



**WHAT HIRING MANAGERS NOTICE FIRST**  
**104 Interviewers on the Signals that**  
**Decide Interviews Before Resumes Do**

RESEARCH REPORT





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**Tolu Towoju**  
Founder, Clarivue

## FOREWORD

**When I was working at Dalhousie, I watched the same thing happen over and over. Someone would walk through our door with solid grades, a decent resume, and genuine ambition. We'd prep them as best we could. They'd go into an interview. And then we'd hear nothing for weeks, or get a polite no with no feedback.**

The frustrating part wasn't the rejection. It was the silence after. We had no idea what went wrong. Neither did the candidate. So we'd try harder next time, doing more of the same, and hoping it would land differently.

After talking to over 50 program directors since starting Clarivue, I kept hearing the same thing: they know candidates are falling through the cracks between training and employment. They just can't see where.

This report exists because we went to the other side of the table. We asked 104 hiring managers one question: what's the first thing you notice in an interview that tells you a candidate isn't ready, something that has nothing to do with their resume or qualifications?

Their answers were remarkably consistent. And the patterns they describe map almost perfectly to the gaps that workforce programs, career services teams, and training providers are trying to close, without knowing what to look for.

If you run a program that prepares people for employment, this report is for you. Not because it tells you what you're doing wrong, but because it shows you what the people on the other side of the interview table actually care about. That's the data most programs have never had.

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

We reached out to hiring managers who have hired at least 10 people over the past 6 years:

“What’s the first thing you notice in an interview that tells you a candidate isn’t ready — something that has nothing to do with their resume or qualifications?”

When we sent the question out, I braced for noise. 104 people, different industries, different stakes, different sized companies. The honest expectation was that we’d find loose themes at best and have to caveat the rest.

Then the responses came back. Six patterns. Over and over. In language so consistent it was almost uncomfortable. Their answers ranged from 50 words

to 500 words. Every respondent is credited by name, title, company, and LinkedIn profile so we know these are real people.

We read every response, tagged it by theme, and identified six patterns that showed up again and again across industries, company sizes, and seniority levels. Those six patterns form the structure of this report.

This report features the **50 strongest, most quotable responses**. The remaining **54 are available in a companion workbook**.

The respondents come from health-care, law, construction, technology, manufacturing, hospitality, fitness, marketing, education, military, real estate, and more. That diversity is the point. What hiring managers notice first doesn’t vary much by industry. The signals are human, not technical.

# THE PATTERN

We expected 104 different answers.

*We got six.*

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**That's the most important finding in this report. Across every industry, every company size, every level of seniority, hiring managers notice the same handful of things. Their language differs. Their examples are specific to their fields. But the underlying signals are identical.**

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And here's what should matter to anyone running a workforce program or career services office: almost none of these signals are about technical skill. They're about how a person shows up, how they think under pressure, and how they handle not knowing something.

These are coachable signals. They're diagnosable signals. And right now, most programs have no structured way to identify or address them before a candidate walks into a real interview.



# WHAT 104 HIRING MANAGERS ARE ACTUALLY SCREENING FOR

## 1. OWNERSHIP

**UNREADY** Blames managers, tools, or teammates for past failures. Gives sanitized non-answers to failure questions. Uses “we” without clarity on their specific role or contribution.

**READY** Names a specific mistake they made. Explains what they learned from it. Describes what they’d do differently. Uses “I” statements naturally.

## 2. LISTENING FIRST

**UNREADY** Jumps to solutions without understanding the problem. Answers the question they wish you asked. Never asks a single clarifying question throughout the conversation.

**READY** Pauses before answering. Asks follow-up questions to understand the real problem. Restates the question or frames assumptions before giving their answer.

## 3. COMPOSURE

**UNREADY** Fills silence anxiously. Bluffs through knowledge gaps with adjacent jargon. Folds immediately under gentle pushback, or gets subtly defensive.

**READY** Pauses visibly without apologizing for the pause. Says “I don’t know, but here’s how I’d figure it out.” Engages honestly when challenged. Stays steady.

## 6. PRESENCE

**UNREADY** Launches into a rehearsed monologue on autopilot. Ignores social cues and shifts in tone. Dismisses or overlooks support staff. Treats the space carelessly.

**READY** Enters the room observantly. Matches their energy and tone to the setting. Acknowledges the people around them. Treats the interview as a live two-way conversation.

## 5. COMMUNICATION

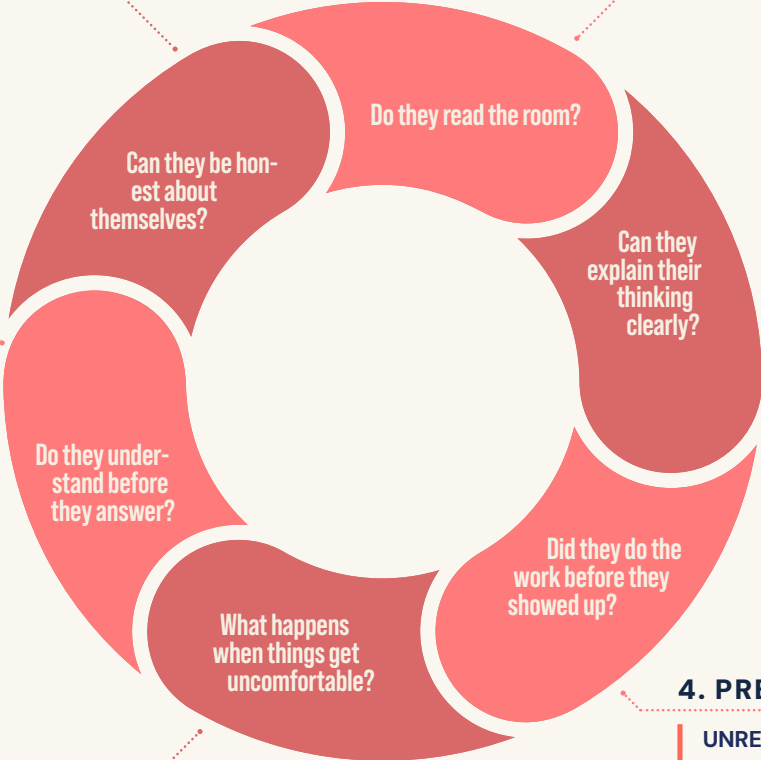
**UNREADY** Hides behind buzzwords and jargon. Rambles, circles back, loses the thread. Can’t translate a technical concept into plain language when asked.

**READY** Speaks plainly and specifically. Structures their answers with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Explains the “why” behind their decisions, not just the “what.”

## 4. PREPARATION

**UNREADY** Knows nothing about the company or the role. Only asks about schedule and pay. Shows no curiosity about the actual work, the team, or the clients.

**READY** References something specific about the organization. Asks genuine questions about the work mid-conversation, not just at the end. Curious about how things work.



Every signal above is coachable. Every signal is observable in a mock interview. The question is whether your program has a way to see them.

## THEME 1

# Ownership: Can they be honest about themselves?

\* **This was the single most common pattern in the dataset. Hiring managers kept coming back to the same idea: can this person talk about a time they were wrong without flinching?**

It showed up in different language. Some called it accountability. Others called it self-awareness or intellectual honesty. A few described it as “the failure question.” But the signal is the same: when a candidate blames every past problem on someone else, or gives a sanitized non-answer when asked about mistakes, hiring managers check out.

The flip side was just as consistent. Candidates who could name a specific mistake, explain what they learned, and describe what they’d do differently were the ones who earned trust in the room. Several respondents said this single signal mattered more to them than anything else in the entire interview.



# Joe Spisak

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## “That vulnerability told me he’d actually learned something.”




**First question I asked: ‘Tell me about a time you completely screwed something up.’ He paused for maybe thirty seconds, then gave me this sanitized story about a ‘communication gap’ that was really nobody’s fault.**

I knew right there he wasn’t ready. The best hire I ever made was a guy who told me he got fired from his previous job for missing a critical deadline because he didn’t ask for help when he was drowning. He walked me through exactly what he should have done differently.”



# Roger Peace

**Director of Client Services, AVENTIS Homes**

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**“I’ve hired and led large teams across both global nonprofit work and now luxury coastal construction.**

**The interview red flag is the same in both: they can’t tell you about a time they were wrong.**


Not a rehearsed ‘my weakness is I work too hard’ answer. I mean a real moment where they misjudged something, owned it, and

adjusted. If someone can’t give me one clear, honest example of being wrong in an interview, I already know how they’ll handle the first thing that goes sideways on a job site or with a client. And something always goes sideways.”



# Brady Soudden

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**“If someone blames every bad job, every old employer, or every mistake on someone else, that usually tells me they are not ready, because on-site work needs people who stay calm, communicate clearly, and take responsibility when something needs fixing.**

**I would rather hire someone with a good attitude and self-awareness than someone trying to sound perfect.”**



# John Mac

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**“The first signal for me is a lack of ownership in how they talk about their past work. Not the results themselves, but the language they use.**

If everything is framed as ‘we did this’ without clarity on what they specifically drove, decided, or learned, it tells me they haven’t fully internalised their role in outcomes. Skills can be developed, but ownership is harder to teach.”



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**“I’ll sometimes gently push back on something a candidate says, even if they’re right. The ones who aren’t ready either fold immediately to please me, or dig in defensively.**

Neither is good. What I’m looking for is someone who pauses, thinks, and engages honestly. The candidate who says ‘I hadn’t thought about it that way, let me reconsider’ is almost always the one who thrives in our culture.

Titles and certifications are easy to verify. How someone handles a moment of friction in a 30-minute conversation tells you everything about how they’ll handle it with your clients.”



# Amit Agrawal

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**“The most significant indicator of whether an applicant is suitable for hire is how they present their previous challenges.**

If an applicant spends the first several minutes explaining how every project was unsuccessful because of ‘poor management’ or ‘bad tools’ and has never taken any responsibility for that, they are probably not a candidate worth hiring. Resilient engineers focus on how they overcame problems, rather than simply listing the challenges that they faced.”



# Cristina Amyot

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**“The first red flag is when a candidate badmouths their past employer or team during behavioral questions.**

Instead of using an ‘I’ statement like ‘I felt frustrated when the project delayed,’ they say ‘My manager screwed it up,’ revealing poor professionalism and a defensive mindset. This signals they’re not ready for team collaboration.”



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**“The tell isn’t technical. It’s how someone handles the moment they don’t know something. I’ve had guys interview who couldn’t explain why flashing fails more than any other roof component, but instead of saying ‘I’m not sure,’ they’d ramble about shingles.**

That evasion tells me everything. Fifty years of family business taught me that character under uncertainty is the whole ballgame. Credentials get you in the door. How you handle not knowing something determines whether you stay.”

## THEME 2

# Listening first: Do they understand before they answer?

**This theme surprised us with how often it came up. Across industries as different as manufacturing, marketing, real estate, and healthcare, hiring managers kept saying the same thing: the candidates who aren't ready jump straight to answers without first understanding the question.**

The language was consistent. "They answer the question they wish I asked." "They start solving before they finish hearing the problem." "They listen to respond, not to understand."

For workforce programs, this is a critical finding. Asking clarifying questions before answering isn't a personality trait. It's a coachable behavior. But most programs don't train for it because they don't know it matters this much.



# Jamie Gyolai

**Vice President, Lean Technologies**

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**“The specific tell is when I describe a real messy situation and ask what they’d do. Candidates who aren’t ready immediately jump to solutions.**

Candidates who are ready ask a clarifying question first. In operations, jumping to solutions before you understand the problem is how you turn a small issue into a shutdown. The best candidates I’ve hired were the ones who got visibly uncomfortable with an incomplete picture. That discomfort with incomplete information is the trait that actually keeps operations running.”



# Jose Escalera

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**“The tell has nothing to do with their resume: they can’t listen, and they answer the question they wish I asked.”**

It shows up fast when I ask something simple like ‘What would you do in your first 30 days here?’ If they jump into a monologue about tactics without asking a single clarifying question about goals, capacity, or constraints, they’re not thinking commercially. Good people diagnose before they prescribe.”



# Vikrant Bhalodia

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**“They answer questions without understanding the context. When asked something slightly open-ended, strong candidates usually ask a clarifying question or frame assumptions before answering.**

**Less-ready candidates jump straight into an answer. It often sounds confident, but misses the actual problem. It’s not about intelligence, it’s about how they approach problems under uncertainty.”**



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\*  
**“After 25+ years negotiating, I can tell in two minutes who thinks an interview is a monologue versus a working meeting.**”

If someone answers everything confidently without once trying to define the problem, they’ll do the same thing in a lease process. The unready candidate jumps straight to neighborhoods and pretty spaces; the ready one asks about headcount, hybrid policy, parking, commute patterns, and what ‘must-win’ terms look like.”



# Gary Leany

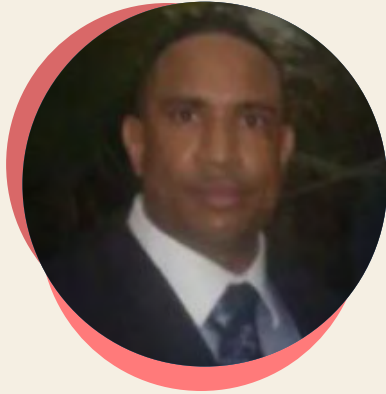
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**“The first thing I notice is whether someone asks questions or just nods. If I describe a scenario and they immediately have all the answers, that’s a red flag.**

The best candidates pause and ask what type of pipe, what the access situation is, whether the homeowner has already tried something. The ones who aren’t ready treat the interview like a test to pass. The ones who are treat it like the first five minutes of a job.”



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**“I watch for one thing fast: do they listen, or do they perform. If they talk over questions, rush to ‘sell’ their method, or can’t reflect back what I said, they’re not ready.**

**I’ll give a simple scenario like ‘busy professional, inconsistent schedule’ and see if they adapt. The ready ones immediately ask availability and structure the plan around the person; the unready ones force a cookie-cutter routine.”**



# Madeline Jack

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\*  
**“The first thing I notice is whether someone asks a single question about the client. Not the role, not the team — the client.”**

I've sat across from sharp candidates who could recite frameworks fluently but had zero instinct to ask 'what does the patient or donor actually experience here?' Someone who doesn't naturally orient toward the end-user misses that entirely.”



# Leon Miller

**Owner, BrushTamer**

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**“The red flag is when they jump straight to tools and tactics without first getting context: access points, what the client wants saved vs. removed, wet areas, slope, utilities, and what the finished surface needs to look like.**

**I want to hear ‘What’s the end use?’ before they talk grinders or excavators. If they don’t naturally think in outcomes and constraints, I know I’ll be babysitting decisions on-site.”**

## THEME 3

# Composure: what happens when things get uncomfortable?

**Several hiring managers described a specific test they run, sometimes deliberately, sometimes just by watching how a candidate handles a natural moment of friction: the moment someone doesn't know the answer.**

What they're looking for isn't perfection. It's how the candidate moves through that moment. Do they freeze? Bluff? Panic-fill the silence? Or do they pause, acknowledge the gap, and think through it honestly?

This pattern has direct implications for interview preparation. Most coaching focuses on helping candidates have the right answers. These hiring managers are saying the more important signal is how candidates behave when they don't have the right answer.



# Sovic Chakrabarti

**Director, Icy Tales**

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**“What I see in candidates who are not ready is a particular kind of verbal motion that happens when the question lands outside their prepared territory.**

They start moving toward an answer before they have one, filling the space with adjacent knowledge that gestures toward the answer without reaching it. It is fluency in the absence of substance. The candidates who are genuinely ready do something different

and simpler. They stop. They think visibly without apologizing for the pause. And then they either answer honestly or describe the boundary of what they know with enough precision that the boundary itself demonstrates expertise.”



# Maxim Von Sabler

**Director & Clinical Psychologist, MVS Psychology Group**

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**“I’ll deliberately pause after a question or leave silence, and an unready candidate fills it anxiously, over-explains, or backtracks on what they just said.**

Working with trauma and complex presentations, a psychologist who can’t tolerate their own discomfort in an interview will struggle to hold space for a client in genuine crisis. I also watch how candidates talk about difficult cases they couldn’t help. The ready ones are honest, reflective, even a little vulnerable about it.”



# John Whitbeck

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**I’ve watched otherwise excellent candidates talk themselves out of offers in real time because they couldn’t tolerate a three-second gap.”**

**“The single clearest signal someone isn’t ready? They can’t sit with silence comfortably. They rush to fill every pause, often with something that undermines them.**

In legal interviews especially, how you handle silence matters enormously. A judge pauses. Opposing counsel pauses. If you panic and start talking, you’ve already lost the room.



# Mike Townsend

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**“Most unready candidates will fill the silence. They’ll ramble, guess, or pivot to something they do know just to avoid looking uncertain.**

In high-stakes environments, that instinct gets people hurt. The candidates who are ready do the opposite. They pause, they own the gap, and they ask a clarifying question. That pause tells me everything. It’s the same discipline we built in the military: mission clarity before action, every time.”



# Elijah Fernandez

**Co-Founder & CTO, CEREVITY**

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**“The other thing I notice immediately is how someone handles not knowing something. If I ask a question and they try to bluff through it, that’s a red flag.**

The people I want on my team say, ‘I don’t know, but here’s how I’d figure it out.’ That’s coachable. Someone who fakes competence is a liability.”



# Stephen Ferrell

**Chief Product Officer, Valkit.ai**

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**“I see this constantly when interviewing for roles at the intersection of compliance and technology. A candidate will walk me through a validation project but can’t articulate why certain testing decisions were made, or worse, they default to ‘because the SOP said so.’**

**I’ll describe a genuinely ambiguous regulatory scenario. Candidates who are truly ready lean in. They get curious. Candidates who aren’t ready go quiet or start hedging immediately, waiting for someone to hand them the answer.”**



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**“The first thing I notice is how someone handles being asked something they don’t know. Some candidates immediately perform confidence, doubling down or deflecting.**

Others collapse visibly, as if not knowing the answer means they’ve failed as a person. Both responses tell me the same thing: their self-worth is entirely fused with their performance. That fusion is what makes someone genuinely unready. When identity and achievement are the same thing, any moment of uncertainty becomes a threat to the whole self.”



# Jennifer Bagley

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**“I watch for how someone responds when I push back on something they said. Not to be difficult, but because speed and decisiveness matter deeply to how we work.”**

If a candidate freezes or folds immediately, that tells me they'll stall when it counts. I need people who can hold a position and update their thinking fast when new information shows up. Readiness isn't about confidence in your past. It's about clarity on what's in front of you.”

## THEME 4

# Preparation: did they do the work before they showed up?

The word “preparation” showed up more than any other in the raw data. But what hiring managers mean by it is narrower than you’d think. They’re not asking candidates to memorize the company’s annual report. They’re asking whether the candidate cared enough to do even basic homework.

The gap between “showed up” and “showed up prepared” turns out to be shockingly wide. And for many hiring managers, that gap is the single clearest proxy for how someone will perform on the job.



# Alexander Dodge

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**“The first thing I notice when conducting screening calls is their level of engagement during the conversation.**

It can be obvious when I am speaking to a candidate who has not made the effort to prepare. I have even had candidates directly ask me to remind them what the job title is, even after emailing them a formal job description ahead of time.”



# Eli Zimmer

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\*  
**“It’s not always a red flag, but it’s at least a yellow flag when a candidate clearly doesn’t know anything about our business.”**

We don’t expect them to be experts in who we are, but we do want them to at least have a decent knowledge of our business heading into an interview. We want to hire people who want to work with us, specifically.”



# Mike Basso

**Founder & CEO, SalesTalent.com**

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\*  
**“My first question is always, ‘What do you know about my company?’**

**If they give a very vague answer or don’t know anything about the company, they have done very little or no preparation for the interview and will likely be a poor fit for the job.”**



# Don Larsen

**CEO Saga Infrastructure**

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**“The first thing I notice is whether they ask anything about the business. Not a rehearsed question at the end.**

A genuine, curious question mid-conversation that shows they did their homework and actually care where they're landing. Candidates who never ask anything are telling you they're focused on getting the job, not doing the job. That's a real difference, and it shows up in execution later.”



# Tom Gordon

**Owner, Twin Metals Roofing**

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\*  
**“The first thing I notice is whether someone asks questions about the work itself or just about the schedule and pay.**

I interviewed a guy for a crew lead position who asked nothing about the projects, the materials, or how we run a job. Only when he'd get paid and what time he'd be done. That told me everything. The people who stick around and do exceptional work are the ones who want to understand why we do things the way we do.”



# Eric Osburn

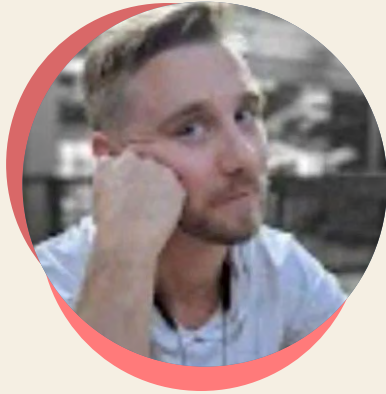
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**“The other thing I watch for is how they respond when I say ‘we’ll train you, experience isn’t required.’**

Some candidates visibly relax and stop trying. The ones I hire actually get more curious and start asking questions. That hunger matters more than anything on paper when you’re learning a trade from scratch.”



# Christian Leszczak

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**“The first tell is when someone talks like they’re here to ‘get the job’ instead of here to solve a real problem for real people.**

I watch for whether they ask thoughtful questions early. If a candidate doesn’t naturally ask ‘What are you seeing with your patients lately?’ or ‘How do you tailor plans based on labs and lifestyle?’ they’re not ready for a clinic that lives on customization.”



# Walt Carter

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**“The tell is simple: do they ask a genuine question in the first five minutes, or do they just wait for their next turn to talk?”**

The best leaders I’ve placed came in wanting to understand the situation before offering solutions. Most unprepared candidates are the ones driving blind themselves. They can’t lead what they don’t first take the time to understand.”

## THEME 5

# Communication: can they explain their thinking?

**Several hiring managers described a specific gap: candidates who clearly had experience but couldn't explain what they did or why they did it. The knowledge was there. The ability to communicate it wasn't.**

This showed up in two ways. Some candidates hid behind jargon and buzzwords, using complexity to mask a lack of depth. Others went the other direction and couldn't structure a coherent explanation of their own work, rambling, circling back, losing the thread.

For programs that prepare people for employment, this is a high-leverage coaching target. Communication clarity isn't personality. It's a skill. And it's one that hiring managers weight heavily, often more heavily than the technical skills the candidate was supposedly there to demonstrate.



# Jon Hill

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**“Too many buzzwords is the biggest red flag. When a candidate comes in speaking in vague, generic statements, it gives me pause.**

When someone speaks plainly, that’s what signals real understanding. The mark of expertise isn’t how complex you can make something sound, but whether you can break it down in a way that makes sense to someone else. Overreliance on buzzwords often reads as a lack of confidence, whereas the candidates who speak directly and clearly tend to be the ones who are comfortable in their experience.”



# George Fironov

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**“The first thing I would look for is a general lack of clarity in the way the candidate communicates their thought process.”**

When a candidate is unable to communicate effectively how they arrive at a particular conclusion, or they tend to jump around from thought to thought, this could be a candidate that does not necessarily understand what they are doing or how they are generating value. A well-prepared candidate is able to effectively communicate how they are solving a particular problem.”



# Brandie Young

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**“The real signal isn’t polish. It’s adaptability.”**

Can you shift how you communicate mid-conversation based on who’s in front of you? I once interviewed someone who kept using jargon like ‘synergistic content verticals.’ When I asked them to explain it simply, they froze. If you can’t explain your thinking to me in plain language, you won’t be able to do it for a client either.”



# Assaf Sternberg

**Founder & CEO, Tiroflx**

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**“The first thing I notice is whether a candidate can clearly explain their decision-making process. In our business, we deal with complex sourcing challenges, so ownership and clarity matter more than titles.**

If someone cannot explain how they approached a problem, it usually signals a lack of real experience. Strong candidates always show structured thinking.”



# Aditya Nagpal

**Founder & CEO, Wisemonk**

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**“The first signal is a lack of clarity in how they communicate their own decisions.**

When candidates speak in generalities or rely on rehearsed answers, it often shows they have not reflected on their actual contributions or thought process. Readiness is less about polish and more about self-awareness and ownership.”



# David Brenneman

**Owner, The Village at Mint Spring**

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\*  
**“The first ‘not ready’ tell I see is when a candidate can’t adjust their communication to the room.**”

Same volume, same pace, same jargon. Like they’re performing a script instead of connecting with people. I’ll often shift from operational questions to a scenario about a resident concern, and some folks keep barreling forward with what they rehearsed instead of meeting the moment. The candidates who are ready don’t just answer. They listen, clarify, and adapt on the fly.”



# Josh Long

**Install Sales Manager, Regal Garage Doors**

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**“The fastest ‘not ready’ tell has nothing to do with tools or door knowledge: they can’t communicate in a clear, written, step-by-step way.**

If they ramble, dodge specifics, or can’t restate the problem plainly, they’ll create surprises on install day. I’ll ask them to explain, like to a homeowner, what happens when a door feels ‘heavy.’ The not-ready person can’t translate ‘spring tension drops, opener strains’ into a calm, simple recommendation.”



# Sabrina Tolson

**Sales and Marketing Director, Vert Environmental**

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**“A super specific flag: they talk about ‘quality’ and ‘customer service’ but can’t ask one clarifying question to tighten scope.**

I’ve interviewed people who gave polished answers, then stumbled when I asked them to explain independence to a homeowner in one sentence. If they can’t translate technical trust into human language, they’re not ready for a client-first role.”

## THEME 6

# Presence: do they read the room?

**This theme captures something harder to name but easy to spot: how a person shows up physically and socially. Are they observant? Do they notice the environment, the people, the energy? Do they adapt?**

Several hiring managers described this as the “day one preview.” How someone behaves in an interview room is how they’ll behave with clients, patients, customers, or colleagues. The interview isn’t a separate performance. It’s a live demonstration of how this person operates.

For programs coaching candidates toward employment, presence is often the most overlooked dimension. It’s not confidence (though that’s part of it). It’s awareness. And it’s something that mock interviews can reveal and address if the right signals are being tracked.



# Nina Izhaky

**Owner, Tribeca Dental Studio**

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\*  
**“The first thing that tells me someone isn’t ready? They can’t read the room they’re actually in.”**

I once had a candidate come in for a patient-facing role. Technically strong on paper. But they sat down and launched into a rehearsed monologue without once glancing around the studio, noticing the environment, or picking up on any social cues. Watch how someone enters the space before they say a single word. Are they curious? Observant? That tells me everything about how they’ll show up for patients on day one.”



# Damien Zouaoui

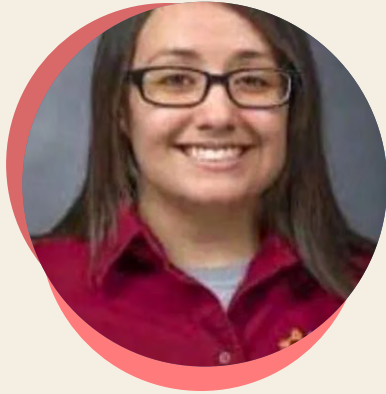
**Co-Founder, Oakwell Beer Spa**

 [linkedin.com/in/damienzouaoui](https://www.linkedin.com/in/damienzouaoui)



**“The first thing I notice is whether they can take responsibility for the room in a calm way.**

Not just answer questions. I look for candidates who treat the interview like a service moment: they arrive a few minutes early, they match their energy to the setting, and they communicate clearly about constraints without over-explaining. If someone can't manage that small interaction, it's a red flag for how they'll handle a real guest when things get busy.”



# Ashley Cordova

**Vice President, Zia Building Maintenance**

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**“It’s how they treat the space they walk into. I’ve had candidates visibly dismiss the environment.**

A slight wrinkle of the nose at the cleaning equipment near the lobby, or completely ignoring the person at the front desk. A candidate who notices and respects their surroundings shows up the same way on a job site. The candidates who are actually ready treat every environment like it matters, because it does.”



# Christopher Pappas

**Founder, eLearning Industry Inc**

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**“The first thing we notice is whether a candidate can read the room.**

Readiness often shows up as awareness in simple ways. A prepared person pays attention to tone, pacing, and context. They understand an interview is a live conversation and not a speech. One clear sign of low readiness is over-rehearsed answers that sound forced. We trust people more when they pause and answer with clarity.”



# Elijah Fernandez

**Co-Founder & CTO, CEREVITY**

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**“Energy. Not enthusiasm,  
not hype. Energy.”**

When someone sits down and they’re already somewhere else mentally, it’s obvious within the first thirty seconds. They might have the perfect resume and say all the right things, but if they’re going through the motions, I can feel it. The candidates who stand out are the ones who are genuinely curious about what we’re building.”



# Dr. Allen Rosen

**President and Medical Director,  
The Plastic Surgery Group of New Jersey**

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**“The first tell is how they handle a simple pause.**

If they can't sit with one clarifying question without defensiveness or rushing, they're not ready for a field where patients are anxious. Second tell: how they treat the 'invisible' people. If they're dismissive to the coordinator who brought them in, or they don't acknowledge the medical assistant, they're not ready. Outcomes and safety are team sports, not solo performances.”



# Marlene Brooks

**Owner, Elite Dymond Designs Beauty School**

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**“The first thing I notice is how a candidate carries themselves the moment they walk in, before they say a single word.**

Slouched posture, no eye contact, mumbling a greeting? That tells me everything about how they'll show up for a client. The candidates who aren't ready treat the interview like something happening to them instead of an opportunity they're running.”



# Ammon Nelson

**Member Manager, Ammon Nelson Law, PLLC**

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**“The first non-resume tell is how a candidate treats the small logistics of the interview.**

Parking, timing, the front desk, and whether they take ownership of simple friction. If they show up flustered and immediately blame traffic, I know they'll do the same when a custody hearing gets moved, a client panics, or a deadline tightens. In family law, clients don't hire excuses; they hire calm problem-solvers.”

# WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROGRAMS

Read through these 50 quotes and one thing becomes clear: the signals that decide interviews have almost nothing to do with technical skills or qualifications.



## **Hiring managers are screening for six things.**

Can this person own their mistakes? Do they listen before they answer? Can they hold it together when they don't know something? Did they care enough to prepare? Can they explain their thinking clearly? Are they aware of the room they're in and the people around them?

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Every single one of those signals is coachable. Every single one is observable in a mock interview. And right now, most workforce programs, career services offices, and training providers have no structured way to identify which of these signals a candidate is missing before they walk into a real interview.

## **That's the gap this report was designed to make visible.**

The question for program directors isn't whether these signals matter. The hiring managers in this report have answered that definitively. The question is whether your program has a way to diagnose them before your candidates meet employers.

# HOW CLARIVUE CLOSES THIS GAP

The six signals in this report aren't soft. They're trackable.



Ownership. Listening.  
Composure. Preparation.  
Communication. Presence.  
Every hiring manager in this report is screening for some combination of these six. Every one of them is observable in a structured mock interview. And every one of them is fixable with targeted coaching — if you know which signal is missing for which learner.

That's the gap Clarivue was built for.

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**Our Mock Interview Engine runs role-calibrated simulations and scores each candidate against these six signals, not against a generic "how'd they do" rubric. Advisors get a readiness profile per learner, so coaching stops being guesswork.**

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Multiply that by 80 learners and you have something most programs have never had: a caseload-level view of which signals are weak, which advisors are getting traction, and which learners are actually ready to be sent to an employer.

*That's the difference between hoping a placement lands and knowing why it will.*

# WHAT'S NEXT?

*Find out what these gaps are costing your program*

The screenshot shows the clarivue.io website interface. On the left, under 'Your program', there are four input fields: 'Learners per year' (300), 'Program type' (Workforce Development), 'Advisors / staff' (16), and 'Current caseload' (3200). A red button labeled 'Calculate my gap cost' is at the bottom of this section. On the right, five colored boxes display results: 'YOUR TRAINING-TO-EMPLOYMENT GAP COSTS' (\$578,500/year), 'TIME LOST' (3,300 hours), 'MONEY LOST' (\$148,500), 'PEOPLE LOST' (86 learners), and '+56 placements'.

Metric	Value
Training-to-Employment Gap Costs	\$578,500/year
Time Lost	3,300 hours
Money Lost	\$148,500
People Lost	86 learners
Placements Gained	+56 placements

The six signals in this report are invisible in most program dashboards. Our Hidden Cost calculator shows you what they're costing you in advisor time, budget, and placements that didn't happen.

**Takes about two minutes. No demo, no sales call.**

[clarivue.io/hidden-cost](https://clarivue.io/hidden-cost)

Want to talk to us directly?



AI infrastructure for workforce and  
employment training programs

[clarivue.io](https://clarivue.io)

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