IG Insider Brief — Drop 009

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📊 **Market Temperature**

**Score: 59 / 100**

August exposed the split-screen economy in full color. Core CPI jumped to 3.1% annually—the highest since January—while Producer Price Index surged 0.9% monthly, the largest increase since 2022. The Federal Reserve held rates at 4.25%-4.5%, confirming this economic fracture will persist.

Tech unemployment dropped to a two-year low with AI/ML job postings exploding 30-fold year-over-year. But federal employment contracted by 200,000 since January, creating a "no-hire, no-fire" market that ADP's chief economist says defines the new normal: companies won't let people go (pandemic hiring was too difficult) but won't actively recruit either (economic uncertainty).

Small business optimism improved to 100.3, but uncertainty hit the fifth-highest reading ever at 97. Consumer confidence softened across both major indices, with inflation expectations rising to 4.8% and recession expectations hitting their highest levels since April.

**The reality:** This isn't a broad slowdown—it's selective paralysis. AI-fluent sectors are in a talent war. Healthcare continues trending up. Everything else waits for policy clarity. Tech salaries rose 5% year-over-year, but nonprofit funding fell 10.84% compared to 2024.

**Bottom line:** Follow the data, not the headlines. Target the AI boom, healthcare expansion, and skills-based roles where companies are still competing for talent.

📉 **Headlines You Shouldn't Miss**

1. **"US Department of Labor promotes AI literacy across the American workforce"**  
   *U.S. Department of Labor (August 26, 2025)*  
   <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/osec/osec20250826> **Why it matters:** The feds just greenlit WIOA grants for AI training programs nationwide. Translation: free, government-funded AI upskilling is rolling out. This validates AI fluency as a core competency—not a nice-to-have.  
   **Action:** Check your state's workforce development site. These programs are launching fast, and early applicants get priority access.

**2. "Immersive Technologies Launches JobSpeed: An Innovative Job Application Tracker"**  
*PR Newswire (August 12, 2025)*  
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/immersive-technologies-launches-jobspeed-an-innovative-job-application-tracker-that-eliminates-spreadsheet-chaos-for-job-seekers-302526468.html>  
**Why it matters:** Job search admin is killing productivity. JobSpeed adds collaborative features so you can share intel on companies and roles with other seekers—turning individual hunts into community intelligence.  
**Action:** The tool launches with free tiers. Skip the spreadsheet chaos and test-drive something built for the volume game most of us are playing.

**3. "The Great Re-Evaluation and Why Employers Need to Reimagine Work Now"**  
*Careers In Government*  
<https://www.careersingovernment.com/tools/gov-talk/about-gov/education/the-great-re-evaluation-and-why-employers-need-to-reimagine-work-now/>  
**Why it matters:** The narrative has shifted from "Great Resignation" (quitting jobs) to "Great Re-Evaluation" (reassessing your entire relationship with work). Workers are prioritizing purpose, values, and flexibility over traditional career tracks.  
**Action:** Use this mindset shift in negotiations. You're not begging for a job—you're seeking alignment. Frame conversations around mutual fit, not desperation.

🔎 **What's Working Now**

**LinkedIn Carousel Expertise Strategy**  
Subject-matter experts who consistently post about specific topics are winning the algorithm. Carousel posts generate 1,387 average impressions vs. 589 for text-only content. The platform now rewards older, relevant content over recent but less valuable posts.  
**Why it works:** LinkedIn prioritizes expertise over engagement bait. Build a reputation in your niche with structured, visual content.

**Community Intelligence Job Tracking**  
Tools like JobSpeed are enabling collaborative job searches where seekers share real-time intel on company response rates, interview processes, and hiring manager insights. Early adopters report 40% faster identification of legitimate vs. ghost opportunities.  
**Why it works:** Individual job hunting is inefficient. Shared intelligence helps focus effort on companies that actually respond and hire.

**TikTok Career Trust Factor**  
46% of Gen Z successfully landed jobs through TikTok, with 92% trusting the platform for career advice. Career content viewership increased 36% between October 2024-January 2025, creating direct recruiter discovery channels.  
**Why it works:** Authentic video content cuts through AI-generated resume noise. Even B2B recruiters are monitoring TikTok for talent discovery.

✅ **Job Hack**

**The Company-Specific Research Portfolio**

Before applying anywhere, invest 2-4 hours creating a digital portfolio of solutions for that company's current challenges. Use basic design tools like Canva to showcase 2-3 concrete fixes you could implement immediately.

**Step 1:** Deep-dive their recent news, executive interviews, strategic initiatives, and industry pain points they're facing.

**Step 2:** Develop specific, actionable solutions focused on problems you can solve day-one—not generic capabilities.

**Step 3:** Create a simple visual presentation. Lead networking conversations and applications with this value demonstration.

**Why it works:** This aligns with the fundamental 2025 shift toward value-demonstration over credential-listing. You're proving business understanding and immediate impact potential while differentiating from applications that list past duties instead of future solutions.

⚡ **Changing Dynamics**

**ATS Platforms Deploy AI-Native Rediscovery**  
Gem's August 21 release allows instant searches across past applicants and 650M+ new profiles in single queries. The system understands that a "Digital Community Lead at a finance startup" matches "social media marketer with fintech experience"—connections simple keyword searches miss.  
**What this means for you:** 25% of organizations plan AI-driven ATS by 2027. Your entire digital footprint becomes searchable. Keep your online presence cohesive across all platforms.

**Responsive Employer Badge System Launches**  
LinkedIn, Indeed, and Greenhouse implemented badges for companies that consistently reply to candidates within 48 hours and provide clear communication throughout processes.  
**What this means for you:** Target companies with verified response rates. These badges filter out the time-wasters and ghost-job posters from legitimate opportunities.

**"No-Hire, No-Fire" Market Crystallizes**  
ADP's chief economist coined the term defining August: companies won't fire (pandemic hiring was too painful) but won't hire either (economic uncertainty). Employers are hoarding existing talent while freezing new headcount.  
**What this means for you:** Longer search timelines are the new normal. Focus on leveraging existing networks over cold applications. Internal mobility and contractor-to-full-time conversions become primary pathways.

🧠 **AI Tracker**

→ **University of Washington Exposes AI Hiring Bias**  
New research found AI resume screening systems favor white-associated names 85% of the time and never favored Black male names over white male names. This led to the first EEOC AI hiring discrimination settlement—iTutorGroup paying $365,000 for age bias.  
**So what?** Even qualified candidates face systematic algorithmic discrimination.  
**Action:** Apply through multiple channels, especially direct referrals, to bypass potentially biased AI screening.

→ **Meta Freezes All AI Division Hiring**  
On August 21, Meta halted AI team recruitment after aggressively poaching 50+ researchers, highlighting the competitive intensity for AI talent while other sectors stagnate.  
**So what?** AI talent wars are creating winner-take-all dynamics within tech.  
**Action:** If you're AI-adjacent, now is your moment. Even tangential AI experience commands premium salaries and multiple offers.

→ **HireVue Discontinues Facial Recognition Features**  
The leading video interview platform dropped facial analysis due to bias concerns, while traditional coding challenges become less viable as AI tools render them ineffective for assessment.  
**So what?** Interview evaluation is shifting from automated analysis back to human judgment.  
**Action:** Focus on clear communication and authentic storytelling in video interviews. The technology is stepping back—your genuine personality needs to step forward.

💬 **Interviewer Behavior**

→ **AI Governance Questions Become Standard**  
Companies now expect every employee to act as an AI risk manager. Expect detailed questioning across all knowledge-worker roles:

* "Walk me through your process for verifying AI-generated outputs"
* "How do you handle sensitive company data when using public AI tools?"
* "What's your framework for deciding when AI is appropriate vs. inappropriate?"  
  **What this means for you:** Prepare specific examples of your AI verification processes, data protection practices, and judgment frameworks. Generic "I use ChatGPT sometimes" answers won't cut it.

→ **Panel Interviews Deploy AI Bias-Flagging**  
48% of hiring managers now prefer panel formats, finding them 79% effective. New AI tools provide real-time coaching to interviewers, flagging potentially biased language during conversations and suggesting more inclusive phrasing.  
**What this means for you:** Your answers are analyzed by both humans and algorithms for bias indicators. Use structured STAR responses and avoid jargon that might trigger algorithmic red flags.

→ **Interview Scheduling Automation Surges**  
51% of recruiters now use automated scheduling software (up 36% year-over-year), with self-scheduling becoming standard. However, 31% of candidates still experience 2-3 week delays due to the "no-hire, no-fire" decision paralysis.  
**What this means for you:** Scheduling is faster, but final decisions are slower. Use the extended timelines to your advantage—continue interviewing elsewhere and don't put your search on hold for any single opportunity.

📌 **Prompt Lab**

**The Skills-First ATS Bullet Generator**

Transform your work experience into skills-based achievement statements that align with the hiring revolution where skills are 5x more predictive than education.

**Copy-Paste Prompt:**

Act as a skills-based hiring expert. I need to rewrite my experience bullets to emphasize transferable skills and quantified outcomes over job duties.

Here's the role I'm targeting: [TARGET ROLE]

Here's my experience to transform: [PASTE EXPERIENCE]

Rewrite as 4 bullet points that:

- Lead with the skill being demonstrated (not the task)

- Include quantified business impact (numbers, percentages, savings)

- Use action verbs that show problem-solving capability

- Connect to skills the target role actually uses

- Avoid industry jargon that doesn't translate

Format: [Skill] • [Action verb] [what you did] resulting in [quantified outcome] and [business benefit]

Example: "Project Management • Coordinated cross-functional software deployment that reduced system downtime by 40% and saved $200K in productivity losses"

**Why it works:** McKinsey research confirms hiring for skills is 5x more predictive of job performance than education. This prompt restructures your experience around demonstrated capabilities rather than job titles or duties, aligning with the skills-first hiring acceleration that's cutting hiring times by 91%.

⚠ **Sketch Radar**

🚨 **FTC Issues "Gamified Job Scam" Alert**  
Reports exploded from 5,000 in 2023 to 20,000 in first six months of 2024, causing over $220 million in losses. Scammers contact via WhatsApp/Telegram promising $50-400/day for "product testing" through app-based tasks, making small payments initially before demanding large upfront fees to "unlock" earnings.  
**Red flag:** Any job requiring upfront payment to earn money, especially through cryptocurrency.  
**Defense:** Real employers pay you, never the reverse. If they want money before you work, it's a scam.

🚨 **BBB Warns of Signal/Telegram Interview Scams**  
Sophisticated scammers conduct entire hiring processes through encrypted messaging apps, avoiding video calls while requesting $2,000-5,000 for "equipment" or "training materials."  
**Red flag:** Interviews conducted entirely through messaging apps, avoidance of video verification, immediate equipment purchase requests.  
**Defense:** Legitimate employers use company email domains and video platforms. Always verify through official company channels before any financial commitment.

🚨 **Connecticut AG Issues Recruiter Phishing Alert**  
State authorities warn of impersonators using slight domain variations (e.g., @amaxon.com vs @amazon.com) to harvest personal information through fake job applications.  
**Red flag:** Email domains that are similar but not exact matches to real companies, requests for full Social Security numbers before interviews.  
**Defense:** Always double-check email domains character-by-character. Real recruiters won't ask for complete SSN until after official offers and background check authorization.

💼 **Side Hustle Intel**

**1. High-Value Contract Freelancing**  
Upwork reports 31% growth in contracts over $1,000 among large businesses, with AI-skilled freelancers seeing 25% income boosts in 2024. Top opportunities include AI-enhanced marketing strategy ($50-200/hour) and technical writing ($40-100/hour).  
**Start today:** Position yourself as "AI-augmented [your expertise]" rather than generic consulting. Show how you use tools to deliver faster, better results than traditional approaches.

**2. Short-Form Video Editing Surge**  
Businesses desperately need social media content, driving massive demand for TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts editing. Rates range from $28-110/hour, with AI spokesperson work averaging $110/day.  
**Start today:** Learn basic editing in DaVinci Resolve (free) and create sample reels for local businesses. Package 5-video social media bundles for $300-500.

**3. Back-to-School Tutoring Spike**  
Late August kicks off prime tutoring season with families and college students seeking help. Online platforms like Wyzant and Chegg Tutors allow flexible signup, with rates from $15-30/hour for K-12 and higher for specialized subjects or test prep.  
**Start today:** Identify subjects you're comfortable with, create profiles highlighting your expertise, and market yourself for calculus, chemistry, coding, or Excel skills that teens increasingly need.

**4. Pet Services via Rover/Wag ($300+/month)**  
Pet care demand remains recession-resistant, with dog walking, pet sitting, and boarding generating consistent income. Top providers in urban areas earn $500-800/month with minimal time investment.  
**Start today:** Create profiles on both platforms, start with competitive pricing to build reviews, then raise rates as your reputation grows. Focus on reliable scheduling and photo updates to differentiate from competition.