



## Offers on the Internet don't have all the answers

Patty Kruse of Green Bay visited SCORE recently for assistance with her new [Internet business](#). She had paid \$2,000 to a company called Professional Marketing International to help her start an online [business](#), and was finding it difficult to get through to the counselors that were promised.

"I came across (Professional Marketing International) when doing an Internet search," Kruse explained. "I was only working part time and thought that this was something I could do on the side to increase my income. I gave them a call and they made it sound easy to set up the site. They promised to walk me through it, step by step."

But what Kruse found was discouragement and frustration. She wanted to sell decorative stained glass and had questions about licenses, shipping, suppliers, returns and other issues. Although the company had said counselors would be readily available, she discovered that their hours were limited and calls went unanswered.

She noted, "I'd call and get put on hold for a long time. When I finally got to talk to someone, more often than not, I got no response to my questions. They would tell me to contact an attorney or accountant even though they told me when I signed up that they could provide all the information."

A quick Internet search on scams by Professional Marketing International shows that Kruse's experience is common. She was probably more fortunate than most as others reported fees as high as \$15,000. Like Kruse, these clients were assured that they would receive all of the education and assistance needed to be successful.

The website brags, "Our commitment to you is to provide all the tools and resources you need to recoup your [investment](#). Clients that put forth the effort and follow the outlined coaching program can see results immediately." The site is full of success stories of happy and satisfied clients. Kruse is not one of them.

She has degrees in architecture and interior design and now works full time at Pamperin's Paint & Decorating in Ashwaubenon. She'd like to start a business someday but is tapped out. The charge is on her credit card, and she is paying it off a little at a time. Like thousands of others, she feels like she was taken advantage of.

"They did send me a lot of information, but the more I've been talking about it to others, I feel like I was scammed. I wouldn't do it again, but at the time, I was hurting for money and it sounded like a good thing," she added.

Professional Marketing International draws clients with infomercials and has more than 50 connected businesses including Dave Espino, Jim Cochran, Auctions for Income, and other popular names. People making contact with the infomercials receive a call from Professional Marketing International along with a sales pitch. A credit card number is required before a contract is provided.

Since signing up, Kruse has seen other sites that promise something similar for much less. And, as she found out at the SCORE session, there are volunteers willing to help for free.

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