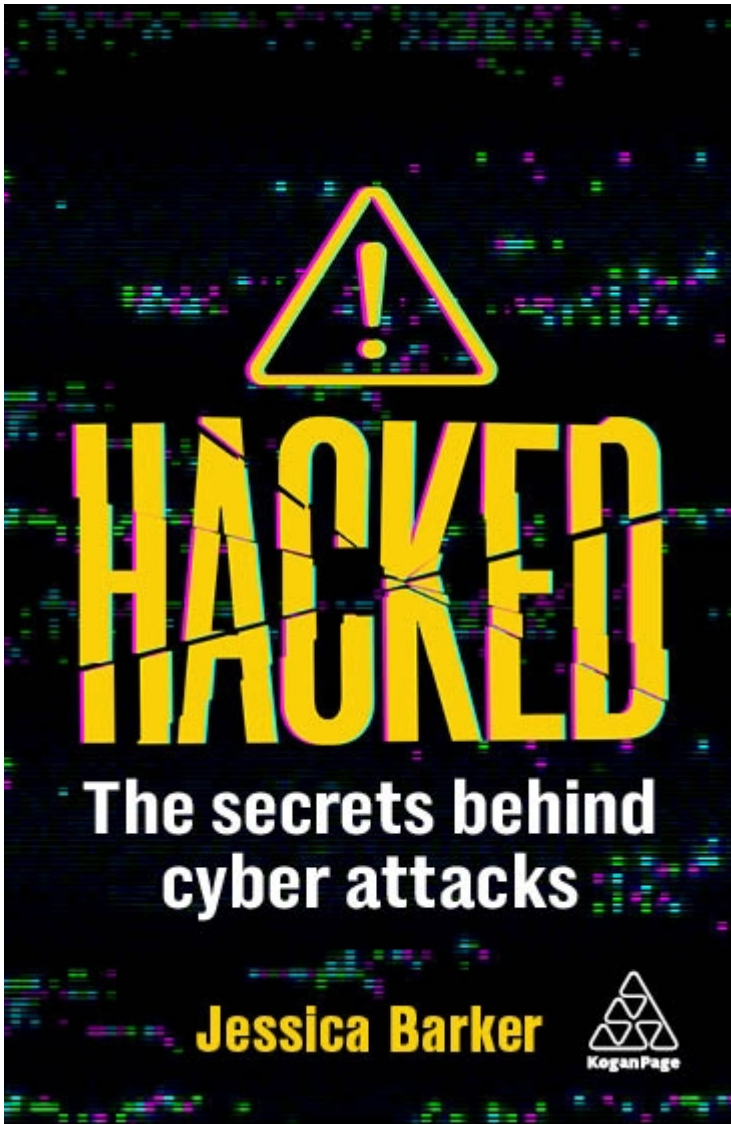
With this in mind, if you encounter a fake job advert or suspect fraudulent behaviour, take proactive measures to report it. Notify the relevant job platform, providing detailed information about the suspicious listing, can help shut down scams and safeguarding others from becoming victim to similar scams. When you report a scam, you never know the positive ripple that can come from this, preventing someone else from being a victim.

Victims of cyber crime and fraud can suffer profoundly. The financial loss can be devastating, as can the impact of self-esteem, emotional well-being, and mental health. People can feel a misplaced sense of shame, blaming themselves and questioning their judgment. This is why it is so important to raise awareness of these scams and the tactics that the criminals use, removing the stigma and taking the power away from the fraudsters.

If you are a leader or member of a community, prioritise education and awareness of this and other scams. Provide training sessions on identifying fake job adverts, emphasising the importance of diligence and skepticism during the recruitment process. Share case studies and highlight the red flags to be alert to. By empowering your team with knowledge, you create a culture of vigilance and resilience against fraud.

Stay vigilant, trust your instincts, and be diligent in your hunt for the next opportunity.

Dr Jessica Barker MBE is the author of *Hacked: The Secrets Behind Cyber Attacks*.



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