IG Insider Brief — Drop 010

Date: 2025-09-08

📊 **Market Temperature**

Score: 55 / 100

The market has moved beyond the selective slowdowns of early summer into a broad-based stall. August produced only 22,000 new jobs—the weakest growth since 2010 outside of the pandemic years. Unemployment rose to 4.3%, and the average job search now stretches close to six months.

For the first time since 2021, unemployed Americans (7.2M) outnumber job openings (7.18M). That leverage shift back to employers is already shaping hiring behavior: recruiters are tightening requirements, extending interview cycles, and leaving more applicants stranded in limbo.

Consumer confidence fell hard (UMich index at 55.4), real wages slipped into the red (–0.1%), and household budgets are feeling the pinch. Candidates are holding out longer, but employers know the power dynamic has shifted.

Healthcare continues to buck the trend with steady hiring, but elsewhere it’s flat lines and shrinking opportunities. This is the **Great Stall**—the clearest sign yet that the job market has tipped from selective cooling into systemic stagnation.

**What to do:**  
• Slow down and sharpen up—stop blasting generic resumes and focus on hyper-targeted outreach.  
• Prioritize sectors still adding headcount (healthcare, certain state-level programs) and cut off “zombie” postings that go nowhere.  
• Prepare for a longer search—think in quarters, not weeks—and use the downtime to upskill or showcase passion projects.

**Bottom line:**  
Old playbooks won’t carry you through the stall. Strategic patience, precision targeting, and proof of fresh, in-demand skills are the levers that still move the needle.

📉 **Headlines You Shouldn't Miss**

**OpenAI Announces New Hiring Platform, But Will It Fly?**

https://www.jobboardsecrets.com/2025/09/15/openai-announces-new-hiring-platform-but-will-it-fly/  
📌 Why it matters: OpenAI is moving beyond job boards toward **AI skills certification + matching**, a direct challenge to LinkedIn’s moat at the high-skill end.  
🧠 What to do: If you’re in data/ML, prep a portfolio that proves **AI literacy + outcomes**; early adopters will get discovery advantages.

**Workday to Acquire Paradox. A Bigger Deal Than You Think**

<https://joshbersin.com/2025/08/workday-to-acquire-paradox-a-bigger-deal-than-you-think/>  
📌 Why it matters: Workday just bought the AI chatbot that McDonald's uses to hire 2M+ workers annually. This consolidates their ATS dominance and means more companies will use AI agents for first-round screening.  
🧠 What to do: Prepare for "Olivia" or similar AI chatbots—practice clear, keyword-rich responses for automated phone screens.

**Future of Jobs Report 2025**  
<https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf>  
📌 Why it matters: Fresh, global baseline on **roles and skills** (AI/ML, big data, creative thinking, resilience).  
🧠 What to do: Run a **skills gap audit** against WEF’s top 10; target 1–2 gaps to close this month using low-cost courses or state programs.

🔎 **What's Working Now**

• **The "Hacker News" Strategy** – A senior software developer landed a role by ignoring mainstream job boards entirely. They built a target list from niche online communities, especially the “Who’s Hiring?” threads on Hacker News, resulting in fewer but much higher-quality applications.

• **"Weekend Warrior" Application Timing** – Submitting tailored applications over the weekend—particularly Sunday evenings—gets you into Monday’s first review pile. Recruiters often start the week sorting new postings, and early birds land on top before inboxes flood.

• **Documenting Your Hustle** – Job seekers with long gaps are creating work for themselves—freelancing, passion projects, or personal builds—and showcasing them in interviews. Employers respond better to current projects than to months of unexplained unemployment.

✅ **Job Hack**

Tired of sending applications into the void? Focus on companies that actually reply. Platforms now flag these: Indeed awards a **“Responsive Employer”** badge to companies that quickly communicate with candidates, and LinkedIn shows which posters are actively recruiting.

**How to do it:**  
When searching, filter for postings or employers with responsiveness badges or high review scores. Prioritize these in your schedule and skip zombie postings that haven’t been updated.

**Why it works:**  
A company that engages fast is more likely to fill the role and respects candidates’ time. This simple pivot cuts dead ends and drastically reduces your chances of being ghosted. Spend energy on employers who demonstrate a real candidate experience.

⚡ **Changing Dynamics**

**Internal Mobility Is Now the Default Hiring Strategy**  
A stunning 42.3% of employers hired from within over the past year—a 150% YoY increase.  
What this means for you: The “hidden job market” has shifted inward. If you’re an external candidate, the critical move is securing a strong internal referral.

**Immigration Policy Shifts Are Reshaping Talent Flows**  
A USCIS update (effective August 15, 2025) adopted a stricter method for calculating a child’s age for visa eligibility.  
What this means for you: Companies recruiting global talent from backlog-heavy countries like India and China may lose top candidates unwilling to jeopardize their dependents’ status. This could shrink international competition in some U.S. sectors, but also make hiring pipelines more volatile.

🧠 **AI Tracker**

→ **The AI Cheat-Detection Arms Race Begins**  
As candidates use generative AI in video interviews, new HR tech is emerging to counter it. At HR Tech 2025, “Alex Detects” launched to flag candidates using outside AI help during interviews.  
So what? Employers are deploying AI to police the use of AI. Authenticity just became a technological arms race.

→ **The Dawn of the AI-Powered Job Simulation**  
Companies like Anthropos now run immersive simulations where candidates collaborate with AI “colleagues” to resolve virtual project delays.  
So what? These tests measure practical, real-world problem-solving in a way traditional interviews can’t. Expect more employers to judge how you work, not just what you say.

→ **Employer Adoption Skyrockets**  
25.9% of U.S. employers now use AI in hiring, up from 14.7% in 2024. Of those, nearly a third use it for resume screening.  
So what? One in three applications is first evaluated by a machine, not a person. If your materials don’t align with AI filters, you may never make it to human eyes.

💬 **Interviewer Behavior**

→ **The Shift to “Culture Add”**  
Interviewers are moving beyond “fit” and testing for what unique value you’d bring. Expect prompts like:  
*“How do your colleagues benefit from working with you specifically?”*  
*“What’s your impression of our culture, and how could we improve it?”*  
What this means for you: Position yourself as a strategic partner, not a clone. Highlight fresh perspectives you’d add to the team.

→ **AI-Enforced Consistency**  
At larger firms, AI assistants now “listen” in or analyze transcripts to check your answers against your resume and other candidates’ responses.  
What this means for you: Stay truthful and consistent. Even tone and clarity matter—monotone or overly terse responses can score poorly on engagement metrics.

📌 **Prompt Lab**

**Use Case:** Build the ability to defend your experiences against sharp, critical follow-up questions—simulating an interview with a tough, skeptical hiring manager.

**The AI-Powered “Red Team” Interviewer Prompt:**  
*“Act as a ‘Red Team’ interviewer. You are a skeptical but fair hiring manager for the role of [insert role]. Your goal is to pressure-test my thinking, not just accept my first answer.*

*Here is the process we will follow:*

1. You will ask me a challenging behavioral question relevant to the role.
2. After I provide my answer using the STAR method, you will ask one or two critical follow-up questions designed to challenge my narrative (e.g., *‘What was the second-order consequence of the result you described?’* or *‘Who on your team would have disagreed with your approach, and why might they have been right?’*).
3. After I respond, you will provide a brief, critical evaluation of my logic and self-reflection.
4. Then, move on to the next question. Let’s begin.”

**Why it works:** This forces the AI to push past surface-level evaluation into an adversarial, Socratic role. Practicing with this prompt builds resilience, sharpens your stories, and helps you think on your feet under pressure.

⚠ **Sketch Radar**

🚨 **The 1,000% Surge in Impersonation Text Scams**  
McAfee reports job-related text scams exploded between May–July 2025. Scammers pose as recruiters from platforms like Indeed or big brands like Amazon, then demand upfront fees for fake “background checks” or “equipment.”  
**Red flag:** Any unsolicited job offer via text, especially those promising high pay for little work.

🚨 **Fraudulent Government Compliance Notices**  
The BBB warns of scammers mailing official-looking letters from fake agencies like the “United States Business Regulations Department.” They cite real legislation, then demand payment to “avoid fines.”  
**Red flag:** Any compliance request that doesn’t come from a verifiable .gov email or mailing address.

💼 **Side Hustle Intel**

**The Hyper-Local Service Boom**  
Counterintuitively, one of the fastest-growing side hustles is in physical, local convenience services. “Mobile car wash service” leads the pack with a 276% year-over-year surge in search interest.  
**Start today:** Post a simple offer on community platforms like Nextdoor or a local Facebook group.

**Monetizing Your Professional Opinion**  
Market research firms are paying well for expert feedback on software and business products. Platforms like UserInterviews.com and Respondent offer $50–$150 per hour for one-off interviews.  
**Start today:** Create detailed profiles on both platforms, list your industry experience and the tools you use daily, and apply for matching studies.