

Joe Cardillo, Reading the Room

February 2024

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[00:00:05] **Amy:** Hello and welcome to What is Wrong with Hiring, the podcast where we talk about why hiring people and getting hired in tech are both absolute nightmares, and try to figure out what we can do about it. I'm Amy Santee, a career strategist and coach for user experience professionals.

[00:00:21] Today I'm excited to be talking with coach, trainer, speaker, and founder of the early manager, Joe Cardillo. Joe, who uses they them pronouns, previously worked in marketing and communications, journalism, and startups, where they developed a deep expertise in how to build and scale inclusive teams and operations.

[00:00:39] Joe also serves as a moderator for the Albertslist Jobs and Career Community, co leads the 8 Weeks to Employed Bootcamp for Job Seekers, and provides coaching for Job Seekers. So if you're interested in learning more about Joe, check out the show notes for some links. Welcome Joe!

[00:00:56] **Joe:** Amy, what's up? Hey, great to catch up. I'm [00:01:00] excited.

[00:01:00] **Amy:** yes, I've really been looking forward to this. Lots of fantastic stuff. We're going to be discussing today. And before we start, I just want to thank you for being such a great contributor to the community and supporter of diverse voices in business and leadership. Including women, people of color, LGBTQ community.

[00:01:20] I always love all of the public resources you create for people and share on LinkedIn. And I also appreciate that you both walk the talk and talk the walk when it comes to living your core values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

[00:01:34] **Joe:** Appreciate that. That's very kind of you to say, and it takes a resource person to see a resource person. And I love the stuff that you do and your various resources for job seekers and folks in and around tech and UX.

[00:01:45] And I'm a believer that like we try to create things that are useful for each other. That's like a principle of the open web. And if we do that, then we

usually find opportunities. To work and collaborate and things like that. And so I always try to come from that place. And my life has [00:02:00] been enriched by people who've brought that spirit to it.

[00:02:02] So I try to return that favor.

[00:02:05] **Amy:** Yeah, the importance of community and reciprocity, especially in the system that we live and work in today. So yeah, and thank you for the kind feedback. Our topic for today is reading the room when you're going through the interview process. And when I think of reading the room, I think of being in a space or a place like an office or party or Some other event and having a good contextual sense for what's going on there, who people are and what they care about and figuring out how to interact with people effectively and behave according to the cultural context.

[00:02:41] So I can, avoid missteps or awkward interactions. How does that track with the way you think about reading the room?

[00:02:50] **Joe:** I think it's it's very consistent and aligned with how I approach the topic. And I think the one additional thing I would say is what are the operational constraints [00:03:00] of a particular workplace? And by that, I mean like the business model and the customers and the users and the product, are you working on a legacy part of the product or a startup or a new part of the product things like that.

[00:03:14] Also tend to factor in an impact and influence the degree to which, someone's EQ or kind of perspective or biases come to play. Cause the more those things are difficult to work in, the more our personal predilections and biases come up. I'm very aligned with, the way that you think about it and also just adding that extra component too.

[00:03:33] **Amy:** So if we think about Someone going through the job search process and the interview process. What's the most effective way to incorporate this concept of reading in the room over the course of an interview, say with your initial interactions with a recruiter, hiring manager team.

[00:03:52] **Joe:** Yeah. The way that I approach it is Staging it a little bit according to sort of where you are at in the process. Because you don't want to [00:04:00] spend a lot of time obviously researching if you're not even in the interview process, right? You're just applying for a role, but there is a little bit of like reading room that you can do to understand the.

[00:04:09] I call it messaging match, which is a marketing term. You can think about it as you see an ad, and then you click through and then there's a landing page and how much does the content or the messaging between those two things match.

[00:04:19] But I think it's similar in the early staging of a job search when you're finding an opportunity and assessing like, is there a match here? And how do I position myself?

[00:04:28] So there's a little bit of kind of light reading the room in that. And then once you actually get, to the interview phase, whether it's the recruiter screen or, the hiring manager or panel interview, et cetera, then you're sort of like reading it a little bit deeper. And trying to understand what is the context which I would be working in this role and, what are the risks and the, the.

[00:04:47] Pros and the cons and all that sort of thing. And so there's a little bit of a kind of a graded version of reading your room that goes with that.

[00:04:53] **Amy:** You mentioned positioning. Can you talk a little bit more about what positioning means?

[00:04:59] **Joe:** Yeah. I [00:05:00] think, with positioning a lot of times it, and I'm, no judgment because I'm as guilty of this as anyone where we, we read the job description and we're like, Oh, this is amazing.

[00:05:09] It sounds great. That's not always everything that, you know, that the job encompasses. I've read job descriptions that are very well done and, they're extremely detailed. But no matter how contextually appropriate a job description is, it can't contain everything that exists in a team or role or.

[00:05:25] An organization and so let's say you're applying to a role or you're interviewing for a role in a big part of the job is that they just shifted from one tool to another. That's core to the work, right? For a designer, it could be moving from, an Adobe product to Figma, which is.

[00:05:40] Now I was gonna say owned by Adobe, but if I'm remembering the acquisition just got rejected. Is

[00:05:45] **Amy:** It did. They decided to part ways.

[00:05:49] **Joe:** Okay. So this is still relevant as an example. Maybe a big part of the design job that you're applying for interviewing, like Figma has been the

go to, but you're switching so contextually there's a risk to [00:06:00] that because changing all of your design system tools is a big deal.

[00:06:03] And so the positioning like lesson that will come from that, what's the risk to this. Team of switching like a major core tool. And it would not be just that you have experience with whatever tool they're moving to

[00:06:16] it would be that you have experienced switching a major tool in general. So then you would position yourself to say, look, switching a new tool is a big risk. I've actually done that. Here's an example that would go in your cover letter. Maybe that would go in your interview too. So that's just like an example of how I would think about that type of message matching or positioning.

[00:06:35] **Amy:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And thinking about the job search process and as you move forward, you have. More conversations. You talk about more specific things around your technical skills. What the work looks like. You talk to different stakeholders.

[00:06:51] How can people think about the like evolution of their positioning over the course of the interview [00:07:00] process. Yeah,

[00:07:02] **Joe:** question. And so here's an example, that I think is useful. So there's this organization called carb X. This is an actual example. I had a client who applied for this role, but they're not in the mix for it. They went with something else so I can share it, I think pretty openly so this is a job at carb X, which is like this, the research accelerator in biotech and, and I don't, there's a lot of technical stuff I don't understand about the job. I just did a little read the room as we were. thinking about the opportunity, but they do a lot of granting or funding of startups. And they get money from huge players in the space,

[00:07:36] so they. Put a ton of money into an intermediary. Same thing for the government as well. You put a ton of money in these huge tranches or chunks and then that regrating work find startups. That's them and puts, money and then helps them grow. So that's the, the context of the org.

[00:07:51] The role was a communications manager role and the big. Positioning points for that one that are that sort of evolved as we were talking through the process like [00:08:00] one was translating highly technical content because what I just described is probably not even the best description of it, but it's, obviously very technical field with a lot of variation.

[00:08:09] So that's one aspect is just like. Being able to, as you have a couple of conversations in the interview process, speak sort of, even if you don't come from that world, being able to talk about like biotechnology and how you would translate that if you're creating content, right? Press releases, webinars fact sheets, things like that.

[00:08:28] Another piece would be the communications workflow or operations piece. And one of the sort of challenges of this particular role would be that there isn't really a developed communications team, even though it's a pretty successful org so far, it's, maybe eight or 10 years old, so it's not totally new.

[00:08:44] The reporting structure, which is a thing I often bring up or reading the room is who would you report to? And is it missing anything? And the reporting structure in this case was there's no VP of marketing or comms. There's no, director head of comms. It's just communications manager and [00:09:00] COO essentially.

[00:09:01] So there's like missing a little bit of that team structure that you would expect in a more evolved org. Which would raise that question as you're getting into interviews. What is this process like for, translating highly technical stuff? Am I going to have to do all that?

[00:09:13] And, do the external facing social media, newsletter, website, content type thing. That's a lot of jobs in one, right? So what is the most important prioritization would be one of the core questions you'd get into in the interview process. Cause you can't do it all.

[00:09:29] **Amy:** That's a really great point. And it makes me wonder, are there any, traps or challenges in the process of reading the room that you see people fall into, like some common I don't know obstacles or things that make it a bit harder to read the room or detours

[00:09:49] **Joe:** yeah, that's a really great question. And It's probably a bit unique for each circumstance. There's a lot of variables in the process. But I would say there's sort of two traps that I do see pretty [00:10:00] regularly. And, one is that you just don't have enough information, right?

[00:10:04] I think sometimes And again, no sort of judgment. I come from this place too. Sometimes we just get a little anxious because there's just not that much data or information. And, like with the example I gave, there was a job description that was a little thin, right? And that's, that sometimes happens where you're like, there's just not a lot to work with here.

[00:10:19] And so, you know, that could be a red flag, but it could also just be that , it's a new role or there's a lot of room for you to define it. So I think one of the traps is just to avoid over analyzing too early in the process. And just like being methodical about getting more information.

[00:10:36] Like you have that recruiter screen and you're like, Hey, you do the normal, tell me about yourself. Why do you want to work here? All that kind of stuff. And then you say, the job description had a few things in it, but tell me a little bit more about what. What are the most important things that the hiring manager is looking for in this role?

[00:10:53] So you would seek to really just draw out and get more information. I think the other trap is only getting [00:11:00] information from one place you get the interview, go look up the team, and find six or eight or ten people who are either on that team or they're around that team, they might be like a key partner or collaborator, and send at least a good handful of people a message and say, hey, I'm interviewing for this role.

[00:11:18] Would you be open to a quick question? I'm just wondering if XYZ is a workplace you'd recommend to friends, family, or colleagues. A lot of people aren't going to respond, right? It's a cold outreach, but if you get one or two back and they just give you even the tiniest bit of insight, you're going to get an additional context point.

[00:11:34] For what it would be like to actually work there.

[00:11:37] **Amy:** And some job postings aren't written very well or they're maybe not written by the person who's the actual hiring manager or you know there's so much variation and I talked to People about the idea of two things that relate to what you're saying. One is the importance of collecting enough data at different points in the process.

[00:11:58] So you can look at a job posting and get [00:12:00] really excited. You can look at one and go, ah, this is meh. And maybe you find something in the middle and you're going to have to make a decision about whether or not. This is enough information and it seems clear enough for you to decide at that moment, yes or no in terms of applying but then you might go, I'm not really sure.

[00:12:21] I don't want to make assumptions about the position or the company. So I'm at least going to explore it and apply and just see, so You're not making a

decision when you don't have enough information, right? You're making a decision based on the fact that you need more information.

[00:12:38] And I think that's applicable over the course of the interview processes to really do your due diligence and collect enough data, understand the context, talk to different people and make sure you know the questions at each point in the process that makes sense. to explore or the type of data to [00:13:00] collect in conversations or just in observations of the process and, your secondary research on LinkedIn.

[00:13:07] And bringing that all together so you can decide whether or not to keep going through the process and also how to refine your positioning. And do you have any examples of people who, as they've gone through the process and they've been reading the room have made a pivot in how they position themselves, based on what they learned, like they got a lot more targeted or refined, they were reflecting back to the hiring manager a little bit more effectively, that sort of thing?

[00:13:40] **Joe:** Yeah. One thing I'll say just right off the bat is to tap on what you said, because I think it's really. Insightful. And I just want to translate it a little bit to another way of thinking about it, which is you're tapping on pacing in both directions. And I don't use the metaphor all the time, but a lot of people do.

[00:13:55] And I think it's appropriate. The dating metaphor, it's a. Good interview [00:14:00] hiring process is like dating in both directions,

[00:14:02] Which, upper pro to some of the conversations you and I and other folks have all the time about power and kind of balancing is, look, if it's all one way, then that's not really a great relationship starter, and so that, that goes in both directions, although usually the employer tends to have the majority of the power in the hiring process. Um, So I think the pacing is really important and. What I tell clients that I work with for job seeking is like, I call it emotional leverage.

[00:14:28] You have to keep things in the queue. So you, even if you have an opportunity that's in the interview process and you're like so excited and it's exactly what you want. Keep applying, keep adding more things, because you need to keep, emotional leverage in the process. Not for them, but for you, so that you feel relaxed and good about your, opportunities.

[00:14:47] So I think that pacing thing is important. And then in terms of going back to what you were saying about positioning throughout the process of an interview, and just like adjusting, yeah, I think constantly iterating and being ready. Because one of [00:15:00] the questions that you really do need to.

[00:15:02] Answer. And, I have to give credit here to Albert Keon, who's the founder of Albert's List, which is a jobs community and professional development community. I've been part of that community and I'm one of the moderators for it as well. He, Albert talks about this a lot. He talks about like understanding what the risk is across the room and the perception that a hiring manager or hiring team has.

[00:15:24] What are the risks of hiring? It's a lot of work to hire someone. There's time and money involved. And so, you know, you're naturally thinking about risk. And so I think as you get deeper into the interview process, that's where you're repositioning to address risk. And I think.

[00:15:40] Ideally, you're really just doing your homework throughout and asking the best possible questions and hopefully also doing sort of outreach and networking to get more context so that you can, adjust. And here's an example because it's helpful to be practical, right? I've shared this a couple of times, but from a little ways back, I did some work with a client who's a product [00:16:00] manager and they're really great at SAS subscription stuff, but they're also a creative person and super outdoorsy and into, snowboarding and hiking and adventure stuff.

[00:16:10] And we were looking at some sort of opportunities and one of them was GoPro? And GoPro, we all know GoPro is the camera, you put it on your helmet, you take all this footage, etc. But GoPro is also Pivoting into, I don't know if this is the right phrase, but like processing tools, meaning in addition to hardware for capture, they're also offering some subscription based tools where you can upload your footage and process and maybe edit it on the cloud.

[00:16:35] I don't know if it's very good or not. I haven't tested it, but that's, a new part of the business. And in fact, If you go look at their public company earnings, you quickly scan and answer the question of like, how much of GoPro's business is traditional hardware versus subscription stuff.

[00:16:51] You can see they're doing well, right? It's very new. So the total dollar amount is low, but the growth rate of the subscription SaaS part of the business is high. So [00:17:00] here you have a product manager who's, been

through the process before of, scaling product management around a platform or subscription based service.

[00:17:07] You can right away, you can see if you go look at their public company earnings and the way they describe the tools and the tool set, like that's an opportunity to reposition yourself as you go through the process. And, talk about the risks of, moving something that's more hardware to more software, et cetera.

[00:17:22] So anyway, just a practical example.

[00:17:24] **Amy:** Yeah, absolutely. Something else that comes to mind is the concept of implicit and explicit values. And so explicit values going back to what you said about job postings, trying to positively reflect the company culture or how things get done at the organization. Here's what we value and the kind of people we're looking for.

[00:17:49] Explicit values that are stated on the website or, looking at employees LinkedIn posts, right? Trying to understand it for face value or even a bit in [00:18:00] terms of their business, their actions, their business model, all of that. And then there's this other idea of, implicit values, which are the actual values which may or may not match the explicit values.

[00:18:13] So I'm wondering and especially how things might reveal themselves or change once you get inside of an organization. Is there a way for people, or how would you recommend people investigate and try to get a more accurate sense of what the implicit values are when they're reading the room.

[00:18:34] **Joe:** Yeah. That's such a great question to raise. And another way is to borrow a phrase from folks we know who do DEI work is what is the performative, the theatrical versus the, the operational, the work and I think it's really one of the most important parts.

[00:18:51] As a job seeker, because you don't want to be matched to a workplace and you're not going to get a perfect workplace. They're not going to get a perfect employee. Sorry. Side note [00:19:00] here, footnote for these companies that are like, I'm going to repost this job for the 39th time because I didn't get the perfect person.

[00:19:06] Don't work there. That's not a safe place to work for most of us.

[00:19:10] **Amy:** Yeah. There's something going on there.

[00:19:12] **Joe:** Yeah, usually there's one of the most common scenarios with that is the person who's hiring for the role doesn't really understand the work or they've never hired for that type of role and their expectations are just off or, the classical kind of micromanager founder thing, where I'm looking for someone who thinks exactly like I do.

[00:19:29] Oh, fantastic. Have a great time finding that person. So I, I think that's a really important concept, and to some extent, with very few exceptions, I don't, this is going to sound weird, but I don't read the values sections of people's websites or their DEI statement or whatever, because, And every now and then I'm surprised, so I appreciate a well crafted, value statement and mission statement, but a lot of times there's a gap.

[00:19:55] And so I'm really just like, I quickly scan that and then I'm mostly looking for the gap [00:20:00] between sort of the stated versus the real. How do you get answers to that? You're looking for subtext and stuff in the margin, so that can be difficult. But an example would be, learning to ask really specific direct questions, like what's your management style. I can tell you that if you ask a manager, the hiring manager, that question if they haven't thought about it and they just give you like a I'm very collaborative and I like to work with people. Okay, that's a little, very cool. Awesome. Thanks.

[00:20:27] What you're looking for with a question like that, for example, is like someone who's thought about and practiced and, what would an answer look like that would tell you if there's, that match between sort of the stated external, versus the implied. Is, does this person have a standard set of frameworks that they use?

[00:20:44] So they might say something like, Oh yeah I've led teams for five years or three years or whatever. I use a standard set of tools. I really keep a one on one on the calendar. Every couple of weeks is my team. I keep a running doc. I typically also practice active listening, situational [00:21:00] leadership.

[00:21:00] And then if they can give you an example or two of maybe somebody on their team that they work with. Then you're at least closer to like, okay, this person is paying attention to the nature of how they manage. And there's self awareness and other things included with that too. Versus, and here's the classical example that I know you'll be familiar with versus the manager.

[00:21:18] Who's like, well, I was very talented as an individual contributor and now I'm managing and I don't really have any support. So my management style is I'm, I want to be a good manager and helpful. Okay, but how are you

practicing that right? What are the literal frameworks tools? How are you investing in that?

[00:21:35] And so that is an example. It's again, it's kind of unique and there's a lot of different cases, but that's an example of something that goes beyond the present, the presented and into the like operational.

[00:21:45] **Amy:** Yeah. Yeah. And I've always. Thought that hiring managers should be able to respond to questions with the star framework. So situation, task, action, result, provide examples. [00:22:00] And I like what you said. It's not vague, right? What you described is someone responding in a more specific way that indicates that they've thought about it, that they're intentional, that they actually care about it.

[00:22:10] And one step further could be, like providing some sort of example to illustrate that, which is what candidates are expected to do. So yeah, it would be nice if people would provide examples, but that is not always the case.

[00:22:23] And I do think it has to do with people just not thinking about it or seeing themselves as also, Trying to sell that position and company to the candidate, right? Going back to the power dynamic.

[00:22:36] **Joe:** Yeah. And another question that I think dovetails with that, that to your point. Is, you're trying to suss it out. It's tell me a little about how power is shared or created in the organization or the team. And I know that sounds like a really wonky question.

[00:22:48] And granted, you know, I do coaching and training and I'm very interested in leadership and, not the crappy bullshit version, but the like really tough, real accountable version of leadership and be [00:23:00] inclusive, and I think that there are ways of looking into that with folks and a lot of times the answer is you don't get an answer and that is you have to just pay attention to when you don't get a response to you know, because a lot of companies, just to use the broader version that we're all familiar with, a lot of companies will just slap up photos of black or, Latina or, Muslim employees.

[00:23:22] Sometimes it's stock photos. It's not even actual employees. Please don't do that. If anyone happens to be listening as a hiring manager recruiter, just stop doing that. The, that's such a common practice and a trope that we all recognize now. But the reality is that, it's not a great workplace for, a Muslim woman to work, it's not safe because they're the only one in their team or the unit or whatever. And, they're not getting credit for the work. They're not,

getting, giving room to experiment and try things. Other people can fail, but they can never fail because they're the only, you know, those kinds of like things you can, you can ask pretty direct questions about it.

[00:23:55] And in fact I recommend for people who are thinking about really being [00:24:00] inclusive. And I don't use the word ally. I think it's, some people will say that to me. I don't really care. For me it's what you do and not what you're called. That's important. But I think for all of us in the hiring process, we can ask those direct questions.

[00:24:13] And yes, you may get screened out of certain workplaces because they don't want to have that conversation. But ultimately to your point, that specificity, I think looking for and asking about that specificity is something that really. Helps you read the room and understand to what degree is this person or this company really serious about the thing that they're saying they're serious about on their mission, vision, values, positioning, et cetera.

[00:24:38] **Amy:** Mm hmm. Mm hmm. And in a way, the questions that we ask in the interview process in order to read the room are a form of positioning? So if you ask how I forget how you phrased it asking about what power looks like in an organization, that kind of language, I think, reflects people who are a lot more in tune with Power and the [00:25:00] concept and practice of power in organizations, right?

[00:25:03] I can imagine someone also saying asking the question like, I'm interested in understanding how the engineering team works with design. Product marketing, whatever, right? So I'm interested in this thing. Can you give me an example of a recent project where the engineers that are on your team were able to collaborate effectively?

[00:25:29] And how was that done? And what was the result? So you're framing it as a topic you're interested in, and then a specific question. And again, It reflects how you're positioning yourself. It, I think, illustrates that you are being considerate and thoughtful about what you really want to know.

[00:25:47] It can also be a softer way, right? Like, you know, Screening candidates out who might come in and want to rock the boat. on these really important [00:26:00] topics like DEI and accessibility and power dynamics and all of that. We exist, but if we are transparent about that, it can screen us out. And it leads me to my next question, which is, does authentic positioning look like versus inauthentic positioning that might come from a pressure to perform in a certain way in order to get a job, right?

[00:26:34] If you have personal values or beliefs that might conflict with other peoples or with the organizations, right? How do you balance the authenticity of your positioning and transparency and what you care about with the potential risk of Maybe not being invited to continue in the interview process.

[00:26:54] **Joe:** Yeah. Okay, let me say two things. One, just to tap on what you were saying about [00:27:00] essentially ways of working to some extent. I'm, and I just wanted to mention this because I think a great read on this is from Elisa Valdez David Ramirez, who's a really fantastic engineering leader.

[00:27:10] I believe Strava leading the engineering function there. But there's an essay called finding your ideal tech role. If you look up Elisa Valdez de Ramirez and medium. com, you'll find that article, and there's a section about ways of working, which talks about like the work styles and the specificity.

[00:27:27] And there's some very specific questions that Elisa put in there that you can ask in an interview to find out, is this, what kind of place is this? Um, and, And I think it also, to your point, offers that kind of like. Intelligence, because when you think about the risk on the other side of the room where the hiring manager is thinking, their biggest risk is will this person be able to come in and figure out the way that we work?

[00:27:52] Is it a fit, right? Is that even a match for this person? And so I think, just being really intentional will screen, will help you opt into things [00:28:00] that are a good fit for you and out of things that aren't a good fit. So I think that specificity is really important, but to your point.

[00:28:06] About what does that balance look like? First of all, I think it's different for everybody. And so I never give any declaratives and say you have to do this, but not that. I think the best sort of balancing that, that I'm aware of is really, I think there's two things. Like one is you have to like really think about what's important to you and have your negotiables.

[00:28:29] One of the things that, and I didn't come up with this, lots of coaches and career folks do it. Maybe you do it, like have your list of non negotiables, have your list of maybes I could do that, or I could deal with that, or that would work for me, but under certain circumstances, and then have your green flags, right?

[00:28:45] You're like, yes, this, if these things come up, I'm like, heck yeah, that's exactly what I want. So you get this sort of gradient of. That's not okay for me. That's not negotiable. This could be, but the circumstances are X. And then

this is absolutely a [00:29:00] yes for me. And then I think the second part is you just have to test that, right?

[00:29:03] Because, sometimes what happens in the interview process, and again, once you start a job, this comes up too, is, you may find that things that you thought were on one list actually are a little bit closer to the other list. And so you just have to figure out what the bucketing is for you.

[00:29:20] But, and I will add one other kind of caveat to my thinking about that, which is. You can't know what you wouldn't say out loud, which is you may not, and we'll use a current contemporary example in folks who are being silenced and talking about what's happening in Palestine. There are other examples, it's certainly not the only situation, China is another place where human rights and abuses and, maybe depending on your definition in certain regions, genocide is occurring, but there's a lot of scenarios where that's happening and a lot of people right now with, with the Israel and Hamas set of, intensities and conflicts that are happening.

[00:29:58] A lot of people are afraid to [00:30:00] talk about that, because it could impact their job search and they're right. But you can't know what you stand for unless you say it out loud. And so I think that's part of the job seeker conundrum too, is. It's, this is my opinion very much, and I just for me, this is when people ask me, this is what I tell them, I say, it's better to say out loud and to do the things that you need to do so you know what's important to you and where you stand, and there might be a cost to that.

[00:30:25] But it's a lot harder to just guess what might or might not be okay, and then when you get into a workplace and it turns out it's not okay for you to have the, public stance or opinion that people in Gaza deserve to live freely and have basic human rights, just as the people of Israel do. It's very hard to go back and so self censoring, I think is something that I advise people not to do, but you might choose.

[00:30:51] To know where you stand, but not say it out loud. But sometimes you need to say it out loud to know where you stand. So I think that's the way that I approach it. And I don't know if you take a similar approach, but that's my [00:31:00] perspective.

[00:31:00] **Amy:** Yeah. No, thanks for sharing that. I think I think that's really important and the fact of the matter is people are afraid to even discuss general critiques of capitalism to discuss the potential of unions to share traumatic experiences in the workplace, right?

[00:31:20] Once you start getting into this zone of topics that are obviously really important, but are taboo in the traditional workplace or quote unquote professional environment, which for example, LinkedIn is a reflection of for the most part there's, yeah, a lot of different levels of self censorship that happens and Personally speaking, I feel the way that you do talking about the topics all of the ones that we've discussed in the past five minutes.

[00:31:49] All of those things are important to me and to talk about publicly. I think the difference is a few things. I'm self employed. No one can do anything about it. [00:32:00] Any consequences I face, I don't care about because my values are important and talking about things that are affecting other people, especially marginalized communities people in Palestine even discussing it on this podcast right now if I were to say lose a few people.

[00:32:18] Listeners that is the consequence. And of course, this is my personal perspective, your personal perspective, but regardless of the topic, I think we can even look at just D. I. Racism, right? All of these things that happen in the workplace that are ubiquitous in the United States, for example, even those topics can be risky.

[00:32:38] And so I believe this is a personal choice and the risk is going to be different for different people, right? So in the interview process let's say like a black woman has to position herself very differently in certain ways than like a white dude, right?

[00:32:56] There are identity related things that impact [00:33:00] how we show up in the interview process, how we show up online, that positioning, right? The questions we ask, right? There's a lot of biases and discrimination assumptions. So I think there's a range of risk taking and things that people need to consider.

[00:33:17] And so perhaps speaking out or positioning yourself as someone who cares about certain things depending on who you are, there can be more of a risk in that. And frankly, for a lot of people, They just, they want a job. They need to make a living. They need to support their family. Maybe they're totally against the major initiatives of the business they work in, but they're able to perhaps compartmentalize that and just, see it as a job, as a way to make money.

[00:33:46] So yeah, I think it's multi dimensional in that way.

[00:33:49] **Joe:** And I think it's, like another example that, that aligns with that is the salary slash pay transparency piece, which I think is a little easier for most

people to conceptualize, cause it's directly related to your work [00:34:00] versus your speech and conduct outs. You might, you might see pull it.

[00:34:03] politics or, social issues or whatever is outside of your work. I don't, clearly. Not hard to figure that out, but salary, transparency, your work conditions might feel a little closer to home for some people. But I know that some people, the risk for some people in talking about their salary is higher to your point.

[00:34:21] And I my perspective is to know your position, know where you have leverage or power, be aware of your positionality and try to be a little braver than yesterday, right? That's like my practical approach to it. And that's how I think about it with folks, but I got to be honest with you.

[00:34:38] A lot of times I have the conversation with folks about various topics that feel dangerous or difficult. And I'm really just listening to the person and trying to help them think about it and reflect on what. Is important to them, what the tradeoffs are literally to them financially, emotionally, intellectually and what those risks look like.

[00:34:58] And they're just trying to help them find a [00:35:00] decision that feels not necessarily good, but just like better, right? Again, being a little braver than I was yesterday. And I have, I'm sure you have job seekers too that you talk with who are like, okay, I'm not gonna, continue in any interviews if they don't confirm the salary range.

[00:35:16] That it's 2024 if you don't want to talk about the budget that I know you have for a role, then it's probably not a negotiable for me. That's, thank goodness we're moving more towards that world because, I'm very aware that I have gotten paid more to do the same work that I've had colleagues do who don't look like me.

[00:35:36] They're doing just as good or better work than me and they're getting paid less. And that's just nonsense to me. So I am very serious about pay equity for that, that reason, that example. But each person really is gonna, when you think about reading a room, they're going to find their own kind of balance or version of that.

[00:35:51] And, I don't come from a place of judgment because I think it really is important to be collective. And I think that, to something I know you care about, like again, with pay. And salary [00:36:00] transparency half the battle is

just to be able to look around and go, you know, I should get, I should talk with some people about this.

[00:36:05] I should get some advice. I should think collectively and act collectively here because it may not be as isolated or as scary as I'm thinking it is.

[00:36:13] **Amy:** Exactly. And yeah, the more we see people normalize these sorts of things in public or even in the workplace, that's what's going to move the needle of the discourse and the Overton window, right? What people are comfortable talking about. So yeah, I, yeah, I love this topic. I think it's so important to think about this kind of stuff.

[00:36:36] I have just a couple other questions for you. We've been talking about job seekers, reading the room, and the interview process. If we think about a hiring manager, how can they read the room with a candidate? Hmm. Mm

[00:36:51] **Joe:** All right. Let me break out my favorite question for interviews. So when I started managing teams this is like 2016, [00:37:00] 2017, nobody like gave me any primer and it wasn't necessarily my current supervisor's fault at that time. I think, I think back to a couple of them and I'm like, Oh, they're just overworked and dealing with a lot.

[00:37:11] But I didn't really get a lot of support. And so I had to seek out resources a bit on my own and try to learn from other folks. What I came to, which informs how I, when I do, am responsible for interviewing people in any context. What I came to was that like, look, everybody's a bit different and needs different supports and resources, but to do work well, we need to be able to self advocate, right?

[00:37:33] We need to be able to say, here's how I work, and here's what I need to be successful in this type of role. Pretty basic. And so I always ask that question, and I advise hiring managers to ask that question is usually it's give more context as a hiring manager, try to provide as much context as you can stand to possibly give on the role in the team and the organization and, the current sort of set of challenges and all that.

[00:37:57] And then once you've done that, ask the person [00:38:00] and sometimes it's in that first interview, but sometimes it's later, cause it takes time to absorb, ask them like, now that more about this role, what kinds of supports and resources do you think you would need to really do well in it?

[00:38:13] And that's a really fundamental question because a, you're trying to assess how self aware is your candidate. And, do they sort of know where they really play well? And do they know where they want to play? Do they know where they could use some more help? Is there a part of the job where they're like, I haven't really done that I'd be open to it, but I probably need some professional development or some support or mentoring or whatever training conferences, et cetera.

[00:38:41] So you're trying to assess that. But the other thing is it just gives you the best possible way to onboard that person. You're like this, let me hear from this person, what they really need to be successful and what's important to them. That'll set me up as on the other side of the table to be like, okay, now at least I know.

[00:38:58] And I say that because I think [00:39:00] one of the things that happens typically when you get yourself down to that finalist pool of there are three people, I think they could. They could all basically do the job is what would they need? And realistically, do we, as a team or me as a hiring manager, what are we willing to actually do and provide

[00:39:16] and there's, I'm just going to be really straight up and say there's always bias in that question. And so you have to be. As a hiring manager, self aware as possible, because ultimately, we all pattern match in some way or another, and you might be like that person would be really easy.

[00:39:31] They'd hit the ground running and they do all the technical parts of the jobs, but they might not bring creativity or real thought or intention to it. That somebody who has less of the okay, they've worked with this exact tool or they've done this exact thing before, so that balance is somewhat complicated, but I think coming from that place, if you're going to be genuine and honest about it as a hiring manager coming from that place of what does this person really need to do well?

[00:39:55] And am I prepared to actually provide it or not?

[00:39:58] **Amy:** Yeah. I'm wondering, [00:40:00] thinking about your own career journey and your experiences in reading in the room as a, regular old job seeker or as a consultant reading the room to get hired by an organization or even in your coaching, right? Like we have to read the room with potential clients and figure out how to position ourselves.

[00:40:20] So just thinking about all these different experiences. you've had. Any lessons learned that you want to share?

[00:40:26] **Joe:** It's a great question. And I think one would be is it's an iterative process and Nobody's perfect at it, like I'm not, this is not to puff myself up, but like you can pretty much send me any company or organization and I'll get you a pretty good fix on it in about 15 minutes.

[00:40:42] And I enjoy doing this cause I've worked in journalism. I've worked in startups. I worked in higher ed. I've done a bit of corporate, I understand office versus remote. Like I have a good access. Point for a lot of scenarios, not all, but a lot. And so I enjoy being like what's really going on and what would I need to ask [00:41:00] about to really understand, the deal of this organization or team or manager or whatever, not a perfect science.

[00:41:06] Clearly there's a lot going on and a lot of variables. But I think ultimately like just knowing that process is iterative and that you're constantly learning.

[00:41:15] I just try to emphasize that you're trying to, it's like information literacy, right? You're just trying to teach yourself about how to recognize and see and ask about things. And so nobody's perfect at it. You just get better, maybe you've never really gotten comfy with figuring out the financial picture of an organization.

[00:41:31] So now you're learning to Google like annual revenue and. latest funding round for the startup, or you're looking at, Coca Cola's Q4 earnings, like which parts of the company are making money and which parts are not making so much money. Some of those things are like, I don't know, I'm not an expert at all that either.

[00:41:46] Although, I was a business reporter. So looking at company earnings is the thing I can decode it. I know how that works. But ultimately, you're going to get better if you just keep iterating your ability to ask those questions and look into it, and it gets faster and easier, as you go.[00:42:00]

[00:42:00] And I think the other thing that I would say is like just, you learn that usually your gut check is right. Usually you know what you need for yourself in a workplace. And sometimes we don't trust ourselves. And we go into workplaces or further into scenarios that we don't feel good about.

[00:42:15] And it turns out the non negotiables were there. But we just didn't we just avoided it. So most of the time, I think people are, we're better at that than we realized.

[00:42:25] **Amy:** Yeah, I love that. This has been such a fun conversation. I've really learned a lot during our time today. And before we close out,

[00:42:36] Do you have any pluggables to plug? So where can people find you? Your services, any community organizations that you'd like to promote?

[00:42:45] **Joe:** Yeah, I'm all about putting the people up front and taking good care of folks. There's a job seeker resources page on my website. It's just the early manager. com all spelled out and then there's a, click on job seeker resources. There's a page for that.

[00:42:59] If you want to [00:43:00] learn more about my coaching and training, I work with, small and medium sized orgs. I do a lot of work with folks who are, in progressive and comms movements, but lots of startup stuff too. Always happy to talk about training, workshops, consulting, et cetera. Also a really big fan of a startup that I advise that's led by Jasmine Jacobs Williams, they run Black Remote She, so it's just blackremoteshe.

[00:43:20] com. Lots of resources for job seekers of all kinds, but especially some good stuff for LGBTQ plus folks. So tons of stuff at blackremoteshe. com. I'm always going to show up and plug that one. Cause you know, again, the value is so high. And then if you are in search of some community around your job search, I'm a big fan of Albert's list.

[00:43:38] I mentioned Albert and the community a little bit earlier here, but just look up Albert's list. There's a group on Facebook. There's a LinkedIn page. Look up Albert himself. He's always happy to connect with new folks. Just Albert Keon Q I a N. We run a bootcamp and things like that for job seekers a couple of times a year.

[00:43:54] So check that out if you're in the mood for that too.

[00:43:57] **Amy:** All right. Thank you again, Joe. [00:44:00] This has been really fun and insightful. And everyone listening, that's all the time we have for today. If there's a question or topic that you'd like us to focus on, please reach out to me on LinkedIn. And if you're so inclined, we'd love Greatly appreciate your support on the podcast.

[00:44:16] If you like the show, please subscribe and leave a rating for us. And once again, I am Amy Santee and Laura and I would like to thank all of you for listening and wish you all the best of luck with your search, no matter what you're looking for. We are rooting for you.