

What HR professionals need to know about job candidate scams

While many South Africans are familiar with job scams aimed at taking advantage of vulnerable job seekers, less attention is paid to how fraudsters also operate in the other direction. From a candidate inflating their skillset on their CV to using a fake identity to obtain confidential business information, fraudsters pose a serious challenge to HR professionals and can place a business at significant risk should a criminal get a foot in the front door, says Sameer Kumandan, Managing Director, of [SearchWorks](#), South Africa's largest and most innovative data aggregation platform.

The most common, and often the most obvious, misrepresentations are on job seekers' CVs. HR teams are wise to candidates exaggerating their previous experience and responsibilities. However, more serious acts of fraud, such as falsifying a degree or faking qualifications could earn job seekers a fine or up to five years in jail for misrepresenting their qualifications. Despite the risks, job seekers still engage in the practice which is why it is vital appropriate checks are carried out before a final letter of employment is signed.

Recruiters and HR professionals who aren't familiar with candidate scams are at a higher risk of falling for them. Not only do these scams waste valuable time and resources, but fraudsters can get their hands on private information about the business, customers, and employees. This happens when someone assumes a false identity during the hiring process. In some instances, another unknown individual completes an interview on behalf of a candidate during an online interview. In other cases, candidates assume a false identity altogether using fraudulent ID documents or provide a fake driver's license in the event a position requires one. This is why, as far as possible interviews should be conducted in person, and if they must be online, recruiters should insist cameras be turned on.

Another fairly common act of dishonesty is when job seekers may try to negotiate a higher salary or benefits by falsely claiming that they have received a higher offer from another company. This can put pressure on the employer to offer more than they are willing to pay.

A major area of concern for every HR professional is having a full picture of a candidate's background, and more specifically, whether they have a criminal record that either wasn't disclosed or discovered during the hiring process. This could include past convictions for theft, fraud, or other crimes that could make them a risk to the company.

To avoid being scammed by potential new hires, employers should conduct thorough background checks, verify references and work history, and carefully review CVs and job applications for inconsistencies or red flags. Employers should also be cautious of candidates who appear too eager to negotiate salary or benefits. In addition, it's also important to have a transparent hiring process and to communicate clearly with applicants about job requirements and expectations.

For dedicated HR professionals, background checks are a critical part of hiring processes. Fortunately, they've become a lot easier and it's no longer necessary to manually check every fact or qualification.

Tips to spot (and stop) a candidate scammer

1) Pre-screen potential hires

Conducting interviews with potential candidates can be a time-consuming undertaking, but conducting pre-screening interviews can streamline the selection process. This can be done online or via phone to assess whether applicants fulfil the necessary qualifications for the position.

2) Test candidates

If HR teams are recruiting for a position that demands certain skills, it's a good idea to provide assessments or tasks to potential candidates to confirm that they meet expectations. These evaluations provide proof of the skills that applicants have stated in their CVs, cover letters, and other application documents.

3) Opt for panel interviews

Panel interviews that involve several team members are a great way to determine the candidate's ability to work well with a team and collaborate effectively. Additionally, HR teams can gain useful insight into any potential discrepancies regarding the candidate.

4) Perform background and reference checks

Using SearchWorks HR professionals can check, verify and confirm any details relating to potential candidates, to ensure that the best possible hiring decision can be made. Checks include:

- ID verification
- Trace
- Qualifications checks

- Professional Driving Permit check
- Social media checks
- Credit checks (relevant if the applicant works in finance)
- Criminal checks
- Politically exposed persons and sanctions
- Matric certificate verification
- Qualification check
- FAIS status
- Social media report
- SAFPS fraud verification
- Employment confidence index
- Gross monthly income
- CIPC director search

5) Take red flags seriously

During the selection and interview process, candidates typically aim to present themselves in the best light possible. However, it is possible to observe their work-related behaviour or detect signals of their performance. Red flags to take seriously include candidates being vague about their previous roles and experience, or asking inappropriate questions about the company's finances, customers, or confidential processes.

Ends.