

# BBB REPORTS ONGOING PROBLEM WITH ONLINE JOB SCAMS

## JOB SEEKERS RISK LOSING MONEY AND PERSONAL DATA

March 21, 2007 – The Better Business Bureau (BBB) today issued a warning advising job-seekers to beware of misleading online job postings and employment arrangements aimed at stealing money and identities.

Online employment scams generally target the increasing population of workers wanting to work from home, but also impact those looking for second jobs, and young people looking for part-time employment.

Complaints to the BBB span dozens of sites, to include employment advertisements listed on well-known, legitimate job sites such as Monster, CareerBuilder and Yahoo Hot Jobs. New fraudulent offers seem to appear as quickly as screeners for these and other online job posting services can remove them.

“Job scams prey on a victim’s willingness to trust an ‘employer’ by offering high-paying jobs to con workers into revealing personal information, such as Social Security or bank account numbers,” said Edward Johnson, president and CEO of the BBB. “In most cases, instead of getting paid, the job seeker loses money and in some cases, instead of getting hired the job seeker loses their identity.”

No profession or position appears to be immune. Through posting resumes online and replying to advertised positions, victims report scams associated with diverse jobs and career fields such as mystery shoppers, IT assistants, quality control administrators, export/import specialists, bookkeepers, journalists, engineers, construction workers, “government” agents and security experts.

A common denominator in all online job scams is the employer’s lack of interest in meeting the employee. There is no job interview and the job applicant is not invited to the place of business.

“Essentially, the employee is hired sight unseen to do a virtual job for a non-existent company. Trustworthy businesses want to meet prospective employees face-to-face, discuss their experience and qualifications, check references and only then, make a job offer,” Johnson said.

An example of an employment scam that solicited victims online is:

A job seeker should refuse any employment opportunity that involves:

- **Using your personal bank account:** Never agree to deposit checks or money orders or to have money wired into your bank account, for any reason. And don’t forward money from your account to another account, even if you are promised reimbursement. The checks or money orders will be counterfeit and the wire transfers will eventually be rescinded.
- **Paying money out of your pocket:** You should not have to pay a fee to learn the details of a job, secure job-placement assistance, obtain a “background” or “identity” screening or accept an employment offer.

- **Re-shipping products:** Stolen credit cards are typically involved. Victims spend their own money to re-ship products and are “reimbursed” with counterfeit checks or money orders.
- **Divulging private information:** Legitimate businesses do not ask prospective employees to provide their birth date or Social Security number, or a copy of their driver’s license or passport.
- **Cross-border action:** Offers from entities located outside the United States and Canada are typically suspect. While there are BBBs across the U.S. and Canada to help investigate businesses in North America, it is much harder to develop information on businesses located in other countries.

To further guard against identity theft, the BBB advises job-hunters to refrain from including their Social Security Number, birth date, or college graduation date in resumes that are posted online. Consider posting your resume anonymously, and providing an e-mail address as your primary contact rather than your home address or phone number.

Job seekers are urged to check out all prospective employers, job recruiters, placement firms and other employment opportunities with the BBB ([www.mybbb.org](http://www.mybbb.org)) to find out if the business is legitimate and can be trusted.

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## ONLINE JOB SCAMS

### Case Story #1

**The Pitch:** Job-seeker responded to an ad by the North American Headquarters of T&T Corporation (Trust & Trade), which claimed to be an auto parts manufacturer with offices in 41 countries. Hired as a “transfer processor,” the employee was asked to provide access to her checking account into which \$2,080 was transferred shortly thereafter. She was told to use the funds to send a money gram for \$1,980 (less her cost) to T&T’s office in Poland. She also received a FedEx package with three money orders to deposit into her account and “transfer” to another of the company’s officers.

**The Truth:** The money orders had already been cashed months ago. The BBB in Jacksonville, FL advised her that fraudulent wire transfers can be recalled or “bounce”, and not to draw any funds from the transfer. She was encouraged to close her bank account to prevent further access. The BBB discovered that although the company sported a slick, sophisticated Web site, the phone numbers on the site and the number on its Web site registration were “unlisted.” The address for the entity registering the Web site turned out to be a hotel, with no commercial offices.

### Case Story #2

**The Pitch:** After posting her resume online, an aspiring journalist received an e-mail from the “world’s fastest growing news organization” telling her she’d qualified to be an editor. She was responsible for recruiting her own writers and collecting and sending their e-mail addresses to the company. The writers would be paid by the number of hits their stories (posted at the “news organization’s” Web site) received. The editor did not hear further from the company, but did begin receiving a slew of spam.

**The Truth:** An investigation by the BBB in Washington, DC revealed the address listed on the organization’s Web site to be for a service that forwarded mail for other businesses. Rather than offering jobs, the business was a scheme to amass and sell personal contact information.

### Case Story #3

Even the BBB is not immune from being approached by suspect employers. When the Baltimore BBB advertised online for a part-time bookkeeper, it received an e-mail from “B&T Fabrics” of West Yorkshire, England. The company was seeking a bookkeeper in the U.S., because it did not have an office there, and was “unable” to open a bank account “without first registering the company name.” The e-mail promised monthly income of \$4,000 for less than three hours of work daily. The job entailed receiving customer payments, depositing the payments in the employee’s personal bank account, deducting 10% as commission and forwarding the balance to a B&T office. Needless to say, the BBB was not interested!

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