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Internet a legitimate source of funding--and a minefield of unscrupulous offers

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With commercial credit increasingly difficult to come by, small businesses owners and entrepreneurs are turning to the Internet in search of a quick fix. While countless legitimate avenues exist for connecting investors and entrepreneurs, so too do unscrupulous individuals. Rick Singer, chief executive of RaiseCapital.com offers these tips for navigating online fundraising: Beware upfront fees Say no to unscrupulous brokers, investors and venture capitalists charging thousands of dollars in "startup and processing costs"

Don't be manipulated by the markets Beware of scams featuring offers that merge an entrepreneur's firm into a dormant shell company traded on the public market and under someone else's control. The shells are essentially dead, and if you don't investigate before getting involved, your company could end up dead, too.

Do background checks Don't be fooled by a fancy-looking Web page with eye-catching graphics and bold headlines.

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