

# Another Implausible Investment Scheme Blows Up

You'd think that following the collapse of Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme in 2008, all investors would have developed a more skeptical protective layer to ward off those who would dishonestly separate them from hard-earned savings. Sadly though, examples regularly occur of the gullible being fleeced.

Joe Lewis ran a currency trading business from Istanbul, Turkey that promised monthly returns of 1-3% (annually this compounds to between 12% and an incredible 42%). In spite of these implausibly high returns, not everyone was put off by such a promise. Consequently, there were many recipients of a series of recent e-mails admitting that not much currency trading had been going on after all, that the business had lost "almost all of its assets," and that, "...contrary to what was reported to you previously, you cannot expect any payments in the future."

One poor victim lamented that, "I have never met the bloke and I don't think I have ever spoken to him." I bet he regrets that now, but what on earth was he thinking in handing over his money under such circumstances and with so little care?

Part of the appeal was evidently golf trips for clients to exotic locations, as it turns out funded by the clients to a far greater degree than they originally suspected. Mark Bavin organized the golf and helpfully steered investors to Joe Lewis, but now claims he was taken in just like everybody else. Mark may be a thoroughly nice chap but evidently didn't find much use for a financial services background. On LinkedIn his most recent role was as owner of Mulberry Executive Cars before his current title of simply "Golf Ambassador."

Harry Markopolos once signed my copy of his gripping book, *No One Would Listen; A True Financial Thriller* when we had the opportunity to meet before a presentation he was giving. Joe Lewis's victims certainly would have benefited from reading "The Madoff Whistleblower's" account of the many warning signs about Madoff available to those willing to do some work, like Harry. The memorable inscription when he returned my signed copy of his book to me was, "Assume Fraud Until Genius is Proven". It's pretty good advice.