

Serious Job Offer or Serious Scam? Be wary of unusual hiring practices

Written by Julie Desmond
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julie@insightnews.com

Kendra's job search was frustratingly slow until she received an offer that seemed impossible to refuse. The company wanted to interview her the following week, was extremely encouraging based on her resume alone and assured her this was an incredible opportunity. The catch: the interview had to be in-person and in Boston (she was in MN) and she would have to appear at her own expense. She came to me because she was having trouble finding information about the company.

Another candidate, Cyndi, approached me recently with similar concerns about a company in Michigan. She said the company wanted to run a credit check on her prior to the job interview, that she was required to use their credit bureau to run the check and that if she refused, they would move on to another candidate. Like Kendra, the position was for an administrative assistant and the company was hard to discover online.

Even while job searching methods and hiring practices constantly evolve, the one common thread among all reputable organizations is they want to save time and money and they want to hire the best people as practically as possible. This means most companies follow similar, common sense practices when hiring.

Kendra's position is relatively entry level. The company should offer a phone interview prior to an in-person meeting, and they should be able to explain why they haven't found anyone locally who can handle the job. National job searches are usually limited to executive level or specialized positions.

Both Kendra and Cyndi can find only very limited information on these companies, including a one-page website online. Both companies' websites have several tabs that don't function. Neither has many employees listed on LinkedIn and, in both cases, a Google-search leads back to the one-page website. Even small and specialized companies have a web presence today. Candidates should think twice about relocating for a company that is so hard to find that they would be challenged to do business with them - let alone work for them.

Cyndi's situation raises multiple questions. Specifically, credit checks cost money; why would a corporation spend money finding the credit score of an administrative assistant they haven't yet phone interviewed? Also, They say they issue a corporate credit card to new employees; why would a company issue a credit card to a new administrative assistant? A solid company has credit agreements with vendors; sales people, on the other hand, might be issued a card upon hire to use for travel expenses.

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The list of questions and inconsistencies goes on, but the message is simple: anything that seems too good to be true, is. Anything that makes a practical person skeptical is a red flag. And if a company's practices give you a nervous gut feeling, pay attention. Get the information you need, or run the other way... fast.

Julie Desmond is an experienced recruiter and career counselor. She currently leads job search workshops in Minneapolis, MN. Send your job search stories to julie@insightnews.com.