Getting back to work after unemployment

By Patricia Kitchen Tribune Newspapers

At 7:30 on a recent morning, Ken Wald-mann was checking his voice mail and got both a thrill and a momentary jolt. A recruiter had left a message the day before telling him to go to a job interview that very morning at 9.

Laid off a year ago from a financial analyst position, Waldmann, 43, of North Bellmore, N.Y., was not about to miss this opportunity, so show up he did, without even knowing the names of the people he was scheduled to see.

Still, all went well. He was hired a week later as a senior financial analyst for a aster as a senior inflancial analyst for a Bethpage, N.Y., distributor and has been on the job since the beginning of the month. A yearlong pause in his profes-sional life—during which he played the dual roles of athletic director at a sum-mer day camp and Mr. Mom at home—is

Although he says he relished the time with his two kids, "there was no crystal ball telling me when there was no crystar ball telling me when there was going to be a job. As much as you want to have a great attitude, you ask for how long—two years? Three years?" For others like him with an eye on the

calendar, relief, at least for some, may be on the radar screen. Although no one's envisioning a robust job market any time soon, there are signs of encouragement. Among them:

Temporary staffing firms employed

50,000 more workers per day nationwide in the second quarter than the first, showing three consecutive quarters of growth—this after eight quarters of decline, according to the American Staffing Association.

Association.
■ Employers expect a 12.7 percent increase in college graduate hiring this school year, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers.
■ With close to half the 148 Fortune 1000 executives polled saying their firms are understaffed, 29 percent said they expect to hire in the next six months, according to Cleveland-based executive search firm Christian & Timbers.
"The damming up of [staffing] demand these past two years is beginning to ease. Quality companies can't hold out forever," said Peter Felix, president of the Asserts.

er," said Peter Felix, president of the Association of Executive Search Consultants, a Manhattan-based organization of

retained search firms

Despite continued uncertainty, "now's a good time for people to test the waters," said Gary Huth, labor market analyst for the New York Department of Labor. But be forewarned that some areas such as information technology and some financial areas may continue to lag. Also, employ-ers "will still be looking at the least costly options" and that "generally, the higher salaries will come on board the slowest."

Many employers are going to be hearing, "I'm outta here," said Tony Lee, editor of CareerJournal.com, The Wall Street Journal's career site. A survey by CareerJournal found almost two-thirds of 900 worondorst easily care

Career Journal found almost two-thirds of 300 respondents said once the market improves they are extremely likely to start or intensify their job searches. Those who have kept current with their skills, networking contacts and industry happenings are the ones most primed to trade up. Lee says. And, it's critical to keep from projecting an attitude of "I've only been house-painting this past year." You can't let your survival mentality "color the way you approach companies."

companies Newsday



Just shy of a promotion

Being an introvert can hold back a career. But even quiet types can learn to increase their visibility at the office.

By Chuck Green

achel Michalski Mottaz's stomach was constantly in knots at work. Staff meetings were pure agony "I had to white-knuckle my way through them," said Michalski Mottaz, a former production manager for a live theater company in Chicago. "Most of my anxiety was with authority figures. At staff meetings, I got very intimidated by everyone

and didn't speak up." Her shyness, said Michalski Mottaz, wasn't just hold-ing her back from speaking up in meetings. Ultimately, it was holding back her career. Unpleasant encounters vir-

tually paralyzed her.

"If I had a bad confrontation with someone, I felt like I couldn't talk to that person again, or even look at them," she said. "If someone asked me to do something, my automatic thought would be I have to say yes, otherwise

that person would hate me."

Michalski Mottaz is far from alone. According to Bernardo J. Carducci, a professor of psychology and director of the Shyness Research Institute at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany, between 40 and 43 percent of adults believe they are shy. "That's huge," said Carducci, who has studied shyness for 25 years.

And while mean repended are to peak their natural.

And while many people learn to mask their natural shyness at the office, others find that it works against

snyness at the onice, others find that it works against them. As a result, shy people often are several rungs be-hind their more outgoing and sociable co-workers on the career ladder, Carducci says.

"Shy people experience 'off time,' "he explained.

"They get promoted later, they make less money One of the heat revolutions of career reasons is marked lettle. If the best predictors of career success is verbal skills. If you are too shy to demonstrate those skills, it will hold

you back. You move along — it just takes you longer."
That may be especially true in today's workplace.
With payrolls shrinking, employers are demanding that
workers demonstrate soft skills as well as technical know-how. They want employees who can speak in front of groups, work in teams or with customers and inspire

PLEASE SEE SHY, PAGE 4

Shy-proofing strategies for the office

Selling yourself or your ideas i easy for many introverts. But it be learned. Try these tips to ov come shyness in everyday offic uations and meetings.

1. Practice "quick talk."

A common mistake that a sh person makes when they're at business gathering is to find so one with whom they're comfo able and latch onto him for the duration

"With quick talk, you speak t lot of people for brief periods time," said Bernard J. Carducci, director of the Shyness Resear Institute at Indiana University Southeast. "That lets other peo know that you're the kind of p who's willing to talk to a variet people."When people recognithis, they may begin to seek yo out, he added.

2. Prepare to make your po

If you're shy about expressing your thoughts in staff meeting Chicago-based psychotherapis Kathryn C. Keller recommends advance preparation.

"Before you go into a meeting what I call 'pad and points,'" sa Keller. "Take a pad of paper an write down what points you w to make, then read them. After rewrite them as succinctly as p ble. When you get in the meeti put the pad down in front of ye and just say you have a point y like to make. Having it written down will help you explain it so cinctly, rather than rambling."

3. Just say it.

Shy people kill their own be ideas" because they're too selfcal, Carducci said.

Rather than dwell on the neg tive, "focus on what people are ing and then begin to use that basis to elaborate. Then you sta brainstorm," he said.

4. Enlist the help of support

If public speaking is a part of your job but it makes you nerv try out your speech in front of those you know can help, said Cheryl Carmin, associate profes and director of the Stress and Anxiety Disorders Clinic at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

You also may want to join a p lic-speaking group such as Toastmasters to develop your speaking skills.

5. Make the connection.

Link what you're doing to wh your co-workers are doing. "If you're working on a project

and someone is talking about v they're doing, you should say, 'That's real consistent or suppo of the kinds of things I'm doing Explain what you're doing and your help if it's needed," Carduc said.

Furthermore, Carducci added "Ask for feedback. That creates a open forum and lets people kn how well you're doing something Do this with your colleagues as as your supervisor."

6. Volunteer for committees on projects.

That makes people aware of

PLEASE SEE TIPS, PAGE 4

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about their next promotion, a shy person still is dealing at a lower level on the career tier," Carducci added. "You don't have that social support, which is critical in terms of promo-

Frank Gangarossa says he knows the feeling. "I've always been a really, really shy person. In high school, I was painfully shy. I could socially interact on some level, but as far as engaging in real conversations and starting friendships, it was al-

ways real difficult for me."
To help overcome his shynes: Gangarossa, an actor and administrative assistant at a Chicago engineering firm, has tak-en improvisation classes at Sec-

en improvisation classes at Second City. Now, Gangarossa says,
he's more apt to take a risk and
speak up at work.
"Improv stops you from
thinking so much. Often, your
brain can be a big inhibiting factor in interactions with people,
because you start thinking and
judging what you're saying and
planning it out," he said.
Generally, shy beople tend to

Generally, shy people tend to be self-critical, which blocks them from sharing ideas, Carducci said.

ducci said.
"It's like shy people walk around as if there's a mirror in front of them," he said. "When you look in a mirror, what you tend to see are your faults. So when you want to make a comment and that thought comes in-

HOW TO **CONTACT US** Comments, questions and sugges

tions about articles in this section are welcome. Carol Monaghan, editor

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Social support

to your head, the first thing you do is negatively evaluate it so it doesn't go any further."

Michalski Mottaz found that once she began group therapy, she began to worry less about what people were thinking. "I could ask myself, 'Is he really going to hate me?"—and if he does, is that someone I'm supposed to care about? I realized I. posed to care about? I realized I can only do my best and be hon-

to your head, the first thing you

est."
Shyness can be paralyzing if you allow it to define you, says Kathryn C. Keller, a Chicagobased psychotherapist and-counselor.
"If a person considers being a part of them as

If a person considers being shy as much a part of them as their eye color, for example, they're in trouble," she said. "You want to say, 'I'm shy with certain people, in certain situations of the said to contain situations of the said to contain times." tions and at certain times.' If you want to be successful in the workplace, the first key is not to identify with shyness. Then list the types of jobs you want and figure out what social skills go into those jobs."

Often, a shy person's silence is mistaken for aloofness, said

Richard Heimberg, professor of psychology and director of Adult Anxiety Clinic of Temple University. But the reason that happens is that shy people don't talk.

is that sny people don't talk. And the non-shy person says, 'Why is this person not talking to me?' The non-shy person won't see it's because someone is shy, because a shy person can look perfectly calm on the outside while they're shaking inside."

That was often the case for Shelly Berger, an office manag-er at a dental practice in Deer-field, who says her shyness has been mistaken for her being 'standoffish."
"I'm just basically on the shy

I'm just basically of the sny side, and when I'm not comfort-able with certain situations, I get quiet and observe, 'she said. "I' try to be aware of that and make sure I don't give that im-

The answer then? "Talk," said Heimberg. "Take the risk, make the conversation, make a comment. You'll either come across as friendly or as nervous. If you come across as nervous, you come across as nervous, you won't be thought of as aloof or conceited anymore. People don't think negatively about shyness in big ways." Bartlett resident Monica Sur-ma, a nurse at Motorola in

Schaumburg, knew her pattern of shyness meant the cat often got her tongue in front of her supervisors. So, like Gangarossa, HELP WANTED HELP WANTED HELP WANTED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 your skills and it's a way to

TIPS

demonstrate your willingness to do more than just sit on the sidelines," Carducci noted. "You become the person people want to know, and it makes it possible for shy people to seek out their comfort zone." 7. Engage in "active listen-

"With active listening, peri-odically you summarize the highlights of a conversation," Carducci said. "That lets people know that not only are you listening, but that you're actively paying attention because you're processing their major points. It conveys you're not aloof." 8. Practice social niceties.

Carducci said: "If you're get-ting a cup of coffee, offer to get one for a colleague, or if you're going to the supply closet, ask he or she if they need anything. That shows you're not aloof and are involved with the needs of others. Chuck Green

she took improv classes at Second City.
Surma now has the confi-

dence to speak up to upper management—and uses humor to get her point across, she says.

get her point across, she says.
"If you kind of joke around
with people and you're more
lighthearted, everyone lightens
up and it relaxes the atmosphere," she said.
And that's helped her job performance. "I have to be around
recoile a let so it helps generial.

formance. "I have to be around people a lot, so it helps, especially as a nurse," she added. "Things like trust and eye contact are important."

Introverted people also can take comfort in knowing they may not seem as shy as they feel. "Shy is a very oversed."

may not seem as shy as they feel.
"Shy is a very overused
word," said Cheryl Carmin, an
associate professor and director
of the Stress and Anxiety Disorders Clinic at the University of
Illinois-Chicago, "When you ask
the average person if they're an
introvert or extrovert some introvert or extrovert, some people lean toward saying they're an introvert. But if you asked their friends, they'd prob-ably look at you cross-eyed and say they're not all that shy. So I think there's some distinction between how we perceive our-selves and how others might perceive us.

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