Interview with Adam Delgado, CEO at North Technology People & Organizer at AI Tinkerers (https://calgary.aitinkerers.org/)

Andrew Obwocha: You've been part of AI Tinkerers for eight months now. The community is known for hosting events, hackathons, and meetups across Calgary. In your experience, are there common traits among the people who attend these events? Or is it more of a random mix?

Adam Delgado: AI Tinkerers is actually very intentional in its design—we curate our content at a high technical level for a technical audience. Our monthly in-person events are for what we call "AI Tinkerers": AI/ML founders, researchers, data scientists, developers—anyone building in the AI/ML space. We recently had a great presentation by a Master's student from the University of Calgary, and the audience was equally engaged. It's not random at all—it's a strong, consistent community of builders.

Andrew Obwocha: I actually saw you posted about the recent AI Tinkerers event hosted at Google Cloud. Was there a particular moment or demo that stood out to you?

Adam Delgado: Yes! I actually meant to write more about it online. There was this great moment during the Q&A—someone asked a question, then another person followed up with a related question, and the presenter answered, and someone else chimed in again. It turned into this spontaneous, 7–10 minute dialogue. No script, just tech people talking tech. That's exactly what we want AI Tinkerers to be. It's not about me—it's for builders like you, and that energy really motivates me to keep going.

Andrew Obwocha: You also help build AI startup teams as CEO of North Technology People. Besides technical and communication skills, which are pretty expected, are there other underrated qualities you look for in founders?

Adam Delgado: Great question. When I work with founders—CEOs, CTOs, VPs—they often give me a spec for a role they're hiring for. What I've noticed is that not all founders are great at telling their company's story. A lot of them struggle to clearly communicate the mission, product, or vision. That's where I step in: I take their information and become a brand ambassador for them—sometimes representing the company better than they do.
 So I'd say **storytelling and positioning** are hugely underrated skills. Whether you're at a party, an investor pitch, or just explaining your work to someone—**everything is communication**.

Andrew Obwocha: And what about candidates? What qualities do you see in top-tier engineers?

Adam Delgado: I've interviewed over 10,000 people in my career, including time in San Francisco. The top engineers—the ones who get into Meta, Google, etc.—they all have a few things in common. They **communicate exceptionally well**. They can explain deeply technical things in ways non-technical people understand. They also present well—smart, casual, clear, confident. So two things: **know your audience** and **present the part**. That combination makes a big difference.

Andrew Obwocha: You emphasized storytelling. What can tech founders do to actually improve that skill?

Adam Delgado: First, understand your audience. If you're talking to engineers, fine—go technical. But most of the time, you should explain what you do in **as few words as possible**— ideally so a 5-year-old can understand it. Don't jump straight into the stack or the algorithm. Start high-level. Most people overcomplicate, and it hurts their pitch.

Andrew Obwocha: If you had just one minute to advise students who want to build or lead their own AI startup, what would you say?

Adam Delgado: I was just saying this yesterday—investors don't just invest in ideas. They invest in **founders**. And part of their thesis is founder fit. If two people have the same idea, but one team has founders who've known each other for years and built trust, they're usually more desirable.

So here's my advice: If you're in university and you've got an idea—even a vague one—**tell people**. **Find someone who complements your skillset**. Not three engineers—get someone who can handle users, sales, research. Then grab a pizza, a six-pack, and brainstorm like crazy. Validate those ideas. Build fast. Iterate. If it fails? Great. You've got experience now. Start another.

When you eventually apply for jobs, you'll be someone who built. And that stands out more than any internship.

Andrew Obwocha: That reminds me of the business school case competitions I've seen— teams with diverse skill sets almost always win.

Adam Delgado: Exactly. Same idea. A complementary team that works well together will always outperform a group of clones, no matter how smart.

Andrew Obwocha: As a final thought—you mentioned the job market is rough right now. Any closing advice for students and grads trying to break in?

Adam Delgado: Yeah, the market sucks right now. I've got 15 years of experience and even I struggled to get interviews recently. So here's the truth: **DIY. Do it yourself.**

Start a side project. Get into an incubator. Build something. Even if it fails, you'll be able to say: "Hey, I was the CEO of a startup. Here's our website. Here's what we built."
That experience makes you incredibly desirable to employers. It shows initiative, resilience, and real-world value.

Also, this is part of what I'm trying to fix with my startup, *Sik Central*. Most people don't know most companies, and vice versa. If we can connect grads and founders directly, we can break the traditional recruitment bottlenecks and help people get real traction.

Andrew Obwocha: Thank you! This was incredibly insightful. I'll share the post with you once it's ready. Also, I'd love to collaborate with AI Tinkerers.

Adam Delgado: Absolutely. We're doing this for students, grads, and researchers. Let's sync in August—I'll add you to the AI Tinkerers Discord, and we can make a big push when your society ramps up in September. Our events will stay free, and the more people we reach, the more value we can create together.