

## Industry body addresses recruitment fraud

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South African businesses have been urged to actively participate in the regulation of the staffing industry by the Federation of African Professional Staffing Organisations (APSO).

The aim is to promote transparency in order to stop the exploitation of desperate job seekers by bogus organisations.

KC Makhubele, Vice President of APSO - recognised as a professional body in the industry – says, "Deception in the recruitment industry is forcing employers to carefully consider their options when trying to identify a reputable recruitment partner."

He notes that by only working with employment agencies who have opened themselves to regulations and scrutiny by industry peers, businesses will aid in closing down the operations of fake recruiters.

Today bogus recruitment agencies continue to pose a threat, with unscrupulous "recruiters" offering attractive employment opportunities for money in advance. This is usually under the guise of work visas, travel expenses or background and / or credit checks required for the position. Once the money has been paid over, the job seeker is left with no employment - and no money.

Makhubele stresses that con-artists are becoming more sophisticated in the way they operate, even posing as a company that already exists. By setting up a fake recruitment website, fraudsters have been known to mimic a legitimate recruitment agency or company, targeting job seekers for identity theft and possible money laundering.

He says, "Adverts placed on a legitimate looking (but fake) recruitment website leads the applicant through a series of steps via email which eventually includes requests for their bank account details, personal information and copies of identity documents such as their passport and driver's licence."

"Another scam involves an applicant paying an upfront fee for fake work-from-home opportunities such as typing, data capturing, and addressing envelopes. Since 2011, 99% of work-from-home opportunities have been outlawed by the South African Government," Makhubele adds.

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Operating an illegal work-from-home opportunity is a criminal offence and is punishable by a fine not exceeding R200 000 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or both a fine and imprisonment.

Makhubele adds that the law also forbids employment agencies from charging job-seekers to secure them employment and should therefore never be the case when dealing with a reputable and compliant agency.

He says, "Reputable recruitment agencies make their money by charging a service fee to the client company for sourcing and managing their workforce, never the job-seeker. "

"For job seekers, companies and employment agencies, an industry body like APSO protects everyone. Working with an agency that is aligned to an industry body can negate the risk of dealing with fraudulent recruiters. By joining the industry body, the recruiter or agency is essentially saying that they accept accountability for their actions and decisions."

There are many unscrupulous people who will do anything to steal a jobseeker's money, identity, or in the case of "work-at-home" scams, they'll steal their time, labour, and effort for their gain. Makhubele lists the most common red flags to look out for.

How to spot a fake recruiter:

1. Never ever pay to get a job - Avoid any jobs requiring a commitment fee, caution fee, processing fee, test fee, allocation fee or placement fee – it's a sure sign that it's a scam.
2. Overseas company - Here the job seeker is approached via email and offered a job in another country. An obscure email address, badly designed company website with no traceable phone number or address should all be red flags.
3. "Work-at-home" and money transfer opportunities - Payment Processing positions are most likely to be scams designed to obtain a job seeker's bank account details in order to steal money from them.
4. Guaranteed commissions or big earnings – This is a big red flag. The job offered is purposely vague and designed to entice a low-income job seeker with the promise of massive earnings. Be very sceptical of any plan that ever uses the terms "guaranteed" and "lots of money" in the same sentence.
5. Absurd offers/Get rich quick schemes – These scams entice job seekers with the "passive income" opportunity. The more absurd the offer, the higher are the odds that it's a work from home scam. The only people getting rich are the ones selling these plans!
6. Bad grammar - Misspelled words and grammatical errors alone aren't a true indication of the validity of an opportunity, but excessive mistakes can be a big tipoff.

A relationship with your recruiter, says Makhubele, is just as important as having a good relationship with your attorney or banker.

Makhubele shares some indicators that will help determine whether a recruiter is providing a legitimate service.

Good recruiters:

Keep up with industry trends, employee benefits, compensation and personnel planning

Can screen employees and spot false information supplied on CV's

Will investigate the validity of applicant's certificates, diploma's and degree's

Help you avoid making mistakes in the hiring process by providing an objective analysis of a candidate

Will vet both the client and the applicant

Is beyond reproach in the quality of service delivered

Fosters loyalty and quality relationships on trust

Upholds professionalism at all times

Makhubele says, "When awarding tenders, businesses should insist on the industry body membership in all contractual requirements."

"Ethical companies will naturally seek to align themselves with an organisation that is committed to values common to their own and this is evidenced by the fact that APSO currently has an 800-strong membership," he concludes.

For more information on APSO, visit: [www.apsoc.co.za](http://www.apsoc.co.za).