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Modern methods to cheat our fellow humans

by Mark Pavilons

?Most scams are absurd ? so absurd that one wonders how anyone falls for them at all; yet if no one falls for them, how do the scammers make money??

? James Veitch

A fool and his money are soon parted, according to an old English adage. It seems this 16th century phrase has never been more true than it is today.

Hard currency was first created by King Alyattes in Lydia, now part of Turkey, in 600 BC. So, my dear friends, we've been earning money, spending money, losing money and stealing money for the past 2,600 years! It's no wonder our fellow humans have become quite savvy at loosing our grip on the all mighty dollar.

Scams pop up almost daily and their prevalence is made much easier thanks to the

Internet. Scammers have it quite easy these days. They can create a load of codswallop and send it around the globe in minutes. Like a fisherman casting a wide net, they toss out the rubbish in hopes of landing a few gullible souls.

It's sad, really. Scams over the years have made people quite reluctant about responding to almost any deal, offer or bargain that crosses our social media platforms. It has become a lot more difficult to separate the nonsense from the truth. And this can hurt the genuine sellers and fundraisers.

We are all familiar with the obvious, exposed attempts of fraud. We hear about them all the time ??uge cheques in our name from a Nigerian source.

But there are many others that are not as easy to detect and weed out.

I?pretty much ignore all strange and odd emails I receive, and I get a ton of them at work each day. Anything that reads ?urgent attention required??is hogwash. Anything that starts with ?Dear Friend??is malarkey, although I?really liked one I received that was addressed to me as ?Your Excellency.? That has a nice ring to it, but my co-workers refuse to adopt it as my new title.

Unfortunately, hokum permeates places we least expect it.

I have been helping my son shop for his first used car. I?regularly scan the common sites such as Kijiji and autotrader.ca

I remember Auto Trader when it was a thick publication and I just loved flipping through the pages for used and classic cars.

The online site is pretty good and offers a lot of individualized search parameters to make looking for a car quick and easy. The drawback is, of course, almost anyone can post an ad, with little regard for accuracy or legitimacy.

?Let the buyer beware??goes the sage bit of advice.

So, we have to become a little more diligent when shopping these days. I've encountered a few hurdles with used cars advertised on autotrader.ca lately. We found some amazing deals and yes, I now realize that if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

I?found an immaculate 2008 Honda Accord, fully serviced and e-tested, with only 85,000 kilometres on it. The owner wanted

$2,700!

When the ?owner??responded, she said she was at an air force base in BC, undergoing her final training. She would then be relocated to Cold?Lake, Alberta. She would have the car shipped right to my driveway and I could inspect it, drive it and take it to my mechanic before making my decision. But I had to send her the money, via eBay, who would hold it until?I made my decision. I would get a ?refund??if I chose not to take the car.

This explanation was so absurd, I?didn't know whether to laugh or cry. There were so many red flags I just shook my head. I?marvelled at the complexity of the details, no matter how weird they were.

Another man was selling a mint 2009 VW?CC, again for a bargain of $2,500. The only catch was he accepted a three-year contract job in Europe, so his ?delivery man??would handle the transaction for him here. This man took my information via email and he would deliver it to my driveway and leave it in my hands for a few days while I made my decision. Of course, he never got back to me.

Again, it seems selling a car these days goes beyond strange and out of the ordinary. Whatever happened to putting an ad in the local paper with a phone number?

Many of the ads posted online don't have phone numbers, only email addresses.

Again, why would someone who's anxious to sell their vehicle not want to be contacted quickly and easily?

So, in the past month, I've responded to at least a dozen adds, most of which are either misleading or total rubbish.

You would think that this behavior is limited to scammers and ne're do wells, but that's not the case.

New and used car dealers are becoming a little more, how do you say, less than truthful!?My son saw a 2014 British luxury car advertised for $3,000 and yet when we called the dealer, the car didn't exist. But I was offered many more models to choose from on the showroom floor.

Shame on you.

I have come across many offers of ?free product samples,??only to learn you have to sit through an in-home presentation, while the sales rep tries to sell you a year's supply of pork rinds. And the ?free sample??is a snack baggie of dried, chewy stuff.

Has anyone every won by calling the number at the bottom of your grocery store receipt?

Today, in our free market economy, it seems there are so many ?strings attached,??it's a wonder we don't strangle ourselves on a daily basis.

I'm a trusting person who likes to give people the benefit of the doubt. I hope

I don't change.

But the more I explore humanity with my fellow creatures, the more disillusioned

I become.

I hope there's a happy ending to my car shopping journey, one with no scams, no strings, no bunk.

Caveat emptor!