



SEPTEMBER 14 - SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Every post. Every story. In my own words.

38

ORIGINAL POSTS

7

DAYS OF THE EXPERIMENT

76

BEHIND-THE-POST NOTES

WHAT THE INTERVIEW GAMES IS ALL ABOUT

The experiment behind every story.

The Interview Games started with a question so basic it should not require 100 interviews to answer: what is hiring really like for the person trying to get hired? Not the company careers page, where everyone is smiling near a whiteboard. I mean the actual journey: the application, the assessment, the camera that asks questions but cannot answer any, the recruiter who runs late, and the days of silence afterward.

I put myself through those processes. I submit real applications, examine what the system asks for, attend interviews when invited, compare candidate experiences and write about what I encounter. I also listen to readers, because their messages reveal how widely a strange recruiting practice can spread. Some companies get it right. Others appear to have let a PowerPoint presentation design a human relationship.

The jokes are not the whole mission. Humor gets attention, but the point is to raise standards. Candidates deserve preparation, clear schedules, fair assessment, honest feedback and basic respect for their time. Employers benefit from hearing how their processes feel from the other side. And people who are unemployed deserve more than another automated reminder that their application has been received by a computer with no immediate plans to respond.

September 14-20 told this story from every direction. Recorded interviews with Target, Mars, Southwest Airlines and Best Buy sat beside a delayed Tesla call. There were posts about disappearing job listings, cover letters, drawn-out Amazon interviews, workplace loyalty slogans and corporate group behavior. There were also reader questions, stories about layoffs and a moment in a Walgreens aisle that made the fear of age discrimination painfully real.

This weekly edition collects the complete written text of every original commentary post in my LinkedIn data export for September 14-20, shown in Chicago local time. Each story is preceded by two new editorial reflections: what appears to have triggered it, and what I hoped readers would take away. The reflections are interpretations; the original post text remains the published text. Thanks for reading, laughing and holding hiring to a higher standard.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The week at a glance.

OPEN ANY STORY BY SELECTING THE TITLE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14		
01	The Day Hiring Forgot to Meet the New Employee	5
02	A Calendar Invitation With HR and No Agenda	6
03	Target, and the Interview That Opened My Inbox	7
04	The Executive Phone Call and the Store-Level Video Link	8
05	Why I Keep Playing The Interview Games	9
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15		
06	Tesla: Next Steps, Whenever the Recruiter Arrives	10
07	Mars, HireVue, and the Missing Chocolate	11
08	When the AI Misses Its Own Interview	12
09	Corporate Sarcasm Has a Coffee Budget	13
10	Welcome to the Hiring Wildlife Documentary	14
11	The CEO Laugh Track: Attendance Mandatory	15
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16		
12	A Layoff Email Before the First Cup of Coffee	16
13	Why Candidates Should Research Employers, Too	17
14	The Interview Started on My LinkedIn Profile	18
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17		
15	When People Turn Into Dashboard Metrics	19
16	How Do You Keep Getting Interviews, Alex?	20
17	Three Questions From a Tired Job-Seeker Inbox	21
18	Southwest Airlines: An Interview Without a Crew	22
19	The Founder Event and the Unfair Advantage	23

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The week, continued.

OPEN ANY STORY BY SELECTING THE TITLE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17		
20	The Human Being Missing From the Video Interview	24
21	Jobs That Vanish Before You Finish Applying	25
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18		
22	Nobody Wants to Work? Look at the Applicants	26
23	An HR Job With an Airport-Sized Schedule	27
24	Walgreens, Grey Hair, and an Interview Tomorrow	28
25	Best Buy and the Microwave Interrogation	29
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19		
26	Please Explain the Job Before You Quiz Me	30
27	Karen Would Like Me to Stop Posting	31
28	We Are Like Family, Until Restructuring	32
29	Nine Amazon Interviews for Under \$50,000	33
30	The Avengers of Job-Seeker Networking	34
31	The Outlook Calendar Olympics	35
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20		
32	Eight Steps to Be Vice President of People	36
33	The Cover Letter, Our Ceremonial Offering	37
34	When the VP of HR Is the Plot Twist	38
35	My Ex-Boss Has a LinkedIn Season Pass	39
36	The Goose Is the Hiring Process	40
37	A Former Boss Meets the Revenge Plot Twist	41
38	When the Toxic Job Ends but the Noise Continues	42

The Day Hiring Forgot to Meet the New Employee

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader account of someone being hired through recorded interviews and digital paperwork, without speaking to a person before the first day, sparked this observation.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask what a people-first hiring process means when the people never actually meet before employment begins.

Modern hiring has reached the point where meeting another human being before accepting a job is apparently optional.

I saw a story today about someone hired without speaking to anyone until the day she was supposed to start. Resume submitted. Recorded video interview. Online documents signed. Training date scheduled. First day confirmed. Human interaction? Apparently that was part of the deluxe employment package.

Companies used to say they wanted to “get to know the person behind the resume.” Now some are comfortable hiring the person behind the webcam without ever speaking to them. You answer questions into a camera, upload your documents, and suddenly an email appears saying, “Congratulations! Welcome to the team!” Excuse me, what team? Who is my manager? Who works here? Is Kevin real? Does HR exist outside automated emails? Am I supposed to show up Monday morning and wander around until someone recognizes me from my video audition?

Imagine walking in on your first day and saying, “Hi, I’m Alex. I start today.” The receptionist looks confused and asks, “Who hired you?” I was hoping someone here knew. Then a manager appears with a badge like they just adopted you from the internet. “Welcome aboard! We’re so excited to finally meet you.” Finally? You hired me. At this point onboarding looks like ordering takeout. Choose your position. Upload your resume. Select your shift. Add benefits to cart. Accept terms and conditions. Your employment will be ready for pickup in three to five business days.

The funniest part is companies still put “strong interpersonal communication skills” in the job description while designing a hiring process with no interpersonal communication. Candidate must be outgoing, collaborative, emotionally intelligent, and excellent with people. Perfect. Please demonstrate all of that alone in your kitchen while speaking to a blinking green light.

There is a point where efficiency starts looking like nobody wanted to be bothered. A job is not a streaming

subscription. You are asking someone to leave another company, rearrange their life, trust your leadership, learn your culture, and spend forty hours a week there. Maybe one actual conversation before “Congratulations!” should still be part of the process. Because if I can get hired without speaking to anyone, I have questions. Can my performance review be prerecorded? Can I send a cardboard cutout to the holiday party? And when I resign, can I upload a video saying, “Thank you for the opportunity. I have decided to move forward with another employer?”

Corporate America spent years complaining that candidates were becoming impersonal and less engaged. Then somebody heard that feedback and said, “Excellent point. Let’s remove all the people from recruiting.” At this pace, employees will get hired by an algorithm, trained by a chatbot, managed by an app, congratulated by an automated email, and finally meet their boss six months later.

Probably during the exit interview.

A Calendar Invitation With HR and No Agenda

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Remembering a mysterious meeting invitation with a boss and HR led into a story about social media posts and workplace scrutiny.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how uncomfortable vague meetings and policing harmless opinions can feel, especially when no real confidentiality issue is involved.

There are certain calendar invitations that can ruin your entire morning before you even finish your coffee.

“Quick meeting with your boss and HR.” No agenda. No context. Just that beautiful little mystery box sitting on your calendar like a corporate jump scare. You immediately start reviewing every conversation you’ve had for the last six months, every email you sent, every joke you made, and whether saying “Per my last email” technically counts as workplace violence.

I’ve been invited to one of those meetings before. I walked in and saw my boss, HR, and the kind of serious facial expressions usually reserved for quarterly losses and missing company laptops. Apparently, we needed to discuss a social media policy violation. That phrase alone is impressive. It sounds less like I posted something online and more like I hacked the Pentagon from the break room.

HR started explaining that some of my posts had “raised concerns.” Naturally, I was curious. Had I shared confidential information? No.

Had I posted customer data? No. Had I revealed company secrets? Also no. The concern was apparently that I had opinions, a sense of humor, and access to LinkedIn at the same time.

My boss sat there nodding like we were reviewing evidence in a federal case. HR had screenshots. Screenshots! Nothing makes you feel more famous than discovering your employer has been collecting your posts like baseball cards. “On this date, you wrote...” Yes, I did. I remember. I was there.

Then came the speech about representing the company professionally. I always enjoy that part because companies love employees having personalities right up until those personalities become visible outside the building. During recruiting they want authentic leaders, bold thinkers, people willing to challenge the status quo, and candidates who bring their whole selves to work. Then you bring your whole self to LinkedIn and suddenly Karen from HR is printing exhibits.

I remember sitting there thinking, if my sarcastic post has made it all the way from LinkedIn to an HR

conference room, congratulations to everyone involved. We have officially created content with cross functional impact.

The funniest part about social media policies is how vague they can become when someone in leadership simply doesn’t like what you said. “Use good judgment.” Great. Whose judgment? Mine? Yours? The executive who posts inspirational quotes every morning and then schedules a mandatory meeting at 6:30 p.m.?

I survived the meeting. Nobody confiscated my phone. LinkedIn remained operational. Civilization continued. But I learned something important that day: sometimes the scariest words in corporate America aren’t “performance improvement plan.”

They’re “HR would like to join us.” Because once HR joins a meeting you thought was with your boss, you’re no longer having a conversation. You’re starring in an episode, and somehow they already have the screenshots. Apparently HR was part of my audience after all.

Target, and the Interview That Opened My Inbox

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

After discussing a recorded Target Guest Advocate interview, messages arrived from people reporting similarly impersonal screenings.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to give the candidates who contacted me a voice and question whether camera-only interviews let people show who they really are.

I knew the Target post had escaped containment when my inbox started looking like customer service for the entire American hiring system.

The other day I wrote about my little recruiting experiment with Target. I applied for a Guest Advocate role, got invited to a recorded video interview, dressed professionally, stared into a webcam, answered behavioral questions to nobody, and tried to maintain eye contact with a laptop that offered all the emotional support of a self-checkout machine. I thought I was simply sharing another chapter from my unpaid investigation into modern hiring. Apparently, I accidentally opened a national support group.

Since then, my inbox has been full of messages from people saying, “Alex, this happened to me too.” Different companies. Different jobs. Same strange experience. One person told me they spent forty minutes recording answers only to receive a rejection before they had even mentally recovered from question three. Another said they had to redo an answer because their dog barked in the background. Honestly, I

respect the dog. At least somebody in that interview gave feedback.

Others told me they hated not being able to read the room. In a normal interview, you can tell when your answer lands. Someone nods. Someone smiles. Maybe the hiring manager says, “That’s a great example.” In a recorded interview, you finish your answer and stare at yourself like you just left a voicemail for your dentist. No reaction. No follow-up. No human signal whatsoever. Just a countdown clock and your own face asking whether you should have used a better example from 2017.

Then came the messages from hiring managers and recruiters. Some defended them because they save time. Fair point. But if your efficiency strategy makes candidates feel like they are auditioning for a corporate hostage video, maybe we have optimized one step too far.

What surprised me most was how many people said they simply refuse to complete them now. Experienced leaders. Sales professionals. People with decades of experience. They

see “recorded video interview” and close the browser tab like they just discovered the application requires twelve references, a personality assessment, and a blood sample.

And that should matter to companies. Hiring is not only about evaluating candidates. Candidates are evaluating the company. Every automated email, every late recruiter, every repetitive assessment, every awkward video platform, every week of silence tells people something about the organization before they ever become employees.

I’m not against technology. I love technology. Technology lets me apply for jobs from my couch while eating cereal and questioning my career choices. I just think we should remember what interviews are supposed to be: conversations between human beings trying to decide whether working together makes sense.

My Target experiment clearly hit a nerve, because my inbox has now become a museum of recruiting trauma. I may need office hours.

The Executive Phone Call and the Store-Level Video Link

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Seeing a Target executive appointment announcement after my own prerecorded store-level interview highlighted two different candidate experiences.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to contrast personalized executive recruiting with entry-level screening and question why basic human contact should depend on seniority.

I opened LinkedIn tonight and realized Target has been busy hiring people at both ends of the organizational chart, and apparently the recruiting experience changes dramatically depending on which elevator button you press.

A few days ago, I was sitting alone doing a recorded video interview for a Target Guest Advocate position. No recruiter. No hiring manager. No friendly human saying, "Tell me about yourself." Just me, a camera, a countdown clock. Then today I see Mark Weinstein announcing that he joined Target as Chief Marketing and Guest Experience Officer. Mark got a phone call. I got a link. Mark talked to people. I talked to my reflection. Mark accepted the role because of the people. I was trying to figure out whether the camera light meant Target could hear me breathing.

Clearly, our recruiting journeys were slightly different. His announcement was polished and full of words like brand, culture, people, and opportunity. Mine would have been, "I successfully completed Question 4 without staring into the wrong corner of the screen." I'm not jealous. I'm inspired. Somewhere

near the top, a senior executive gets a phone call, meets leadership, and discusses vision, strategy, customer experience. Somewhere closer to the store level, Alex gets 30 seconds to prepare an answer about teamwork while wondering if blinking too much will be interpreted as a lack of leadership potential.

I imagine Mark's process involved meaningful conversations about where Target is going. Mine involved me saying, "That's a great question," to a prerecorded question. This is why I keep doing these hiring experiments. Companies spend millions building brands around human connection and customer experience. Then a candidate clicks Apply Now and sometimes the first person they meet is nobody. Just a screen saying, "Tell us about yourself." You have two minutes. Good luck, contestant.

The line in Mark's post that made me laugh was, "I took the phone call because of the brand, but accepted this role because of the people." Great line. I took the email because of the brand, but completed the recorded interview because I had already put on a decent shirt and

moved the laundry basket out of camera range. Different journeys, same bullseye.

I'm genuinely happy for Mark, but if he wants inexpensive market research, I have an idea. Apply for a store position under a fake name. Complete the application. Wait for the automated email. Do the prerecorded video interview. Watch the timer start counting down while trying to explain why teamwork matters. Then stare into that black camera lens and passionately explain why you love creating great guest experiences while absolutely no recruiter, manager, or living human being is there.

That is customer journey research with consequences.

And Mark, if you ever need feedback from Target's completely unofficial, unpaid recruiting quality control department, I've already completed the field study. I have notes. Quite a few notes.

Why I Keep Playing The Interview Games

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

People asked why I voluntarily keep applying and testing recruiting processes, so I explained the purpose of the experiments.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted readers and employers to understand that the jokes come from observing candidate experiences, not from a desire to ridicule job seekers.

People sometimes ask why I keep doing these interview experiments, like I've developed a strange hobby involving Microsoft Teams, recruiter calendars, and being asked where I see myself in five years by someone who hasn't read my resume.

The truth is, I do it because modern hiring has become one of the strangest systems in corporate America. Candidates are told to research the company, tailor the resume, prepare examples, study the job description, test the camera, show enthusiasm, follow up professionally, and somehow remain emotionally stable while waiting weeks for an email saying, "We decided to move forward with someone whose background more closely aligns."

Meanwhile, I've had recruiters show up late, hiring managers forget what role we were discussing, panels ask the same question four different ways, companies assign homework, executives ghost candidates, and automated systems reject people before a human being ever knows they existed. I've interviewed with over 100 companies because I wanted to see the process from the inside.

Sometimes I apply because I'm interested. Sometimes because I'm curious. Sometimes I see a hiring process and think, "There is absolutely no way this can get weirder."

I document what happens because candidates deserve to know they are not crazy. When someone tells me they completed six interviews, a personality test, a case study, a presentation, and then got ghosted, I understand because I've sat in that same virtual waiting room. And apparently somebody is scheduling Navin for a VP of Supply Chain interview and calling him Regina. You cannot make this stuff up. Actually, recruiting departments can. They do it daily.

But underneath the sarcasm, there is a serious reason I keep doing this. People are exhausted. Good candidates are starting to believe something is wrong with them because algorithms reject them. Experienced professionals question their worth because hiring managers call them overqualified. People with decades of experience are being asked to prove themselves through unpaid projects and seven

rounds. Then they go home wondering if they are the problem.

That part bothers me. So I keep testing the system. I keep writing about it. I keep sharing the ridiculous moments because humor makes an ugly process easier to survive. When I can, I send feedback directly to companies because maybe one recruiter, hiring manager, or executive will read it and think, "We should probably stop doing this."

I'm not trying to embarrass companies. I'm trying to hold up a mirror. If my posts make one unemployed person laugh during a miserable week, remind one candidate that rejection does not define them, or make one company rethink how it treats people during hiring, then the experiment is worth it.

I don't get paid for this research. I get content, headaches, and apparently a growing possibility that one day I'll accidentally become Regina, VP of Supply Chain. At this point, I'm willing to accept the risk.

Tesla: Next Steps, Whenever the Recruiter Arrives

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A Tesla interview invitation led to preparation and waiting when the scheduled recruiter call did not begin on time.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show why punctuality and preparation should be shared expectations rather than rules imposed only on candidates.

At this point, I don't apply for jobs. I conduct unpaid corporate field research with a resume and the suspicion that modern recruiting was designed during a meeting nobody wanted to attend.

My latest experiment was Tesla. Yes, Tesla. I looked at the hiring circus and thought, "You know what this needs? Electricity." Then the email arrived: "Tesla, Next Steps." That subject line has movie trailer energy. I expected dramatic music, a secret mission, maybe instructions to report to a charging station. Instead: schedule a phone interview, pick a time, and talk to a recruiter. Naturally, I became suspicious.

I scheduled the call, reviewed the role, prepared enough leadership examples to survive a congressional hearing. The interview time arrived. No recruiter. Five minutes passed. Still no recruiter. I was staring at my phone like a raccoon staring through a restaurant window at somebody else's French fries: curious, hopeful, slightly offended. Candidates are told to join early, test the microphone, research the company, prepare STAR examples,

find a quiet room. Recruiter arrives late: "Sorry about that." Of course. Nothing says "we move fast" like me sitting alone wondering whether I scheduled the interview for next year.

We finally connected and talked about my background, multi unit operations, sales, leadership, coaching, and Tesla. I gave thoughtful answers while part of my brain was still in the imaginary waiting room eating invisible snacks. Then came recruiter silence. I finished an answer. Nothing. Corporate silence. The kind where you pull the phone away from your ear and stare at it like it owes you money. "Hello?" I asked. "Yes, I'm here." Fantastic. For a second I thought Tesla had remotely disabled my candidacy.

Then came the classics. "We need someone who can move fast." Perfect. I work in automotive service. Moving fast is what happens when three customers arrive, two technicians need approvals, the phone is ringing, and somebody announces the restroom has no paper towels. "We need someone

comfortable with ambiguity." Also perfect. Corporate leadership is being handed half a map, conflicting emails, and a message saying, "Please take ownership." Then came the multiple-hats conversation. Wonderful. I've worked places where I didn't need multiple hats; I needed multiple heads and an emotional support sandwich.

By the end, we discussed next steps, I thanked the recruiter, hung up, and stared at my phone like I had just completed another episode of The Interview Games.

Tesla gave me exactly what I came for: a professional process with just enough chaos to keep my unpaid content department alive. No seven round panel. No personality test. No case study requiring me to reinvent automotive service by Tuesday. Just one late recruiter, one silence, and me sitting there like a raccoon waiting for the dumpster lid to open. The cars may be electric, but apparently the recruiting process still runs on corporate timing.

Mars, HireVue, and the Missing Chocolate

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A Mars invitation to a HireVue digital interview let me test another recording-based hiring experience firsthand.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to describe what it feels like to deliver your career story to a camera, while finding the humor in a candy company offering no emotional-support chocolate.

I have officially reached the point in my recruiting experiment where I can say I interviewed with Mars and somehow never left my house.

I apply to companies because I want to see what candidates actually go through. I test the portals, interviews, technology, whatever new obstacle corporate recruiting has invented this week. So when Mars invited me to a 35 minute digital interview powered by HireVue, I thought, perfect. An interview where the company makes Snickers, Twix, M&M's and Skittles. Surely this came with emotional support chocolate.

It did not. I clicked the link, tested my camera and microphone, adjusted the lighting, fixed my shirt, prepared to have a meaningful conversation with absolutely nobody. That is the magic of the recorded interview. No recruiter. No hiring manager. No "How's your day going?" Just me, a camera, a countdown timer, and the realization that I was about to explain my career to software.

Mars gives you practice questions first. They tell you the answers will not be reviewed, so you can "relax." Relax? I was sitting alone rehearsing

eye contact with a tiny green dot on my laptop like it was the Regional Vice President. I answered the practice question, adjusted my chair two inches, and called this professional development.

Then the real questions started. The question appears. The timer starts. I have years of leadership experience, managed large operations, built teams, improved sales, handled difficult situations, and the second that countdown appeared my brain offered one useful memory: where I parked at Costco last Saturday.

So there I was talking to the camera, trying to sound natural while wondering what HireVue was evaluating. My answer? My eye contact? My enthusiasm? Whether I smiled at the correct corporate frequency? At one point I became so aware of myself nodding that I stopped completely and probably looked like a hostage reading a prepared statement.

And there is no interviewer to rescue you. In a normal conversation, someone smiles, reacts, asks a follow up, or gives you the head nod that says, "Yes, continue." In a recorded interview, you finish your answer and the

screen basically says, "Great. Next." Cold. Efficient. Beautifully robotic. The funniest part is Mars said the digital interview makes the process faster. Modern recruiting has taught me that "faster" can mean anything from tomorrow to three weeks after you forget you applied. But I completed it. All 35 minutes. Me, HireVue, and the Mars corporate universe.

I survived my interview with Mars without a single Snickers, which feels like a missed opportunity. At this point my experiment has taken me through recruiters, panels, personality tests, recorded interviews, mute buttons, late interviewers, and now Mars. I'm no longer sure I'm applying for jobs.

I may be collecting corporate hiring processes like Pokemon. Corporate America keeps building the rides, and apparently I keep buying a seat. And yes, I'll keep testing them.

When the AI Misses Its Own Interview

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader described an AI interview scheduling mix-up in which automated interview communication overlapped with the scheduled interaction.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to challenge the assumption that automating every step automatically makes recruiting more reliable or more considerate.

I thought we had officially reached peak recruiting when companies started replacing actual conversations with recorded video interviews, personality tests, automated assessments, and portals that ask you to upload your resume and then type the entire thing in again.

Apparently, I was wrong. We have now entered the era where the AI can miss its own scheduled interview and then call you while you are already talking to... the AI.

Someone messaged me today with a story that belongs in the Hiring Circus Hall of Fame. She had a scheduled AI screening call. Probably mentally prepared to answer questions about leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, and where she sees herself in five years while speaking to a machine that has never once had a bad Monday. The scheduled time arrives. Nothing. No call. No robot.

After about ten minutes, she checks the email and sees a phone number to call if she missed their call. Which is already beautiful because apparently the candidate is now responsible for tracking down the interviewer when the interviewer is

software. So she calls the number herself and starts the screening. Fine. We adapt. Candidates have become part applicant, part detective, part IT department, and now apparently part AI support technician.

Then, halfway through the screening call, her phone starts ringing. Guess who? THE AI. The same AI she was already talking to. At this point I would have put both calls on speaker and let the two artificial intelligences interview each other. "Tell me about a time you handled a scheduling conflict." Maybe one AI could ask the other where it sees itself in five years while the candidate quietly makes a sandwich.

This is where hiring has gone from complicated to performance art. Companies keep telling candidates they are using technology to create a faster, smoother, more efficient experience. Meanwhile the technology is standing outside knocking on the door while it is already sitting in the living room.

And somehow the candidate will still be expected to demonstrate flawless communication, punctuality, attention to detail,

adaptability, and problem solving. The AI can miss the appointment, call late, double-book itself, and attempt to interview the same person twice. But heaven forbid your Wi-Fi freezes for three seconds. Then suddenly we need to discuss whether you are "comfortable working in a fast paced environment."

I love these stories because every time I think I have seen everything in modern recruiting, someone sends me evidence that the industry has discovered a brand-new staircase leading to another basement. We used to worry about a recruiter being ten minutes late. Now we have to worry about whether the robot interviewing us knows it is already interviewing us. And after this experience, I completely understand the final line of her message: "I want a Snickers bar."

Forget interview preparation. At this rate, every candidate needs a charger, two phones, and emergency snacks!!

Corporate Sarcasm Has a Coffee Budget

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I shared a short note inviting readers who enjoy my work to support the ongoing stream of recruiting stories with coffee.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to acknowledge the readers who make this project enjoyable and make a quick joke about caffeine being the real operating budget.

Apparently sarcasm has operating expenses now. If my posts have ever made you laugh, question corporate America, or wonder how I keep finding this chaos, you can officially buy me a coffee. I'll provide the stories. Corporate America will provide the nonsense. You provide the caffeine.

<https://lnkd.in/gyM9XDfX>

Welcome to the Hiring Wildlife Documentary

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Watching applications, repeated data entry, assessments, late calls and elaborate interviews stack up inspired a broad comedy about the modern job hunt.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to put the entire absurd recruiting journey in one place so both candidates and hiring teams could recognize what needs improvement.

Job hunting used to be simple. A company needed someone. You needed a job. You sent a resume, had an interview, and somebody made a decision.

Today, applying for a job feels like entering a corporate wildlife documentary where the recruiter is late, the hiring manager is muted, Kevin from finance has joined the panel, and a raccoon appears to have a better chance of getting hired than you do.

First, you find a posting marked “urgently hiring.” That usually means the role has been open for months, reposted nine times, and the company is searching for a unicorn with 14 years of experience. You click Apply Now, upload your resume, and the website asks you to type your resume again. Work history. Education. Skills. Maybe next it wants my third-grade report cards.

Then comes the personality assessment. “I enjoy helping others.” Strongly agree. “I stay calm under pressure.” Sure. Apparently companies want candidates who have become one with Microsoft

Excel. At this point I’m waiting for, “If you found a raccoon in the break room holding a stapler, what would you do?” My answer: give him a company email address and see how far he gets.

If you survive that, you earn a recruiter screen. The recruiter joins eight minutes late and says, “Sorry, crazy day.” No problem!! I only logged in early, tested my camera, researched the company, and memorized the job description. Then they ask, “So tell me about yourself,” while opening my resume for the first time. After that comes the hiring manager, their boss, three future coworkers, and Kevin, who nobody remembers inviting.

By round six, I’ve told the same leadership story so many times I’m questioning reality. Then someone asks, “If you were an animal, what would you be?” Easy. A raccoon. Raccoons are resourceful, adaptable, survive chaos, and somehow have time for seven round interviews. Plus, if rejected, they knock over the trash can and move on. That is resilience. Put it on LinkedIn.

Next comes the case study. Spend your weekend building a free presentation explaining how you would fix a company that still hasn’t decided whether you deserve dental insurance. You present Tuesday while six executives stare at you, answer thirty questions, and hear, “We’ll have an update very soon.” Very soon means anywhere between Thursday and the collapse of civilization.

Then silence. You check email. Nothing. Spam. Nothing. LinkedIn? The recruiter who promised an update just posted, “Communication is the foundation of great leadership.” Beautiful. Three days later, the job is reposted. At 4:17 a.m., the rejection arrives. “After careful consideration...” Careful? Who was considering me at 4:17 in the morning? Kevin? The recruiter? The raccoon?

Modern job hunting is no longer a hiring process. It is a reality show with passwords, assessments, panels, homework, ghosting, calendar links, motivational LinkedIn posts, and one raccoon making it to the final round. And honestly, I hope he gets it. He already knows Kevin.

The CEO Laugh Track: Attendance Mandatory

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

An executive panel interview in which everyone enthusiastically laughed at the CEO's jokes inspired a story about power and workplace behavior.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to make fun of performative leadership culture and ask whether authentic conversation is possible when everyone is managing the boss's reaction.

You ever been in a panel interview with an executive team where you realize the real skill being tested has nothing to do with leadership or experience? It is whether you can identify the exact second the CEO expects everyone to laugh.

A while back, I was sitting in one of those interviews. Big conference table. Notebooks open. Everyone looked like they had just left a meeting about another meeting. The CEO walked in, sat down, looked around the room, and said, "Well, I guess if this interview goes badly, we can always blame HR."

That was the joke. Silence would have been appropriate. Instead, the entire executive team exploded like somebody had just booked Kevin Hart for the holiday party. HAHAAHAHA. A VP gave the CEO the kind of laugh you normally reserve for someone who controls your annual bonus. Maybe the actual punchline was available only through the executive compensation package.

The CEO smiled like he had just crushed a Netflix special and then added, "See? That's why they keep

me around." Round two. Everybody laughed again. At that point, I realized this was no longer a panel interview. I had accidentally walked into Executive Open Mic Night, where the comedian also happens to approve everyone's raises. The VP had a professional chuckle. The director did the full teeth showing laugh. One person laughed so hard I briefly wondered whether HR needed an emergency response plan. Meanwhile, I was sitting there with a polite smile trying to calculate exactly how much fake laughter demonstrates "culture fit" without damaging my dignity.

Then the CEO looked directly at me. That was the real interview question. Forget "Tell me about yourself." Forget "What is your leadership style?" My future with the company now appeared to depend on whether I could convincingly pretend "we can always blame HR" was comedy gold.

I gave him a small laugh. Not a laugh. More like the sound you make when your uncle tells the same joke for the nineteenth Thanksgiving in a row. Just enough to confirm I understood the social expectations, but not enough to accidentally get

invited onto the CEO's comedy tour. Then one executive said, "That's a good one." No. It was not. But nobody in that room was volunteering to be the first person to tell the CEO his joke had the comedic power of an employee handbook.

The interview continued, but I stopped studying the questions and started studying the room. Every time the CEO spoke, heads nodded. Every time he smiled, people smiled. Every time he made another little joke, the invisible laugh track activated. Sometimes you learn more about culture by watching how people react to power than by asking anyone to describe the culture.

If twelve executives start laughing like they are sitting front row at a comedy special because the CEO says, "Blame HR," you may have just received the most honest employee review of the company without anyone saying a word. I didn't get a comedy show that day. But I definitely got material.

A Layoff Email Before the First Cup of Coffee

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Reports of Oracle employees receiving early-morning layoff emails highlighted the gulf between administrative language and personal upheaval.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to look past the phrase organizational change and recognize the shock experienced by workers and their families.

Imagine going to bed Sunday night thinking Monday will be completely normal. You have meetings on the calendar, projects in your inbox, and a manager you assume you'll hear from sometime that morning.

Then you wake up, grab your phone, open your work email around 6:00 AM, and find out your job is over. Not at the end of the week. Not after a meeting. Today. That is reportedly what happened to some Oracle employees. The email told workers their roles were being eliminated as part of a "broader organizational change." It thanked them for their dedication, explained that severance information would follow, asked for a personal email address, and warned that access to their computer, email, voicemail, and files would soon be shut off. Before some people had even made coffee, corporate had already completed the breakup.

The wording is always fascinating, too. "Broader organizational change" sounds calm and harmless, like someone moved the copier. Meanwhile, the person reading it is standing in the kitchen wondering how they are going to explain to

their family that the job they had when they went to sleep is suddenly gone.

Then comes the appreciation paragraph. "We are grateful for your dedication, hard work, and the impact you have made." That basically translates to: We deeply value everything you did here, but your laptop is about to become an expensive rectangle.

Then Monday arrives. At 6:00 AM, you have mail. At 6:01 AM, apparently you no longer have a job. At 6:02 AM, you are being asked for a personal email address so the company can continue communicating after shutting off the email address they just used to tell you that you're done. Somewhere, a process improvement consultant is thinking, "Now that is efficiency."

The email also warned that access to systems would be deactivated soon, which means you now have a really very small window to process a major life event, understand severance, figure out benefits, tell your family, and say goodbye to coworkers.

This is why I laugh when companies spend millions talking about culture, loyalty, belonging, and how "our people are our greatest asset." Apparently, some assets can be removed by mass email before breakfast. Businesses restructure. Jobs can disappear. That part is reality. But how you communicate those decisions says a lot about the culture you spent years advertising.

If someone gave years of their life to an organization, worked nights, answered weekend emails, missed family events, trained people, and sat through meetings about company values, maybe the final interaction should involve more humanity than opening an inbox and discovering their career ended while they were sleeping.

And somewhere in headquarters later that afternoon, there will probably still be a leadership meeting titled "Improving Employee Engagement." Nothing says "our people matter" quite like telling someone at 6:00 AM that today is their last day and their computer access will be disappearing shortly.

Why Candidates Should Research Employers, Too

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Noticing how thoroughly companies investigate applicants raised a parallel question: what can candidates learn about the employer's real hiring record?

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to encourage job seekers to investigate employers with the same seriousness companies apply to resumes and references.

I'm starting to think job seekers need the same warning labels you see on financial products: "Past performance may indicate future nonsense." If companies can investigate our employment history, references, skills, gaps, and LinkedIn profile, candidates should know one basic thing before applying: does this company actually hire people for the jobs it keeps posting?

Someone messaged me after LinkedIn told them they were a "Strong applicant" for a role they had already applied to twice. Not a similar role. The same role. Same title. Same description. Same company. Naturally, the portal of misery was Workday, requiring retyping the resume you uploaded, and receiving a rejection saying they selected candidates whose skills "more closely align."

Apparently not closely enough, because the exact same job keeps coming back. Here we go!! The role appeared months ago, disappeared, returned, and has now been resurrected. At this point it is less of a job opening and more of a recurring television character. I'm half expecting LinkedIn to say, "Your

favorite role is back for Season Four." Same responsibilities. Same qualifications.

So I have a proposal: employer credit scores.

Every company posting a job gets an indicator: green, amber, or red. Green means the company appears to actually hire people. Jobs get posted, candidates apply, interviews happen, somebody gets hired, and the listing closes. Revolutionary concept.

Amber means proceed carefully. The same role has appeared several times, the hiring process is entering its third fiscal quarter, and the recruiter may still be "circling back" from an email sent around Memorial Day. You can apply, but maybe don't cancel dinner for the personality assessment.

Red means welcome to LinkedIn Catfish Edition. The role has been reposted six times, thousands have applied, nobody knows anyone who was hired, and the company keeps saying it found candidates "more closely aligned" while continuing its search for the mythical human who satisfies every bullet point.

LinkedIn already has much of the data. It knows when jobs are posted, when they are reposted, and how many people click Apply. Imagine a warning before spending 45 minutes inside Workday: "Caution: This employer has reposted this position four times in 120 days." That is a Premium feature I would pay for.

Banks use risk models before lending us money. Employers assess candidates before hiring them. Maybe candidates deserve a risk assessment before donating another evening to an application portal. I'm not asking for revenge. I'm asking for symmetry. If I have to explain a six month employment gap from seven years ago, a company can explain why its "urgent opening" has been urgent since May.

Until then, I'll keep applying, experimenting, collecting receipts, and watching impossible to fill jobs celebrate another birthday on LinkedIn. Patricia in HR may need to stop searching for the perfect candidate and start sending anniversary invitations.

The Interview Started on My LinkedIn Profile

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A hiring conversation unexpectedly referenced a much older LinkedIn post, revealing that the interviewer had read beyond the resume.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to explore how public writing becomes part of the interview before the formal questions ever begin, and why that can be both funny and revealing.

I've learned something important from documenting my adventures through corporate America: sometimes the interview starts long before the interview.

Hiring managers love looking through my LinkedIn profile, and I don't mean a quick glance at the headline and work history. I mean an FBI level excavation. Posts. Articles. Comments. Interview experiments. Somewhere out there, a hiring manager is 147 posts deep wondering whether inviting me to a Teams call is worth the risk. LinkedIn should probably interrupt and ask, "Are you still researching Alex?" At this point, they should probably subscribe and call it research.

The other day, I was talking to someone during an interview when they casually mentioned one of my older posts. Not yesterday's post. Not last week's post. An old one. That means they had been scrolling. Deep scrolling. The kind of scrolling where you start qualifying for a loyalty program. At that point I realized they already knew everything. They knew I write about recruiting, test interview processes, and document

candidate experiences. They probably knew about the late recruiter, the mute button disaster, and the unicorn executive.

So now I'm sitting in the interview answering questions while also watching them mentally review my entire content library. Hiring manager: "Tell me about your leadership style." Their internal voice: "Please don't make me tomorrow's post." Most candidates worry whether the hiring manager read their resume. I'm wondering whether they read the story where the recruiter joined late, the one where nobody knew who was supposed to ask the next question.

Then comes the sentence I hear occasionally: "I noticed you're very active on LinkedIn." Very active. That is corporate language for, "Alex, HR has reviewed your profile, Legal has been notified, and Kevin from Operations wants to know why you called someone the Unicorn Man." Then they ask, "What inspires your content?" Oh, nothing unusual. Leadership. Hiring. Corporate culture. Recruiters disappearing. Interviews becoming hostage situations. Personality tests asking

whether I enjoy teamwork while completing them alone at 10:30 at night.

Companies always tell candidates to research them. Read the website. Study the leadership team. Learn the values. Understand the culture. Apparently some hiring managers have decided to return the favor, except they're researching me like I'm about to acquire the company. And I'm fine with it. My content is public. Scroll away. Read everything. Bring snacks. Just don't spend two hours reading my posts and then open the interview with, "So, tell me about yourself."

Sir, at this point you know more about me than my dentist. If you mention a post I wrote eight months ago, I'm impressed. If you quote it, I'm concerned. If you know the comments section too, I'm changing the interview format and asking you questions.

Because somewhere around post number 83, this stopped being candidate research. You became a subscriber.

When People Turn Into Dashboard Metrics

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A memory from managing in a large organization brought back how frontline realities can disappear as numbers travel up the hierarchy.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted leaders to remember that behind labor variances, customer scores and staffing charts are people doing actual work.

Corporate America has an incredible magic trick. The bigger the organization gets, the faster actual human beings disappear. People become metrics.

I remember when I worked for a large organization and realized there was a point somewhere between the front line and the executive floor where people stopped being people and became numbers. At the store level, you knew who stayed late, who had a sick kid, who was covering an extra shift, who was burned out, and who was one bad customer away from throwing their name tag into traffic. Then that information traveled upward through leadership, dashboards, conference calls, and PowerPoint until eventually Alex was no longer Alex. Alex became "Location 217, Labor Variance +2.4%," and suddenly everyone was concerned about the variance.

I remember sitting in meetings listening to people who had not visited a location in months explain what the team needed. Exhausted employees needed "better execution." Short staffing required

"stronger accountability." Long customer waits required "more urgency." Managers working sixty hours a week needed "better time management." And naturally, the best way to address burnout was a mandatory 7:30 a.m. Teams call about work-life balance. Nothing says "we value our people" like a 48 slide deck explaining why everyone needs to do more with less while someone says, "We just need everyone to lean in."

The language gets even better the farther you get from actual people. On the front line, someone says, "Mike called off because his kid is sick." One level up it becomes, "We have a staffing challenge." Another level up: "We are seeing labor pressure." By the time it reaches corporate, Mike and his sick kid have become a red cell on a dashboard labeled OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY. Then somebody who has never met Mike asks, "What is the action plan?" The action plan, of course, is another spreadsheet.

I watched good employees become percentages, managers become payroll, technicians become

productivity, customer complaints become trends, and turnover become a metric. Every conversation eventually ended with someone asking, "What does the data tell us?" Sometimes the data tells you Kevin has worked twelve straight days and is exhausted. But Kevin does not fit neatly into the pivot table, so we will circle back after reviewing gross margin.

That is what large organizations can forget. The people producing the numbers are still people. They have families, bills, bad days, ideas, frustrations, pride, and a breaking point. You can build every dashboard imaginable, but if leadership gets so far removed from operations that employees become anonymous rows, eventually the spreadsheet can look healthy while the culture quietly bleeds out.

Then leadership acts shocked when good people leave, schedules an emergency meeting, and unveils a slide called "Retention Strategy." Nobody will mention Mike, but I guarantee his name is still somewhere in the spreadsheet, probably highlighted yellow.

How Do You Keep Getting Interviews, Alex?

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader asked how I could reach so many interviews when ghosting and unanswered applications are everywhere.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to explain the volume and persistence behind the experiment while making clear that I experience the same rejections and silence as others.

Apparently I have reached the stage of my career where people are no longer asking how my interviews are going. They are asking how I am even getting invited to them.

Someone messaged me today and said, "Alex, if ghosting is this common, how are you landing enough interviews to test all these companies?" Fair question. The answer is volume, persistence, and a complete disregard for my own peace. I apply a lot, because I apparently looked at recruiting and thought, "You know what my life needs? More passwords, more portals, and another chance to retype the resume I just uploaded."

I get ghosted too. Applications disappear into systems connected to an abandoned basement behind HR. Jobs get reposted four times while my application still says "Under Review." Under review by who? NASA? A committee of monks? Someone waiting for Mercury to leave retrograde? I have matched nearly every qualification and still been rejected at 4:13 a.m. Nothing says "careful consideration" like being dumped by a robot before

sunrise. Somewhere an ATS reviewed my experience and apparently concluded, "Too many complete sentences. Send him away."

So how do I get interviews? I keep applying. Somebody opens the door, and that is when the research begins. Sometimes I get a recorded video interview where I sit alone talking to my laptop while a countdown clock threatens me. Sometimes I meet a hiring manager who opened my resume eleven seconds before the call. Sometimes I join a panel with six people and nobody knows who is supposed to speak first, so we all stare at each other on Zoom like a family that just realized nobody brought Thanksgiving dinner. That is when I know I have struck content gold.

I customize my resume. I align it to the job description. I research the company. I follow up. I do all the things candidates are told to do while companies advertise an "urgent opening" and then disappear for six weeks like they entered witness protection. Nobody puts that in the LinkedIn posts. "Be

intentional." "Only apply to roles you are passionate about." "Quality over quantity." Wonderful advice until you send 30 tailored applications and receive one email from noreply@company.com thanking you for your interest and wishing you success elsewhere. At that point, quality and quantity are filing a joint tax return.

Every process teaches me something. The good companies communicate, show up on time, explain the steps, and treat candidates like humans. The chaotic companies give me material. A missed interview becomes a story. A seven round process becomes a case study. A personality assessment asking whether I enjoy completing tasks becomes comedy. No Brenda, I prefer starting 47 things, wandering into the woods, and waiting for a recruiter to circle back.

Corporate America keeps inventing new hiring rituals, and apparently I have appointed myself the unpaid mystery shopper of recruiting. At this point, I am not job hunting. I am conducting field research with my resume.

Three Questions From a Tired Job-Seeker Inbox

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A message asking about motivation, AI interviews and seemingly hidden openings created an opportunity to answer practical job-search concerns.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to mix useful perspective with reassurance that the hiring process is often confusing even for experienced candidates.

Apparently my inbox has become the customer service department for modern job hunting. Someone messaged me today with three questions that summarize hiring in 2026: How do you stay motivated when nobody responds? What do you think about AI interviews? And how do you find jobs that exist but seem hidden from everyone?

First, motivation. I wish I had an inspirational answer involving sunrise routines, gratitude journals, and staring confidently at a mountain. I don't. I keep applying because allowing a rejection email sent at 4:13 a.m. by an automated system to determine my self worth gives the robot too much authority. Some days you apply to ten jobs and hear nothing. Other days you get an email saying, "We were impressed with your background," immediately followed by, "Unfortunately." That word has ended more promising relationships than my entire dating history. Eventually you stop taking every rejection personally and treat the process like airport security. Shoes off, dignity in a plastic bin, keep moving.

Then we have AI interviews, part of the experiment called "How little human interaction can we include in hiring?" You apply because you want to work with people, and your first interaction is a screen asking you to smile naturally while a countdown timer threatens your future. No recruiter. No hiring manager. Just you, a webcam, and a blinking light deciding whether your answer about teamwork had enough enthusiasm. Companies say, "People are our greatest asset," then outsource the first conversation to software. I still do them, but every time I finish one I expect the laptop to say, "Thank you, Alex. Your facial expressions have been forwarded to compliance."

Then there's the mysterious hidden job market. Apparently great jobs are floating around privately, passed between executives like secret dinner reservations. This is where networking matters. Former coworkers, vendors, customers, recruiters, LinkedIn connections, and direct messages all count. Not with "Please hire me," but with an actual conversation. Many opportunities begin before a job description reaches a public board.

Sometimes a company knows it has a problem before it knows what title to put on the solution.

If you're exhausted, confused, or wondering whether you're doing job searching wrong, welcome to the club. The process has become a combination of persistence, networking, technology, psychology, luck, timing, and trying not to throw your laptop when an application asks you to upload your resume and then manually type the entire thing again.

My advice is simple: keep going, keep talking to people, keep experimenting, and don't let silence convince you nothing is happening. Sometimes the opportunity comes from an application. Sometimes it comes from a message.

And sometimes it comes from turning your job search into a public comedy series until corporate America finally gives up and hires you. At this point, job hunting needs a loyalty program and a free coffee

Southwest Airlines: An Interview Without a Crew

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A Southwest Airlines one-way interview invitation included an apparent mismatch in the stated number of questions and a camera-led screening.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to turn the oddities of an unattended interview into a funny but serious question about the candidate experience.

At this point, I don't apply for jobs because I'm looking for employment. I apply because corporate hiring has become my favorite unsupervised experiment.

After interviewing with more than 100 companies, I've tested recruiters, panels, assessments, recorded interviews, case studies. So naturally, this week I decided the experiment needed altitude. This week's experiment: Southwest Airlines.

Not long after applying, I got the exciting news that I had been selected for a One Way Interview. One. Way. Interview. Corporate America has figured out how to conduct an interview without attending it. No recruiter. No hiring manager. Southwest basically said, "Alex, we'd like to get to know you. Please do that alone." Naturally, I clicked "Get Started."

The invitation said there were nine questions. Then the instructions said there were eight. Beautiful. We hadn't even left the gate and one question was already missing. I pictured Question Nine sprinting through the airport yelling, "WAIT!

I'M PART OF THE INTERVIEW!" I had to test my microphone, camera, browser, and uploads. At this point I was preparing Mission Control.

Then the camera came on. "Tell us about yourself." Nothing deletes your professional history faster than a blinking light and a countdown timer. Thirty seconds earlier, I could explain leadership, operations, sales, staffing, coaching, and chaos. Camera on: "Hello. I'm Alex. I have... worked before." Then came the classics. Why Southwest? Tell us about a difficult customer. Describe a time you worked with a team. Tell us about a challenge you overcame.

I kept waiting for the important question: "Alex, a raccoon has entered the terminal, stolen three boarding passes, taken control of Gate B17, and is demanding priority boarding. What do you do?"

Easy. I assess the raccoon's leadership potential. Strong hands. Works nights. Excellent problem solving skills. Comfortable around trash. Clearly understands resource acquisition. Honestly, by question six I was ready to recommend him for management. The strangest part is

giving a great answer and getting nothing back. No laugh. No nod. No "That's a great example." Just a webcam staring at you like you confessed something. I finished one answer, smiled confidently, and the laptop gave me the same emotional response as a microwave.

Then it ended. No handshake. No "Great meeting you." No human explaining what happens next. So just upload your answers into the hiring universe, where they'll presumably be reviewed by a recruiter, an algorithm, or the raccoon after onboarding.

That's why I keep doing these experiments. Companies say they want personality, communication, connection, and culture fit, then sometimes start by removing every human from the room.

Southwest wanted to learn more about me. I learned something too: one question disappeared before takeoff, my laptop has no sense of humor, and somewhere at Gate B17, a raccoon is wearing a Southwest badge and crushing his second interview.

The Founder Event and the Unfair Advantage

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

At a founder event, talk of visibility, personal brands and authenticity prompted me to ask what happens when branding outgrows the business.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to contrast inspirational startup language with the operational questions that make a company sustainable.

The other day I attended one of those founder events where everyone looked like they had either raised \$8 million, were about to raise \$8 million, or had a Canva presentation explaining how they manifested it while drinking mushroom coffee.

I walked in expecting business. Revenue. Customers. Payroll. Instead, I entered a motivational theme park where everyone was “building,” “scaling,” “disrupting,” and “stepping into their power.”

One of the speakers, Beatrice Vladut, stood on stage with a giant screen behind her talking about founder branding, trust, visibility, and your “unfair advantage.” Then the screen flashed: “My toxic trait is thinking I can do anything.” The room loved it. People nodded. Unfortunately, my toxic trait is raising my hand. So during the Q&A, I asked, “What happens when the founder’s personal brand becomes bigger than the actual business?” You could feel every ring light in the building flicker. There was a pause. The kind where 200 founders suddenly remembered they had emails to check.

The answer included words like authenticity, trust, visibility, and alignment. I nodded respectfully while mentally translating it into: “Alex, this is a founder conference. Please stop bringing operations into it.” That was when I realized founders have their own language. Nobody says, “I sell consulting.” They say, “I help visionary leaders unlock transformational growth.” Nobody says, “I post online.” They say, “I’m building authority.” Nobody says, “I need customers.” They say, “I’m cultivating an ecosystem.”

I sneezed near the coffee station and expected somebody to announce I had disrupted respiratory wellness. By this point, I was waiting for someone to explain how invoicing could become a personal growth exercise with a downloadable workbook, naturally, too.

Then came the success stories. Three years ago, they were watching other people travel the world, build companies, speak on stages and get invited into important rooms. Then one day they asked, “Why not me?” Powerful message. Terrible message to give someone with my imagination. Within five minutes I

was considering launching six companies, becoming a keynote speaker in Dubai, starting a podcast, and selling a \$4,997 leadership course called Executive Raccoon: How to Dig Through Corporate Garbage and Still Look Strategic.

I really enjoyed the event. Confidence matters. Visibility matters. Believing in yourself matters. But social media sometimes skips a tiny chapter between “believe you can do anything” and “now I travel the world speaking on stages.” That chapter is usually years of work, rejection, payroll, taxes, failed ideas, awkward networking, terrible decisions, and staring at your bank account at 2:13 a.m. wondering if “abundance mindset” accepts Visa.

Still, I walked away inspired. I just have one concern. If I attend another founder event, there is a very real chance I leave with a podcast, a mastermind, three investors, and a raccoon as Chief Strategy Officer.

The Human Being Missing From the Video Interview

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Repeated one-way interviews led me to focus on the strange contradiction of trying to know someone without ever holding a conversation.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to suggest that efficiency and mutual respect are not the same thing, and that candidates deserve a chance to ask questions.

Somewhere along the way, companies decided the best way to “get to know the candidate” was to remove the person doing the getting to know.

One way video interviews are becoming more common, and I still can’t decide whether they’re efficient or dystopian. Someone apparently said, “What if we made the interview feel like a hostage video, but with better lighting?”

You apply for a job. You polish the resume. You research the company. You rehearse examples, study the job description, and prepare to answer “Tell me about yourself” for the 400th time. Then the email arrives: Congratulations! You’ve been selected for a one way video interview. Congratulations? No recruiter. No hiring manager. No human face on the other side. Just you, a webcam, a timer, and a blinking button with more authority than anyone you’ve met in the process.

Then the questions start. “Tell us about a time you overcame a challenge.” Fantastic. My current challenge is maintaining eye contact

with a tiny black dot while pretending this feels like a conversation. “Why do you want to work here?” Because apparently I enjoy performing TED Talks for laptops. “Describe a difficult customer.” At this point, the difficult customer is me trying to remember whether I’m supposed to look at the camera or my own terrified face while the countdown clock judges me.

And this is the part that makes me laugh and feel a little sad. Interviews used to be awkward, but they were human. Someone could laugh. Someone could ask a follow up. You could read the room, explain an answer, recover from a bad start, or discover that you connected with the person across the table. Now you can give the greatest answer of your life and receive the emotional feedback of a microwave. Nothing. You finish, smile, and wait. The screen says, “Response submitted.” Beautiful. My entire personality has successfully uploaded.

I understand why companies use these systems. Scheduling is difficult. Recruiters are overwhelmed. Hundreds of applicants can apply for

one role. Technology can make the process faster. But somewhere between efficiency and automation, we should remember that candidates are people too. They’re nervous. They’re hopeful. Some have been unemployed for months. Some are applying after layoffs. Some are trying to change their lives. Asking them to perform alone for a camera can feel less like an interview and more like an audition nobody explained.

The irony is amazing. Every company talks about culture, connection, communication, authenticity, and people first leadership. Then step one is occasionally: “Please demonstrate your personality alone in a room. You have 90 seconds.” At this rate, interviews in 2030 will involve a webcam, three personality assessments, an AI panel, a blood sample, and a raccoon from HR asking why there’s a gap in your resume.

Maybe one way interviews are here to stay. Maybe they save time. But I hope we don’t become so efficient at hiring people that we forget to meet them.

Jobs That Vanish Before You Finish Applying

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Seeing job postings close unusually quickly, along with unusual application confidentiality demands, prompted questions about clarity and access.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted employers to understand how disappearing listings and premature legal formalities can undermine trust before a conversation begins.

Apparently applying for a job now requires the speed of a Formula 1 pit crew, the patience of a tax auditor, and possibly legal counsel.

The modern hiring process has become so efficient that some jobs disappear before you can finish reading the description. You see a brand new posting on your phone. It says it was posted two hours ago. Great. You save it, get home, open the laptop, customize your resume, write a cover letter that pretends you have dreamed about this company since childhood, click back on the posting and... "No longer accepting applications."

Excuse me? I spent longer deciding what to order for dinner than this position spent accepting candidates. And sometimes the posting even says applications will remain open for weeks. Apparently those dates are more of a decorative suggestion.

Maybe the company got overwhelmed. Maybe the position was filled internally. Maybe someone accidentally hit "publish." Nobody outside the company really knows. But when a public opportunity vanishes within hours,

candidates naturally wonder whether the posting was corporate theater with an Apply button.

Then we have the next evolution in recruiting: the application NDA. Yes. An NDA. We have reached a point where you may be asked to promise confidentiality before anyone has even promised to read your resume. You haven't met the hiring manager. You haven't interviewed. You haven't seen the office. But apparently you're already guarding nuclear codes. At least give me a badge before asking me to guard launch codes and corporate secrets!!

At this rate, applying for an assistant manager position in 2027 will require a resume, cover letter, personality assessment, retinal scan, two witnesses, an NDA, and a sworn statement confirming you will never reveal what happened during Question 14 of the Workday application. And candidates are still told, "Just be patient. Hiring takes time." Of course it does. The candidate needs six weeks of availability, but the job posting itself apparently has the life expectancy of a fruit fly.

This is what makes the modern job search exhausting. It isn't only rejection. Most adults can handle rejection. It's the inconsistency. One company wants five interviews. Another closes the role before lunch. Another asks for free homework. Another apparently wants confidentiality paperwork before deciding whether your resume deserves human contact.

Meanwhile, candidates are told to be transparent, responsive, prepared, flexible, enthusiastic, and respectful of everyone's time. Maybe companies should try the same experiment. Post the real job. Keep it open for the timeframe you advertise. Explain unusual requirements before the final screen. Communicate when things change. You know, wild revolutionary concepts like clarity.

Until then, keep your resume ready, your cover letter drafted, your attorney on standby, and your finger hovering over Apply. Because apparently the hottest new qualification is being faster than HR.

Nobody Wants to Work? Look at the Applicants

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A hiring manager's claim that nobody wants to work led me to compare that complaint with the long and often discouraging hiring funnel.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to push back on a tired phrase and ask whether the process itself is turning willing applicants away.

The other day I had one of those conversations with a hiring manager that makes you wonder if corporate America and job seekers are living in two completely different economies.

We were talking about hiring when she sighed and said the sentence I've heard approximately 47,000 times: "Nobody wants to work anymore. It's impossible to find good talent." Apparently the millions applying for jobs, rewriting resumes, surviving six rounds, and getting rejection emails at 4:17 in the morning have secretly decided they hate employment.

Nobody wants to work? Interesting. LinkedIn looks like a waiting room full of professionals carrying resumes and begging somebody to answer an email. People are applying to hundreds of jobs and writing "just following up" so often it could be their middle name.

So naturally I asked what their hiring process looked like. That was my mistake. First, candidates submit a resume. Then they manually type the same resume into the portal because apparently the PDF is decorative. Then comes the recruiter

screen, hiring manager interview, panel, leadership interview, an assessment, references, and somewhere around round seven Brian asks where you see yourself in five years. But yes. Nobody wants to work.

Maybe candidates are tired of jobs posted three hours ago that are already "no longer accepting applications." Maybe they're tired of hearing "we're moving quickly" and then nothing for four weeks. Maybe they're confused when the job asks for twelve years of experience, an MBA, weekend availability, and the ability to levitate, then offers \$52,000 and a meditation app. Companies will say, "We can't find talent," while rejecting 684 applicants because none perfectly match a job description written for Batman with Excel. Then they repost the exact same job two weeks later with "URGENTLY HIRING" in capital letters. Of course you are.

My favorite part is when employers complain that candidates ghost interviews. Ghosting is terrible. Meanwhile, companies have perfected it. Interview twice? Ghosted. Complete the assessment?

Ghosted. Meet the vice president? Ghosted. Send a thank you email? Ghosted, but now with a survey asking you to rate your experience. Five stars. Loved disappearing into the woods.

I'm not saying hiring is easy. Candidates cancel. People exaggerate experience. Some vanish. But maybe the problem isn't that nobody wants to work. Maybe people want to work, but they don't want to audition for employment like they're trying to become the next astronaut. If your hiring process requires more rounds than the NBA playoffs, personality tests, unpaid homework, and approval from a committee, talent may not be disappearing. It may simply be walking across the street to the company that answered the phone.

Whenever I hear "nobody wants to work anymore," I smile. Somewhere, a candidate is refreshing their inbox waiting for a company that desperately needs talent to reply to the application they submitted six weeks ago...

An HR Job With an Airport-Sized Schedule

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

An HR Business Partner job posting advertised broad availability across shifts, evenings and weekends in the language of work-life balance.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted candidates to read schedule requirements carefully and companies to be straightforward about what a role actually demands.

Corporate America has officially found a new way to say, “We value work-life balance,” while quietly handing you a schedule designed by three managers, a roulette wheel, and a raccoon with access to Outlook.

I came across an HR Business Partner posting that started out sounding respectable. Strategic HR support. Leadership partnership. Employee relations. Culture. Development. All the polished words that make you imagine meetings, coaching conversations, and maybe a normal calendar. Then I kept reading and realized this is less “HR Business Partner” and more “Please become permanently available to the building.”

First requirement: on site only. No remote. No hybrid. Apparently HR must be physically present in case somebody suddenly needs to discuss PTO, attendance points, or why Gary microwaved fish in the break room again. Fine. Then comes the schedule. First shift. Second shift. Days. Evenings. Weekends. Rotating weekends. Flexibility to work day and night shifts. At that point I stopped reading a job description

and started reading airport operating hours.

Then they provide examples: 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM, 1:00 PM to 10:00 PM, and Friday through Sunday 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Translation: do not make plans. Do not buy concert tickets. Do not tell your family what time dinner is. Keep a duffel bag in the trunk and wait for “business needs” to decide which version of you is reporting to work.

And the salary? \$85,000 to \$95,000 plus bonus. Sounds solid until you realize the role requires you to rotate through days, nights, evenings, weekends, and whatever shift gets invented after someone says, “We just need a little flexibility.” At that point the bonus starts sounding less like an incentive and more like compensation for losing track of what day it is.

Of course the benefits include PTO, sick time, corporate holidays, medical, dental, vision, and a 401(k). Excellent. PTO should come in handy once you identify the one weekend when nobody needs HR coverage. Corporate holidays are also a beautiful touch for a facility that

operates seven days a week. Nothing says “Happy Thanksgiving” like being on site explaining why the holiday schedule is complicated.

This is the part of hiring that makes me laugh. Companies design roles requiring maximum flexibility, constant physical presence, weekend coverage, night coverage, leadership skills, conflict resolution, recruiting knowledge, emotional intelligence, and the ability to smile while someone says, “Do you have five minutes?” at 9:47 PM. Then six weeks later someone posts, “We’re struggling to find qualified candidates.” No. You found them. They read the schedule.

I actually appreciate the honesty because nobody can claim the expectations were hidden. The posting basically walks up, shakes your hand, and says, “Before you apply, please understand that your personal calendar now belongs to operations.”

At least the job description is doing one part of HR exceptionally well: setting expectations.

Walgreens, Grey Hair, and an Interview Tomorrow

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A brief encounter in a Walgreens hair-dye aisle involved a woman worrying that visible grey hair might affect an upcoming interview.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to write about the anxiety age bias can create, and affirm that experience should be an asset rather than something to hide.

This evening I stopped by Walgreens to pick up a couple things. Just toothpaste, simple mission, in and out, five minutes tops. But Walgreens has a way of turning a quick errand into a full blown social documentary. I expected toothpaste, a receipt, and no major life lesson tonight.

I'm standing there in the aisle, comparing twelve different tubes that all claim to whiten faster, clean deeper, and change my life, when I notice a woman next to me staring at boxes of hair dye like she's defusing a bomb.

She's on the phone, pacing slowly, and says, "I have an interview tomorrow, and I don't want anyone to see my grey." The way she said it, half joking, half pleading, stopped me. She wasn't just picking a color; she was picking armor. I stood there pretending to read fluoride ingredients while overhearing the quiet panic of someone trying to blend into a system that's allergic to experience.

When she hung up, I smiled and said, "Looks like you've got a big day

tomorrow." She laughed, holding up a box of 'Midnight Chestnut' like it was a ticket to survival. "I just don't want to look old," she said. I told her, "You don't look old. You look like you've been through things that made you interesting."

She chuckled, but I could tell, behind that laugh was exhaustion. The kind that comes from doing everything right for years, only to be told you're suddenly "overqualified." The kind that makes you cover your grey instead of wearing it like the badge of resilience it is. We talked for a few minutes. About interviews. About how job hunting today feels like speed dating with rejection letters. About how people keep saying "the right fit" like it's a soulmate thing, when really it just means "someone cheaper."

She said she hadn't had an interview in a while, and she was nervous. I told her everyone's nervous. The whole world's trying to look younger, sound smarter, act calmer, and pretend the system still makes sense. She smiled, thanked me, and said, "I just want to be seen." That one stuck with me. Because isn't that

the whole point? Every resume, every cover letter, every hair dye box, we're all just trying to be seen.

As she walked away, I realized this aisle wasn't about toothpaste anymore. It was about survival in a world that keeps asking people to shrink to fit. She didn't want to look older because somewhere along the line, someone convinced her that experience is something to hide, not highlight.

I grabbed my toothpaste and left, but couldn't shake it off. Because she's not alone. There are thousands of people tonight dyeing their hair, editing their resumes, softening their voices, not because they've changed, but because the world refuses to.

So here's to her and to everyone getting ready for an interview tomorrow. May your color hold, your confidence stay intact, and your worth never wash out. And if anyone in that interview can't see past a few silver strands, that's not your problem. That's their blindness masquerading as business.

Best Buy and the Microwave Interrogation

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Applying for a Best Buy sales role led to another recorded video assessment, this time with automated instructions and repeated answers.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to document the real applicant experience and ask whether a timer and camera truly reveal customer-service ability.

This week's unpaid recruiting field trip took me to Best Buy because apparently the hiring process looked at human interaction and said, "What if we removed the human, added a timer, and made Alex talk to himself like he's being questioned by a microwave?"

I applied for a Retail Sales Associate role to see what candidates experience after clicking apply. Not the shiny careers page version with smiling employees. The real version. The one where you get a system generated email inviting you to complete a one way video interview, because nothing says "people first" like asking a candidate to perform customer service into a webcam while no manager, recruiter, or emotionally supportive raccoon is present.

Then came the questions. The classic interview questions that sound simple until a countdown timer appears and suddenly your brain deletes every professional accomplishment you have ever had. Tell us about yourself. Describe a time you handled a difficult customer. Why Best Buy? What does

great service mean to you? Normal questions, except you are answering them alone, staring at your own face, while the laptop judges your lighting and whether your soul has left the room.

At one point, I answered a question and was asked to repeat my answer. By the system. Let me say that again, because apparently technology needed clarification too. I was alone, interviewing with software, and the software basically said, "I'm sorry, can you run that enthusiasm back one more time?" Even the robot was not convinced. I have been interrupted by hiring managers, recruiters, panels, and once probably a raccoon spiritually, but being asked to repeat myself by a one way video platform felt like a new low.

Nothing builds confidence like explaining your customer service skills to a camera and then having the machine respond with the digital equivalent of, "Yeah, I didn't love that take."

The whole thing felt less like an interview and more like an audition

for a retail survival documentary. I was sitting there trying to sound professional while wondering if anyone would watch it, or if my answers would be stored on a server next to 400 people saying they are passionate about helping customers find Bluetooth speakers.

And yes, I understand why companies use these systems. It saves time. It creates consistency. It lets hiring teams review answers later. But easier for who? On the candidate side, it feels like applying for a job has turned into a low budget game show where the prize is maybe hearing back. Apply online. Upload resume. Retype resume. Answer questions. Record yourself answering more questions. Repeat your answer because the software got picky. Smile into the void. Wait patiently.

At this rate, my next interview will be conducted by a Best Buy display refrigerator asking me to describe a time I exceeded expectations, while a raccoon in a blue polo takes notes and says, "Interesting answer, but could you repeat that with more passion for HDMI cables?"

Please Explain the Job Before You Quiz Me

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A panel interview changed direction when I asked interviewers to describe the actual role before launching into standard questions.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to remind both sides that interviews are most useful when they explain the work, expectations and problems to solve.

I've reached the point where I'm convinced corporate interview questions are stored in one shared Google Doc created in 2007 that nobody has permission to edit.

"Tell me about yourself." "What's your greatest weakness?" "Where do you see yourself in five years?" "Tell me about a time you dealt with conflict." "Why should we hire you?" At this point I could probably answer half of them before the interviewer finishes reading the question.

The other day I was on a panel interview, and before they could launch into the traditional corporate interrogation, I decided to start with a question of my own. I asked them to walk me through the actual job description. You would have thought I asked for the nuclear codes. There was a pause. One person looked at another person. Another person looked down at their notes. Someone gave me that classic corporate smile people use when their brain is currently displaying the spinning wheel. Apparently everyone was prepared to ask me where I see myself in five years, but nobody was quite prepared to explain what I would actually be doing on Tuesday.

Eventually they started describing the role, and suddenly we were having an actual conversation. Responsibilities. Expectations. Problems. Priorities. What success looks like. The things you would assume an interview might be about before we collectively decided personality quizzes, trick questions, and STAR method storytelling were more exciting. And that's when it hit me: so many interviews have become completely backwards. The candidate is expected to arrive knowing the company history, mission statement, leadership principles, recent earnings, organizational chart, customer reviews, parking situation, and probably the CEO's favorite sandwich.

Meanwhile, ask, "What does this person actually need to accomplish in the first six months?" and sometimes the room turns into a hostage negotiation. I'm not saying traditional questions are useless. Context matters. Behavioral questions can reveal plenty. But when every company asks the exact same recycled questions, candidates naturally give the exact same

rehearsed answers. "My weakness is that I care too much." Outstanding. Call Harvard. We have found the one.

Maybe instead of asking people where they see themselves in five years, tell them where you need them in five months. Instead of asking why they want the job, explain why the job exists. Instead of asking for another inspirational story about overcoming conflict, tell them what conflict is currently waiting for them Monday morning. That's the interview I want. Tell me what's broken. Tell me what needs fixing. Tell me why the last person struggled. Tell me what success actually looks like when nobody is reading from the recruiting brochure.

Because I can absolutely tell you about a time I handled a difficult situation. I'm sitting in a panel interview answering the same questions for the 400th time. This is the difficult situation. Again. With enthusiasm, too.

Karen Would Like Me to Stop Posting

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A LinkedIn message warned that speaking publicly about hiring problems could hurt my career and suggested saving my thoughts for a book.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to defend thoughtful public criticism and laugh at the notion that good leaders should have no visible opinions.

Every once in a while, LinkedIn delivers a DM so perfectly corporate it feels like HR mailed me a Hallmark card from the Twilight Zone.

Today's came from Karen. We'll call her Karen because, spiritually, there was never another option. Karen wanted to help. Her message was basically: Alex, you speak the truth, but every post is hurting your chances because recruiters don't like controversial or cynical people. Her solution? Save it for a book. Write it down. Keep it to yourself.

Ah yes. The ancient corporate survival guide: have thoughts, just don't let anyone catch you having them. Thank you, Karen. I had no idea the secret to employability was becoming a beige throw pillow with a LinkedIn account. Apparently companies want leaders who solve problems, challenge broken processes, communicate directly, but only if they never publicly demonstrate any of those qualities. Makes perfect sense. Leadership, but quietly. Courage, but preferably in draft mode.

For decades people were taught to smile, nod, stay polished, never rock the boat, never mention layoffs,

ghosting, ageism, broken hiring processes, unpaid assignments, or eight round interviews. Just keep smiling while uploading your resume for the seventh time and pretending the automated rejection at 4:13 a.m. was a decision. Because silence has worked beautifully so far every day.

Here's the problem, Karen: people are exhausted. They're angry. They're scared. They send me stories because they thought they were the only ones experiencing this nonsense until somebody finally said it out loud. That's why I post. Not because I'm trying to burn bridges. I'm simply pointing out that several bridges are already on fire and HR keeps sending engagement surveys asking whether we feel supported by the temperature.

And if a company sees me saying "ghosting candidates is bad," maybe we weren't a match anyway. That is okay. There are companies looking for employees who will identify a problem, create a solution, and communicate clearly. Apparently there are also companies looking for decorative office plants. I am terrible at photosynthesis.

Karen's suggestion to "save it for a book" also made me smile. Karen. My friend. I have books. Multiple books. At this point telling me to write a book instead of posting on LinkedIn is like telling Gordon Ramsay, "Have you considered cooking?" But the bigger issue is this strange belief that honesty equals career suicide. If telling the truth about broken processes makes someone unemployable, corporate America doesn't have a talent shortage. It has a comfort shortage.

Strong organizations don't need everyone whispering. They need people willing to say, "This doesn't work," and then help fix it. So I'll keep posting. I'll keep laughing. I'll keep sharing the stories people are afraid to attach their names to. And if that scares away a recruiter who requires public silence, Karen may actually be right about one thing. I probably did hurt my chances. Thankfully.

We Are Like Family, Until Restructuring

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A polished executive team photo declaring workplace family was followed shortly afterward by a former team member announcing a job search.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to examine how corporate loyalty slogans can ring hollow when circumstances suddenly change.

Three weeks ago, I was scrolling through LinkedIn when I stumbled on a photo that could have been ripped straight out of a company brochure.

You know the type, all the executives lined up in blazers, perfectly staged smiles, maybe even a soft filter to make the office lighting look inspirational instead of fluorescent. The caption underneath? “We’re like family here.” And I paused, because those four words are the biggest red flag in corporate America. “We’re like family” doesn’t mean Sunday dinners and unconditional love. It doesn’t mean showing up at the airport with a sign and a hug. In office speak, it translates to, we will expect your loyalty, your weekends, your sanity, and possibly your first born, all in exchange for pizza on Fridays and a \$15 Starbucks card at Christmas.

So, I chuckled, scrolled on, and thought nothing of it. But here’s where the plot twist comes in. Two weeks later, just 14 business days after the big “family” declaration, one of those executives was back on LinkedIn posting the two words

nobody wants to type, “Open to work.”

Now tell me that isn’t the most corporate “family” story you’ve ever heard. Because in real families, you don’t get a LinkedIn notification that Cousin Jerry has been restructured out of Thanksgiving. In real families, no one tells you over Zoom that your position at the dinner table has been eliminated effective immediately. Only in corporate “families” does someone get hugged in a group photo one week and escorted out of the building the next. Here’s the thing, companies love to romanticize the workplace with family language because it sounds warm and fuzzy. But real families don’t write you up for being late to brunch. Real families don’t hand you a severance package after Christmas dinner. And real families don’t tell you to “bring your whole self” to the reunion, then rank your performance on a five point scale.

And yet, people still fall for it. We post the photos, we hit “like,” we comment with heart emojis. Then the reorg comes, and suddenly someone from the family portrait is gone like they’ve been voted off the island. If corporate America is a

family, it’s less Brady Bunch and more Survivor. That’s why I’ve stopped believing the “we’re like family” posts. I want honesty. Say, “We’re like a bowling league here. You’ll have fun, you’ll get some strikes, you might bond over nachos, and if your average drops too low, you’re off the team.” That’s at least accurate.

When I saw that executive posting “open to work,” I didn’t gloat, I felt what we’ve all felt, the sting of learning that “family” often means “until it doesn’t.” But the outpouring of comments, introductions, and encouragement reminded me, maybe LinkedIn is the real family.

Because when the glossy group photos fade into layoffs, we still show up, sharing resumes, offering support, and reminding each other we’re not alone. At the end of the day, corporate families fade, but the honest community we build is what lasts.

Nine Amazon Interviews for Under \$50,000

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Reflecting on a lengthy Amazon interview process for a role paying under \$50,000 inspired a story about diminishing returns.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted hiring teams to weigh the candidate's investment of time against the actual level and compensation of the position.

At some point, the interview process stopped being about finding the right person and started feeling like a reality show where the grand prize is a salary under \$50,000 and hearing “bonus potential” whispered like you just won a timeshare in Orlando.

A while back, I interviewed with Amazon. I knew Amazon was efficient because they can get a package to my front porch before I remember ordering it. I assumed the hiring process would be just as streamlined. Maybe two interviews, a conversation, an offer. Adorable. What followed was nine rounds of interviews for a job paying under \$50,000 with bonus potential. Nine. By round three, I had explained my leadership philosophy, conflict resolution style, biggest accomplishment, biggest failure, favorite leadership principle, and enough personal history to qualify for therapy.

Round four felt familiar. Round five felt suspicious. By round six, I was wondering if I was applying for the job or being vetted for a nuclear submarine. Every interviewer had a

serious expression and another version of, “Tell me about a time when...” I wanted to answer, “Tell me about a time when a company made someone complete nine interviews for forty something thousand dollars.”

Then came “bonus potential.” Corporate America loves the word potential. It sounds exciting because it lets your imagination do all the work. The salary may be \$49,000, but technically there is potential. Potential for what? A yacht? A Costco membership? A \$37 bonus after the company hits twelve metrics, Mercury is in retrograde, and Jeff Bezos sees a bald eagle fly over headquarters? Nobody knows. Just smile and nod like the mystery money is already in your account.

By round seven, I had met so many people I expected one to ask whether I had considered naming my firstborn after a leadership principle. Round eight had the energy of a parole hearing. Round nine was where I stopped feeling like a candidate and started feeling like an unpaid Amazon employee whose only responsibility was

attending interviews. I was half expecting an email asking me to complete a survey.

And this is the part that gets me. Companies tell candidates they need to move fast, stay flexible, respect everyone's time, and demonstrate urgency. Then they build a hiring process with enough rounds to elect a pope. For a senior executive role involving billions of dollars? Fine. For a job under \$50,000? Nine rounds feels less like due diligence and more like corporate cardio.

I survived it, learned a lot, and gained another story. I also learned that when someone says, “We have just one more conversation,” never believe them. There is always another conversation. Somewhere in a conference room, another interviewer is opening your resume for the first time and preparing to ask, “So, tell me about yourself.”

By interview nine, I wanted to say, “Absolutely. But first, please refer to rounds one through eight. My autobiography should already be available with free two day shipping.”

The Avengers of Job-Seeker Networking

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A networking event for job seekers brought together people with different layoff and career-transition stories.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to find humor and solidarity in a room full of talented people navigating uncertainty rather than competing over who had the hardest search.

The other day I was invited to a networking event for job seekers, which sounded productive until the introductions started and I realized we had accidentally assembled the Avengers of professional uncertainty.

One by one, people introduced themselves. “Hi, I’m Sarah. I was laid off after 14 years.” “Hi, I’m Mike. My position was eliminated.” “Hi, I’m Jennifer. I’ve been interviewing for six months.” Then it got to me. “Hi, I’m Alex. I’ve interviewed with over 100 companies because apparently I turned job hunting into an unpaid research project.” There was a pause. Then laughter. One guy leaned over and said, “Wait, voluntarily?” Fair question. At this point, I’m a corporate lab rat with Wi-Fi.

The introductions kept going, and every story became more familiar. One person had been ghosted after five interviews. Another completed a case study, presentation, panel interview, personality assessment, and a small military exercise before receiving an automated rejection. Someone else had applied to more than 300 jobs and said the only

consistent communication she received was, “Thank you for your interest.” It was oddly beautiful. More like strangers bonding during a power outage with recruiter trauma.

One woman said, “I made it to the final round three times.” I asked, “Which final round?” She laughed because everyone knew exactly what I meant. Another guy said his recruiter told him the company wanted to move quickly. That was seven weeks ago. Corporate America has a unique definition of “quickly.” It is similar to how a toddler defines “five more minutes,” except the toddler eventually does something. Then someone mentioned one way video interviews, and the entire room made the same face. Nothing unites strangers faster than realizing they have all stared into a webcam answering, “Why do you want to work here?” while nobody from the company was there.

By the end, the networking event had stopped feeling like networking and started feeling like a support group with name tags. We traded stories, resume advice, interview tips, and company names. These were experienced people who had

built careers, managed teams, hit goals, and survived enough corporate meetings to deserve hazard pay. Yet almost everyone had a story about being ghosted, over-interviewed, or asked to complete enough unpaid work to qualify for an internship.

The event was supposed to help job seekers network, and it did. But it also reminded me that job searching has created its own strange community. Mention ghosting and someone nods. Say “final interview” and someone laughs. Mention Workday and three people reach for a drink. Behind every application is a person with experience, bills, responsibilities, and a browser history containing, “How long should I wait before following up again?”

When the event ended, someone asked if I had learned anything. Absolutely. I learned I’m not the only one collecting stories. I’m just the one crazy enough to turn the whole thing into a book.

The Outlook Calendar Olympics

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Another look at drawn-out hiring processes made the sheer number of scheduling invitations seem like the real selection test.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how excessive steps can turn a simple staffing decision into an exhausting administration exercise.

I'm beginning to think the modern hiring process isn't really designed to find candidates. It's designed to see how many calendar invitations one human being can accept before Outlook files a restraining order. Apparently, this is innovation.

Hiring has become a corporate scheduling experiment with resumes attached. First there is the recruiter call. Then the hiring manager call. Then the "quick follow up" that lasts 47 minutes. Then the panel. Then another panel because apparently the first panel was only the appetizer. Somewhere in the middle, someone says, "We just want to make sure there's alignment," which is corporate language for, "Nobody wants to make the decision, so we invited three more people."

You start wondering whether anyone is actually evaluating candidates anymore or whether everyone is trying to hit an internal target for meetings booked. I picture a dashboard saying, "Fantastic work, team. We scheduled 86 candidate touchpoints this week, held 42 alignment calls, created 19 follow up meetings, and hired

absolutely nobody. Engagement is through the roof."

Meanwhile, the candidate is rearranging work, family, lunch, dinner, and dentist appointments to accommodate six calendars. Then comes the email: "Can you provide your availability for the next two weeks?" Absolutely. Would you also like my dental records, moon sign, and the current location of the raccoon emotionally supporting me through this process?

Then comes my favorite part. After all those meetings, someone asks a question already answered in the application, resume, recruiter screen, and three previous interviews. "So, Alex, tell us a little about yourself." At this point, I should have opening credits. By interview number five, I'm no longer introducing myself. I'm releasing Season Two. I understand companies want to be careful. Hiring the wrong person is expensive. Teams want input. Leaders want confidence. That makes sense. But there is a difference between being thorough and turning a job opening into a Broadway production called "Waiting for Approval."

If six people need to meet a candidate before anyone can decide whether the candidate should meet the seventh person, the problem might not be the candidate.

Candidates are expected to stay enthusiastic through every round, send thank you notes, complete assessments, record videos, prepare presentations, repeat the same career story, and somehow act surprised when another calendar invitation arrives titled "Final Conversation." Final, of course, is now more of a suggestion. There is always one more. At this rate, I'm convinced the modern hiring process doesn't end with an offer. It ends when Outlook finally says, "Enough. I'm not creating another meeting."

Maybe companies don't need more interviews. Maybe they need one person willing to say, "I have enough information. Let's make a decision." At this point, that might qualify as the most disruptive innovation corporate America has seen in years.

Eight Steps to Be Vice President of People

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A Vice President of People and Culture posting advertised an eight-stage interview path that resembled a loyalty program.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask whether the most senior HR leaders are designing hiring experiences they would personally enjoy completing.

At some point, interviewing for a job stopped being a conversation and became a loyalty program. Complete enough rounds and you unlock a free tote bag, a stress headache, and the privilege of meeting the CEO twice.

I was scrolling through job postings when I found a Vice President of People & Culture role with an eight step interview process. Eight. Not three conversations and a decision. Eight checkpoints before you even find out whether “competitive pay” means actual money or a branded water bottle.

Step 1 is the initial phone screen, where someone verifies that you are a real human being. Step 2 is the recruiter interview, where you explain your career because apparently the resume you uploaded has entered witness protection. Then we arrive at Step 3: interview with the CEO. Reasonable. Except Step 4 is a CEO working session. So after meeting the CEO, you return for the director’s cut. At this point I would like to know whether I am applying for a job or being slowly adopted by the executive team.

Step 5 is the executive leadership interview. Wonderful. More executives. I assume six people join a Zoom call, three remain muted, one asks a question already answered on your resume, and another spends the meeting looking like they just discovered the camera is on. Step 6 is an interview with the company’s executive coach. This is where the process officially becomes a side quest. I have now met the recruiter, the CEO twice, the leadership team, and apparently the person who coaches the people who interviewed me. By Step 6, I am no longer sure if they are evaluating me or assembling the Avengers.

Step 7 is an onsite interview with leadership, because apparently everyone we just met has developed temporary amnesia and would like to see us again in person. I would arrive with luggage, snacks, a phone charger, and emergency contact information. My family would probably file a missing person report and write, “last seen interviewing.” Finally, Step 8: references, offer, and background check. At this point my references deserve compensation too. They have been emotionally involved in this process for three fiscal quarters.

Executive hiring requires care. But eight stages starts feeling less like recruiting and more like Survivor: Executive Edition. And my favorite part is the introduction: “We believe in a respectful, efficient, and transparent hiring experience.” Efficient. That word is doing more heavy lifting than anyone in Step 7. If I complete eight interviews, two CEO appearances, an executive coach conversation, an onsite visit, references, and a background check, I do not want a rejection email beginning with, “After careful consideration.”

After that journey, I want a graduation ceremony, a small parade, and one executive at the exit handing me a T-shirt that says, “I survived the hiring process and all I got was another calendar invite.” At eight rounds, I’m not interviewing anymore. I’m becoming part of the company history.

The Cover Letter, Our Ceremonial Offering

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Repeated resume uploads and screening requirements led me to question whether cover letters are meaningfully read or merely required.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to poke fun at performative application steps while encouraging clearer, more useful screening practices.

I have officially reached the point in job hunting where I believe the cover letter is no longer a document. It is a ceremonial offering to the Applicant Tracking System.

You upload your resume, then type your resume into seventeen boxes because apparently the file was decoration, answer questions already answered on the resume, and finally, just when you think you are free, the application says, "Cover letter required." At that point I assume somewhere a recruiter lights a candle and Microsoft Word opens by itself.

The other day, I decided to test how sacred this document really is. I applied for a position, uploaded my resume, completed the application, and when the system demanded a cover letter, I uploaded one. Technically. It was completely blank. Not one word. No "Dear Hiring Manager." No dramatic statement about how deeply aligned I am with the company's values after spending eleven minutes on its website. Just a beautiful white page containing nothing.

And then they invited me to an interview. During the conversation, the recruiter was reviewing my application and said, "I don't see your cover letter." I thought, oh, it's there. Trust me. It is just extremely concise. Then she found the file, opened it, and there was this beautiful pause. The kind of pause that happens when someone realizes the universe has betrayed them. Then she said, "Oh. It's blank." Correct. That was the artistic direction. I wanted to explain that the white space represented the emotional journey of applying for jobs in 2026. The missing words symbolized recruiter feedback. The empty page represented the salary range. Honestly, it may have been the most accurate document I submitted.

But here is the best part: I still got the interview. Which means my blank cover letter passed whatever sacred checkpoint required one in the first place. The system apparently did not care what was inside. It just needed proof that something had been uploaded. At this point, the hiring process feels

less like recruiting and more like airport security. Remove your shoes, upload a PDF, answer the same question three times, and hope nobody notices you packed a raccoon in your carry on. If nobody noticed the cover letter was blank until I was already talking to a recruiter, I have to wonder how critical this masterpiece really was.

The interview continued. No alarms went off. HR did not rappel through the ceiling. The ATS did not revoke my professional credentials. We simply acknowledged that my required cover letter contained about the same amount of useful information as many corporate mission statements and moved on. My blank page made it farther in the hiring process than some fully completed applications.

Next time, I may upload a photo of a raccoon wearing a tie and title it "Leadership Philosophy." At least the raccoon would demonstrate initiative. Somewhere right now, a recruiter is probably feeding my blank cover letter into AI and asking it to summarize my key strengths.

When the VP of HR Is the Plot Twist

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader shared an account of an Amazon interview that left her concerned enough to withdraw from the process.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to highlight that candidates evaluate the interviewer too and are entitled to walk away from a poor interaction.

I was reading through the comments on one of my posts and came across a story that deserves a place in the hiring process museum of confusion.

A woman said she interviewed with Amazon a few years ago and eventually decided to bow out of the process after meeting with a “VP of HR.” Now, normally when you hear VP of HR, you imagine someone who can talk about people strategy, leadership development, succession planning, organizational design, culture, employee relations, and maybe even explain why every company survey somehow ends with “we hear you” followed by absolutely nothing changing.

That was not the experience. According to her, this VP’s background was primarily as a General Manager in retail stores. Nothing wrong with that at all. Plenty of great leaders come from operations. But during the interview, she started asking basic HR questions and quickly realized the person on the other side of the table could not answer them. Then she asked what the strategic vision was for the position she was interviewing for. Also unclear. At

that point, I imagine the interview became less “tell me about yourself” and more “should I grab a dry erase board and explain your department to you?”

That is a special kind of interview moment. You arrive expecting to prove you are qualified, and twenty minutes later you are quietly wondering whether you accidentally walked into an executive coaching session. The company is supposed to be evaluating you, but somehow you are evaluating whether the person evaluating you understands the function they are leading. And this is where job interviews get funny.

Candidates are told to come prepared with research, thoughtful questions, examples, metrics, leadership stories, strategic thinking, and preferably a five year plan for a job they have not even been offered yet. Meanwhile, occasionally you ask one basic question like, “What are you hoping this role will accomplish?” and the room suddenly develops the energy of a substitute teacher discovering the lesson plan is missing. Her conclusion was better. She said she was done managing up unqualified

bosses. I felt that sentence in my soul.

Managing up can be a useful skill. Helping your boss communicate better, anticipating needs, bringing solutions, and keeping priorities aligned are all normal parts of leadership. But there is a difference between managing up and becoming the unpaid emergency generator for someone whose title has more experience than they do. At some point, “managing up” turns into “congratulations, you are now quietly doing two jobs while being paid for the cheaper one.”

The funniest part is that candidates are often terrified of giving the wrong answer in interviews. Maybe we should spend a little more time noticing whether the people asking the questions can answer any themselves. Interviews are supposed to be two way conversations.

Sometimes the biggest red flag is not the question they ask you. It is the question they cannot answer.

My Ex-Boss Has a LinkedIn Season Pass

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A former toxic boss appeared among my LinkedIn profile viewers, reopening the comedy of being watched after leaving the workplace.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to remind readers that a former boss's curiosity does not have to control their next chapter.

Nothing says “I’ve moved on” quite like an ex boss quietly checking your LinkedIn profile to see whether your life has collapsed without their leadership.

Earlier today, my ex toxic boss stopped by my LinkedIn profile. Not called. Not messaged. Not congratulated me. Just appeared in the bushes like a raccoon with Wi-Fi, probably wondering what I’m doing, where I’m working, whether I’m happy, and whether I have posted anything that could somehow ruin his afternoon. Toxic bosses are fascinating after you leave. When you worked for them, they barely had time to answer an email, approve payroll, solve a staffing problem, or remember the conversation you had with them fifteen minutes earlier. But the second you leave? Suddenly they develop investigative skills that would make the FBI uncomfortable. Now they know your job title, your latest post, who commented, who liked it, and probably what time you updated your banner photo.

I imagine the process is very professional. Coffee in one hand. LinkedIn open. Search bar. My name. Click. “Let’s see what Alex is

up to.” Apparently managing me wasn’t enough. Now we are doing post employment surveillance. And I love the silent profile visit because it creates so many questions. Were you checking to see whether I failed? Were you hoping I posted something angry? Did someone send you one of my posts and say, “Isn’t this your former employee?” Did you accidentally click my profile while conducting your annual search for accountability? Maybe it was nostalgia. Maybe he misses the good old days when every emergency somehow became my emergency, every bad decision became a “team opportunity,” and every problem created above me was delivered downward with a motivational speech about ownership.

I can almost hear it now. “We all need to take accountability.” Absolutely. I’ll take accountability for noticing you viewed my profile. The funniest part about leaving a toxic boss is realizing how much peace exists when nobody is randomly calling you to discuss something they could have put in a two sentence text. Your phone stops feeling like a bomb.

Sunday evenings become Sunday evenings again. You stop rehearsing explanations for problems you didn’t create. Then, months later, LinkedIn taps you on the shoulder and says, “Guess who’s watching?” Hello, friend. I hope the profile looked good. I hope you enjoyed the posts. I hope you noticed I am still alive, still working, still laughing, and somehow surviving without the leadership style that once involved confusion, panic, twelve follow up messages, and a meeting to discuss why there were too many meetings.

And if you’re checking because you miss me, I understand. Great employees are hard to replace. Great toxic bosses, however, are easy to recognize once you no longer work for them. Anyway, thanks for stopping by my LinkedIn profile today. No need to be shy next time. Send a connection request. I promise I won’t put you on a performance improvement plan. How sweet!!

The Goose Is the Hiring Process

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A short comic video struck me as an unexpectedly accurate picture of an applicant finally pushing back against a ridiculous process.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to give readers a quick visual-joke caption that made the exhausting job hunt feel recognizable.

Job hunting in 2026 perfectly explained in one video: the goose is the hiring process, the kid is the applicant, and somehow after 47 applications, six interviews, three assessments, and being ghosted twice, the candidate finally decided to fight back. HR will be reaching out in 7–10 business days.

A Former Boss Meets the Revenge Plot Twist

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader described moving away from a difficult former boss and later witnessing a surprising change in their relative circumstances.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to celebrate rebuilding after toxic leadership without pretending a person's recovery depends on revenge.

Every once in a while, my inbox delivers a story so perfectly poetic that I have to stop, reread it, and make sure Netflix has not secretly started writing LinkedIn revenge dramas.

A woman messaged me and told me her toxic boss chapter ended three years ago. She left professionally, moved across the country, and planned to start over. Then came the fun part: three years of applying for hundreds of jobs while carrying an MBA, 25 years of experience, and the apparently controversial achievement of being 57 years old. Apparently, in modern hiring, experience is valuable right up until you have too much of it.

For three years she lived inside the same circus I write about every day. Rejections. Silence. Ageism. Applications disappearing into portals. Employers wanting 20 years of experience but somehow hoping it belongs to a 31 year old who accepts entry level pay and considers dental insurance a personality trait. At one point, she seriously wondered if working at Target was going to be the next

chapter. Somewhere, a recruiter just whispered "culture fit" into a portal, and disappeared behind another personality assessment.

Then she went home, back to the city where she had relationships, contacts, history, and people who actually knew what she could do. Within 10 days, interviews started showing up. Within 30 days, she had three offers. Three. After three years of corporate hide and seek, she returned home and apparently unlocked the secret achievement called "People Who Know Your Actual Value."

Now here comes the part that made me laugh. She accepted a Director level role. The same level as her former toxic boss. For her former toxic boss's direct competitor. Because that is not a comeback. That is a professionally dressed plot twist with a laptop bag.

It gets better. She blocked her former boss a year ago because the woman kept checking her profile. Nothing says "I have moved on" quite like repeatedly checking the LinkedIn page of the employee you

helped drive away. But on day one of the new job, she plans to unblock her. Not to message her. Not to argue. Not to send a 47 slide presentation titled "Remember Me?" Just to post the most dangerous sentence in corporate America: "I'm excited to announce..."

That is not revenge. That is strategic communications. And the best part? Many of the accounts her former boss now works with originally belonged to her. So while one person may think the past is safely buried, the past just got a Director title, a new company email address, and access to the competitor's parking lot. Underneath the comedy, this story matters. Three years is a long time to be ignored, overlooked, rejected, and made to question whether decades of experience suddenly became a liability. She kept going anyway. Now she is back. Not starting over. Starting again with everything she learned.

And somewhere soon, one former toxic boss is going to open LinkedIn, see that announcement, and discover that karma apparently has Wi-Fi.

When the Toxic Job Ends but the Noise Continues

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Reflections on bosses who keep talking about former staff after those employees have moved on inspired this closing workplace piece.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted people leaving painful jobs to know that their future matters more than the stories their former boss keeps telling.

One of the strangest parts of leaving a toxic workplace is realizing that sometimes the job ends, but the noise does not. People move on, rebuild, breathe easier, and try to put their energy into a better chapter. Meanwhile, somewhere behind them, a former boss is still talking, still checking, still asking questions, and still treating LinkedIn like a surveillance system funded by the company.

Toxic bosses often care deeply about controlling the story after someone leaves. They explain why the person was difficult, why they were supposedly the problem, and why everything is better now. Then, for people they claim not to care about, they somehow need regular updates. So a manager gets sent to check the profile, scroll through the posts, see where the person works now, notice who is commenting, and report back like they just completed a classified operation. “Boss, they posted again.” Excellent work, detective. Somewhere a customer is waiting, a team is exhausted, and actual work is piling up, but at least

headquarters has fresh intelligence from LinkedIn.

The sad part is how quickly people inside toxic environments learn to participate. Staying on the boss’s good side can feel safer than asking the obvious question: why are we still talking about someone who left? So people laugh at the jokes, agree with the criticism, bring screenshots, and deliver updates because loyalty to the boss becomes more valuable than honesty. Eventually, grown adults are discussing a former employee’s social media activity like it is a quarterly business review. Nothing says healthy culture quite like a meeting titled “People Who Left and Continue to Exist Without Our Permission.”

Underneath the sarcasm, though, this can genuinely hurt. Leaving a toxic workplace can take more out of someone than people realize. It can take months to rebuild confidence, stop replaying conversations, and remember what work felt like before every day became about surviving someone else’s mood. The last thing anyone

needs is to feel like the old environment is still watching from the rearview mirror.

People who have truly moved on do not need constant updates. They do not need screenshots. They do not need to know whether someone got promoted, changed careers, started a business, found peace, or simply smiled again. Sometimes the happiness of a former employee bothers toxic leaders because it ruins the ending they had written. They expected that person to struggle without them. They expected the story to get smaller.

Instead, people heal. They rebuild. They laugh again. They create lives that no longer require approval from the people who made them miserable. So if a toxic former boss is still checking, still asking, and still sending someone to look, let them look. The best update they can receive is simple: The person they tried to control moved on.

And somehow, life got better without the daily surveillance report. And that is the part no screenshot will ever fully explain.

ONE MORE THING BEFORE NEXT WEEK

A last thought.

Another week of The Interview Games has ended, and I remain fascinated by one remarkable contradiction: companies say they want to know people, then keep finding more ingenious ways not to speak to them. We have reached an era when you can apply, record answers, complete paperwork and nearly begin work before anyone introduces themselves. The only employee who seems consistently available is the automated email system, and even that one refuses to answer follow-up questions.

This week featured Target, Mars, Best Buy and Southwest Airlines in starring roles as I stared into tiny camera lights and tried to turn a one-way recording into a meaningful career conversation. Somewhere along the way an interview went from two people discovering whether they could work together to one person performing professionally for a laptop while the other person remained a theoretical concept. I miss eye contact. Real eye contact. Not the kind where I try to stare through a green light and pretend the light might offer me a salary range.

Then there was Tesla and the small miracle of a recruiter finally joining a scheduled call. Candidates are repeatedly told that punctuality communicates professionalism. I agree. It communicates professionalism in both directions. If a candidate is expected to study the company, understand the role, prepare examples and arrive early, an interviewer can surely locate the appointment they scheduled. This should not require an executive leadership off-site or an additional workflow automation.

We spent time asking why job postings disappear almost as soon as they appear, why an application can demand confidentiality before the first conversation, and why a vice president might need eight interviews before receiving an answer. Nobody benefits when a hiring journey becomes an endurance competition. An organization can be careful without being endlessly complicated. Two clear conversations can tell you more than seven meetings where everyone asks a different version of the same question.

A LAST THOUGHT / CONTINUED

And I keep returning to that phrase: nobody wants to work anymore. It is an astonishing thing to say while thousands of professionals are clicking Apply, rewriting resumes, scheduling screenings and checking inboxes as though the next email might change their lives. People want to work. Many people desperately want to work. What they do not want is to donate forty hours to a company that responds with a form letter written in the emotional register of a printer manual.

One of the most important moments of this week happened far away from any corporate conference room. In a Walgreens aisle, a woman worried about the grey in her hair before an interview. That is the cost of a culture that makes experienced people wonder whether they need to disguise themselves to be considered. A career is not a manufacturing defect. Years of work are evidence of adaptability, resilience and knowledge. Interviewers should see the person, not calculate their age from the shine of a hair-dye box.

Layoffs are another reminder that these stories are not just material for sarcasm. When a worker learns in an early morning email that a job has disappeared, the organizational chart might update in minutes, but the person has an entire life to reorganize. A mortgage does not appreciate the elegance of the phrase broader organizational change. The kids do not care how efficiently HR shut down a badge. The person on the receiving end deserves decency, clarity and support.

The same human reality exists behind every job-seeker networking event. People show up carrying histories that cannot fit on a name tag. They have led teams, solved problems, raised families, survived layoffs and built skills nobody can summarize in a thirty-second introduction. If you are employed, you can make a difference by answering a message, offering a useful introduction, checking a resume or simply treating an old colleague as though their value did not expire with their company account.

Employers, there is a simple experiment I recommend: take your own hiring process from start to finish. Apply on a phone. Upload a resume. Watch the portal request the same information again. Complete the assessment. Record answers into the camera. Wait for the follow-up. Count the hours. Then ask whether you would feel respected if you were not already inside the company. That answer may be more useful than a dozen employee-experience dashboards.

I also hope managers remember that a candidate is interviewing the organization. When people cannot explain the role, arrive unprepared, or join a panel to laugh too hard at the CEO, they are teaching the applicant something. Interviews are not ceremonial tests in which all scrutiny flows in one direction. They are conversations about work. The best leaders can discuss the hard realities of a position without hiding behind corporate language, countdown clocks or a roomful of identical questions.

A LAST THOUGHT / CONTINUED

As for the bosses who watch their former employees on LinkedIn and the companies that call everyone family until the restructuring meeting, I have a small request: let people grow. An employee leaving is not an invitation to supervise their next chapter from the bushes. A company calling itself a family does not become one by printing those words under a photograph. It earns loyalty by behaving with integrity when the conversation is inconvenient and the headlines are gone.

There are thoughtful recruiters, excellent hiring managers and employers who genuinely care, and they deserve to be recognized. The Interview Games is not a campaign to label every company terrible. It is an invitation to look at the messy, inefficient and sometimes hilarious parts of recruiting, and to improve them. If one organization replaces an unnecessary video screen with a real conversation, or a recruiter closes the loop instead of ghosting, the experiment has done more than produce a punchline.

To readers who share their experiences, whether in public comments or quiet private messages, thank you. You make this more than my own collection of unusual appointments. Your stories bring urgency, context and sometimes tenderness to a subject that too often gets reduced to metrics. I may provide the sarcastic narration, but the reason to keep writing is that someone out there is still waiting for an answer, still trying to be seen and still hoping for a decent opportunity.

So here is the last thought I will leave with you: be the person who shows up. Be the recruiter who calls when promised. Be the leader who knows the job they are hiring for. Be the colleague who keeps in touch after a layoff. Be the employer who values experience instead of asking people to hide it. And if the system still insists on nine rounds of interviews for a salary that barely covers the rent, you already know where to find me. I will be the guy in front of the webcam, wondering whether the

THE POINT OF ALL THIS

Behind every application is somebody's real life.

MAKE THE PROCESS WORTH THEIR TIME.