

Wise up to ploys of conmen

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their website's jobs and employment offers section.

A copy of the actual job scam e-mail, fake company names and addresses and links to articles that explain the scam are also included.

"We then try to 'kill' any scam website in conjunction with www.aa419.org by sending abuse reports to the registrar and/or hosting company of that domain/website," London says.

"As potential victims or actual victims see these warnings and the posts on our forum, some will either e-mail to us questionable job offers or post them in our forum so that we can analyse them."

London adds that it is very difficult to identify, arrest and prosecute those behind the scams.

"Obviously, the scammers never use their real names and the victims never meet the scammers," he points out.

"When a scam domain is set up, the Who-Is information is usually fake and many registrars and hosts will not bother to turn over the information to the authorities."

He says the biggest problem is the lack of legal jurisdiction, in addition to the fact that scammers avoid scamming people in their own countries.

"Consequently, even if they are identified they are not under the legal jurisdiction of the country the victim resides in," he says. "Thus, law enforcement is generally ineffective."

London is a firm believer that education is the best method of stopping the scams.

However, despite the clear signs of a scam, many individuals still fall for it.

"Some, even when faced with clear evidence of a scam, such as a posted warning, are reluctant to believe it's a scam," London says.

What is being done

In the past years, cases have been detected in Malaysia that targeted hotels, hospitals and the oil and gas industry.

CyberSecurity Malaysia acting chief executive officer Zahri Yunos confirms that similar scam techniques have been used here. CyberSecurity Malaysia, he says, issued an advisory in April last year to warn the public about a con targeting job seekers in the oil and gas industry.

"As you can see, the criminals have moved from the oil and gas industry to the health-care industry but use similar tricks."

Zahri says Cybersecurity Malaysia continuously creates public awareness and provides a channel for the public and organisation to report such scams.

"We notify the respective ISP hosting the fake job scam website and request for shut-down of the site," he explains.

Alerts of such scams are also posted on the CyberSecurity Malaysia website.

Zahri adds that they also work with the local enforcement agencies and foreign computer emergency readiness teams in tackling these scams.

CyberSecurity Malaysia also has an outreach programme, www.cybersafe.my, to educate the public about such scams and create security awareness.

Zahri adds that those who come across these fake sites can do their part by alerting the relevant parties or reporting to Cyber999 Help Centre of CyberSecurity Malaysia.

This would enable them to inform the affected establishment, Internet Service Provider and relevant law enforcement agencies.

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— LYSANDER LONDON

"Web-hosting providers must be strict when receiving requests for registering websites," Zahri stresses. "They should monitor the websites they are hosting and report to the authority if any of the websites is found to be fake or bogus in nature."

Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) chairman Datuk Mohamed Sharil Tarmizi, meanwhile, advises the public to always verify any e-mail or text messages they receive.

"In essence, it is cheating and theft," he says. Action can be taken under the Penal Code.

He adds that the MCMC also tries to educate the public and make them more aware of online scams such as phishing.

"They (the scammers) are very, very smart and the best of people can 'get' it," he warns.

When it comes to how such scams affect the country, executive search firm Corporate Inspiration Group chief operating officer Shawn K.T. Bhushan says there is definitely an impact.

Bhushan says such scams can scare off potential expatriates and hinder the country's hopes of becoming a gateway for business in South-East Asia or the Far East.

He also points out that while it may not necessarily be Malaysians behind the scams, people would still link it to the country and its people.

"After all, these scams are not taking place in Singapore or Hong Kong," he says while emphasising that tougher enforcement is needed.

He also suggests that the Human Resources Ministry set up centres that enable people to check on the validity of companies in the country.

He has, in the past, received queries on "job offers" which were found to be scams, he says.

How scammers work

THE cost of a job scam includes paying for a domain and hosting, which might add up to US\$50 (RM152). Scammers have to get a SIM card for a mobile phone, and that could cost US\$10 (RM30). Sending out e-mail is free.

Their expenses include charges for the phone calls, an Internet connection, and a computer.

Members of the scam gang usually meet at Internet cafes or a scammer's house to carry out the con job. It is also a part-time job for some, like students.

One person handles the phone calls, which

he can take anytime, and then gets a cut of the illicit proceeds.

Another person just mines various sources for addresses and sends out the scam e-mail.

Whatever they get is tax-free profit although they may have to share the money with the mule whose bank account they use (maybe 10% of the earnings).

Even if they only get one victim who pays US\$1,000 (RM3,040), they still make a handsome profit.

Source: fraudwatchers.org

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