

Our advice on how to avoid being caught

# Buyer impersonations

Impersonation fraud happens when criminals pose as reputable companies to place orders, request delivery to fake addresses, or offer to collect goods themselves. The real company is later invoiced but denies placing the order.

This type of fraud is becoming more common, especially with the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). While AI benefits businesses, it's also being exploited for criminal activities.

We've seen fake invoices or suspicious emails with errors and poor design. Now, AI enables highly realistic fake correspondence, even mimicking voices and images of business partners, making it harder to detect fraud.

B2B professionals know these risks, but fraudsters strike when we're distracted or stressed. Let's explore how to spot these scams early and minimise potential damage.

#### Points to watch for that may indicate impersonation:

- Professional-looking website with limited functionality
- Buyer shows little interest in price or negotiation
- Quick turnaround between first contact, order, and delivery
- Buyer requests to collect goods himself (in unmarked vehicles)
- Delivery address changes at short notice
- Buyer operates in a different trade sector
- Significantly larger or smaller orders than typical for the industry or product type
- Buyer readily provides requested information (trade references, accounts, etc.)
- Orders placed by a business director or CEO
- Unexpected order from a well-known company you've never dealt with before

“Each point in isolation would not necessarily indicate fraud. However, when you start seeing several points together, that is when suspicions should be raised.”



## What can you do?

Suppliers should carry out checks to ensure their customers are genuine:

- Take a contact name, landline phone number, and website address, and verify them
- Impersonators often use mobile numbers and Gmail/Hotmail email addresses, so be cautious
- Check the grammar and spelling in any documents provided; they should meet professional standards
- Do not rely solely on contact numbers provided by the buyer. Look up alternative numbers for the company and call them to verify the individual's employment
- Beware of fake websites. Always search for an alternative to the given address, as impersonators often create convincing secondary sites with slight name variations
- Use [whois.com/whois](https://www.whois.com/whois) to check the creation date of email/web domains. A recently created domain for a long-established business should raise concern
- Use Google Street View to verify the delivery address
- Beware of last-minute changes to the delivery address; do not change the destination once goods are in transit
- Educate vehicle crews to deliver only to specified destinations and report any attempts to change the delivery destination before off-loading goods
- Be cautious of urgent or casual orders from existing customers; insist they follow usual purchasing procedures
- Be alert to our T400 warning condition used for genuine businesses where impersonation has occurred, and extra due diligence is recommended



### Do not forget!

- These incidents are not covered by credit insurance
- In cases of fraud, the only recourse is to contact the authorities
- Recovery of funds is highly unlikely
- Everyone in procurement, sales, and accounting must be aware of these risks and take them seriously

### Get in touch

For questions and support, reach out to us today.



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