

How the scammer worked

1 Scammer posted job advertisements on Facebook and Carousell offering part-time work, which involved replying to texts.

2 When victims replied to the ads with their cellphones, they were told they would receive a text confirming purchase of game credits. They were told to reply "Y" for "yes", generating a code which they sent to the scammer.

3 Victims were told they would be reimbursed for the money they spent on the credits, and they would be paid for their work via bank transfers.

4 They would chalk up bills of hundreds of dollars to over \$1,000 for the credits, which were then charged to their phone bills.

5 When the victims tried to contact the scammer about the reimbursement, he would be unreachable and they were left saddled with the bills.

Easy job? Con job

Man, 19, arrested over fake job scam, victims cheated of \$14,000 in total

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She thought it was a way to earn a quick buck — getting paid just to reply to texts.

But less than 12 hours later, she ended up the victim of an elaborate Internet scam.

Instead of earning the \$150 to \$200 she was promised for the job, Miss Lin Siew Khim, 21, was left saddled with a \$1,100 phone bill.

She is one of more than 20 people — most of them students — who fell prey to a 19-year-old con man.

He was arrested on Monday and will be charged today with cheating.

Two weeks ago, Miss Lin saw an advertisement on Carousell, a local online marketplace, for two days of work. All that was needed was a Singtel mobile phone line with monthly billing.

Miss Lin was told she just had to acknowledge text messages from GX Credits, an online store specialising in gaming credits, which could be used in online games like Maple Story, League of Legends, and on popular gaming platform, Steam.

Shortly after she agreed, she received a text message from GX Credits asking to confirm if she was buying more than \$100 worth of credits.

She replied yes, and was sent another text message with a security code that was to be activated on the gaming website.

"The guy (who put up the job listing) said I just had to take a screenshot and send it to him, which I did," Miss Lin told The New Paper yesterday.

This went on 11 more times, resulting in a total of \$1,100 worth of gaming credits.

She said: "As I was replying to these messages, I kept having a bad feeling that I could be cheated, because it's happened to me before on Carousell, but I didn't think too much about it."

The next day, a Singtel representative called and told her she had chalked up a \$1,100 mobile phone bill.

"I was shocked because the man who offered me the job told me I would be reimbursed and the credits would be erased," she said.

DELETED

When she called him to sort out the situation, his mobile phone was off and he could not be reached. His online accounts had been deleted.

Miss Lin made a police report that afternoon.

She also reported the account to Carousell, which suspended it. But the con man quickly set up another account.

"Whenever I saw a similar ad on Carousell, I would report it so that he couldn't go round cheating other people," Miss Lin said.

She said she reported the scammer at least twice.

Two other victims contacted her — one of whom was a 15-year-old girl.

"I thought to myself, at least I can still try to work and pay off my debts. But what about the young girl?" Miss Lin said.

Another victim, who wanted to be known only as Mr Wong, said he saw the job advertisement on a Facebook page on Oct 31.

He had previously found work on the page, serving at a banquet and working as an usher, so he believed the ad was legitimate.

Mr Wong was promised \$200 for his work. But after spending \$600



TRICKED: Miss Lin was scammed into buying gaming credits via text messages.

TNP PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

on credits, the man behind the post could not be contacted.

Mr Wong also made a police report.

In a news release yesterday, the police said at least 25 people had made reports of a similar nature, falling victim to elaborate "job scams" involving GX Credits.

After the victims provided their mobile phone numbers and sent screenshots of the game codes, the scammer would disappear. These credits were then sold online.

Police estimate the man has cheated people of some \$14,000.

Working with the Commercial Affairs Department and the Technology Crime Investigation Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department, police managed to track down the suspect.

He was arrested at about 2pm

on Monday at Kay Siang Road, just off Dempsey Road. Several mobile phones, SIM cards, bank tokens and cash amounting to \$7,500 were seized.

He will be charged with cheating in court today.

Said Assistant Commissioner of Police Lian Ghim Hua, Commander of Ang Mo Kio Division: "Members of the public are advised to be wary of online advertisements where deals might appear to be too good to be true. Personal information also should not be offered to strangers."

Miss Lin, who is now more careful with her online dealings, said: "When you think something doesn't sound right, talk to your parents. Or if you're unsure, do what I'm doing now and get a job through a (placement) agency."

Other common scams

SOFTWARE SCAM

In November last year, there was a spate of scams involving con men pretending to call from major software companies.

They tricked people into paying for additional software and got them to download malware. They even had victims give out their credit card details.

This led to some computers getting remotely controlled and used for illegal online activities.

INTERNET LOVE SCAM

Con men, mostly claiming to be from the UK, target women searching for love on dating sites or social networks.

Once they befriend the victim, they correspond through e-mail or phone calls.

In some cases, the scammer says he intends to visit Singapore to propose. On the stated day of arrival, he will call to say he has been detained by Customs for

carrying excess cash, and he asks the victim to transfer funds to secure his release.

In other cases, the suspect will claim to send valuable items such as designer bags and watches. The victim will be asked to transfer funds to clear penalty charges on the items.

PAYPAL E-MAIL SCAM

Scammers, who typically claim to be located overseas, place orders with online sellers.

The scammers will send fake e-mails, usually from Paypal, notifying sellers that payment has been received. The victims will then send the items to the overseas addresses.

ONLINE CREDIT SCAM

Con men convince male victims to buy gift cards or online shopping credit in exchange for a meet-up, date or sexual liaison.

The scammers typically insist

the victims buy the cards from AXS machines or convenience stores before sending images of the receipts, along with the PIN, for them to claim the credit.

Victims were befriended on social media platforms such as WeChat and iAround and they communicated through online messaging and phone calls.

PURCHASE CARD/VIRTUAL CREDIT SCAM

Scammers gain access to a person's mobile messaging app account to impersonate him.

They will send requests to buy gift cards to the account holder's friends or family members. These cards are meant for redeeming monetary credits online.

Scammers will then ask the victim's friends and family to send messages or photos containing the redemption codes over mobile messaging apps.

They redeem all the value of the

gift cards before the victims realise their mistake.

MULTIPLE PAYMENT ONLINE PURCHASE SCAM

People posing as sellers ask buyers for further payments on the pretext of mistaken delivery orders. Victims typically accede to the request, but do not receive the items.

The payments made by the victims are quickly transferred out of local bank accounts to overseas accounts, making it difficult to trace and get back the stolen funds.

CYBER EXTORTION

In typical cases, a female scammer befriends her victim, usually male.

The scammer coaxes the victim into undressing and performing indecent acts in front of a webcam.

The scammer video records the act and blackmails the victim.



I thought to myself, at least I can still try to work and pay off my debts. But what about the young girl?

— Miss Lin on a 15-year-old victim of the same scam.



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