BOGUS RECRUITMENT AGENCIES FEED OFF VULNERABLE JOBSEEKERS

Category: Administrative and Procurement Law,Commercial Law
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With the South African unemployment rate at its peak, some phony recruitment agencies are exploiting the jobseekers and taking the little that they have towards their search of employment. The unemployment rate in South Africa has increased to 29% in the second quarter of 2019 from 27.6% in the previous period.[1]

You may directly or indirectly have been adversely affected by bogus recruitment agencies. Although some may be legit, some have strayed off the path of righteousness.

Statistics South Africa ("Stats SA") was a target of this type of scam, and on its website stated that *"Stats SA wishes to caution the public about imposters claiming to represent the organisation and falsely promising jobs, and asking for prepayment to secure jobs for applicants. Stats SA wishes to officially state that no vacancies are currently advertised and no agency or middleman represents the organisation for the purposes of recruitment."*

The red flags to look out for:

- A fake recruitment agency may want an applicant to pay a fee in order for the agency to conduct a 'criminal clearance test'. This fee is normally paid by the employer, i.e. the agency's client.
- On other occasions, a fake recruitment agency may want you to pay a registration fee so that they can process your application, or ask you to pay them a certain amount of money in order to 'secure a job.'
- A fake recruitment agency may allege to represent a certain, often big, organisation.
- The job is only advertised on one job board.
- The job does not appear on the organisation's careers site.

Due to the severe repercussions, WhatsApp has granted users until 7 December 2019 to change their ways if they are currently in breach of WhatsApp's terms about creating and/or sharing fake news and advertisements via automated and/or bulk messages on the platform.[2]

What should you do in order to limit or evade falling into a fake recruitment agency's trap?[3]

- Verify that the recruitment agency exists and is authorised to trade in SA by checking the VAT number;
- Verify the phone number in question;
- Research the recruitment agency's name;
- Familiarise yourself with the genuine recruitment agencies within your niche and industry;
- Consider getting the job description directly from the company's official website as fraud recruiters may pretend to be from an actual company;
- Do not provide any banking details or financial information;
- Make sure the agencies' adverts show authenticity and follow due recruitment protocol;
- Under no circumstances will legitimate recruiters ask for a sign-up fee to register you on their database; and
- If something is amiss or appears too good to be true, it likely is. Stay vigilant and alert.

Where the recruitment agency has falsely and illegally extorted funds from the applicant, an applicant may approach the South African Police Services to report such an alleged criminal activity.

Further, the Federation of African Professional Staffing Organisations acts as one of the governing bodies for the industry and provides credibility to the agency. If you feel that you have been taken advantage of by a recruitment agency, please contact them.

Finally, contact us for more good, clear, precise advice.

[1] https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate.

[2] https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/.

[3] https://jouloopbaan.solidariteit.co.za/en/job-hunters-dont-fall-victim-to-recruitment-fraud/.