



OCTOBER 12 - 18, 2026

THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Every post. Every story. In my own words.

51

ORIGINAL POSTS

7

DAYS OF THE EXPERIMENT

102

BEHIND-THE-POST NOTES

WHAT THE INTERVIEW GAMES IS ALL ABOUT

The experiment behind every story.

The Interview Games started with a simple experiment: instead of trusting what employers say about their hiring process, what happens if I actually enter it as a candidate? I apply to jobs, test the systems, take the calls, sit through the interviews and write about what the experience feels like from the other side of the screen.

This is not a collection of motivational quotes about “embracing the journey.” It is the journey itself: late recruiters, application software that forgets people, interviews that multiply like rabbits, awkward corporate parties, generous strangers, and messages from readers who are trying to stay hopeful while the job market tests their patience.

I use humor because comedy has a way of making an uncomfortable truth easier to see. A bad interview is funny until you realize someone took time off work to attend it. A seven-step assessment is ridiculous until you remember a qualified person needs that job. And the company promising “people first” may never see the people it leaves waiting for an answer.

This week brought 51 original posts. I talked with people about their processes, examined the systems we are all expected to accept, and listened to readers who remind me why the stories matter. There were serious moments, absurd moments and a few jokes that probably generated spontaneous meetings in HR.

Every story in this issue is reproduced from my October 12-18 LinkedIn posts. Before the complete post, I have added two short reflections: what triggered the idea, and why I chose to write about it. The words of the posts themselves are the ones I published. I hope you laugh, think, and maybe look at the next hiring process a little differently.

01**THE EXPERIMENT**

Apply. Compare. Observe.

02**THE HUMOR**

Make the absurdity visible.

03**THE PURPOSE**

Keep people at the center.

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The hiring manager is the homework

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Preparing for an interview prompted a deeper look at the hiring manager's LinkedIn posts, values and leadership language.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted candidates to research not just the organization, but the actual person across the interview table.

Interview preparation in 2026 is no longer “read the company website, memorize the mission statement, and bring three copies of your resume.” That was adorable. Now you need the investigative skills of the FBI, the patience of a tax auditor.

A while back, I had an interview coming up, so I did what every candidate is told to do: research the company, the CEO, leadership team, recent news, values, culture, and anything else that might prevent me from answering, “So what do you know about us?” with, “You have a logo and apparently several employees.”

Then I looked up the hiring manager on LinkedIn. Her profile was serious corporate. Very serious. Every photo looked like it had been approved by Legal, HR, Communications. Her posts were filled with phrases like “driving alignment,” “building high performing teams,” “leading with purpose,” “creating accountability,” and my personal favorite, “leaning into strategic transformation.” I leaned into my coffee.

But after a few minutes, I realized I had found something useful. She posted about leadership, communication, accountability,

culture, and developing people. She had basically published the interview study guide online for free. By page three, I knew accountability mattered. By page five, collaboration was apparently the oxygen keeping corporate America alive. By page seven, I was convinced that if I said “cross functional partnership” three times into a mirror, a vice president would appear and schedule another panel interview.

Interview day arrived. She asked, “What does good leadership look like to you?” Funny you should ask. I talked about accountability, communication, developing people, setting clear expectations, and giving teams ownership. Her face lit up like I had personally invented leadership. Then came, “How do you handle change?” I talked about transparency, adaptability, alignment, and helping people understand the purpose behind the change. She nodded so hard I thought my Wi-Fi was buffering her.

That is why interview preparation matters. Do not just research what the company sells. Research the people interviewing you. Look at what they post, what they celebrate,

what language they repeat, and what ideas clearly matter to them. You are not trying to become a fake version of yourself. You are trying to understand the room before you walk into it.

Companies research candidates. They read our LinkedIn profiles, scroll our posts, review our resumes, run assessments, check references, and investigate whether we used the wrong font in 2014. Sometimes the hiring manager has already told you exactly what matters to them. Research isn't creepy when HR calls it preparation. Suddenly it becomes strategy. You just have to scroll past the corporate inspirational graphic to find it.

Prepare for the interview, but prepare for the person, too. The job description tells you what the company says it wants. The hiring manager's LinkedIn usually tells you what you are actually walking into.

Twenty minutes to diagnose turnover

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A company invited me to test an interview at a location facing high staff turnover; the meeting lasted about twenty minutes.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask whether rushed interviews and unclear expectations are part of the turnover problem.

A company recently reached out to me and asked if I would run one of my interview experiments with a manager at one of their locations.

Usually I am the one quietly entering the process, taking notes and wondering how long it will take before someone says “we’re like a family here.” This time, the company knew exactly what I was doing. They wanted the real candidate experience and my feedback. The location also came with one detail: high turnover. Not “a couple people left last year” turnover. I mean the kind where the team photo probably needs to be updated every Tuesday. So I went in curious. Was the problem pay, leadership, training, scheduling, culture, or something else?

The interview lasted about 20 minutes. Twenty. I have spent longer ordering at Cheesecake Factory. The manager asked a few standard questions, gave me a quick overview of the role, mentioned scheduling, touched on expectations, and around minute 14 I realized we were already heading toward the grand finale. No real conversation about leadership, why people stay, what motivates

someone, or what kind of manager they work best with.

It felt like the interview version of a drive thru. “Tell me about your experience.” “Are you comfortable with the schedule?” “Why are you interested?” “Any questions for me?” Thank you, please pull forward.

I walked out thinking about the turnover, because sometimes companies treat turnover like a mysterious weather pattern. “We just can’t figure out why people keep leaving.” Meanwhile, the entire hiring conversation took less time than an oil change. If a location keeps losing people, maybe the interview should be more than checking for a pulse, transportation, and Tuesday availability.

The interview is where expectations get clear. What is the culture really like? How does the manager communicate under pressure? How are new employees trained? What happens when someone struggles? Why did the last few people leave? What does success look like after 30, 60, or 90 days? Those questions matter because hiring is not just filling a hole in the schedule. You are trying to figure out whether this

person and this manager can actually work together without someone updating LinkedIn by Friday.

And to the company’s credit, this is why they asked me to do the experiment. They did not want the polished corporate version where everybody smiles, says “great culture,” and changes the subject when turnover comes up. They wanted to know what a candidate actually experienced.

My takeaway was simple: the interview was fast, transactional, and probably did not give either side enough information to make a great decision. Twenty minutes can tell you whether someone showed up. It probably cannot tell you why they will stay.

If you have a turnover problem, do not only study the people leaving. Study the way you are interviewing, onboarding, training, managing, and inviting people in. Sometimes the first warning sign shows up before the employee ever clocks in.

When a LinkedIn post reaches Legal

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A public story involving McKinsey and comments by a senior partner set off a reflection about executives posting online.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to explore the gap between corporate calls for authenticity and the scrutiny that public comments can bring.

LinkedIn has always been the place where people say, “Bring your whole self to work,” right up until your whole self posts something Legal has to read before breakfast.

I saw the story about McKinsey removing senior partner Chris Bradley from a leadership role after public comments the firm said fell short of its standards, and all I could think was: corporate social media really is an open book exam, except nobody tells you which answers will get you called into a meeting with three people who all say, “This should only take a few minutes.”

For years, professionals have been told to build a personal brand. Share your thoughts. Be authentic. Challenge conventional thinking. Become a thought leader. Apparently there should have been a tiny asterisk under all of that saying, “Terms and conditions apply. Authenticity subject to review by HR, Legal, Communications, your boss, and Janet from corporate who already has screenshots.” One minute companies are posting graphics about courage, speaking up, and healthy debate. The next minute somebody actually says something bold and a conference

room appears out of nowhere. Then comes the sentence nobody enjoys hearing: “Can you join us for a quick conversation?”

Whether you agree or disagree with what was posted is almost secondary to the lesson. If you are a senior leader, your LinkedIn account is not just your LinkedIn account anymore. Your title follows you into the comment section. Your employer follows you into the comment section. And Legal is already there wearing reading glasses, wondering why you could not just post a picture of a leadership book and write, “Great reminder.”

This is why I laugh when companies tell candidates during interviews, “We really value people who speak their minds.” Wonderful. How much? Because there seems to be a pricing structure. Entry level honesty is free. Manager honesty requires approval. Executive honesty may include a meeting invitation, an updated org chart, and a statement containing “our standards.” Corporate America loves authenticity the way hotels love complimentary breakfast. Yes, it exists. But there are hours, rules,

approved options, and somebody is watching the waffle machine.

The bigger lesson is simple. Public platforms are public. If you attach your professional identity to your opinions, people are going to connect the two. Companies will too. That does not mean everyone should become a silent corporate robot posting “Thrilled to announce” until retirement. It means understand the room, understand your role, and understand that your personal brand and your company’s reputation occasionally share the same Wi-Fi password.

So before hitting Post, maybe ask yourself three things: Is this what I really mean? Am I willing to defend it publicly? And most importantly, is Legal awake yet?

Because on LinkedIn, your next engagement metric may not be likes, comments, or impressions. It may be a calendar invite titled: “Quick Chat.” Corporate LinkedIn.

Amazon: the eight-part interview series

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A discussion with an Amazon area manager centered on why candidates might face eight interview rounds.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted employers to ask whether exhaustive interviews improve decisions or simply wear down strong candidates.

At some point, an interview process stops being an interview and starts feeling like you accidentally signed up for a limited series on Prime Video, except nobody told you how many episodes there were and every episode ends with, “Great conversation. We’d like you to meet one more person.”

Earlier today I had a conversation with one of the area managers at Amazon about their eight rounds of interviews. Eight. Not two. Not three. Eight. By round six I would expect a commemorative badge, a snack cart, and someone from HR handing out blankets. He told me, “Amazon is not for everyone.” And I agree. Neither is jury duty. Neither is a root canal. Neither is spending three weeks meeting half the company so everyone can decide whether you are capable of answering emails, attending meetings, and saying “Absolutely” when somebody schedules another meeting about the previous meeting.

I asked him why eight rounds are necessary. He explained that Amazon wants to make sure candidates are the right fit, understand the culture, demonstrate leadership principles,

meet multiple stakeholders, and give everyone confidence in the decision. Sounds sophisticated. But somewhere around interview number five, you have already met the hiring manager, the hiring manager’s manager, somebody from another department, and one mysterious executive who joins ten minutes late and asks a question already answered three interviews ago.

At that point, are we still evaluating the candidate, or are we checking whether they have the emotional endurance to survive Amazon’s calendar system? I told him that to a candidate, eight interviews can feel less like careful hiring and more like corporate indecision wearing a leadership principles name tag. Because the candidate is also interviewing the company. Every round says something. Can this organization make decisions? Do leaders trust the people they hired to hire other people? Does anyone own the process? Or does the final decision require a council meeting where seven people whisper, “I liked Alex, but I need to hear what Brad thinks.” And Brad is on vacation.

This is why I run these experiments. I want to experience the process the way candidates do, not from a conference room where someone says, “Our candidate experience is world class,” while a candidate is on interview seven wondering whether they should update their emergency contact. Amazon is an incredible company. It is also enormous. And giant companies can sometimes build giant processes because giant processes feel safer. But more steps do not automatically create a better decision. Sometimes they just create tired candidates.

The area manager was right about one thing: Amazon is not for everyone. But hiring should also ask a second question: is this process for the people Amazon wants? Because if top candidate gets to round seven and thinks, “I would rather start my own delivery company than do one more interview,” the process may have answered the question for them.

My blocked boss and the mystery profile

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

An unfamiliar connection request made me reflect on a former boss and the limits of social-media boundaries.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show that declining access to a toxic relationship can be a complete answer, without drama.

Blocking a toxic boss is apparently no longer a boundary. It is now just a suggestion. Somewhere out there, a former manager sees the word “Blocked” and treats it like a corporate escape room challenge. New account. New profile picture. Same personality wearing a fake mustache. Apparently LinkedIn has become witness protection for people who cannot accept that you left and blocked their number.

The other day I got a connection request from a woman I had never seen before. Perfect lighting. Perfect smile. Perfect corporate headshot. So perfect she looked AI generated after someone typed, “Create a friendly executive who enjoys synergy and monitoring former employees.” Naturally, I clicked the profile. Three connections. No job history. No posts. No comments. Just a polished photo and the energy of someone who had been born on LinkedIn eleven minutes earlier.

I stared at it and thought, “This feels familiar.” Then the detective part of my brain woke up. Not the smart detective. More like the raccoon behind a restaurant that has found a locked dumpster and suddenly believes it has a federal

investigation. I started looking at the details. The headline. The industries followed. Her recent connections. And there it was: several people connected to a former toxic boss I had blocked. Could this have been a completely innocent stranger with an AI generated photo who randomly decided I was the missing piece in her tiny professional network? Absolutely. And I could also be recruited tomorrow to become Batman.

Toxic bosses have a fascinating relationship with boundaries. When you work for them, they want “open communication.” When you leave, they watch your LinkedIn. When you block them, they apparently enter witness protection, create a new identity, and return as Jennifer from Strategic Solutions. I can imagine the planning meeting. “Sir, Alex blocked you.” “Understood. Activate Project Blonde Headshot.” “What should her background be?” “Blurred office. Maybe a plant.” “Experience?” “None. Too risky.” “Connections?” “Three. We don’t want to look suspicious.” Excellent work, team.

The funniest part is people like this will tell everyone they have “moved

on.” Meanwhile, they are creating burner LinkedIn accounts at 10:47 PM like they are investigating international espionage. If someone blocks me, I assume they do not want to hear from me. Radical concept, I know. I do not create a new identity named Deborah, upload an AI headshot, and sneak back into their network wearing digital sunglasses.

I declined the request. No message. No confrontation. Just decline. Because sometimes the healthiest response to a toxic person trying to reenter your life is not a debate or a five paragraph explanation. It is one click. Somewhere tonight, “Jennifer” may be wondering why the mission failed. Maybe next week Brad from Regional Sales will appear with six connections and hands AI forgot how to draw. Boundaries apparently need passwords now. Totally normal, right?

Aramark: still reviewing, seventeen months later

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A message about a 2025 vice-president application arrived in October 2026, saying it was still under review.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to spotlight how stale application updates and automated outreach can feel to a real applicant.

There is a special kind of corporate confidence required to disappear for more than a year, come back like nothing happened, and casually ask, “So... how was your experience with us?”

On May 2, 2025, I applied for a Vice President position. They confirmed it and said the team would review my qualifications. I figured a few weeks. Enough time to read my resume, schedule four meetings about one decision, and eventually decide whether I was worth a phone call.

Fast forward to October 12, 2026, and Aramark emailed me. They are still reviewing my application. Still. At this point I am not an applicant anymore. I am part of the company’s long term strategic plan. This email had the energy of a toxic ex sliding back into your messages after disappearing for a year with, “Hey stranger.” Stranger? We had history. You accepted my application, told me you would review it, vanished into the corporate wilderness, and now you are back like we just spoke Tuesday. “Hey stranger. Just wanted to let you know we’re still thinking

about you.” Sir, I have changed phone chargers, passwords, and three versions of my resume since then.

Then came my favorite part. They invited me to share my application experience with Aramark on LinkedIn. That is not a survey request. That is handing me a microphone and saying, “Alex, tell everybody what happened.” Of course. This reminded me of Walgreens, another application relationship that lasted long enough to qualify for carbon dating. Corporate recruiting must have a secret room labeled “Maybe,” “Still reviewing,” and “Candidate may have retired by now.”

I can picture the meeting. “Any update on Alex?” “Not yet.” “When did he apply?” “May 2025.” “And what year is it?” “2026.” “Perfect. Let’s not rush this.” Maybe they are reading one line of my resume per quarter. Legal has paragraph two. Finance has bullet seven. HR is waiting for alignment. Somebody in operations is “circling back.” The CEO gets my references sometime after humans colonize Mars.

And this is exactly why I started The Interview Games. Candidates notice this stuff. We notice the silence, the automated updates, the job getting reposted five times while our application remains “under consideration,” and the mysterious timeline where “we’ll be in touch soon” apparently means “see you next fiscal year.” To Aramark’s credit, at least they sent something. Most companies throw your application into the digital Bermuda Triangle and hope you develop closure on your own.

Aramark came back a year later, tapped me on the shoulder, said, “Hey stranger. We’re still reviewing you,” and then asked me to share the experience publicly. Say less. Application submitted: May 2, 2025. Status update: October 12, 2026. Current status: still moving at constitutional amendment speed. Walgreens, move over. You now have competition.

At this pace, my next email may begin, “Dear Alex, congratulations on your upcoming retirement. Your 2025 application remains under active consideration.”

Open bar, corporate face

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Attending a corporate party with a friend supplied an evening of speeches, name tags and networking theater.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to laugh at the distance between official company culture and what people actually do at the party.

Nothing prepares you for corporate America quite like watching people who spend all week saying “per my last email” suddenly put on nice clothes, grab a drink, and act like the quarterly forecast never hurt anybody.

This evening I went to one of those corporate parties with my friend, and within five minutes I realized I had walked into the Super Bowl of professional pretending. Nice ballroom, tiny food, open bar, and strategic smiling everywhere. My friend disappeared almost immediately, leaving me alone with a shrimp skewer while a man named Todd explained his department’s restructuring like I had joined an earnings call. In ten minutes I heard “exciting year ahead,” “strong leadership,” “we’re like a family,” and “big things are coming.” Corporate bingo before appetizers. I asked one guy what he did. He gave me a five minute answer containing synergy, stakeholder engagement, transformation, and scalable solutions. I still have no idea what he does. I think he moves spreadsheets and gets invited to meetings.

Then came the speeches. Nothing says celebration like turning down the music so a vice president can give everyone a quarterly business review while they are holding mozzarella sticks. He opened with, “Tonight is about you,” then spent fifteen minutes talking about himself, EBITDA, growth strategy, and Dallas. The centerpiece looked exhausted. The best part was watching people change around executives. One second they were laughing, then suddenly someone pressed the invisible corporate mode button. Shoulders back. Smile activated. Vocabulary upgraded. “Absolutely, we’re excited about the opportunities going into Q4.” Five seconds earlier they were asking whether the tequila was free.

Corporate networking is speed dating with business cards. One manager looked at my name tag and asked, “So what team are you on?” I said, “Tonight? Appetizers.” He laughed, but also looked concerned. By then I felt like an undercover auditor. Then the awards started. People clapped for Operational Excellence, Leadership Impact, and Strategic Collaboration. I kept waiting for “Best Ability to Survive a Meeting That Could Have Been an

Email.” Half the room deserved that one.

By the end of the evening, the ties came off and the dance floor opened. The same manager who spent dinner discussing productivity metrics was suddenly dancing like he had just been released from a three year noncompete. HR stood nearby smiling politely while mentally opening Monday morning case files.

Watching it all, I realized something: take away Outlook, Teams, org charts, quarterly goals, and performance reviews, and everyone is just a person trying to find dessert without getting trapped in another conversation about strategic priorities. I came as someone’s guest and left with three business cards, two LinkedIn requests, one reorganization rumor, and enough material to confirm what I suspected.

Corporate parties may be the greatest interview experiment nobody asked me to run.

A reader found the circus by algorithm

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A reader wrote that an unexpected LinkedIn recommendation led her to my posts and helped her laugh.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to thank the people who turn individual stories into a community of shared experiences.

LinkedIn has many mysteries. Why does the algorithm show you a job you are wildly unqualified for, hide posts from people you follow, and then decide that what you really need is a sarcastic stranger talking about interviews, toxic bosses, corporate theater, and recruiters who disappear faster than free donuts in a break room?

Today I received a message from someone who said she had no idea what “goofy algorithm” decided my posts needed to show up in her feed, but she was grateful it did. She said the posts make her smile while looking at serious workplace issues with humor and realism. I laughed because I’m used to LinkedIn messages beginning with, “Hi Alex, I have an exciting opportunity,” followed by a job paying 40 percent less, requiring relocation, seven interviews, a personality test, and one kidney during onboarding.

Messages like this are why I keep writing. Yes, I still make jokes. Corporate America keeps leaving the comedy door unlocked, and I walk in carrying a notebook. I don’t invent the eight round interviews, managers joining Zoom late, cameras off, 2:22 a.m. rejection

emails, “culture fit” conversations, or recruiters who say, “We’ll circle back,” and then enter witness protection. I document the wildlife.

But underneath the jokes are real people. People getting laid off after years. Candidates applying to hundreds of jobs and hearing nothing. Experienced professionals wondering if their age became a software error. Employees sitting under terrible leaders while being told to “bring their whole self to work,” as long as that whole self agrees with management and completes the engagement survey by Friday.

Humor doesn’t make those things unimportant. Sometimes humor is how we finally talk about them without turning it into a webinar called “Navigating Challenging Workplace Dynamics Through Strategic Resilience,” hosted by someone who has never navigated anything more challenging than choosing between Teams and Zoom.

Apparently, somewhere at LinkedIn, an algorithm looked at all of this and said, “Yes. Put this man in her feed.” For once, I’d like to recognize the algorithm for outstanding performance. No corrective action

plan. No 90 day review. No coaching session. It identified the need, delivered the product, and did not schedule six follow-up meetings to discuss whether the delivery aligned with our core values.

That message made my day because it reminded me that behind every view, comment, laugh, disagreement, and “this happened to me too” is a real person. Some come here for career advice. Some are frustrated. Some are rebuilding after a layoff. And some want to see what fresh nonsense the hiring process invented overnight.

So thank you to everyone who reads, comments, shares a story, or sends a message. I started writing to talk about what was happening. Somewhere along the way, it became a much bigger conversation. And to the goofy LinkedIn algorithm: excellent work today. Please don’t let it go to your head.

HR asked me to review the job description

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

An HR manager invited me to a Zoom call about a job posting that appeared overloaded with requirements.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to challenge job descriptions that ask for impossible combinations while companies claim nobody qualifies.

The other day, an HR manager from a corporation invited me to a Zoom meeting to review a job description. Not interview for the job. Review actual job description.

I figured, why not? I have read enough job postings this year to qualify as an unpaid corporate archaeologist, so I joined expecting a few confusing bullet points and at least one sentence about thriving in a fast paced environment.

She shares her screen, and within thirty seconds I realize they are not looking for a candidate. They are looking for a unicorn riding a purple squirrel while carrying an MBA, fifteen years of experience, and the emotional stability to survive seven departments arguing over one position. The title sounded normal. The description did not. They wanted someone strategic but hands on, independent but collaborative, confident but humble, and capable of influencing without authority. In other words, they wanted someone who could lead the orchestra, play every instrument, sell the tickets, and still be grateful for the opportunity.

Then we reached the responsibilities. Build strategy.

Improve operations. Grow revenue. Reduce costs. Manage vendors. Coach leaders. Analyze data. Lead transformation. Fix broken processes. Present to executives. Support sales. Improve customer experience. Handle conflict. Drive culture. I finally asked, "Is this one position, or did four executives paste their wish lists into the same document?" She laughed. At that point even the unicorn was scrolling. Indeed.

Ten plus years in the industry. Five plus years leading teams. Experience with finance, operations, technology, project management, analytics, compliance, and customer experience. Then I saw my favorite line: "Must be comfortable wearing many hats." I asked if the company provides the hats or if the purple squirrel brings them. She laughed and said, "Okay, I see your point."

And that really was the point. High standards are fine. The problem is when every department gets to add one more requirement until the job description becomes corporate fantasy football. Finance adds finance. Technology adds technology. Operations adds process improvement. Leadership adds

"executive presence," HR adds "culture champion," and suddenly the ideal candidate can run a P&L, motivate a team, negotiate contracts, predict the future, and probably land a plane.

So we started cutting. What does this person actually need to accomplish in the first six months? Which skills are truly required? What can be learned? Which responsibilities belong somewhere else? Slowly, the mythical creature started turning back into a human being. And that is one of my favorite things about modern hiring. Companies say, "We cannot find qualified candidates," then publish a job description that would make Batman ask for clarification.

Sometimes there is no talent shortage. Sometimes somebody just posted a search warrant for a unicorn, a purple squirrel, and one exhausted human who somehow meets both descriptions.

The US Foods joke that refuses retirement

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

An old post about a US Foods rejection kept resurfacing, bringing the same joke back into circulation.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to poke fun at the internet's memory and the unintended life of one hiring story.

I have accidentally discovered the most secure job in America. It is not in healthcare, government, or technology. It is a joke I made about US Foods, and apparently it has lifetime employment on LinkedIn.

A while back I posted about a rejection email I received after applying for a Vice President of Operations role. The rejection itself was normal corporate housekeeping: thank you for your interest, we have decided to move forward with other candidates, best wishes in your search. Fine. Happens all the time. Then came the note asking me not to post or share the correspondence or details about the hiring process on social media. That was the exact moment an ordinary rejection email put on sunglasses, climbed into an unmarked van, and became classified material. I could practically hear someone whisper, "Alex knows too much."

Naturally, I made a joke about it. I mentioned burner phones, secure bunkers, HR surveillance, maybe a raccoon or two. I figured people would laugh, comment for a day, and move on. That was adorable. The joke refuses to die. Every few

days somebody sends me the post like they discovered an ancient artifact. "Alex, have you seen this?" Yes. "Did they really send that?" Yes. "Are you going to talk about it?" I have unfortunate news about the screenshot you are forwarding back to me.

At this point, the rejection email has become more successful on LinkedIn than some company pages. The comments keep multiplying. Candidates tell stories. Recruiters debate wording. HR people debate confidentiality. People debate whether telling someone not to discuss something publicly is the fastest way to make everyone discuss it. Somewhere, I imagine a communications meeting where twelve people are staring at my post while one executive asks, "How do we make this disappear?" and an intern slowly closes the laptop.

The funniest part is that I was never upset about the rejection. Rejection is part of the experiment. Sometimes I move forward. Sometimes I get declined. Sometimes Workday swallows my application so completely that I wonder if the position, the recruiter, and the entire company ever existed. That is

modern hiring. But adding "please do not share this" to a routine rejection gave the whole thing the energy of witness protection orientation.

Now the post keeps resurfacing like a corporate zombie with a login. I close LinkedIn, come back later, and somehow, there it is again, digging through my notifications like a raccoon that somehow passed multi factor authentication. It has better retention than some departments, more engagement than some leadership teams, and probably qualifies for a service anniversary.

I have learned one thing from this: if you want the internet to forget something, telling people not to talk about it is an ambitious strategy. If this post comes back one more time, I am no longer calling it content. I am putting it on payroll. And based on its attendance record, it may already be eligible for promotion.

One Starbucks coffee, one entire sitcom

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A simple coffee stop turned into an observation of the line, customers and the chaos around the counter.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted readers to laugh at a familiar everyday scene and remember there is comedy beyond interview rooms.

I went into Starbucks for one coffee and somehow ended up watching a full season of humanity before they called my name.

This evening I stopped by my local Starbucks just to grab a coffee. That was the entire mission. In, caffeine, out. Simple. I walked in expecting a five minute transaction and immediately realized I had entered a small scale social experiment. The line was long, three people were staring at their phones like the stock market had collapsed, one guy was loudly conducting what sounded like a quarterly business review from a table, and somebody near the pickup counter had apparently ordered a beverage with enough modifications to qualify as a construction project.

I finally got to the register and ordered something very normal because I have learned that the more words you add to a coffee order, the greater the chance you accidentally become responsible for managing it. The barista nodded, typed something into the screen, and I stepped to the side to wait. That is when the real entertainment began.

Every thirty seconds, a name was called and six people looked up. "Jennifer!" Four Jennifers moved. "Mike!" Half the building responded. At one point a drink sat on the counter so long I started wondering if it had been abandoned by its family. People were inspecting cups like forensic evidence. One woman picked up a drink, read the label, took a sip, made a face that suggested betrayal, and quietly put it back down. Somewhere, a health inspector just felt a disturbance in the force.

Then came the mobile orders. I have never seen so many cups lined up in my life. It looked less like a coffee shop and more like Amazon fulfillment for people who cannot function before 8 a.m. Names everywhere. Drinks everywhere. Nobody completely sure what belonged to whom. One guy walked in, grabbed three cups without checking anything, and left with the confidence of a man who has absolutely done this before.

Meanwhile, my coffee was taking on the status of a missing person. I started checking the counter, the app, the ceiling, anywhere it might have gone. I briefly considered filing

a report. Then a barista called my name, handed me the cup, and I felt the kind of relief normally reserved for locating lost luggage.

I sat down for a minute and looked around. Laptops open. Headphones on. Meetings happening. Someone interviewing for a job two tables away. Another person appeared to be breaking up with somebody over FaceTime. A teenager was filming a drink from seven different angles before touching it. Starbucks is no longer a coffee shop. It is an airport lounge without airplanes.

Eventually I took a sip. It was hot, bold, and exactly what I needed. Was it worth the chaos? Absolutely. Because sometimes you do not need peace and quiet. Sometimes you need caffeine, background drama, and the comforting knowledge that somewhere nearby a stranger is still waiting for a venti iced something with twelve modifications and no idea which cup is theirs.

The Interview Games lands on Apple Books

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

The book became available through Apple Books, giving my recruiting stories a new audience.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to celebrate the book while reminding readers it grew out of real questions about hiring.

Apparently my bad decisions are now available on Apple Books. The Interview Games is officially sitting in the bookstore like a respectable piece of literature, which is impressive considering it contains ATS chaos, endless interview rounds, rejection emails at ridiculous hours, corporate buzzwords, awkward panels, and one raccoon that somehow has better leadership potential than half the executives I've met.

I started documenting hiring experiments. Somehow I ended up with a book. At this rate, Apple is going to send me a rejection email just to keep the story accurate.
<https://lnkd.in/gKzZy53S>

A normal morning before the layoff

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

The ordinary routines that precede layoffs made me think about how suddenly someone's life can change.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to recognize the personal weight behind polite corporate terms like "position impacted."

The strangest thing about layoffs is how completely ordinary the day can look right before someone's life gets flipped upside down.

You wake up, grab coffee, answer emails, sit through a meeting that could have been an email, maybe even get a "great job" from your boss. Then suddenly HR appears on your calendar, your future gets compressed into a 15 minute call, and the company you gave years to explains that your position has been "impacted."

Netflix is cutting 1,000 staffers in its biggest round of layoffs in years. NBCUniversal has made cuts. Disney has gone through multiple rounds. Somebody is staring at a calendar full of meetings they no longer need, wondering how "we are one big family" became "please return your laptop and badge." Corporate America has mastered the art of making painful things sound like spreadsheet updates. "Restructuring." "Realignment." "Efficiency." Nobody says, "A thousand human beings are going home today to explain to their families that the paycheck they planned around just disappeared." That part does not fit neatly into the

earnings call, so we dress it up like an Excel update.

This is why I get sarcastic whenever companies talk about loyalty. Employees are told to give 110%, stay late, answer emails on vacation, embrace change, wear the company shirt, and smile through another transformation. Then one Wednesday, the transformation transforms your badge into a souvenir. You can spend 10 years somewhere, survive reorganizations, new bosses, and thousands of Teams meetings that should have been emails. Then suddenly your chapter ends with a short HR call and a PDF explaining benefits. And by Friday, your job is posted.

I joke about this because sometimes humor is the only thing standing between people and complete exhaustion. But there is nothing funny about losing a job you depended on. Nothing funny about going home and telling your spouse. Nothing funny about looking at your kids and pretending everything is fine while your brain starts calculating mortgage payments, insurance, groceries, and how long severance might last. A layoff is not

just a business event. It is a confidence event.

It makes talented people question themselves. People praised on Monday can feel worthless by Wednesday. People who gave everything start wondering whether any of it mattered. It did. Your job may disappear. Your value does not. Your title can be deleted from an org chart. Your experience cannot. Your email can be shut off. Your ability, knowledge, relationships, humor, resilience, and everything you learned are still yours.

So to anyone caught in these layoffs, whether at Netflix, The Walt Disney Company, ESPN, or anywhere else: take the day. Be angry. Be scared. Make inappropriate jokes about the "exciting next chapter." Avoid LinkedIn advice for a day.

Then get up again. Because companies restructure. People rebuild. And sometimes the best thing that happens to your career starts with the worst email you ever received.

Startups want the hiring process tested

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Recruiting startups, founders and leaders began asking for feedback on products and candidate experiences.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to explain why firsthand testing matters more than a polished demo and invite serious improvements.

Apparently, somewhere along the way, I stopped being the guy applying for jobs and became the person companies invite in to test whether their hiring process survives contact with an actual candidate.

Lately I hear from a lot of startup companies in recruitment. New platforms New matching tools. New ways to “fix hiring,” which is always a brave sentence considering hiring has spent the last few years developing enough software to launch a satellite and still somehow loses your resume after you click Submit.

Founders send me demos. CEOs ask if I will try their product. VPs ask if I will go through their hiring process and tell them where it gets weird. Recruiters want feedback on candidate experience. HR leaders ask what candidates are actually seeing. At this point, I am one Zoom invitation away from needing a lab coat and a clipboard.

And I enjoy it. If you are building something for candidates, recruiters, hiring managers, or HR teams, I want to see what happens when a real person uses it. Not the perfect demo where every button

works, the resume uploads beautifully, the AI understands the job, and nobody gets an email at 2:17 a.m. saying, “After careful consideration...” I mean the real version. The version where I click the wrong thing, ask annoying questions, compare the results, and find out whether the tool is actually helpful or just another robot wearing a nicer tie.

The same goes for companies that want me to test their hiring process. I have had CEOs and VPs reach out and say, “Go through it and tell us what you see.” That is probably the healthiest response a company can have. Instead of getting defensive about candidate feedback, they want to know where communication breaks down, where interviews drag, where job descriptions become fantasy novels, and where the process starts feeling like contestants are competing for immunity.

I do not expect perfection. Hiring involves people, and people are beautifully inconsistent. I am looking for whether the experience makes sense, whether communication is clear, whether candidates are treated like humans,

and whether the process matches what the company says about itself. If your career page says “people first” and your application requires a blood sample, three personality tests, and the maiden name of your first manager, we may have something to discuss.

So if you are working on something new in recruiting, HR tech, candidate experience, interviewing, resume tools, job matching, or hiring systems, feel free to reach out. If you want me to test the product, test the process, or simply tell you where candidates may start quietly questioning their life choices, I am always interested in the conversation.

You can send me a DM here or email me at alex@interview-games.com. Just know what you are signing up for. I will test it. I will ask questions. And if your “revolutionary hiring solution” asks me to create another Workday password, we are probably going to need a second meeting.

If I had a time machine

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Someone asked what I would change if I could revisit the past, moving my thoughts from work to time with people.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to remind ambitious people that no employer can refund missed evenings and memories.

Most people think a time machine would be used to buy Bitcoin, pick lottery numbers, or stop one terrible email. Someone asked me the other day, "If you could go back into the past and change one thing, what would it be?" My first thought was simple: how much fuel does this time machine use?

Then I actually thought about it. Would I change a job I took? A boss I trusted? A company I gave too much of myself to? Maybe I would grab younger me before he answered an email at 10:47 at night and say, "Alex, nobody is performing emergency surgery on this spreadsheet. Go home." I spent years believing the next promotion, the bigger title, the better bonus, or the next "great job" would finally make all the sacrifices feel worth it.

Spoiler alert: corporate America does not hand you a trophy for missing dinner. Nobody retires and gets a plaque that says, "Congratulations. You answered 14,382 emails after business hours." They replace your laptop, deactivate your badge, and by Tuesday somebody is sitting in your chair asking where the stapler is.

If I could go back, I would not erase every bad decision. Some mistakes taught me more than the wins ever did. I would not remove every difficult boss, every terrible meeting, every job that made me question my sanity before 8:00 a.m. Those experiences shaped me. But I would change one thing: I would stop giving so much of my time to people and places that would have replaced me in a week.

I would leave work earlier. I would take more pictures. I would make the call instead of saying, "I'll call tomorrow." I would sit at the dinner table a little longer. I would stop treating weekends like backup storage for the life I was too busy to live Monday through Friday. I would realize sooner that the people who love you do not care about your quarterly numbers, your title, or how many conference calls you survived without putting yourself on mute.

That is the strange thing about ambition. It convinces you there will always be more time later. Later to travel. Later to visit. Later to rest. Later to laugh. Later to be present. Meanwhile, life keeps moving like it never received the calendar invite. I

would still work hard. I would still take risks. I would still chase big goals. I would just stop confusing being constantly available with being valuable. I would stop trying to impress people who eventually forgot my name and spend more time with the people who never needed my job title to remember it.

Unfortunately, the past has a terrible customer service department. No refund. No exchange. No "Alex's Life Revised Final FINAL v12." Maybe that is why the question matters. We cannot go back and change one thing. But we can change the next thing.

Leave earlier. Make the call. Take the trip. Say what you mean. Sit at the table longer. Put the phone down. Stop waiting for life to become less busy before you start living it. Because the calendar will always fill up. The question is whether your life does too.

A company I roasted invited me to talk

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A company previously discussed in my posts invited a conversation about its hiring practices.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to recognize leaders who listen to criticism and use it to improve rather than retaliate.

Apparently, if you joke about a company long enough, eventually they invite you to a meeting instead of sending security.

Today I was invited by one of the companies I have joked about to talk about their hiring process. Somewhere along the way, my little interview experiment apparently escaped LinkedIn, wandered through the corporate hallways, got into a few group chats, and reached enough people inside the company that somebody finally said, “Maybe we should just talk to Alex.”

I joined the call expecting the usual faces and one person from Legal hiding just outside the camera frame. Instead, the conversation was open. They wanted to know what I had experienced, what candidates were seeing, what parts of the process created frustration, and why things became so funny online. I told them the truth: most of my jokes are funny because candidates recognize themselves in them. I am not inventing a parallel universe. I’m basically holding up a mirror and occasionally putting a raccoon next to it.

We talked about long interview processes, communication gaps, job

descriptions that appear to have been written by seven departments during a hostage negotiation, automated emails, candidate experience, and the strange corporate habit of saying “we value transparency” right before disappearing for three weeks. At one point I thought, this may be the first time one of my jokes has accidentally scheduled its own follow up meeting.

What impressed me was that they were willing to listen. It is easy for a company to get defensive when a post gets attention. It is much harder to say, “Okay, people are reacting to this. What can we learn?” Engagement had reached people throughout the organization, and instead of pretending they had never seen it, they brought me into the conversation. That deserves credit.

Of course, I still had questions. Was I attending as a candidate, a consultant, a troublemaker, or the guy responsible for giving their HR department an unexpected spike in LinkedIn notifications? Nobody officially assigned me a title, so I am going with “external raccoon with Wi-Fi.”

The bigger lesson is that companies should pay attention when candidates joke about hiring. Humor is usually carrying information. If thousands of people laugh at the same story, it may be because thousands of people have experienced some version of it. The joke is entertaining, but underneath it is feedback about communication, expectations, respect, and how the process feels from the other side of the screen.

I started The Interview Games by applying, observing, documenting, and occasionally asking why a simple hiring process requires enough meetings to qualify for a streaming subscription. Now one of the companies I joked about invited me in to discuss what they could do differently.

That might be the funniest plot twist yet. I spent months trying to get companies to respond to applications. Apparently, I should have just started roasting the hiring process sooner.

When my AI interviews your AI

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A story about a candidate responding to an AI recruiter by sending an AI of his own sparked this scenario.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to question the point where hiring efficiency replaces all meaningful human interaction.

Apparently we have officially reached the stage of hiring where humans are becoming optional accessories.

I saw a post about a company using an AI recruiter to interview a candidate. The candidate basically said, "Perfect. I'll send my AI," then walked away while two bots discussed his future without him. Meanwhile the candidate was making coffee while two digital strangers debated whether he was collaborative enough.

For years candidates were told to prepare better. Research the company. Study the leadership team. Practice behavioral questions. Memorize STAR answers. Smile at the camera. Ask thoughtful questions. Send the thank you email. Follow up professionally. Basically perform a small Broadway production just to qualify for dental insurance. Now apparently the next evolution is to deploy your robot and hope it has better chemistry with their robot than you would have had with an actual human being.

Imagine logging into an interview and nobody human shows up. Company AI says, "Tell me about

yourself." Candidate AI says, "Great question." Company AI says, "Thank you." Candidate AI says, "Thank you for thanking me." Company AI says, "I appreciate your appreciation." Candidate AI says, "It was wonderful speaking with you." Company AI says, "Likewise." Three hours later they are still saying goodbye because neither algorithm wants to hang up first.

The funniest part is that this feels like the logical conclusion of modern recruiting. AI scans the resume, ranks the application, schedules the interview, conducts the interview, and sends the rejection email. Soon one AI will call another AI to explain why you were not selected. "After careful consideration, our algorithms decided to move forward with another algorithm." Beautiful. Somewhere in the middle of all this, a human HR executive will post, "People are our greatest asset." Absolutely. We just don't let them talk to each other anymore.

I run hiring experiments, so part of me wants to test this. Send an AI version of myself into an AI interview and see what happens. Mine would probably ask why there

are seven interview rounds, question the salary range, make a joke about corporate culture, and eventually get flagged for "not being aligned with company values." Recruiter bot: "Where do you see yourself in five years?" My bot: "Hopefully speaking to a person." Recruiter bot: "Response not recognized." My bot: "That tracks."

Technology can improve hiring. It can save time and remove repetitive work. But there is a strange point where efficiency starts removing the reason interviews exist. People hire people to work with people. At least that used to be the idea. If two bots can interview each other and reject one another without either human being present, we may have completed the automation circle.

Next year the bots will attend onboarding too. By 2028, your AI will get promoted before you do. And somewhere, two chatbots will still be on a video call saying, "No, you hang up first."

CEO succession, candidate confusion

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A ManpowerGroup leadership succession announcement contrasted with the uncertainty ordinary applicants face.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted hiring leaders to provide candidates a fraction of the clarity available at the executive level.

Corporate America has a special talent for turning “someone is getting a new job” into an announcement that sounds like the peaceful transfer of power between two small nations.

ManpowerGroup just announced that on January 1, 2027, Becky Frankiewicz will become CEO, while current CEO Jonas Prising moves into the Executive Chair role. And I have to admit, I love the choreography. Nobody just changes jobs at this level. There is no awkward Friday email saying, “Hey team, quick update.” No cardboard box. No badge being shut off at 4:57 PM. No HR escort carrying a ficus. Instead, we get months of transition, confidence, strategic continuity, Board support, global teams, commercial judgment, and enough leadership language to make LinkedIn’s algorithm stand at attention.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the same corporate universe, a candidate is applying for an assistant manager role and being told the process includes six interviews, a personality assessment, a case study, a panel presentation, a background check, a “culture

conversation,” and one final meeting with a regional director who may or may not remember why everyone is on the call.

That is what makes executive succession announcements so fascinating to me. At the top, the process is beautifully organized. The handoff is announced months in advance. Everybody knows who is replacing whom. There is a transition plan. There is support. There is clarity. There are probably binders. Expensive binders. At the bottom? “Thank you for your interest. We have decided to move forward with another candidate.” Which candidate? Nobody knows. Maybe an internal person. Maybe the position was frozen. Maybe the job disappeared into Workday and now lives there permanently with the other 47 applications you forgot you submitted.

I also noticed the phrase “fifth Chief Executive Officer in our almost 80 year history.” That is an impressive retention statistic. Some companies have had five store managers since Memorial Day.

And I genuinely wish Becky success. Becoming CEO of a global workforce solutions company in 2027 has to be

one of the most interesting jobs imaginable. You are taking the wheel at a time when companies are talking nonstop about talent, AI, skills, retention, candidate experience, workforce transformation, and why the job posting says “entry level” but requires seven years of experience and the ability to rebuild civilization from scratch.

I just hope somewhere in the transition plan there is one small agenda item called: “Apply to our own jobs and see what happens.” No special login. No executive shortcut. Just upload a resume, create a password with one uppercase letter, one symbol, one ancient rune, retype everything already on the resume, complete the assessment, wait three weeks, and then receive an automated email at 2:14 AM saying, “After careful consideration...”

Because if you really want to understand the modern workforce, nothing builds character quite like trying to get hired by it.

POST 19 / THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

WORKPLACE CULTURE

The boss who was afraid of questions

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I recalled a manager who treated reasonable questions about changing priorities as disobedience.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to defend the right to ask how a plan works before employees are held responsible for executing it.

I learned something important from a toxic boss years ago: some managers do not fear bad ideas nearly as much as they fear being questioned.

We were in a meeting discussing another last minute change, the kind that arrives with zero planning but somehow comes with the expectation that everyone should act like it was part of a strategy. I asked, "What changed since yesterday that makes this the new priority?" He looked at me like I had challenged leadership. Then he said, "Why can't you just be flexible?" I said, "I can be flexible. I'm just trying to figure out which direction we're bending today." That did not help.

Then came one of the classics: "This came from above." I replied, "How far above? Because at this point I'd like to know if we're taking instructions from senior leadership or weather satellites." He crossed his arms and said, "You always need an explanation." I said, "Usually. It makes execution easier." Apparently that was sarcasm. I thought it was project management.

Then came the line toxic bosses love because it sounds powerful: "I don't

need you to agree. I need you to execute." I said, "Perfect. What's the deadline?" He said, "As soon as possible." I asked, "Today? Tomorrow? Before lunch? Before the sun burns out?" He said, "You know what I mean." I replied, "That's actually the problem. I don't." The meeting was no longer about the new priority. Now we were reviewing my "communication style," which is corporate language for, "You asked a second question and I was not emotionally prepared for it."

He told me, "You need to learn when to let things go." I said, "I'm trying. Unfortunately, the thing I'm trying to let go is currently our number one priority." Then he said, "Other people don't seem to have a problem with this." I looked around the room at six people studying their notebooks like the answers to life were hidden there and said, "They might. They've just seen what happens when someone asks." The silence could have had a company logo on it.

Toxic managers love silence because they confuse it with agreement. If nobody challenges the plan, they assume the plan is brilliant. If

nobody asks questions, they assume everything is clear. If everyone nods, they call it alignment. Meanwhile half the room is mentally updating LinkedIn and the other half is checking their PTO.

Eventually he said, "I'm the one accountable for the decision." I said, "Then I'd want people telling me where it could go wrong." He replied, "That's not your responsibility." I said, "Perfect. Please put that in the email." For some reason, he did not.

That is the strange thing about toxic leadership. They tell you to take ownership until ownership involves questioning their decision. They want initiative until initiative has an opinion. They want honest feedback until the feedback is honest. Then one day everyone stops speaking, and the boss looks around the room and says, "I wish people would communicate more."

We did. You trained us not to.

Amazon Legal takes flight

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

My recurring Amazon hiring jokes inspired a deliberately absurd cease-and-desist-by-drone story.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to take corporate defensiveness to a comic extreme and keep the hiring-round debate alive.

Apparently I have reached a level of corporate irritation where Amazon no longer sends emails or certified letters. They deploy aircraft.

Today, a drone showed up carrying a cease and desist letter. Most people get packages. I got legal correspondence with propellers, which feels like an achievement unlocked in The Interview Games. I expected a box, maybe return label, perhaps a coupon. Instead, I got the corporate version of “we need to talk” descending from the sky like Legal had finally discovered Prime Air and decided to test the task on me first.

I have talked about Amazon quite a bit during these experiments. The panels. The leadership principles. The interview rounds. Apparently somebody finally looked at another post and said, “Enough. Prepare the drone.” I can only imagine the meeting. “Sir, Alex posted about us again.” “How bad?” “He mentioned the eight interviews.” “Again?” “Yes.” “Did he use the raccoon joke?” “Yes.” Silence. “Launch it.” And Amazon Legal entered aviation.

The drone came down, delivered the letter, and flew away like this was a perfectly normal Thursday.

Meanwhile, I am standing there wondering whether Prime membership now includes same day legal delivery. Amazon apparently asked, “Can we make this faster, stranger, and somehow involve robotics?” Of course you can. The same company that can get batteries, dog food, and a phone charger to your house before dinner can now deliver “please stop talking about us” directly from the sky. Drone launched: on time. Letter delivered: on time. Sarcasm eliminated: absolutely not.

That is the funny part about corporate transparency. Companies love feedback when it arrives inside a survey with five bubbles and a comment box nobody reads. They love authenticity when it has been approved by Communications and reviewed by Legal. They love open dialogue right up until somebody actually opens the dialogue without asking permission first. Then suddenly Legal has air support. I’m not anti Amazon. I’m fascinated by Amazon. But if you can put legal correspondence on a drone and land it at my house, I feel like we can discuss why candidates sometimes need enough interviews to qualify for a Senate confirmation hearing.

That is why I started The Interview Games. I apply. I interview. I document what happens. I talk about the good, the bad, and the moments where corporate reality gets so ridiculous satire barely has to work. Sometimes recruiters laugh. Sometimes executives reach out. Apparently sometimes a small aircraft arrives with paperwork. I’ll respect legitimate legal boundaries and separate fact from satire. But I am still going to talk about candidate experiences, because people deserve to know what modern hiring actually feels like.

At this point, I only have one complaint: no tracking notification. If you are going to send Legal through the sky, at least give me the full customer experience. “Your cease and desist is 3 stops away.” Now that would be customer obsession.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

The familiar forecasting question surfaced as another example of outdated interview rituals.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to expose how awkward it is to demand certainty from candidates while employers regularly reorganize.

I am convinced “Where do you see yourself in five years?” was invented by someone who had no idea where they would be in five years but wanted to watch other people panic about it.

It is the only interview question that asks you to predict the future while pretending the company asking it has not reorganized three times since breakfast.

Five years? I barely know what I am having for lunch on Thursday, and now you want a strategic forecast of my career through 2031. I love this question because it assumes the candidate has a crystal ball while the company itself cannot tell you whether the position will still exist after the next “organizational realignment.” You are supposed to sound ambitious but not threatening, confident but not arrogant, loyal but not desperate, and excited about growth without implying that you would ever like the interviewer’s job.

So we all perform the ritual. “I see myself growing with the organization, taking on additional responsibility, mentoring others, and contributing at a higher level.” Translation: I would like a raise, a

better title, fewer pointless meetings, and a chair that does not make a noise every time I move. You definitely cannot say, “Hopefully making more money somewhere with fewer meetings,” even though half the room is thinking it.

The funniest answer is the one we are told never to give: “In your seat.” That answer contains everything corporate America claims to love: ambition, confidence, initiative, succession planning, and a desire to grow. Yet the moment you say it, the hiring manager looks at you like you just requested their badge, laptop, parking spot before the interview ended. Suddenly ambition has terms and conditions. Companies love saying, “Hire people who want your job someday.” Then you say you want their job someday, and Linda from HR closes her notebook.

That is why the five year question makes me laugh. Careers do not move in neat five year PowerPoint timelines. People get promoted. Companies merge. Departments disappear. Bosses leave. New leaders arrive with “fresh ideas,” which usually means a new spreadsheet and an acronym nobody understands. Sometimes the

dream job becomes a nightmare. Sometimes the temporary stop becomes the best opportunity you ever had. Sometimes your five year plan gets destroyed by Tuesday afternoon.

Maybe a better question would be, “What do you want to learn here?” Or, “What kind of work do you want to be doing more of?” Or even, “What would make you want to stay?” Those questions might start an actual conversation instead of forcing candidates to perform corporate astrology. Most people do not know exactly where they will be in 5 years. They just want opportunities, a reasonable chance their boss will not schedule a 7:00 a.m. meeting called “Quick Sync.”

So next time someone asks where you see yourself in five years, resist the temptation to point across the table and say, “Right there.” Unless you really like risk. Then maintain eye contact.

The Zoom courtroom gets an AI lawyer

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A conversation about AI-assisted legal appearances set up a satire about software representing clients on Zoom.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask what accountability and human judgment look like when automation moves into serious decisions.

I thought I had reached the limit of things AI could do until a CEO from a legal company casually told me, “We use AI to represent clients during court hearings on Zoom.”

I laughed because I assumed this was one of those executive jokes where everyone smiles because the person telling it signs the checks. He was completely serious. I had one response: I need to see this. Apparently AI writing emails and screening resumes was not enough. Now it had passed the bar exam emotionally and was heading to court.

A few days later, there I was with my laptop open, coffee next to me, watching an AI powered legal representative appear on Zoom like somebody had finally automated billable hours. No briefcase. No legal pad. No stack of folders. Just a digital representative sitting there with perfect posture and zero fear of being held in contempt. Does AI say, “Your Honor,” or begin with, “Based on the information provided”? If the judge interrupts it, does it object, apologize, or offer three alternative responses in bullet points?

Then the hearing started, and I realized how ridiculous the world

has become. Imagine being opposing counsel. You spent years in law school, passed the bar, built a career, prepared all night, joined Zoom in your best suit, and your opponent arrived with 98% battery life and no student loans. You are flipping through exhibits while the other side is one software update away from knowing everything. Somewhere, a first year associate is staring at the screen wondering why they paid tuition instead of learning Python.

Of course, my brain went straight to the technical problems. “Counsel, your response?” “Your Honor, my attorney is buffering.” Court adjourned while someone moves closer to the router. Imagine losing a case because Comcast had an outage. Or the AI freezes mid argument. Does the judge say, “Please reconnect”? Does the clerk type, “Have you tried turning your lawyer off and back on again?” At some point somebody will yell, “Your Honor, opposing counsel is on mute,” and the legal profession will officially become a Microsoft Teams meeting.

The strangest part was that it felt less like science fiction than I

expected. AI is no longer just writing emails, summarizing documents, screening resumes, or creating meeting notes. It is moving into places we assumed would always require a human. That does not automatically make it good or bad, but it definitely makes things interesting. Naturally, I started thinking about hiring. If AI can participate in a court hearing, how long before it interviews us for jobs, conducts performance reviews, denies PTO, explains why our raise is “not in the budget,” and schedules a mandatory culture meeting at 7:00 a.m.? HR is probably already beta testing it.

At this rate, the future will not be humans versus machines. It will be humans asking the machine, “Can I speak to a real person?” And the machine replying: “Your request has been received. Current wait time is 7–10 business days.”

The hiring manager meets my resume live

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

During an interview, the manager appeared to be reading my professional history for the first time.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask employers to match a candidate's preparation with a few minutes of their own.

I knew the interview was going beautifully when the hiring manager looked at my resume like Netflix had just dropped a surprise season of my career.

The other day, about three minutes into a Zoom interview, I realized he was not reviewing my background. He was discovering my professional life in real time, with me sitting there watching the premiere.

He squinted at the screen and said, "Oh, I see you worked in operations." Yes. Excellent detective work, Sherlock. It is right there under the giant heading called EXPERIENCE. I was tempted to congratulate him, but I didn't want to interrupt this archaeological discovery. Then came the classic line: "Walk me through your background." Absolutely. Would you like me to read the document on your second monitor, or should I perform the audiobook version with character voices?

This is one of my favorite parts of modern interviewing. Candidates are told to prepare like they are defending a doctoral dissertation. Research the company. Research the CEO. Research the hiring manager. Study the company values.

Memorize the job description. Prepare STAR stories. Practice questions. Test the camera. Test the microphone. Find a neutral background. Make sure the dog has signed an NDA. Meanwhile, the hiring manager joins Zoom at 10:04, opens your resume at 10:05, and starts scrolling like he is looking for the terms and conditions box.

At one point he asked me, "How long were you with that company?" I almost said, "Scroll down about half an inch. We can discover this together." Then he paused, nodded thoughtfully, and said, "Interesting." Nothing creates confidence like watching someone learn your professional history in real time while deciding whether you are qualified for a job they invited you to interview for.

Candidates notice this stuff. You can tell when someone has read your resume before the call. Their questions connect to your experience. They reference specific accomplishments. They ask why you made certain moves. The conversation feels intentional and professional. You can also tell when they opened it twelve seconds ago because their first question is

basically, "So... you have had jobs?" Yes. Several. That is why the document has multiple sections.

I understand hiring managers are busy. Meetings happen. Fires happen. Calendars explode. Nobody expects someone to memorize commas on a resume. But reading it before the interview seems like a entry requirement for conducting the interview. Candidates are constantly reminded that preparation shows respect, professionalism, and effort. That standard should probably work in both directions.

If someone spent hours preparing to meet your company, the least you can do is spend ten minutes learning who is about to appear on your screen. Otherwise, skip the interview invitation and just schedule a live resume reading. I'll bring coffee. You bring the resume. Apparently one of us should. And bookmark page two. That is where the thrilling plot twist happens.

A small moment at Patel Brothers

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

While shopping, I noticed an older shopper struggling to identify items on a handwritten list.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show that kindness and attention can matter much more than any job title.

This morning reminded me that sometimes the most important thing you do all day has nothing to do with your job, title, calendar, or whatever corporate emergency somebody has marked “URGENT” like civilization depends on it.

I stopped at Patel Brothers to grab a few things, pretending I knew where everything was while pushing a cart with one wheel that had apparently submitted its resignation. A few aisles over, I noticed an older gentleman standing near a shelf looking frustrated. He had a small piece of paper in one hand and kept looking from the list to the products, then back again like he had accidentally signed up for Grocery Store Jeopardy. I asked if he needed help. He smiled and told me he was trying to find a few items his wife had written down for him, but he wasn’t sure what some of them were. Something about the way he said it hit me. It was simple and incredibly human.

So there I was, promoted from random customer to Assistant Director of Patel Brothers Operations, with no training and no badge. We walked around together and found what he needed. We

laughed because one item had seventeen versions, and choosing the correct one apparently required written approval from somebody’s grandmother. At one point he said, “My wife usually does this.” I told him, “Mine would probably send me back with photographic evidence and a performance improvement plan.” He laughed, and for the next ten minutes, two strangers just talked. No LinkedIn titles. No resumes. No interviews. No performance reviews. No “circle back.” Nobody asked about my five year plan. Nobody scheduled a meeting to discuss whether my rice selection strategy demonstrated leadership competencies.

Before we went our separate ways, he thanked me. I told him it was nothing. But driving home, I kept thinking about it because maybe the things we call “nothing” are what people remember. We spend so much time trying to accomplish something big that we forget how much the small things matter. Holding a door. Helping someone. Calling someone who has been quiet. Letting somebody merge even as every Chicago instinct is screaming, “Absolutely not, sir. You had your opportunity.”

You never really know what kind of morning somebody is having. You do not know what they are carrying, what they lost, or how hard it was to get out of the house. Kindness is not always a grand gesture. Sometimes it is ten minutes in a grocery store, walking down an aisle with a stranger because they looked confused and you had nowhere more important to be. Maybe that is the part we forget. We are all walking around carrying invisible grocery lists written by life, trying to figure out which aisle has the thing we need. Every once in a while, someone asks, “Need help?” This morning, I got to be that person. Tomorrow, I may need one.

Be kind. And if you see me lost in Patel Brothers staring at seventeen different bags of rice, please understand that my leadership competencies have officially left the building.

Dating becomes a performance assessment

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A video about financial demands on a date reminded me of how interviews turn relationships into checklists.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to parody the way people evaluate each other when connection gets replaced by arbitrary tests.

Dating in 2026 has apparently merged with banking, recruiting, and a pre purchase vehicle inspection.

I watched this video where a woman says, "Before we continue dating, I need to see your bank account. I'm not wasting my time." Fair enough. Nothing says romance like opening Chase before the appetizers arrive. Forget "What are your hobbies?" We have moved directly to "Please provide your last three statements, a letter from your accountant." Cupid has been replaced by Experian, and apparently dinner comes with a soft credit pull.

Then the guy calmly pulls out a scale. That is when the meeting stopped being a date and became an audit. He basically says, "Great. If we are reviewing qualifications, step right over here." Suddenly both people are staring at each other like HR just added a surprise assessment after the sixth interview. Nobody is smiling anymore. The waiter is in the corner wondering whether to bring dessert or a notary.

And that is what made me laugh. Not because either side should actually

be doing this, but because we have somehow turned human connection into a vendor selection process. Salary? Check. Weight? Check. Credit score? Check. Height? Check. Five year plan? Check. Dental benefits? References from two exes? Background check pending? Congratulations, you have advanced to round two of dating. Please complete this 45 minute personality assessment and upload a video explaining why you deserve tacos.

Imagine meeting someone and saying, "I really like your personality, but before I get emotionally invested, can you log into your retirement account?" Then they respond, "Absolutely. Right after you stand on this scale I brought from the warehouse." At that point, nobody is dating. You are negotiating a merger. The funniest part is how quickly standards become offensive when the clipboard gets turned around. People love requirements when they are the ones writing them. The second someone else adds a qualification, suddenly we need a policy review, legal counsel, and a 14 paragraph LinkedIn post about respect.

Maybe the better screening process is simpler. Are you kind when nobody is watching? Can you communicate without disappearing for four business days? Do you tip the server? Can you disagree without turning dinner into a congressional hearing? Do you have goals? Do you laugh? Can you survive a minor inconvenience without announcing that everyone around you is toxic?

Those questions probably tell you more than a screenshot of a bank balance or a number on a scale. Because bank accounts change. Bodies change. Jobs change. Life can take an organized spreadsheet and throw it directly into a ceiling fan. Character is usually what is left after the spreadsheet stops cooperating.

So if your first date requires financial statements, physical measurements, employment verification, three references, and a risk assessment, just skip dinner and book a conference room. At least there will be coffee. And probably a printer.

Workday discovers the missing login

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A LinkedIn tag pointed me to news about Workday reducing account-creation friction for applicants.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to applaud a better user experience while joking about how long candidates had requested it.

For years, applying for a job through Workday has felt less like pursuing employment and more like entering a government relocation program where every company gives you a new identity, a new password.

Then Stessa C. tagged me after Adam Godson from Workday announced that candidates can now apply without creating a brand new username and password for every employer. Apparently Workday has finally discovered a revolutionary technology known as “remembering who the candidate is.” Progress has arrived now. I have complained about this process so much I expected Workday to block me before fixing it.

Every application used to start the same way: click Apply, get redirected, create account, enter email, and immediately receive, “An account already exists with this email.” Wonderful. Which account? Which employer? Which password? Nobody knows. Applying became a corporate escape room where the grand prize was a rejection email sent at 2:14 a.m. by a system that somehow remembered how to reject me but could not remember my login. Then came my favorite part:

uploading the resume. You upload your resume. Workday looks at it for three seconds and says, “Excellent. Now please type the entire thing again into seventeen separate boxes.” That is not automation. That is administrative CrossFit.

I’m glad Stessa said I deserve some credit, because I’ve spent enough time roasting this process that I should at least receive a commemorative password reset link. I’m not claiming my posts caused it. I’m simply saying that if enough candidates scream into the digital void long enough, somebody in product development eventually hears us, schedules a meeting, adds twelve stakeholders, and discovers the feature candidates requested years ago.

To Adam and the Workday team, credit where it is due. Removing pointless friction is good. Candidates should not need seventeen accounts, eleven passwords, four tabs, and the emotional resilience of an air traffic controller just to apply. The announcement included, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today.” Beautiful. The best time to fix this was also about 20 years ago. The

second best time was probably before password number 46.

Still, progress is progress. Maybe this is the beginning of a new era. Perhaps one day Workday will upload my resume and trust the information already written on it. Maybe it will stop asking me to manually reconstruct my career like I’m testifying before Congress. Maybe someday I’ll click Apply and simply... apply. Until then, I’ll keep applying, testing, documenting, and roasting hiring technology until somebody fixes something just to make the jokes stop.

Thank you, Stessa, for the tag. Thank you, Adam, for the update. Workday, I’m proud of you. It only took a few decades, several million forgotten passwords, and the collective patience of job seekers everywhere. Please send my consulting fee through the account portal. Assuming I can remember the password.

Indeed, I only want a human

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Trying to reach Indeed support led through articles and self-service paths rather than a straightforward conversation.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to ask why job platforms make finding help feel harder than finding a job.

The other day I was doing an experiment, and between clicking “Help,” opening three support pages, and meeting my seventh automated suggestion, I realized something important: reaching an actual human at Indeed may be harder than getting hired through Indeed.

Indeed has somehow built one of the largest job platforms in the world while also creating a customer service maze designed by someone who really enjoys escape rooms. You can search millions of jobs, upload a resume, apply in seconds, and receive emails saying a random position might be “a great match.” But try to speak to a person about an actual issue and suddenly you are Indiana Jones looking for a hidden temple.

I started normally. I clicked Help. Indeed gave me articles. I clicked Contact Us. Indeed gave me more articles. I clicked something that looked like it might lead to a human. It led me to another page explaining how helpful the Help Center is. I expected the website to ask me to solve a riddle before revealing the sacred phone number. “Choose the option that best describes your issue.” Easy. My issue is that I would

like to speak to a person. Apparently that is not an available category.

So I kept going. Chatbot. FAQ. Search bar. Suggested article. Another suggested article explaining the article I had just read. I felt less like a customer and more like I was being gently escorted in circles by a polite robot saying, “Have you considered not needing assistance?” And this was exactly why I was testing it. We spend so much time talking about the candidate experience that we forget the platforms sitting between candidates and employers are part of that experience too. When something goes wrong, people do not need seventeen links to articles written like a microwave manual. Sometimes they need another human being to say, “I understand. Let me take a look.”

Indeed, I know you are busy. There are jobs to recommend, resumes to scan, sponsored listings to sell, and emails titled “Your next opportunity could be here.” But somewhere inside that company there has to be one person with a telephone. I am not asking for the CEO. I am not asking for a private meeting with the board. I am not requesting a

helicopter. I just want someone named Kevin from support to answer and say, “Hey, what happened?”

Instead, contacting Indeed feels like applying for a job at Indeed. First you prove you are human, then you explain your problem to software, then the software decides whether another piece of software should hear about it, and eventually you receive an email saying they have decided to move forward with other support requests.

The experiment taught me something valuable: if I ever disappear, do not contact Indeed to report me missing. By the time you reach somebody, I will have returned, written a book about the experience, completed three interview experiments, and forgotten why I needed help.

Indeed, your slogan is “We help people get jobs.” Fantastic. Now help me get Kevin.

The ZipRecruiter interview and the dog

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A scheduled interview included a late recruiter, an unsmiling response to jokes and barking in the background.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how inconsistent the definition of “professional” can be when candidates are assessed.

I knew this interview was going to be interesting when I found myself staring at an empty Microsoft Teams screen, watching the clock, wondering whether ZipRecruiter had somehow used ZipRecruiter to recruit the recruiter and the algorithm decided nobody was qualified enough to show up.

For anyone new here, this is what I do: I apply to real jobs, go through the hiring process, test what candidates experience, and write about the good, the bad.

Today’s experiment was with ZipRecruiter. The interview was scheduled for 30 minutes. The recruiter arrived late, apologized, and had that unmistakable corporate expression: straight face, professional voice, and the emotional range of a quarterly earnings report. Meanwhile, a dog was barking in the background like it had been assigned to the interview panel.

I told her, “No worries. I was starting to think ZipRecruiter had ghosted me on ZipRecruiter. That would’ve been incredible brand consistency.” Nothing. Not a smile. Not a chuckle. The dog barked. At least somebody acknowledged the

material. At this point, the dog showed more enthusiasm for my candidacy than anyone else on the Teams call.

Then she asked how I handle pressure. I said, “Very well. I’ve completed Workday applications. I’ve uploaded my resume and then typed the entire resume into the boxes underneath it. At this point I’m basically special forces.” Same corporate stare. I could practically hear HR whispering, “Document that.” I asked, “Do recruiters ever get nervous before interviews, or do you just open the resume 30 seconds before the call and trust the universe?” Still nothing. The dog barked again.

The 30 minute interview kept going beyond the scheduled time, so I asked, “Should I invoice ZipRecruiter for overtime, or is there another application I need to complete first?” Her face stayed so serious I briefly wondered whether Teams had frozen. Nope. She moved. Corporate mode was operating perfectly. Then the rejection arrived. They apologized that the conversation had gone beyond the time originally promised. Fair enough. But then came my favorite

part: while they appreciated my personality and sense of humor, some of my jokes apparently did not align with the level of professionalism expected during the hiring process.

And that is exactly why I keep doing these experiments. Companies constantly tell candidates to “bring your authentic self.” Apparently there’s an asterisk. Bring your authentic self, provided your authentic self has completed compliance training, removed all detectable personality, and been approved by Legal before joining the call.

To ZipRecruiter’s credit, at least they gave me real feedback. Most rejection emails say they “went in another direction,” as if the candidate applied for a road trip and HR suddenly took Exit 14.

So the experiment continues. Next interview I’ll be completely serious, perfectly polished, and professionally emotionless. Unless the dog is there again. I think the dog liked me.

A note from Renee about the job search

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Renee wrote about her husband's job hunt at age fifty and how our stories resonated with them.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted experienced job seekers to hear that their knowledge is valuable even when hiring systems overlook it.

Every once in a while, a message lands in my inbox that reminds me why I keep doing these ridiculous hiring experiments.

Tonight, Renee sent me a note saying she loves the stories, and that she and her husband talk about how rough the job market has become. He's 50, looking for a new role, and discovering what many experienced candidates already know: modern hiring has become a corporate escape room where the clues are vague, the doors keep locking behind you, and the grand prize is getting a rejection email six weeks later.

Somewhere along the way, experience stopped being an advantage and started being treated like suspicious luggage. Twenty five years of leadership? Interesting. A history of solving problems, building teams, surviving reorganizations, bad bosses, and meetings that should have been emails? Wonderful. But first, could you complete this 47 minute personality assessment so we can determine whether you are "adaptable"? Also, upload your resume, then manually type the entire resume into our application

system because apparently technology still cannot move your job history three inches down a webpage.

Nobody says, "We think you're too old." Corporate America has lawyers for that. Instead, you hear, "We want someone with more energy," "We need someone who can grow with us," or "We're looking for the right cultural fit."

Then comes the interview marathon. Recruiter. Hiring manager. Hiring manager's manager. Peer interview. Panel. Executive. Then someone named Gary appears and nobody knows why Gary is there, including Gary. By round seven, you have met enough employees to be invited to the company picnic, yet they still need "one more conversation" to determine whether you can do the job you did for two decades. And after all that? "We've decided to move forward with another candidate." Thank you for the interviews, assessments, case study, references, presentation. At this point we should at least split a Costco membership.

Messages like Renee's are why I keep talking about this. Behind

every joke about ghosting, absurd interview rounds, AI filters, one way videos and recruiters disappearing into another dimension, there are real people trying to get back to work. People with families, bills, responsibilities, and decades of knowledge who suddenly have to prove their worth to software before a human sees their name. And no, the answer cannot always be "network more." Some candidates have networked so aggressively they are one coffee meeting away from being regulated by the FCC.

So to Renee's husband and everyone else in their 40s, 50s, 60s, or simply exhausted from playing corporate Hunger Games with a resume: keep going. You are not outdated. The process is. And I'll keep testing it, documenting it, laughing at it, and poking it with a stick until somebody in corporate finally whispers, "Maybe seven interviews is a little excessive." Right after Gary submits his feedback. Assuming Gary remembers what position we applied for.

The hiring circus became a book

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

My accumulated interview observations grew into a book instead of remaining separate LinkedIn posts.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted readers to know why I collected the absurd, funny and painful sides of hiring into one project.

I used to think writing a book meant sitting somewhere peaceful with coffee, staring thoughtfully out a window, and waiting for inspiration to arrive.

Mine showed up twelve minutes late to a Zoom interview and asked me a question that was already answered on page one of my resume. That is basically how The Interview Games was born. This book came from the weird, funny, frustrating, and painfully human side of hiring. I started documenting interviews because I wanted to understand what candidates are actually experiencing. I expected a few bad questions. I did not expect enough material to fill a book and a support group. I mean, wow.

I watched simple conversations become endurance events. Candidates prepared for hours only to meet someone who clearly had not read their resume. People completed assessments, presentations, personality tests, and one way videos until the job started to feel classified.

And yes, I laughed. Sometimes the only alternative is screaming into the mute button. But the deeper I went, the less this felt like funny

stories. Every ridiculous interview has a real person behind it. Someone wondering how long their savings will last. Someone questioning whether getting older somehow erased twenty years of experience. Someone refreshing their inbox because the recruiter said, "We should have an answer by Friday," and apparently never specified which Friday.

That is the part of this book that matters most to me. The Interview Games is sarcastic because corporate hiring gives us plenty to work with. Some stories feel less like satire and more like security camera footage. But it is also personal. I have sat on both sides of the table. I have hired people. I have been interviewed. I have watched great candidates get lost inside terrible processes and good companies look completely unhinged before an offer even exists.

So I wrote about it. Not to attack recruiters. Not to embarrass companies. I wrote it because hiring has become so complicated that everyone can be frustrated and nobody remembers why half the steps exist. This book is for the person ghosted after a final

interview. The recruiter juggling twenty openings. The hiring manager who inherited a process built by six committees and a consultant named Brad. The executive wondering why good candidates disappear. And the person who received an automated rejection five minutes after applying.

Grab a copy of The Interview Games. Read it for the jokes. Read it for the stories. Read it because somewhere in these pages you will recognize an interview you survived or a moment when you stared at your laptop and whispered, "There is absolutely no way this is real." Unfortunately, it probably was.

And if this book makes you laugh while reminding you that your value is bigger than one company's decision, then it did exactly what I hoped. Also, if anyone asks what animal you would be in an interview, choose wisely. I picked raccoon. Still waiting to see if that helped.

The executive who spoke fluent buzzword

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST](#) ↗

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A conversation with a senior executive seemed full of polished phrases but short on direct answers.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to distinguish a prestigious title from the ability to listen and make sense.

You ever tried having a conversation with one of the executives at a giant corporation and halfway through realized, “Oh wow. This person is basically a PowerPoint presentation wearing expensive shoes?”

Earlier today, I had one of those conversations. I joined the call expecting strategy, insight, maybe one brilliant observation that makes you rethink leadership. Five minutes in, I was wondering whether the company’s succession plan involved checking for a pulse and pronouncing “synergy.” This executive had all the classics ready: “We need alignment.” “We need to circle back.” “We need to leverage opportunities.” Sir, we have been talking for twelve minutes and you have not said anything. You built an entire speech out of conference room wallpaper.

I asked a direct question. He answered for nearly four minutes, used the words strategy, optimization, framework, scalable, and ecosystem, and avoided the answer like it owed him money. It was like ordering a cheeseburger and receiving a TED Talk about cattle migration. Then came the

confidence. The kind available only to someone never interrupted by self awareness. He explained a problem his own department had created, then positioned himself as part of the solution. That is like setting your kitchen on fire, walking outside with a garden hose, and asking the neighborhood to recognize your crisis leadership.

The funniest part is how we imagine people at the top possess secret knowledge. They must have a master plan. They must wake up at 4:30 a.m., read financial reports before sunrise, meditate over EBITDA, and communicate exclusively through Harvard Business Review articles. Then you meet one and realize Chad got promoted because he can say “enterprise level thinking” without laughing. This man used “strategic” so many times I started wondering if it was his emergency contact.

Every simple question became a corporate obstacle course. “How is turnover?” Well, if we look at the broader ecosystem... No. Bob left Tuesday. How many Bobs are leaving? “What are you doing to improve the process?” We’re building a cross functional

framework. So... a meeting. “Who owns the problem?” We all do. Excellent. Corporate language for absolutely nobody.

I have met brilliant executives who listen, ask great questions, admit what they do not know, and explain complicated ideas without making everyone feel like they accidentally joined an earnings call. But every once in a while, you meet someone and immediately understand why the company has twelve committees, seven task forces, four consultants, and Linda from accounting still ends up fixing the actual problem before lunch.

Earlier today reminded me: never confuse a title with intelligence, confidence with competence, or a 47 slide presentation with a plan. Behind every corporate bio, headshot, and impressive title is still a human being. And occasionally, that human being is three buzzwords in a trench coat trying to find the Share Screen button.

Ageism does not need a calendar invite

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Interview comments about technology and longevity reminded me of the subtle ways experience gets questioned.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to challenge age-based assumptions without asking experienced candidates to apologize for their careers.

There is a moment in a job search when you realize the company may not be interviewing your experience anymore. They may be interviewing your birth certificate.

Nobody says, "You're too old." That would be far too honest. Instead, they compliment your background, stare at your resume like it belongs in a museum and ask whether you're "comfortable with technology." That is when I wonder which one of us needed help finding the mute button 5 minutes earlier.

I've sat in interviews where someone half my experience asked me whether I was "comfortable learning new technology." I wanted to say, "Absolutely. I survived dial-up internet, fax machines, MapQuest directions, Blackberry keyboards, and Microsoft Teams updates. I can handle your scheduling app, Brad." Instead, I smiled while the hiring manager spent 7 minutes trying to unmute himself.

Then come the coded questions. "How long do you plan to keep working?" Interesting. Nobody asks the 27 year old whether he plans to quit in nine months because a startup offered him free kombucha

and a beanbag chair. But once a little gray shows up, suddenly everyone becomes a retirement planner. I came here to discuss the role, not plan retirement. Companies say they want leadership, stability, judgment, resilience, communication skills, and people who have "been through change." Then someone walks in who has been through change, and suddenly the room gets nervous. Experience sounds fantastic in the job description right up until experience walks through the door wearing reading glasses.

And yes, I joke about it. Humor helps. But underneath the jokes, ageism hurts. It hurts the person who has applied to 300 jobs and keeps wondering whether their resume is being read or carbon dated. It hurts the executive who gets told they are "overqualified" when what the company really means is, "We think you remember when this building was a Circuit City." Experience should never become a defect.

People do not lose ambition because they get older. They do not lose creativity at 45, curiosity at 50, or relevance at 60. A birthday is not a

performance review. Gray hair is not a system error. Experience is not baggage unless the company has no idea how to use it. Some of the best people I have worked with were not the youngest people in the room. They were the ones who had failed, rebuilt, adapted, mentored, learned, and kept showing up. They knew when to speak, when to listen, when to challenge a bad idea, and when to save everyone from the bad idea leadership already approved in PowerPoint.

So if you are job searching and wonder whether your age is becoming louder than your ability, remember this: you are not asking anyone to do you a favor. You are bringing years of lessons, scars, wins, mistakes, judgment, humor, and perspective to the table.

And if a company cannot see the value in that, maybe the problem is not that you have too many years behind you. Maybe they just do not have enough vision in front of them.

Research the panel, survive the panel

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Looking up a VP, HR representative and other interviewers before a meeting supplied an unexpectedly funny cast.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how preparation can reveal interview dynamics before the call starts.

You ever research the people interviewing you and realize you already know who is going to make the meeting weird before anybody even joins?

The other day, I had an interview coming up, so I did what candidates are told to do: research the company, study the leadership team, check LinkedIn, and prepare like I'm negotiating a peace treaty on Microsoft Teams. First up was the VP. His LinkedIn photo had him standing with his arms crossed, staring at the camera like someone had just asked to work from home on a Friday. No smile. The picture basically said, "I have reviewed the numbers, and somehow this is your fault." I wondered if he ever uncrossed his arms.

Then I found HR. Her profile was filled with words like culture, authenticity, belonging, and people first. Every post looked like a motivational poster had been promoted to Director. "Bring your whole self to work" sounds fantastic until your whole self asks questions. Then suddenly they want the approved version of you. After that came Finance. Forecasting. Budgets. Margin. Cost control. His profile

looked like Excel had gained consciousness. He looked like the type to ask, "Do we really need chairs in the break room?"

Interview day arrives. The VP joins with his arms crossed. Of course. At this point I'm convinced they're structural. HR joins smiling like my rejection email is already drafted. Finance joins looking like he priced my oxygen. The VP asks, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" I wanted to say, "Hopefully not answering this question." HR asks, "How do you handle conflict?" I said, "Usually by joining a meeting called 'quick chat' and discovering it has seven people in it." Finance asks, "Tell me about a time you improved profitability." I almost asked, "Does cancelling unnecessary meetings count?"

Then the VP asks, "What motivates you?" I wanted to say, "Direct deposit and meetings that could have been emails." HR asks, "How would your coworkers describe you?" I thought, "Probably using words HR would remove from the survey." Finance asks, "How comfortable are you with budgets?" I said, "Very. I've watched companies freeze hiring and then

spend \$400,000 on consultants to understand why everybody is understaffed."

Beautiful corporate silence. The VP tightened his crossed arms. HR gave me the smile that says "interesting" but means, "We will discuss this later." Finance looked like he was trying to determine whether sarcasm was tax deductible. That's why I research the panel. Companies investigate candidates like it's nuclear clearance, but we're expected to know the mission statement and About Us page. I want to know whether HR's authenticity survives reality, whether Finance has ever approved fun, and whether the VP owns one photo with uncrossed arms.

Sometimes research helps you prepare. Sometimes it confirms you're walking into a corporate sitcom where nobody realizes they're funny. I may not always leave with an offer, but I almost always leave with material.

Netflix: layoffs on one tab, jobs on another

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Posts from laid-off Netflix employees appeared alongside fresh recruitment announcements.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to examine the emotional disconnect between workforce reductions and public hiring messages.

Nothing says “we value our people” quite like watching longtime employees announce layoffs while the careers page is simultaneously yelling, “Great news, we’re hiring!”

Netflix is having one of those corporate moments where reality and the careers page seem to have different writers. On one side, people are posting that they’ve been laid off after years with the company, some after more than a decade of meetings, launches, reorganizations, performance reviews, and pretending every new strategy deck was “exciting.”

Then one morning the script changes to: thank you for everything, please return the laptop. Meanwhile, candidates open LinkedIn and see fresh Netflix jobs appearing like nothing happened. Imagine being laid off at 9:00 a.m. and getting a notification at 9:14 saying, “Netflix has new opportunities you may be interested in.” LinkedIn really knows how to comfort a person. “Sorry about your career. Have you considered applying to your career?”

You almost expect an automated email saying, “We were impressed

by your 13 years of experience with Netflix. Unfortunately, we’ve decided not to move forward with your current position. However, we encourage you to keep checking our careers page.” Peak corporate efficiency. Candidates are watching all of this while preparing for interviews where someone will ask, “Why Netflix?” I’d be tempted to answer, “Apparently because there may be another opening by the time this interview ends.” Then comes my favorite question: “Where do you see yourself in five years?” I’d just like to know where this department sees itself next Thursday.

Companies love talking about loyalty, culture, careers, family, values, purpose, and employee engagement. Then restructuring arrives and suddenly the family meeting includes HR, a calendar invite titled “Business Update,” and instructions for returning your equipment. The careers page, however, is thriving. Maybe this is the employee lifecycle: apply, interview, meet six people, complete an assessment, wait three weeks, get hired, post the mandatory “I’m thrilled to announce” update,

survive four reorganizations, train someone new, get laid off, then receive a message suggesting you apply again. The circle of corporate life, now available in 4K.

And yes, businesses change. Roles disappear. Teams reorganize. New skills are needed. I understand that. But when longtime employees are announcing layoffs while job postings are going live, candidates are allowed to ask one question: what exactly are we being hired into? A career? A project? A temporary seat in corporate musical chairs? Candidates are expected to explain every six month resume gap like they’re testifying before Congress, while companies can eliminate roles and immediately post, “Exciting news! We’re growing!” Consistency is apparently optional.

Netflix may be famous for streaming drama, but sometimes the most interesting series is happening on the careers page. New season. New cast. Same corporate plot twist.

Low morale, high-pressure boss

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I recalled a boss whose constant reversals and blame left the team under pressure.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how employees may be reacting to management, not rejecting hard work.

A while back, I worked for a leader who believed “leadership” meant sending emails in all caps, changing priorities every 6 minutes, and then asking why everyone looked stressed.

He had that special corporate gift where every problem became your fault, every success his idea, and every meeting ended with three more meetings. If the team hit the goal, he would say, “Great leadership starts at the top.” If we missed it, leadership moved to the basement and we were on our own.

Once he called me into his office because morale was “low.” I almost asked him if he had checked under his chair because that seemed to be where he kept it. Instead, I asked what he thought was causing it. He leaned back, sighed like he was carrying civilization, and said, “People just don’t want to work anymore.” Meanwhile, people were working late, fixing problems they did not create, answering messages on days off, and chasing goals that changed every time someone above him had an idea. But yes, the issue was that nobody wanted to work.

Toxic leadership is fascinating because it rarely sees itself clearly. It

calls micromanagement “accountability.” It calls fear “high standards.” It calls turnover “weeding out the weak.” It calls burnout “lack of resilience.” And my favorite, it calls people quitting “a loyalty problem.” I asked him, “If everyone who leaves is the problem, how many people have to leave before we consider the possibility that the building might be haunted?” He did not laugh. Naturally. That usually meant I was close to the truth.

The funny part about toxic leaders is how obsessed they are with “culture.” They will destroy trust by Tuesday, embarrass someone in front of the team on Wednesday, cancel someone’s day off Thursday, then send a Friday note reminding everyone that “we are family.” Yes, a family that apparently needs HR present at Thanksgiving. They love engagement surveys, especially when results are terrible. Then suddenly the problem is not leadership. The problem is “communication,” which is corporate language for, “We heard you, and we have decided you are wrong.”

Good leadership is not complicated. People want clarity, respect, consistency, support, and a boss who does not make them rehearse conversations in the parking lot. A title does not make someone a leader. A parking spot does not make someone a leader. Having “VP” in your email signature does not install emotional intelligence. The best leaders make people better. The worst leaders make people update LinkedIn during lunch.

And if your entire team keeps “failing,” your best employees keep leaving, everyone goes quiet when you walk into the room, and your motivational speeches feel like hostage videos, maybe the problem is not this generation, remote work, work ethic, or “people these days.” Maybe the common denominator has an office, a title, and a calendar full of meetings about why nobody is engaged.

Sometimes people are not quitting the company. They are escaping the manager.

HR meets me at the company party

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A friend's annual company event became a comic look at CEOs, open bars and questions about my department.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to reveal the unfiltered culture that polished corporate messaging often hides.

Corporate parties are fascinating because for one magical evening a company takes everyone who normally communicates through Outlook, performance reviews, “circle back,” and “per my last email,” puts them in a ballroom with an open bar, and says, “Go have fun responsibly.”

The other day, a friend invited me to his company's annual party. Everyone was dressed like they were either accepting an award, announcing a merger, or preparing to deny involvement in an internal investigation. Suits, dresses, polished shoes, and the same corporate face people make when someone whispers, “The CEO is right behind you.”

Then I noticed the open bar, and suddenly the organizational chart became easier to understand. By 7:00, someone from accounting was explaining cryptocurrency to a coat rack, two people from sales were arguing over who “really saved Q3,” and a director who probably sends emails titled ACTION REQUIRED was attempting a dance move that required medical clearance. The CEO's there too, shaking hands with that executive smile that says, “I

recognize your face, but I need you to say your name first.”

I was standing near the bar when one of the HR managers walked over and started talking to me. After a few minutes she asked, “So, what department do you work for?” I said, “Tonight? Mostly beverages.” She stared at me. I smiled and said, “I'm actually here with a friend.” Her eyes got huge. She looked around like Legal had just crawled out from behind the dessert table and whispered, “Oh my God. I'm going to get fired.” I asked, “For talking to me?” She said, “No, because I've been telling you things for twenty minutes.” That was when I realized I had become an unauthorized employee engagement survey with access to appetizers.

During what I thought was harmless small talk, she had explained which executive nobody liked, which department was “a disaster,” who was leaving, and why newest corporate initiative made no sense. Then the CEO walked by. She immediately straightened up, smiled like she had completed media training, and said, “We have such an amazing culture here.” I nearly inhaled an olive. Five seconds

earlier, the company was one email away from collapse. CEO appears, and suddenly everybody is family. It did feel like a family: tension, gossip, one person drinking too much, somebody avoiding somebody else, and an executive wondering why nobody wanted to come into the office anymore.

By the end of the night, I had learned more about that company than I probably would have learned through six interviews, three panels, two assessments, and a culture fit questionnaire. I didn't even work there. I was just holding a drink and looking approachable.

The lesson is simple: if you ever want to understand a company's real culture, skip the careers page and polished videos. Find the annual party. Stand near the open bar. Wait twenty minutes. Eventually somebody from HR will explain the entire company to you and then ask which department you work for.

Fueling the sarcasm

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I shared a brief invitation for readers who enjoy the stories to support the project.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to thank people who find relief and laughter in the writing, without turning the post into a job interview.

Corporate America gave me the rejection emails. I turned them into content. Now apparently the content needs coffee. If I've made you laugh during your job search chaos, feel free to fuel the sarcasm. I'll handle the questionable career decisions.

I sent a CEO some marketing advice

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Seeing a big retailer's social campaign led me to message its CEO with ideas for engaging real customers.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show that attention and humor can outperform expensive, overly managed marketing.

Somewhere inside corporate America, 12 people are debating whether a caption should say “Shop now” or “Discover more,” while finance wonders why the company spent \$20,000 on a campaign that got nine likes.

Companies spend a fortune trying to reach customers on social media. Agencies, boosted posts, consultants, influencer deals, reports, and enough PowerPoint slides to qualify as a hostage situation. Then someone says, “We need to meet the customer where they are,” and everyone nods like they just discovered electricity.

The other day I saw a post from a big retailer. Beautiful graphic. Perfect logo placement. Corporate approved wording. It looked like the kind of post that had survived legal, marketing, three vice presidents, and an executive asking whether the font felt “more premium.” It was polished, perfect, and painfully forgettable. So I sent the CEO a message. I shared the post and said, “Here’s what your marketing team posted. Here’s how I would have done it.” Then I rewrote it like one human being talking to another. Less “unlock exceptional value” and

more “here’s why you might actually care.” I added humor, a reason to stop scrolling, and something customers could recognize.

Because social media is not a billboard people are forced to stare at. People can leave your post in half a second. That thumb is the most ruthless purchasing committee in America. You have about two seconds before Karen is watching a dog video, Steve is arguing about self checkout, and somebody’s uncle is complaining nobody wants to work anymore.

Attention is expensive. Connection is what matters. Yet brands still spend thousands on posts written like a committee trapped inside PowerPoint. “We are thrilled to announce...” Nobody is thrilled, Greg. “We remain committed to delivering best in class experiences...” Congratulations. You have successfully used a lot of words to say absolutely nothing.

The CEO responded, and that was the interesting part. Executives see impressions, reach, conversion rates, and enough charts to launch a satellite. But the best marketing questions are simpler: Would I stop

scrolling for this? Would I react? Would I send it to someone? Would I remember who posted it five minutes later? If the answer is no, spending another \$20,000 promoting it does not magically give it a personality. You do not need louder marketing. Sometimes you need a better sentence, a little humor, and permission to stop sounding like a corporation impersonating a person.

Customers are not waking up hoping to engage with brand pillars. They want something useful, interesting, funny, relatable, or worth sharing. The goal is not to sound expensive. The goal is to be remembered. And sometimes the cheapest marketing consultant is the random guy in the CEO’s inbox saying, “This is fine, but I think we can make people actually care.”

I may never get invited to their next marketing meeting. But if I do, I’m bringing coffee. Those 74 slides are going to take a while.

A quiet lesson on the Riverwalk

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

While walking by the river, I saw an older couple holding hands and thought about what matters during a job search.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to speak to the person behind the resume and the relationships that outlast rejection emails.

Some days, the hardest part of looking for a job isn't hearing no. It's pretending you're fine when the people you love ask how the search is going. You say you're staying positive. Meanwhile, you've refreshed your inbox seventeen times and received another rejection from a job you barely remember applying for.

Earlier today, I walked along the Riverwalk to clear my head. Nobody was asking where I see myself in five years. After some of these interviews, I'm just hoping to be employed by Thursday. That's when I noticed an older couple sitting on a bench, holding hands. No phones. No hurry. Just watching the water together. I asked how long they'd been married. "Fifty three years," the gentleman said. His wife smiled. "And he's still in his introductory period." He said he was hoping for a promotion by Christmas.

We laughed, and then I asked what their secret was. He looked at her and said, "We never had an easy life. We just made sure neither of us had to face the hard parts alone." She told me about the year he lost his job. Bills piled up. He searched for work every morning and came

home pretending not to be scared. One night, he apologized for letting his family down. She took his hand and told him, "I married you, not your paycheck." I had no clever response. For once, my mouth took unpaid leave.

I thought about the people searching for work today. The father sitting in his car after another rejection because he doesn't want his children to see him cry. The mother checking her email while assuring everyone dinner will be on the table and everything will be okay. The person who spent thirty years building a career, only to be told by a computer that they don't meet the minimum qualifications.

Apparently, decades of experience can be defeated by a dropdown menu. We joke about ghosting, robotic recruiters, and interviews with seven executives asking the same questions. I make those jokes constantly. But behind every joke is someone who desperately needs a chance, not another automated message wishing them success in their future endeavors.

Before I left, the gentleman stood up slowly and reached for his wife's hand. She took it without even

looking, as if they'd practiced that little act of love a million times. I watched them walk away, realizing that the interviews, titles, and rejections will fade. What remains is who stayed when life got hard. Who believed in us when we stopped believing in ourselves. Who reminded us that losing a job wasn't the same thing as losing our worth.

If you're job hunting, I hope someone gives you that chance soon. Until then, please don't mistake a difficult chapter for a failed life. You are still the person who worked hard, showed up, supported others, and carried worries nobody could see. And if all you did today was get up and try again, that matters.

Someday, long after the rejection emails are gone, I hope you're sitting beside someone who holds your hand and reminds you that you were always enough.

The employees who whisper in my inbox

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Private messages from readers describing toxic bosses contrasted with cautious public comments.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted people to feel less isolated and to expose why workers may be afraid to speak openly.

There's a special kind of workplace where employees don't need an HR department. They need a witness protection program.

Every time I write about toxic leadership, a pattern emerges. The comments are polite. A few people click "like." Someone from HR posts about the importance of kindness, which is funny because their last employee engagement survey was conducted under what I assume were hostage conditions. Then my inbox starts lighting up with private messages.

"That sounds exactly like my boss."
"Please don't mention my name."
"My manager follows me on LinkedIn." "I'd comment, but I still need health insurance." Apparently, LinkedIn has become a secret support group for people trying to express an opinion without being summoned to a meeting titled "Quick Chat." You know the meeting. No agenda. No explanation. Just your manager, someone from HR, and silence usually reserved for a courtroom before sentencing.

What's fascinating is how many people recognize toxic leadership immediately. Nobody has to explain the signs. The boss who calls every

mistake a "learning opportunity" unless it's theirs. The executive who promotes open communication and then spends three days investigating who said something openly. The manager who says, "My door is always open," but apparently only for compliments and food deliveries.

Somewhere right now, an employee is typing, "This is so true!" under a post, then deleting it because their VP has been online for six consecutive hours. This VP somehow has time to monitor employees' social media but hasn't approved a vacation request from Memorial Day. Productivity is clearly thriving. And let's talk about the phrase "We're a family here." Funny, because most families don't require a calendar invitation to discuss why Grandma's quarterly numbers missed forecast. If your workplace is a family, why does every disagreement end with someone being escorted out by security? Thanksgiving at that house must be spectacular.

The worst isn't even the bad boss. It's what happens to good employees after months of walking on eggshells. They stop offering ideas. They stop asking questions. They

rehearse harmless sentences before meetings. They begin treating a notification from their manager like the opening scene of a horror movie. And when they finally leave, leadership schedules a meeting to discuss the mysterious retention problem. Here's a thought: If your employees feel safer telling a stranger on LinkedIn about your management style than telling you directly, your "open door policy" might actually be a trapdoor.

People shouldn't have to choose between speaking honestly and paying their mortgage. Respect isn't a company value because somebody printed it on a wall. It's how you treat people when nobody is watching.

And to the toxic managers reading this today: relax. I'm not talking about you. Unless you just checked which employees liked this post. Then congratulations. You've identified yourself faster than HR ever could.

When a trusted boss shared my secrets

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I remembered trusting a manager like family, then learning that personal conversations were repeated.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to talk about betrayal at work and why trust requires discretion from leaders.

You ever trusted a boss so much that somewhere between the staff meetings and the late night phone calls, he stopped feeling like your boss and started feeling like family?

The kind you call when life gets difficult. I made that mistake once, and let me tell you, the company offered excellent benefits: paid vacation, questionable coffee, and complimentary betrayal.

I remember working for a company where my boss and I were close. We talked about pretty much everything. Work, family, fears, and things I was still figuring out. He'd tell me, "You can always talk to me. This stays between us." And I believed him. Apparently, "between us" meant between him, HR, three department managers, and anyone who happened to be standing near the copier.

At first, I didn't notice. Then coworkers started asking oddly specific questions about things I'd only told him. One person mentioned a personal situation I'd shared during a private conversation. Another made a joke about something I was genuinely worried about. I remember standing there thinking, either this office has

developed psychic abilities or my boss has launched a podcast called Confidential Conversations With Alex.

I finally asked him about it. He gave me that serious corporate face, the one managers practice in the mirror before saying, "We're a family here." He said he was only sharing because he cared. Fascinating. My grandmother cared about me too, but she never distributed my problems like the weekly sales report. I asked whether my next personal conversation would require a nondisclosure agreement or if I should just put it on the break room bulletin board myself.

The jokes were easy. The disappointment wasn't. Because when you trust someone, you don't walk into every conversation wearing armor. You tell them things you wouldn't say in a meeting. You believe they see you as a person, not a collection of stories to bring up when the room gets quiet. And the worst part wasn't learning that people knew my business. It was realizing the person I trusted had been the one handing it out.

After that, I changed. I still showed up, worked hard, helped the team,

and laughed at the occasional corporate circus. But I stopped bringing my whole life into that office. When he asked, "Everything okay?" I learned to say, "Absolutely." Which, in corporate language, means I've put a password on my personal life and you're not getting the login.

I don't regret being loyal. I don't regret caring. I regret confusing access with trust. A boss can support you without becoming your therapist, your brother, or your emergency contact. And a friendly smile doesn't come with a confidentiality policy.

If you've ever had someone turn your vulnerability into office entertainment, I hope you know this: your honesty wasn't the problem. Their decision to share it was. Protect your peace, choose carefully who gets the personal chapters, and remember that not everyone who calls you family knows how to treat you like one.

The sarcasm is on Facebook, too

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I invited LinkedIn readers to follow the stories on Facebook as the project expanded.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to keep the conversation accessible without asking anyone to pass another assessment.

Come follow me on Facebook!
Apparently, one social media platform wasn't enough to contain my sarcasm. More laughs, ridiculous interviews, corporate disasters, and HR departments questioning my existence. Don't worry, following me won't require nine interviews, three references, or a personality assessment.

<https://lnkd.in/gAeibTaZ>

The ATS nightclub bouncer

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

The gap between real career experience and exact keyword matching inspired a nightclub-bouncer comparison.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to criticize filtering that rewards phrasing over proven ability.

Apparently, the hardest part of getting hired in 2026 isn't proving you can do the job. It's convincing a digital nightclub bouncer that your resume deserves to get past the velvet rope.

Twenty five years of experience? Great. But did you use the exact phrase from paragraph four of the job description? No? Then please step aside, sir. You're holding up the line for candidates who have mastered Corporate Bingo.

This evening, I ran an experiment for The Interview Games using two versions of my resume for a Tesla Service Manager position. The first was my standard resume, unchanged. No tailoring. No keyword gymnastics. No attempt to make "managed multiple locations" sound like "orchestrated scalable, cross functional operational ecosystems." I submitted it, and the rejection arrived about a minute later. That wasn't an interview process. That was a drive thru rejection with express shipping.

Then I created version two. Same person. Same employment history. Same leadership experience. I didn't discover a second MBA in the glove compartment or wake up with

twelve new certifications. I simply rewrote actual qualifications to better match the job description. In the illustrated comparison, version two gets the interview invitation. The AI bouncer has gone from "Not tonight, buddy" to "Welcome, valued candidate. Can I take your coat and schedule your Teams interview?"

I picture the bouncer studying resume one. "You managed people, improved sales, coached managers, and handled budgets? Adorable. But where is the phrase 'strategic performance optimization'?" I explain that I did the work. He taps his earpiece. "Sir, this establishment only accepts experience described in approved corporate vocabulary." I hand him resume two. He nearly faints. "Operational excellence! Stakeholder alignment! Continuous improvement! Why didn't you tell me you were somebody?" Somewhere, a manager wants someone who shows up and solves problems.

Here's the catch: a fast rejection doesn't prove an AI system rejected me, and one comparison doesn't establish discrimination or explain Tesla's actual screening rules. Apparently, the first interview is

with a thesaurus wearing a shiny HR badge. This experiment is about a much bigger question: when the same qualifications can look completely different after a few wording changes, what exactly are employers rewarding?

Maybe we're no longer writing resumes for humans. Maybe we're writing love letters to software, hoping the algorithm notices our shared passion for "process improvement." Employers say they want authentic candidates, then publish job descriptions that sound like three consultants got trapped in an elevator with a thesaurus.

And the best part? Once you get past the AI bouncer, you may still have six interviews, a personality assessment, and a panel asking where you see yourself in five years. At this rate, I see myself outside the nightclub, coaching other applicants on how to pronounce "synergy" without laughing.

Recruiters, please answer the door

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A feed packed with “we’re hiring” posts contrasted with applicants receiving little response.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted recruiting messages to mean there is an actual opening and someone on the other side.

At this point, my LinkedIn feed looks less like a professional network and more like an infomercial for jobs nobody seems able to fill.

Every third post is a recruiter announcing, “We’re hiring!” like they’re giving away concert tickets. Meanwhile, the comment section looks like a lifeboat drill on the Titanic. Hundreds of qualified people waving resumes, and somehow the recruiter has disappeared faster than the office donuts at 9:03 a.m. on a Friday.

This morning, I scrolled past a recruiter celebrating an “exciting opportunity.” Another recruiter called a position “an incredible chance to join a dynamic team.” One said, “We want rock stars!” Are you hiring an operations director or assembling a band for the company holiday party? Because I can manage a budget, but my guitar skills are limited to pretending I know the opening of Stairway to Heaven.

I clicked on one of these wonderful opportunities. The post said, “Message me directly!” So I checked the comments. Forty seven people had written, “Interested!” Another twenty had tagged friends. One

gentleman practically submitted his family tree. The recruiter responded to one person: another recruiter congratulating her on the post. Apparently, networking here is reserved for people who already have jobs in networking.

Then there are the job postings that refuse to die. “Urgently hiring!” they announce. Weeks later, still hiring. Two months later, the same job is back with the same stock photo and another paragraph about culture. That position has been available longer than some of the managers who supposedly supervise it. Halloween decorations come down faster.

And let’s discuss the phrase “perfect fit.” Recruiters say they are looking for someone with leadership, communication skills, problem solving abilities, and experience managing difficult situations. That’s practically my biography. I’ve managed teams, budgets, upset customers, broken processes, and meetings that could have been emails. But apparently the system would prefer a candidate with eight years of experience in software that launched last Tuesday. Even robots need a vacation.

My favorite posts end with, “Don’t hesitate to reach out!” Oh, I won’t. I’ll send a polite message, attach my resume, and ask a thoughtful question. Then I’ll wait. And wait. Eventually, LinkedIn will remind me that the recruiter has celebrated another work anniversary. Congratulations! My message is also having an anniversary. Should I send it flowers?

Look, I know many recruiters are working hard and dealing with hiring managers who change requirements more often than I change coffee orders. But somewhere between the enthusiastic hiring announcements and the silence that follows, we’ve turned job searching into a game show where the prize is permission to be ignored professionally.

So to every recruiter lighting up my feed with “We’re hiring!” I have one small request: if you’re inviting people to the party, could somebody please answer the door?

A hiring sign with no hiring

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A LinkedIn job announcement for Thrive Global led to a response indicating no active opening.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted employers to check their posts before inviting candidates into a process that has already ended.

Imagine walking into a restaurant with a NOW HIRING sign, asking the manager about the opening, and hearing, “We’re not actually hiring. But please keep checking the sign.” At that point, I’m not looking for a job anymore. I’m looking for whoever approved the sign.

Welcome to another episode of The Interview Games, where I test modern hiring processes for fun. This morning’s entertainment involved a cheerful post advertising a Senior Customer Success Manager opening at Thrive Global. “We’re hiring!” it said. “I’d love for you to join our team!” Wonderful. Enthusiasm! Opportunity! A working link! I nearly put on a tie just to click it.

Instead of immediately feeding my resume to the applicant tracking system, I tried something radical: reaching out to a human being. I know. Reckless behavior. Someone should notify Legal. I asked whether there was an actual person I could connect with about the opportunity before my resume disappeared into the same digital basement where unanswered applications go to retire.

And here comes the plot twist worthy of a Netflix documentary: “Thanks for your interest, but we’re not hiring for this role at the moment. Please keep an eye on our careers page.” Excuse me? The post says WE’RE HIRING. The link says APPLY. The job description is dressed for business. But the position itself has apparently gone on vacation without setting an out of office reply. Maybe the opening was just visiting. Maybe HR accidentally hit “Publish” while trying to order printer toner.

This is what job hunting has become. A company throws open its digital doors, hangs a giant WELCOME sign, and then tells applicants the building is closed for renovations. Candidates are instructed to network, engage with employees, reach out personally, and show initiative. Then when somebody actually does those things, the opportunity vanishes faster than the CFO when someone mentions raises.

My favorite part is “Keep checking our careers page.” Of course! I’ll move in. I’ll bring a sleeping bag, a flashlight, and enough snacks to survive two fiscal quarters. Every

morning I’ll refresh the page like I’m watching for concert tickets. Maybe one day the job will emerge from hiding, stretch its legs, and announce that it already went to an internal candidate. Look, positions get filled. Budgets change. Hiring freezes happen. That’s business. But would it be too much to ask that the person announcing the opportunity and the person explaining there’s no opportunity attend the same meeting? Maybe exchange a calendar invitation? Maybe introduce themselves at the company holiday party?

Behind every application is someone spending real time, managing real bills, and hoping the next opportunity will actually lead somewhere. Candidates aren’t asking for a parade. They’re asking for an accurate sign on the door.

At this point, I’m considering applying for the position of “Currently Hiring.” It seems to be the only role on LinkedIn with guaranteed job security.

The jokes are turning into changes

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I began seeing companies address candidate-experience problems that I had criticized publicly.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to encourage organizations to treat widespread candidate laughter as actionable feedback.

Apparently the fastest way to improve a company's hiring process isn't to hire consultants or schedule seventeen meetings. It's to let me complain about it on LinkedIn until somebody in Human Resources spits coffee on their keyboard.

I've been running The Interview Games, applying to jobs, sitting through interviews, and documenting the corporate circus with enough sarcasm to make compliance request a personal day. I talk about ghosting, eight rounds of interviews, job postings that lead nowhere, recruiters arriving late, and application systems that ask you to upload your resume before making you type the entire thing again. Apparently my posts are now an unofficial handbook for companies I don't work for.

Here's where it gets interesting. I'll rant about a hiring practice, then see a company proudly announce an improvement. "We've simplified our interview process!" Fantastic. I explained why candidates shouldn't survive six panels, meet three VPs, and solve a murder mystery to earn a \$52,000 salary.

Another company announces, "We now communicate with every

applicant!" Beautiful! I wrote about candidates getting ghosted so badly they should charge recruiters rent. Suddenly communication is a groundbreaking innovation. Next week somebody will announce that interviews will take place at the scheduled time. Wall Street will lose its mind. And then there's my personal favorite: "We value the candidate experience." Oh, do you? Because three weeks ago the candidate experience involved submitting a resume, creating three passwords, taking a personality test, recording a one way video, and receiving an automated rejection at 2:14 in the morning. I've had warmer conversations with parking meters.

Now, am I claiming every change happened because somebody read one of my rants? Of course not. I'm sarcastic, not the Supreme Court of LinkedIn. But the timing is hilarious. I read these improvement announcements and think, "That sounds suspiciously familiar." I almost expect the next corporate memo to say, "Following a recent encounter with a man who makes too many jokes, we've decided to treat applicants like human beings."

So here's my message to companies: keep reading. Seriously. Take every idea you want. Fix the broken systems. Shorten the interviews. Tell candidates the salary. Stop advertising positions that don't exist. Train hiring managers to show up prepared. And if someone takes two hours out of their day to interview with you, give them an answer that wasn't written by a toaster. You don't have to give me credit. Although if you announce a new Candidate Experience Excellence Committee, I reserve the right to ask whether the committee comes with snacks. And perhaps a small consulting fee. My mortgage unfortunately doesn't accept "engagement" as payment.

If my jokes get people laughing, great. If they get a company to change something that was wasting candidates' time, even better. Imagine the hiring circus finally running out of clowns.

3M and the disappearing opening

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A legal-role announcement at 3M led me to find that the advertised opportunity seemed no longer open.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to show how quickly an enthusiastic recruitment post can become misleading.

Somewhere in corporate America, there's a job opening having an identity crisis. It wants applicants, it doesn't want applicants, and it has already moved in with someone else.

This morning I stumbled across a LinkedIn post from a legal executive at 3M announcing an opportunity. This thing had a rocket emoji, global responsibilities, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, privacy, and enough legal terminology to make my printer request an attorney. The message was clear: WE'RE HIRING! Tag your friends! Spread the word! Bring us the best talent!

Perfect. I'm running The Interview Games, where I test hiring processes firsthand. So I sent a friendly message, introduced the experiment, and threw in a Workday joke. I figured a company famous for sticky notes might appreciate someone pointing out how difficult it is to get an application to stick. Less than 20 minutes later, I had my answer. The position was already filled. I stared at my phone like it had just informed me that my Uber driver arrived yesterday. I didn't apply. I

didn't interview. I didn't even get a chance to create my 19th Workday account, select a password containing an uppercase letter, a hieroglyphic, and the emotional resilience of a Navy SEAL.

The entire hiring journey lasted one LinkedIn message. That's not recruitment. That's a drive through rejection with the window already closed. And here is what makes it hilarious: the post was still out there doing promotional cartwheels. "Apply now!" Meanwhile, the job itself was apparently sitting at home in sweatpants, watching television with its new employee. It's like walking past a house with a FOR SALE sign, calling the realtor, and hearing, "Oh, somebody bought it. But please share our listing with your friends. We're trying to hit 500 likes." Or showing up at a wedding because you received an invitation, only to discover the couple already divorced and the DJ is still accepting song requests.

I have questions. Does the rocket emoji need to be recalled? Who tells the hashtags they're unemployed? Has the Workday portal been notified, or is it still collecting resumes as a hobby? Is there a

department responsible for taking down "We're hiring" signs, or does that require three approvals, two legal reviews, and a meeting about stakeholder alignment? To be fair, the response was polite. And I'm happy somebody got hired. But candidates aren't collecting job listings like baseball cards. They are making plans, investing time, and hoping the opportunity on their screens actually exists.

Companies, please update your posts when a position closes. Otherwise, your recruiting strategy starts looking less like talent acquisition and more like a museum exhibit: "Here lies a job that was available briefly in 2026. Please do not touch."

As for me, I officially completed another Interview Games experiment. No application. No interview. No rejection letter. Just a rocket that launched after the astronaut had already gone home.

More responsibility, same salary

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

I recalled requesting a raise after being given more responsibilities, only to hear an old mistake cited.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to challenge the practice of adding duties while withholding fair pay.

Nothing turns a manager into a professional historian faster than an employee asking for a raise. You can spend three years putting out fires, covering shifts, training people, and keeping the place alive. But mention an extra dollar, and suddenly your boss remembers that Tuesday you missed a signature.

A while back, I walked into my boss's office to discuss my compensation. My job description had quietly expanded from "manage operations" to "manage operations, fix everyone's problems, train people, answer calls on vacation, and perform miracles before lunch." I had more duties than entire departments. My paycheck, however, remained emotionally attached to its job description.

I explained the results. Revenue was up. Performance improved. Problems were getting solved. I was doing work that hadn't even existed when I accepted the position. My boss nodded, folded his hands, and gave me that serious corporate face people use before announcing nothing. "Well, Alex, there's still that incident we need to consider." The incident?! Oh, this should be good. Had I accidentally sold the building?

Driven the company car through the lobby? Announced the quarterly earnings using interpretive dance?

No. Apparently, months earlier, I had handled one situation in a way he didn't particularly like. Nobody was hurt. The business survived. But that single moment had apparently been preserved in a temperature controlled vault labeled REASONS NOT TO PAY ALEX!

Funny how one mistake can remain on your record forever, but fifty extra responsibilities disappear the moment compensation comes up. My boss could forget that I'd worked weekends, handled emergencies, and picked up duties belonging to three other people. But that one Tuesday? Museum quality memory. Smithsonian level preservation.

So I asked, "If that situation is serious enough to prevent a raise, why wasn't it serious enough to prevent you from giving me more responsibility?" Silence. The kind of silence you hear after asking HR whether "competitive salary" means competing against your electric bill. Then came my favorite line: "We really value everything you do." Fantastic. Can I use that at a grocery store? "I'd like to pay for these eggs

with appreciation and a verbal commitment to future growth." I'm sure the cashier will be thrilled.

Here's the part that isn't funny. Some companies will trust you with customers, employees, millions in revenue, and decisions that keep the lights on. They'll hand you another department with a smile. But when you ask to be compensated for that trust, suddenly you have "development opportunities." If someone is good enough to carry more responsibility, they're good enough to have an honest compensation conversation. And if one old mistake is truly holding them back, explain the expectations, the timeline, and what improvement looks like.

Because "you're not ready for a raise, but here's more work" isn't leadership. It's a promotion with the paycheck removed.

I will say it for you

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Readers hesitate to criticize toxic supervisors because those people follow them on LinkedIn.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to give that unspoken frustration a funny public voice.

LinkedIn is a fascinating place. It's the only website where you congratulate your toxic boss on their leadership while wondering if a fire alarm can interrupt a performance review.

Ever wanted to tell your boss or coworker how you feel, but you can't because they follow you on LinkedIn? They like your posts. They comment "Great perspective!" They repost your quote about respect, which is bold from someone who treats employees like printer cartridges. Consider this my public service announcement. I will say it for you. Drink your coffee and pretend you're reading about supply chains.

Dear toxic boss, you love calling everyone family. Funny, because most families don't require three approvals for a sick day. You say your door is always open, yet walking through it feels like entering a courtroom where the judge also writes your performance review. You preach accountability, then disappear faster than the office snacks when something goes wrong. But when the team succeeds? There you are on LinkedIn, accepting

congratulations like you personally invented teamwork.

And to the coworker who smiles during meetings then schedules a private chat to discuss everyone else's mistakes: congratulations on your unpaid surveillance career. You don't need a promotion. You need a hobby that doesn't involve screenshots, whispered conversations, and forwarding emails with "just flagging this." We all know what you're flagging, Karen. It's the last remaining piece of workplace trust.

Here's what some leaders don't understand. People don't always leave because the work is hard. They leave because they get tired of rehearsing ordinary conversations in their cars before walking into the building. They leave because Sunday evenings start feeling like a countdown to a courtroom appearance. They leave because every win gets minimized, every mistake becomes a character flaw, and every request for basic respect is labeled a bad attitude.

The saddest part? Your best employees still defend you. They remember the person you were during the interview, when you

promised growth and support. They keep hoping that version will come back. They stay late, cover shifts, train new hires, and carry responsibilities that should belong to three people. Then they go home exhausted and wonder why giving their best never seems to be enough.

So if you're reading this with someone in mind, don't tag them. Don't risk your paycheck. Just give this post a quiet little like, or don't. I'll personally take the heat. I've been in enough corporate meetings to recognize the look on someone's face when the truth shows up. And if you're the leader reading this and suddenly feeling personally attacked, maybe don't call HR yet. Try asking your team how they're doing. Then listen without preparing a rebuttal.

Because people may forget the quarterly goals. They rarely forget who made them dread Monday morning. And they never forget the person who finally said what everyone else was afraid to say.

People First, positions eliminated

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

Layoff announcements appeared beside leaders' public celebrations of culture and awards.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted leaders to think about displaced workers before congratulating themselves online.

Corporate America has discovered a remarkable new talent: laying people off with one hand while giving itself a standing ovation with the other. If hypocrisy were an Olympic sport, the executive team would be on the podium wearing matching "People First" jackets.

More people are finally saying what they've been thinking on LinkedIn. They're tired of corporate award ceremonies disguised as leadership posts. Somewhere, a company just eliminated 300 jobs and its CEO is typing, "Our people are our greatest asset." Apparently, those assets were depreciated overnight.

The posts are always beautiful. A photo of the executive team smiling in matching polos. A paragraph about compassion, resilience, and family. Meanwhile, the employees who were just laid off are trying to figure out how to pay rent while the company celebrates its "bold new chapter." Nothing says family like changing the locks and calling it transformation.

And heaven forbid someone asks a reasonable question in the comments. "If people come first, why did you announce record profits right before eliminating their

jobs?" Suddenly the same leaders who preach open communication become more silent than a recruiter after the final interview. The HR team starts typing "We appreciate your perspective" like they're defusing a bomb. Legal opens a fresh document titled "How to Say Nothing in 400 Words."

My favorite part is what happens next. You call out the contradiction and a senior executive visits your LinkedIn profile. No reply. Just a profile view, like a corporate Batman who only fights accountability. I imagine a conference room meeting: "We have a situation. Someone has noticed the layoffs and our post about employee wellness appeared on the same day." "Have we tried calling them a culture problem?" "Excellent. Promote Brad. Classic leadership."

Here's what companies don't seem to understand: employees and job seekers aren't demanding perfection. They're asking for a little honesty. If you're restructuring, say you're restructuring. If the business is struggling, explain what you can. But please stop posting inspirational quotes about loyalty while security escorts your loyal employees to the

parking lot. Nobody needs a motivational sunset photo to accompany a severance package.

And to everyone who's finally finding their voice, I get it. Speaking up can be risky, especially when you're trying to get hired, pay bills, or keep the job you have. Nobody owes the internet a public showdown with their employer. But asking respectful, uncomfortable questions isn't the same thing as being unprofessional. Sometimes it's the most professional thing happening in the comments.

Corporate leaders, here's a free communications tip: before you congratulate yourselves on putting people first, check whether the people can still afford groceries. Your employees don't need another leadership quote. They need leaders who can recognize the difference between a company culture and a company costume.

FOX, Workday and the season finale

[VIEW ORIGINAL POST ↗](#)

WHAT TRIGGERED IT

A FOX Entertainment hiring post linked to a Workday application and reminded me of recurring frustrations.

WHY I WROTE IT

I wanted to parody the contrast between inviting recruitment messages and exhausting application platforms.

Hollywood has spent years perfecting suspense, but the most terrifying twist I've seen this week wasn't in a movie. It was a cheerful LinkedIn hiring post that ended with a Workday application link. Even Hollywood would call that cruel.

I spotted Gregory Jones inviting people to join his FOX Entertainment team. "Come work with me!" he wrote. A director level role. Global distribution. Revenue responsibility. A hiring manager putting his name behind a job. I nearly applauded. Then I saw the dreaded application link. Workday.

Cue the dramatic music. A door creaks open. My laptop starts sweating. A voice from the darkness whispers, "Please create an account." I've created enough Workday accounts to earn loyalty points. Ten applications and you get a complimentary rejection email, delivered at 2:14 a.m. by a computer named Jennifer. You upload your resume. Years of experience. Awards. Achievements. Workday looks it over and says, "Wonderful. Now enter all of that again, one tiny box at a time." Am I going through airport security? Should I put my

leadership experience in a separate tray?

FOX, I have a programming idea. Turn modern recruiting into a reality show called "America's Next Top Applicant." Twenty enter. Fifteen are eliminated by software before breakfast. The remaining five are invited to a video interview where the hiring manager asks, "Tell me about yourself," while visibly opening their resume for the first time.

Episode two: The Culture Fit Challenge. Contestants must smile through "We're a family here," explain where they see themselves in five years, and celebrate a salary range wider than the Grand Canyon. Bonus points if they can answer, "Why do you want this job?" without saying, "Because my mortgage company doesn't accept inspirational quotes."

Episode three: Meet the Executive Panel. One is on mute. Another has the camera off. Finance asks about a missing spreadsheet. HR writes "not a culture fit" after the candidate makes a joke. The VP arrives twenty minutes late and calls it a test of adaptability.

Then comes the season finale. Two finalists. Nine interviews. A surprise presentation. A reference check with a manager who retired before smartphones existed. The host opens an envelope, pauses for effect, and announces, "We've decided to move forward with an internal candidate." Confetti falls. The audience screams. Workday asks everyone to complete a satisfaction survey.

To be fair, Gregory's invitation is exactly the kind of personal outreach I wish more hiring managers would do. I don't know what FOX's actual interview process is like, and I'm not reviewing it. It's a roast of the maze applicants so often face after clicking "Apply." Because a warm welcome shouldn't end at the application link. If the invitation says "Come work with me," the process shouldn't feel like "Escape Room: Corporate Edition."

FOX, call me. I already have a title for season two: "The Recruiter Who Ghosted Me." Nobody knows when it airs.

ONE MORE THING BEFORE NEXT WEEK

A last thought.

Another week is over, and somehow the hiring circus managed to book all the tents, sell all the tickets and still forget to invite the candidates. I talked about job descriptions that sound like they were assembled by a committee of superheroes. I heard about interview processes with eight rounds. I watched recruiters announce exciting opportunities and then vanish when real people showed up asking where to apply. I saw software celebrated for the radical innovation of remembering that the same human applied yesterday.

You would think the biggest problem in hiring would be finding qualified people. Sometimes the bigger problem is that we have made the act of meeting a qualified person feel like navigating an airport during a system outage. Create a profile. Verify your email. Re-enter your resume. Explain the employment gap. Explain why you left. Explain why you stayed. Explain why you used that particular font. Then wait for a rejection addressed to “Dear Candidate,” sent by a computer with the enthusiasm of a parking meter.

But the people behind those applications are never generic. I think about the reader whose husband is trying to be seen as capable instead of “too experienced.” I think about the people who lost jobs after years of getting up early and making sacrifices for a company. I think about the person who practiced interview answers all weekend and then met a hiring manager discovering their resume for the very first time. And I think about every candidate who has smiled on camera while silently wondering whether the interviewer is going to unmute before the meeting ends.

It is easy for a company to say that people are its greatest asset. That statement looks wonderful in an annual report and on the side of a coffee mug. The real test begins when there is no camera, no awards ceremony, no leadership conference and no social-media team polishing the language. How do you treat the person who is leaving? How do you speak to the one who was rejected? What happens when an employee says a plan makes no sense, or when someone asks for a raise because their responsibilities have doubled?

This week I also saw something encouraging. Organizations are listening. Sometimes it begins with a joke that spreads farther than expected. Sometimes it begins with an uncomfortable message from an applicant. Sometimes a leader is brave enough to invite a critic into the room, ask questions and look at the actual experience. Those conversations matter. They are proof that criticism does not always have to end with defensiveness and a secret meeting involving Legal.

A LAST THOUGHT / CONTINUED

And yes, I am going to keep making jokes. I may even make a few more about Amazon. Their recruiting process has supplied enough material to support several seasons, a spinoff and apparently an imaginary legal department with a drone-delivery budget. But the point was never to collect punchlines just for the sake of embarrassing anyone. The humor works because people recognize a problem. When thousands of candidates laugh at the same story, it might be worth asking whether they have all lived through some version of it.

The quiet moments are what stay with me longest. Helping a stranger find something at a grocery store. Seeing an older couple holding hands on the Riverwalk. Reading a message from a person who says the stories helped them through a difficult week. Those moments remind me that success is not only the title underneath your name, the salary on an offer letter or the size of an organization chart. It is also how you made people feel when they had nothing you needed.

If you are reading this while trying to find work, I hope you hold onto that. You are more than a filtering score. You are more than a rejected application. You are more than an awkward answer to “Where do you see yourself in five years?” You have a life outside the interview calendar. You have people who care about you. You have skills that do not disappear because one recruiter could not explain what happened to your application.

If you are a recruiter, hiring manager, HR leader or CEO, I am not asking for perfection. I am asking for a process that respects the time and dignity of the people entering it. Be clear about whether the job exists. Read the resume before the call. Keep the interview steps reasonable. Share the timeline. Give a straight answer when there is one. And if you really want to understand your system, try applying through it yourself without a special executive shortcut. I recommend keeping snacks nearby.

I am still learning, still testing, still reading every message I can and still writing about whatever strange chapter appears next. Some experiments make me laugh. Some make me angry. Some stop me in my tracks because they remind me how much a job can mean to the person waiting for it. This newsletter is my record of all three, in my own words and with a little extra context about why each story deserved to be told.

Until the next issue, protect your sense of humor. Protect your time. Be kind to people whose battles you cannot see. And when the corporate circus tells you to jump through another flaming hoop, it is perfectly reasonable to ask whether there is actually a job waiting on the other side. If somebody from HR needs to schedule a meeting to discuss that question, tell them I am available after the eighth round.

THE PURPOSE, IN ONE SENTENCE

Make the hiring process more human - and keep laughing.

ALEX PYATKOVSKY

THE INTERVIEW GAMES