

7 Ways to Identify and Avoid Work-At-Home Scams

Almost every day I am asked if virtual assistance really is a legitimate work-at-home business. I can honestly say, “Yes! It is.”

In fact, the best business that anyone can have is to take what he/she is currently doing for an employer and bring it on home. If you are a carpenter, bring it on home. A bookkeeper? Bring it on home. A brain surgeon or astronaut? Well, don't bring that on home. The FTC and FTT would never agree to that. Hang your consultant shingle in that field and bring *that* on home!

However, if you do find yourself looking for a legitimate work-at-home opportunity—beware. So then what is a work-at-home scam? Usually these are the companies who promise the big bucks for very little work in the comfort of your own home. I'm sure you've seen a few of them: envelope stuffing, home typists, craft assembly to name a few.

Let's face it. Do you think traffic would be gridlocked at rush hour if these scams really worked? Do you think the boardrooms and cubicles would be filled to capacity if you really could make any serious money?

Now to take a closer look at some of the above-mentioned scams.

Envelope stuffing. You are required to buy a “kit” for about \$20 to stuff envelopes for a large company. Later at your own expense, you will be asked to place an ad in a newspaper to attract others wanting to do the same thing. You only make money by selling the scam not stuffing the envelopes for a company.

Email processors. This is the e-version of envelope stuffing. Typically you spend between \$5 to \$35 on a “kit” from Person 1. Then you place an ad in an email campaign and convince others to buy the same kit. The money is made selling the kit to Person 2 instead of being paid per email responses.

Rebate processors. Many of these seem like legitimate companies but they never answer emails or phone calls when “processors” have questions. They also never conduct a background check on processors—big red flag. Shouldn't they be concerned about workers handling credit card information or confidential client information out of their homes?

Home typists. There are legitimate home typing companies. One of them is www.keyforcash.com who never charges a fee. No one should have to pay a fee to type. So if they are asking you to pay a fee for the “privilege” to type—red flag.

Craft assembly. You will buy a kit between \$10 to \$100 and be expected to watch the video and read the instructions on how to make the craft. You will then be required to mail in the craft to be evaluated for payment. Unfortunately, none of the crafts ever measure up to the so-called quality standards. Then many times the company will turn around and sell those “below-standard” crafts without paying for them.

Reading books for pay. While there are companies and writer’s organizations that will pay for a critique, they will advertise carefully. They will also want to see a resume in most cases. These scams also promise unusual amounts of money per day not recognizing that results will vary. Not everyone reads at the same speed. In other words, they never post a disclaimer.

Then what red flags can we conclude from the above-mentioned examples? What are the telltale signs that they may be a scam?

1. A scam will ask for a fee or want you to buy a kit.
2. A scam will promise “unbelievable” amounts of money per day with no disclaimer about how results will vary.
3. A scam will only want you to duplicate the same ad used to lure you.
4. A scam will NOT return phone calls when “workers” have questions.
5. A scam will never be pleased with your work performance even when you know it is within performance standards.
6. A scam will rarely want to see your resume, references or samples of your work.
7. A scam will rarely ask for you to do a background check to work at home even when handling cash or credit.

If you can keep these 7 signs in mind when searching for a legitimate work-at-home company, you will not fall victim to their scheme. You will have done your homework. Good luck!

Leisa Bain Good is a professional virtual assistant and the owner of Gemstone Business Solutions. Her email address is Leisa@GemstoneBusinessSolutions.com.

© 2008 Gemstone Business Solutions. All rights reserved.