IG Insider Brief — Drop 011

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📊 **Market Temperature**

**Score: 40 / 100**

September didn’t just disappoint—it exposed a lie. On September 9, the Bureau of Labor Statistics dropped a bombshell: **911,000 “phantom jobs” never existed.** It’s the largest benchmark revision on record since 2002, erasing half a percent of the entire U.S. labor force in a single keystroke.

Then came the one-two punch: August added just **22,000 jobs.** September? The private sector actually **lost 32,000 jobs**—the first net decline reported by ADP in years. June’s numbers were quietly revised to **–13,000**, the first monthly loss since December 2020.  
And just when you needed clarity, the government shut down on October 1, taking the September jobs report with it. No CPI data. No employment numbers. Just a **750,000-worker furlough** and a data blackout that left companies paralyzed.

Hiring plans collapsed to **204,939**—the lowest since 2009, down 58% from last year. Seasonal hiring announcements? **100,800 vs. 401,850** by this time in 2024. Manufacturing is shedding jobs (**–78,000** YoY), and retail cuts are up **203%**.  
The only sectors still hiring? **Healthcare** (aging demographics won’t quit) and **education.** Everything else is frozen.

**What to do:** Accept that traditional hiring calendars are dead. Target only sectors with confirmed growth. Treat every application like it matters, because the competition just tripled while opportunities halved.

**Bottom line:** The market didn’t slow—it stopped. The data was fake, the shutdown killed visibility, and the few companies still hiring are pickier than ever.

📉 **Headlines You Shouldn’t Miss**

**“Gen Z faces ‘job-pocalypse’ as global firms prioritise AI over new hires, report says”**

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/oct/09/gen-z-face-job-pocalypse-as-global-firms-prioritise-ai-over-new-hires-report-says>

**Why it matters:** A British Standards Institution survey of 850 executives found **41%** already using AI to cut staff and **31%** now evaluate automation before human hires. Within five years, that figure will hit 40%. The battle isn’t person vs. person—it’s human vs. algorithm for the same headcount.

**“5 Essential AI Tools for Job Seekers”**  
  
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/learning-center/five-essential-ai-tools-for-job-seekers>

**Why it matters:** Microsoft’s Copilot+ PCs make AI literacy a survival skill. Use Copilot in Word to rewrite resumes, in Edge to research, in PowerPoint to prep. If recruiters use AI to screen you out, use it to break back in. Welcome to the “Tool Divide.”

**"Tech hiring shows flicker of life with 12.9% jump in postings"**

**URL:** <https://www.dice.com/recruiting/ebooks/dice-tech-job-report/>

**Why it matters:** After months of decline, tech job postings on Dice spiked nearly 13% in September—though still about 2.5% lower than last year. The real story? Demand for AI skills is surging, with half of U.S. tech job ads now requiring AI or machine learning know-how. Tech may be the first sector to rebound, driven by companies investing heavily in automation. If you have technical or data skills, this is your window—emphasize any AI tools or projects you've worked on, as these are becoming essential requirements, not just nice-to-haves.

**Why it matters:** LinkedIn added transparency features—“Actively Reviewing Applications,” AI summaries for recruiters, and post analytics tracking saves and shares. Finally, job seekers can see which companies actually reply—and which just post ghost jobs.

**Bottom line:** AI isn’t the future threat—it’s the present gatekeeper.

🔎 **What’s Working Now**

The application funnel is broken. These three tactics are cutting through the noise this fall—all built on one truth: **human beats algorithm.**

**1**️⃣ **“Show Your Work” Public Posts**  
Post short case studies of problems you’re solving now. One post—“Here’s a messy challenge I tackled this week and what I learned”—outperforms an “Open to Work” badge. Authenticity wins when everyone else sounds like ChatGPT.

**2**️⃣ **Direct DMs (Without Asking for a Job)**  
Reach out to professionals at target companies with a question or compliment about their work. Skip “Are you hiring?” and open with curiosity. Insight-seeking messages build real connections and often lead to referrals.

**3**️⃣ **Backchannel Project Pitches**  
Pitch companies that aren’t hiring: “Here’s what I noticed about your business, and an idea I’d explore if I joined.” It’s bold—and it works. One strategist landed a role at a firm with no open postings this way.

**Bottom line:** The best jobs aren’t listed—they’re created through conversations you start.

✅ **Job Hack**

**The ATS Optimization Triple Play**  
*Jobscan* analyzed 2.5M resumes and found three quick fixes that actually move the needle:

**1**️⃣ **Use the Exact Job Title** — Resumes with an exact title match are **10.6×** likelier to get interviews.  
**2**️⃣ **Submit as .docx, not PDF** — ATS parses Word files more cleanly.  
**3**️⃣ **Delete These:** graphics, full addresses, salary info, or “references available.” They clutter parsing.

**Why it works:** ATS errors kill chances before a recruiter looks. These 90-second tweaks get you past the gate.

**Bottom line:** Beat the bots first. Impress the humans second.

⚡ **Changing Dynamics**

**1**️⃣ **California Cracks Down on AI Hiring Tools**  
As of October 1, California officially made employers legally responsible for bias in their AI screening systems. “The AI did it” is no longer a valid defense. Companies now have to keep four years of hiring data and may need third-party bias audits to stay compliant.

**What this means for you:** expect slower hiring timelines as HR teams add manual reviews and extra paperwork. The upside? More humans are double-checking resumes that used to be auto-rejected.

**2**️⃣ **LinkedIn Kills Engagement Bait**  
Posts that game the algorithm with lines like “Comment YES if you agree!” are now buried. The platform’s AI now measures post quality by engagement in the first hour, rewarding depth and real discussion.

**What this means for you:** quality content now wins visibility. If you post insights or mini case studies, you’ll stand out more easily than before. Clickbait is out; expertise is in.

**3**️⃣ **Workday Faces Age-Bias Class Action**  
Workday’s ATS and its AI partner HiredScore are under fire for allegedly rejecting 1.1 billion applications using age-related “proxy” data (like graduation dates or employment gaps). If the case succeeds, it could rewrite the legal rules for automated hiring.

**What this means for you:** candidates 40+ could gain stronger grounds to challenge unfair rejections. Keep screenshots, timestamps, and correspondence from any suspiciously fast “auto-denials.”

**4**️⃣ **Greenhouse Adds ID Verification via CLEAR®**  
Greenhouse’s new *Real Talent™* feature now requires applicants to verify their identity through CLEAR® before a recruiter even sees their resume. It’s meant to fight fake resumes and deep-fake interviews—but it also means more personal data in third-party hands.

**What this means for you:** be ready for identity checks at application time. Use official portals only, confirm security certificates, and think carefully before uploading government IDs to smaller employers using the same tech.

**Bottom line:** AI hiring just got real rules—and real risks. The systems that were once invisible are now being regulated, audited, and challenged in court. Stay alert, protect your data, and remember: every change meant to protect companies can also protect you—if you know how to play it.

🧠 **AI Tracker**

**1**️⃣ **Indeed’s Dual AI Agents**  
Indeed rolled out *Career Scout* (for candidates) and *Talent Scout* (for recruiters). Career Scout helps job seekers apply faster and tailor resumes automatically, while Talent Scout scans millions of profiles to find matches in seconds.

**What this means for you:** learn how to use Career Scout or similar tools now—AI-assisted applicants are submitting polished resumes while most people are still typing theirs manually.

**2**️⃣ **26% of Jobs Are AI-Transformable**  
Indeed’s latest data shows **one in four jobs** could be heavily automated, while nearly half are partially “hybridized.” Tech, admin, and writing roles are most exposed; healthcare, trades, and education remain steady.

**What this means for you:** map your current skills against AI risk. Upskill where automation hits hardest, and double down on human strengths—communication, empathy, creativity.

**3**️⃣ **Hiring Managers Think They Can Spot AI**  
Nearly nine in ten recruiters believe they can tell when a resume or cover letter was AI-written—and a quarter say they’d reject it on sight.

**What this means for you:** use AI as a drafting tool, not a ghostwriter. Edit heavily. Add personal stories, metrics, and human tone to avoid sounding synthetic.

**4**️⃣ **“Undetectable” Interview Copilots**  
New stealth AI tools like *Cluely* whisper interview answers in real time, invisible even during screen shares.

**What this means for you:** companies are responding by reinstating in-person finals. If you’re invited onsite, it’s not a trap—it’s trust verification.

**Bottom line:** The AI arms race is real, but it’s not unbeatable. Treat these tools like assistants, not replacements. The humans who use AI *well* will edge out both the bots—and the people pretending not to use them.

💬 **Interviewer Behavior**

**The interview process keeps evolving—and not always in your favor. Here’s what’s shifting now:**

**1**️⃣ **Async Video Backlash**  
More companies are using one-way video platforms, but senior candidates are pushing back, calling them “dehumanizing.” Some are even withdrawing from roles that require them.

**What this means for you:** if you’re experienced, ask for a live conversation instead—it shows confidence and sets you apart from passive applicants.

**2**️⃣ **The Mega-Panel Marathon**  
Five-plus interviewers and multi-day gauntlets are becoming normal. It’s not about efficiency; it’s about consensus.

**What this means for you:** ask recruiters upfront how many rounds to expect. Prep short, repeatable stories that reinforce your key wins no matter who’s in the room.

**3**️⃣ **Interview Timelines Are Stretching**  
The average time-to-hire is now **41 days**, up nearly a quarter since 2021. Many candidates drop out mid-process from fatigue.

**What this means for you:** don’t pause your search for one opportunity. Keep parallel pipelines running so you’re never waiting on a single “maybe.”

**4**️⃣ **VR Simulation Interviews**  
Companies are starting to test real-world skills through VR tools like *Bodyswaps*—mock team projects or role-play scenarios inside a headset.  
**What this means for you:** treat them like on-the-job simulations. Stay calm, stay engaged, and demonstrate problem-solving under pressure.

**Bottom line:** Every stage of hiring is now an authenticity check. Be prepared, be patient, and be unmistakably human—because that’s what’s hardest to fake.

📌 **Prompt Lab**

**LinkedIn Profile Mission Statement Optimizer**

Use this to rewrite your About section so it ranks with both AI and humans.

**Prompt:**

Act as a LinkedIn optimization expert. Rewrite my About section using:

CURRENT ABOUT: [paste yours]  
TARGET ROLE: [target title]  
TOP 3 ACHIEVEMENTS: [list with numbers]

Follow these rules: open with a mission statement; blend 5–7 skills into short stories; include 2–3 quantified wins; end with a forward-looking goal; stay under 2,000 characters.

**Why it works:** LinkedIn’s AI ranks for mission language now. “I build safer cities” can rank higher than “Urban Planner.”

**Bottom line:** Your profile is your 24/7 recruiter—make it sell your story.

⚠ **Sketch Radar**

**1**️⃣ **The Boss-Impersonator Scam**  
Fraudsters monitor LinkedIn for new hire announcements, then text employees pretending to be their manager—often saying, *“Hey, can you grab a few gift cards for onboarding?”*  
**What to do:** never respond to financial requests via text. Verify directly through your company email or internal chat before acting.

**2**️⃣ **Messaging-App “Interviews”**  
Scammers run entire fake hiring processes on WhatsApp or Telegram, sending offer letters and cashier’s checks for “equipment purchases.” After you wire the funds to their “vendor,” the bank claws back the fake check—leaving you liable.  
**What to do:** real employers don’t conduct full interviews over text or send money up front. If they refuse video, walk away.

**3**️⃣ **The Nicole Becker Long Con (Oregon, July 2025)**  
A real victim endured two weeks of fake interviews, detailed onboarding materials, and a signed job offer from a spoofed brand—only to learn the entire operation was AI-generated.  
**What to do:** verify every recruiter’s identity on LinkedIn. Look for long work history, connections, and activity. Call the company directly using a number from its *official* website, not the email signature.

**4**️⃣ **$12 Billion Lost to Job Fraud (2025)**  
Employment scams are now the **third most reported fraud type** in the U.S. The FTC and BBB estimate over **75,000 victims** in just the first half of the year.  
**What to do:** forward suspicious texts to **7726 (SPAM)**, and report scams to **ReportFraud.FTC.gov**.

**Bottom line:** scammers now use the same AI tools as recruiters—perfect grammar, real logos, even cloned voices. If a “dream offer” finds *you*, stop and verify before you respond.

💼 **Side Hustle Intel**

**Full-time hiring may be frozen, but the gig economy isn’t. Here’s where job seekers are making real money right now:**

**1**️⃣ **Focus Groups & Paid Studies**  
Companies are paying **$150–$250** for 1–2 hours of consumer feedback on new products, ads, and software.  
**Why it works:** it’s flexible, low-effort income that keeps cash flowing between jobs. Sign up with multiple research panels so you can rotate every few weeks.

**2**️⃣ **The Freelance Platform Boom**  
The global freelance market has doubled since 2020—worth **$5.6B today**, projected to hit **$13.8B by 2030.**  
**Why it works:** platforms like *Fiverr*, *Contra*, and *Revoluu* let you sell skills you already have. Start small, build reviews, and expand into repeat clients.

**3**️⃣ **Reddit’s New Promo Tool**  
Reddit now lets users promote their own safe-for-work posts through low-cost ads, giving side hustlers a new way to find customers.  
**Why it works:** you can boost posts inside niche subreddits where your audience already lives—perfect for freelancers selling templates, tutoring, or digital services.

**4**️⃣ **The $455B Creator Economy**  
The content world keeps exploding—templates, online courses, and digital guides have gone mainstream.  
**Why it works:** packaging your knowledge builds both income *and* authority. One good product can earn for years while showing employers you’re entrepreneurial.

**5**️⃣ **Top-Paying Gig Roles (2025)**  
Amazon reseller – **$102/hr** | AI prompt engineer – **$54/hr** | Digital product seller – **$37/hr** | Podcast editor – **$32/hr** | Rideshare/pet sitter – **$16–$23/hr**

**Bottom line:** Treat side hustles as both income streams and resume boosters. The work you do to stay afloat now could be the proof of initiative that lands your next full-time role.