

WhatsApp job scam even involves pyramid scheme; know how to spot it

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FULL TEXT

"Hi, you have been selected for a part-time online job with a daily salary of \$500 - \$1000. Please contact me through the link..." If you have received a message similar to this, promising remote jobs with high daily pay, be careful: it is probably a scam attempt.

There are cases where the scam is relatively simple. The scammer contacts you, announcing the selection for a job, but asks for a payment, supposedly for an admission exam or a course needed for the job. In more complex versions, the scam can involve pyramid schemes, manipulation of assessments on digital platforms, fraud, and theft of money and data.

Fake job scam starts with message Credit: Rafael Akao - Reproduction

Fabio Assolini, senior security analyst at Kaspersky Brazil, explains that it all starts with a message: "They are using all possible platforms. It started very strongly on WhatsApp and by SMS, today we have seen them using accounts on iCloud, for iPhone owners, and even on Telegram."

The messages usually have a phone number or a link to start a conversation, where the user receives an address to register on a platform. "Most of these registrations have a code passed to the person, which is the affiliate code, to identify who the recruiter is and for them to receive a share," reports Assolini. The analyst explains that those who recruit people to the platform earn a value, increasing the reach of the scam.

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After registering, the user is asked to make an initial transfer via PIX. "It's a low amount, it can be as low as \$20, to a physical account that you don't know whose it is. And they make the promise that by making this contribution you will get this amount back plus a commission, just for having signed up."

This step serves to gain the user's trust: "They really stick to that agreement. You get the first contribution and the commission, which can even double the amount sent," Assolini says.

Once registered, the user is given daily tasks. "Within this platform, they ask you to simulate the purchase of a product and rate it with five stars, to receive the money contributed and another amount back."

Do not respond to messages that arrive on WhatsApp offering part-time jobs to work from home - Gabriel Cabral/Folhapress

Assolini says the scheme uses gamification, that is, game strategies to motivate user involvement and participation. But as tasks are performed, larger contributions and more difficult tasks are requested, so that the scammers gain time and increase the number of recruits. At a certain point, when the platform has received too many sign-ups, the platforms are shut down and people lose the money they have contributed.

Besides the unreturned money, which stays with the criminals when they shut down the platform, there are gains from manipulating product reviews, tasks performed by users as a condition for payment. "When you simulate the purchase, give stars, you are actually manipulating online store reputations," Assolini explains.

"This makes you create an inflated and unrealistic number of sales, especially on marketplaces, and if a store has a very high number of five-star reviews or sales, the likelihood of the algorithm putting the product first in real searches is higher."

HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE SCAM?

Assolini recommends being wary of very generous offers sent by strangers. Even if the message includes the name of a well-known company, contact the official channels to confirm the offer.

Experts recommend to be wary of high-paying offers from unknown people Credit: Rafael Akao - Rafael Akao Maria Sartori, associate director of the human resources consulting firm Robert Half, indicates accessing the LinkedIn of the organization and checking whether you have connections in common with the company, whom you can talk to for references

She points out that admissions exams are necessarily paid for by the company you are hiring. In addition, it is very rare for a professional to be required to take a vocational course on behalf of the professional during selection. "No candidate should ever disburse any kind of money to participate in a selection process," she says.

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The delegate Laércio Ceneviva Filho, from Deic (Division of Cyber Crimes of the State Department of Criminal Investigations), of the Civil Police of São Paulo, adds: "When in doubt, look for the company itself and check who is the recipient of the payment requested. If it is not in the company's name, never make any kind of payment."

I fell.

If the person fell for the scam, we recommend that they immediately try to register the facts at a police station or through the electronic police station on the Civil Police site

If there is suspicion that a criminal organization is involved, look for the Deic's Cyber Crimes Division," advises the delegate. "The Civil Police and Deic are able, once the occurrences are registered, to trace this information and try to find the author of the facts.

Assolini says that it is important that the victim contact the bank and ask for reimbursement as soon as possible. "Scammers are immediate, so when they receive the amount, they don't leave it in the account for a long time." It also suggests keeping an eye out for future contacts that may be made using the victim's data.

WhatsApp recommends that people report inappropriate conduct directly in conversations, through the "report" option available in the app menu (menu > more > report). Users can also send reports to support@whatsapp.com, detailing what happened with as much information as possible and attaching a screenshot.

HOW TO FIND RELIABLE JOB VACANCIES?

Many companies use online platforms such as Gupy, Vagas.com and 99jobs to advertise vacancies. Platforms such as LinkedIn can also serve as intermediaries, as well as government initiatives such as Portal Emprega São Paulo, the Center for Support to Work and Entrepreneurship (Cate) of São Paulo and Portal Emprega Brasil.

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