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0 (40s):

Apply.

1 (48s):

Welcome to the Clark Howard show our mission to serve and empower you. So you make better financial decisions in your life. And today's episode. I have An assignment for each person listening to this podcast. Also, I received a fraudulent email. I want you to know about. So do you know that really the heat's off Equifax, TransUnion and Experian. They had a real target on their backs after Equifax had the worst data breach in the history of the modern era, exposing the deep personal information to criminals of about two thirds of American adults that happened several years ago, the credit bureaus tried to behave themselves for awhile and now, well, not so much.

1 (1m 46s):

So do you know that more than half of all complaints, that consumers are filing right now with the consumer financial protection Bureau concern, credit reports, errors on them. And there's a specific reason that consumer reports believes the number of complaints about credit bureaus have skyrocketed and it's simple. They haven't complied with various elements of the cares act that gave you special protections due to Corona virus. And if you are in a temporary program because of economic hardship, because of coronavirus, and you're not making your payments, which was agreed to as part of your arrangements with your lender, then you are supposed to be reported as current either the fault of the lender, the credit Bureau, or a combination of the two people in massive numbers are being reported as delinquent on their credit reports, devastating their credit standing, and it's time they're already suffering the credit bureaus or supposed to respond to disputes typically.

1 (3m 10s):

And what's known as a reasonable period of time, 30 days, but the credit bureaus use their lobbyists to get a temporary waiver from that during Corona virus. So we have a train wreck. Credit reports are far less accurate than before for any of the number of reasons. And the credit bureaus are baking in their sloppiness into the system, even when you complain. So the time for you to get involved is not at the point that you were trying to buy a home and your mortgage doesn't go through because of a foul up at Equifax TransUnion or Experian.

1 (3m 51s):

It's not at the point that your auto-insurance refuses to renew you or doubles or triples your premiums because of errors on your credit report. No, this is something that we need to manage because what we don't know can hurt us. It's really, really easy for you to be able to monitor what's going on on your credit files. In the case of the law, which requires annualcreditreport.com that you be able to see a free copy of your credit report from each Bureau one time, each year for free temporarily.

1 (4m 33s):

It was extended to pretty much repeatedly. That is really not where the action is. The smart thing to do that gets you two thirds of the way to where you need to be is sign up for credit. Karma credit karma allows you access to their facsimile of your credit score for free. Whenever you want updated typically weekly, and you are able to see if there's any funny business on your credit reports with Equifax and TransUnion. Experian is not in the game, but you're able to see your files as much as you want. And so what I recommend is if you use an electronic calendar, do a monthly reminder to check your credit files, it'll take you just like three or four minutes to look at them, to see if anything is not right.

1 (5m 31s):

And then you go through the dispute process with the credit Bureau involved, disputing the false information on your report, Nan, the midst of that, it triggers what again was supposed to be that 30 day period during that time period, you not only dispute with the credit Bureau, which you can do electronically or through traditional snail mail or, and at the same time you contact whatever lender it is that may in fact have improperly reported you as delinquent when you were in a plan with them or any other reason, you have to believe there's false information.

1 (6m 17s):

Now, sometimes there'll be some of it slipped up on you. Most often, it will be a medical bill that you didn't even know was out there and knowing about it and being able to deal with it and deal with it in a timely basis is the key because medical stuff, if you deal with it on a timely basis, even if something went to Lincoln, essentially he gets erased from figuring in your credit standing and your credit history. Krista

2 (6m 47s):

Clark, Andrew and Massachusetts says I got married in may of 2020 I've since discovered that there is a hilar from my wife's parents' home in her name, she was unaware of this. Then the balance is almost \$80,000. So paying it off is something I want to avoid. What are our options here?

1 (7m 8s):

Oh my goodness. Okay. There's a lot to talk about. So I'm trying to follow, read between the lines. Was this an act of fraud by your in-laws? Is there anything to that effect? Oh man. The things that are, what are referred to often, and the law is friendly fraud, which is such an odd term when, and it involves a family member doing something like this to you puts you so often between a rock and a hard place. If they forged

your wife's information to apply for this, then you're left with this very, very rough choice of getting a police report and then contacted the lender and say that you never took out this loan or your wife never took out this loan.

1 (8m 9s):

And this was taken out fraudulently that creates the risk of a criminal problem for your in-laws. And this is so hard. And here's the worst part. When there's an account that's been opened without your knowledge. And it involves alone, that was actually taken out by a family member, pretending to be you the burden of proof switches and the burden of proof rests with your wife, who has to essentially prove she's innocent rather than the lender proving she was guilty. So this one is really, really difficult and, and it involves family dynamics.

1 (8m 53s):

If you stay silent, it remains her obligation, your obligation together, I guess. And then you may green light other abuses that the end law is may due. So this one is brutal tough, and you'll have to decide as a couple, how you wish to proceed. This is a case where sitting down with a lawyer would be a really good idea because of the amount of money involved,

2 (9m 27s):

Jenn and North Carolina. It says, Clark, thank you for all you and your team. Do my sister recently got a cold call from a roofing company. Part of their pitch was that they were Clark Howard certified. Is that a legit thing I've never heard? You mentioned endorsement of specific service companies.

1 (9m 44s):

That's good is it has never happened. So let me tell you how it plays in the industry. I'm in that normally. And it's funny, Christa, when you have talked with various people in media and you say Know, Clark doesn't do endorsements, Clark doesn't do live or taped reads is almost unheard of in what I do. I never ever, ever, ever, not ever have done a voiced ad and have never done an endorsement. And the reason is I want you to know that when you hear me talk about something, it said from my heart in my head, and you can trust it.

1 (10m 31s):

Nobody bought and paid for me. And so anybody saying that is an automatic tip off that this is a company that is not ethical. If they're claiming that I have quote unquote endorsed them. And I don't even do that, then if they lied about that, what else would they lie about? And on that note, did I share recently than I was walking out on a walk in the park and I got stopped by somebody, you said, you know, and I bought my car recently. They told me that you bought a car from them and that you bought an extended warranty on your car.

1 (11m 16s):

So there I am out on a nice relaxing walk and a park, and I've got to deal with a lie like that again. And she bought it. She said, well, I, I felt like if you bought one, I should buy one too. And I'm like, Oh no, just for the record. I have never, never not ever in my life bought an extended warranty on any product at any time period. Next, I got an email from a fraudster that looks eerily real. I want you to know what you need to look out for. This episode

0 (11m 54s):

Is brought to you by progressive saving money on your car. Insurance is easy with progressive. It's an average savings of over \$750 for customers who switch and save. In fact, customers can qualify for an average of six discounts on your auto policy with progressive, including discounts, just for starting a quote online, or having multiple vehicles on the policy, get your quote online@progressive.com and see how much you could be saving national annual average auto insurance savings by new customers surveyed in 2019 potential savings will vary discounts, vary and are not available in all States and situations.

1 (12m 35s):

Spoofting emails continue to VAX. So many people where you unknowingly may get an email pretending to be from your bank, your credit card company, a utility company, or whatever. And it looks legit to you and there will be something about a problem with your account and they con you into actually creating the problem in your account. In fact, I received a notice from Citibank that there's been a huge uptick in the number of Citibank customers that are getting scammed with phony text messages or phony emails, and Citibank put up a briefing for its customers, telling you how you would know whether or not you were getting a legitimate email from Citibank or not.

1 (13m 30s):

And the thing about that is you need to know that the criminals also are aware of the kind of things that Citibank is warning you about, and they will morph their solicitations to you. The phony pre-texting emails, so that they will look more legit trying to defeat the things that Citi is telling you to do. And it's not just Citibank is any company at all. So be very aware that when you get an email from any financial institution, not just city bank and in credit card issuer or any bank and anything like that.

1 (14m 14s):

And a, you know, we had a wave of these back in November involving What company, Amazon 'cause. It was in the midst of Thanksgiving, shopping black Friday month, all of that. So the criminals are opportunistic. They migrate their tactics, they migrate their targets. But what they're after is through typically a hyperlink in an email or a text, either gaining access deep into your technology, or getting you to tell you whatever fish stale there, going to tell you about how your account's been compromised, how there's been fraudulent activity on your account, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

1 (14m 60s):

And then they try to get you to fill out a form that signs you into your account, which they're then capturing that information. And then the fraud that they warned you about, they were only predicting the future. Remember my key rule phone call from a financial institution or anybody else where you have sensitive personal information that could be valuable to a crook, a text and email do not give up any information, clicking on anything in an email, a text or in sharing information, a phone call. You did not originate. If you're told there's a problem with your account on the phone call, say, thank you very much.

1 (15m 44s):

I'll check into it. Have a great day. Hang up the phone with the email note. What they've said, deleted the text, Know what it says, do not click on any links on it. Then go to your sign-in on your phone for the app or on a laptop for the website, Sign into your account. And then you'll see if there is any funny activity at all. Another one that was really big in December was one that kept rolling around about PayPal. PayPal has been a hugely successful company during the pandemic. As people have turned to various forms of electronic payment in lieu of paying in person, paying with cash, paying with plastic, whatever.

1 (16m 31s):

And so criminals have targeted crime of opportunity, PayPal accounts. So they'll say something like your PayPal account has been suspended, which is always interesting to people. You don't have PayPal accounts cause there's anything to everybody. Again, never, never, never, not ever click on any link in any email, any text or give any personal information in any phone call that is made to you instead of from you

2 (17m 0s):

And my husband keeps sending me those PayPal emails, by the way. And I keep reminding him that our PayPal account is under my email address. He keeps getting them. You don't get it

1 (17m 11s):

Terrible. And your husband, you talk about him wasting money at CVS. You talk with him,

2 (17m 15s):

You brought that up. Not me. Love him. Love him. Tony and Texas says, I'm dealing with an individual internet seller on a digital piano. He refuses to meet in person due to a COVID infection offering shipping only. I'm about to walk away from this deal, but is there any way to reverse a payment using Apple pay or PayPal? If the merchandise does not show up after payment,

1 (17m 38s):

Pretty much you're taking on a level of risks that is unacceptable. Somebody's saying that they're afraid to meet in person because the Corona virus could be a legitimate reason, but with something you're buying online, that is enough of a danger that you walk away. You find another piano and do not believe somebody that they're going to have that piano mover come and bring it right to you because likely the only thing that

takes a trip is your money. One way

2 (18m 12s):

Kimberly in South Carolina, this is I received a letter from a credit card company that I have not been able to pay stating that they were going to send it to a lawyer for review. I need to know what my rights are since I am unable to pay this debt right now,

1 (18m 25s):

Kimberly, I'm really sorry about your financial circumstance and what credit card companies do is once a debt with them reaches charge off status, they then send it to either a collection agency or a collection attorney. What you want to do is stay in contact with the credit card company, as much as you can and tell them you don't have the money. You know, the big problem when people fall behind on the debt is often they're too embarrassed or too weary to contact who they owe the money to staying in contact with the credit card company is a good idea. If you are turned over to a lawyer or a collection agency stay and continuous contact with them, make it clear that you want to pay your debt, that you just have no money because you've been so heavily financially impacted by Corona virus.

1 (19m 19s):

What you want them to know? This is that you have good intentions, but that you're not worth it suing against the debt because you don't have the money. If you were silent, they just assume you're avoiding it. And the reality is they don't want to waste time suing somebody who doesn't have the money and invest to you rebuilding your financial life. I do want to say to you, Kimberly, and to others who have been affected by great economic loss and job loss during Corona virus, it is my strong belief that we're going to have a very meaningful economic recovery. And the second half of 21 is we get enough shots and people's arms, and that the jobs are going to return.

2 (20m 6s):

Absolutely Edward in Colorado says I just started a semi trucking company with one truck. I would like to know if you have a certain business credit card I should go with for my business expenses,

1 (20m 18s):

What I want you to do. And I wish you the best with your business. I want you to look primarily at nine Business oriented cards. You can pay your bill from your business, but having personal credit cards that you use for business purpose gives you a lot of consumer protections that the law does not allow for Business issued. Credit Cards. Business issued Credit Cards of light had been offering generous sign up bonuses than personal cards. And that's because under the law, the bank's can do pretty much anything they want in terms of the changing terms and conditions at any time on the business cards.

1 (21m 4s):

If you're not worried about that aspect, I've got a briefing at Clark dot com on the best small business Cards with essentially a wishlist of all the incredible rewards they're offering right now. But the rewards are one thing. The benefit of the consumer protection is of a personal card is another thing that can be very powerful in your advantage.

2 (21m 31s):

And K and Ohio says, you recently talked about Ponzi schemes and it made me think about multi-level marketing companies. They require an investment in order to join the business, to sell products, but more emphasis has placed on recruiting others' to sell the same things, promising high return on initial investment, essentially the seller's end up being the customers. And if you look at income disclosure statements, barely anyone gets their money back. Clark. I've been listening for a while, but haven't heard you talk about them. What are your thoughts?

1 (22m 0s):

Kay, thank you for this question. So with multi-level marketing organizations where you have to lay out big money up front, there is a trail of tears and busted wallets that is many miles long. There was an athleisure company that we two years ago received endless complaints about from people who bought large amounts of inventory up front that. Now, if you can look on eBay, you'll see people trying to get whatever they can for that merchandise, where that whole multi-level was really about taking advantage of your hopes and your dreams that you would make a lot of money and promising you, that you would make these big bucks in return for buying large quantities of inventory upfront.

1 (22m 53s):

And a good multi-level is one that you don't have inventory risk, that your risk is your time selling the product or service. The other thing that's a key determinant of what would make somebody a legitimate multi-level is if the real incentive and real money is made from selling product or service to strangers, not recruiting new people into the organization. I want to thank you so much for joining us on today's podcast. And I want to tell you that we are here for you seven days a week at Clark dot com and cart deals.com.

1 (23m 36s):

And we have free newsletters for you. If you want to learn even more about saving money from our team of great researchers and writers.