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Employers seek applicants with pinch of bravado

By PAUL P. KOSCAK JR.

Middletown Press Staff

MIDDLETOWN — Too many job applicants are not selling themselves during interviews, a poll of 150 executives at the nation's 1,000 largest companies found.

One third of the hiring managers questioned claim that applicants they've interviewed shy away from touting their accomplishments, another third labeled their applicants too aggressive and the remainder said their applicants showed neither extreme during interviews.

The study was developed by Accountemps, the nation's largest accounting finance and bookkeeping placement agency. "It's very difficult for many people to express their accomplishments and goals," Ariene Mazzotta, owner of A.R. Mazzotta Employment Specialists, said. "especially for people who haven't changed jobs."

For those who suddenly find themselves pounding the pavement for the first time in years, getting a foot back in someone's door for an interview can be overwhelming, let alone how to act once it begins.

Mazzotta's company places people in everything from clerical to professional jobs. And she coaches applicants — sometimes several times — she said, before sending them out for interviews.

"It's not easy, but sometimes that can be overcome," she added.

Greg Lainas, Accountemps division director in Hartford, takes a pragmatic approach to helping applicants sell themselves.

"We tell people to keep a file of every

positive accomplishment in their career," he said. "These can be awards, citations or projects they've managed."

Modesty is a trait even among applicants used to earning high compensation.

Les Cole, who owns Management Recruiters of Middlesex, a Cromwell employment agency that places professionals commanding incomes above \$50,000, said that many of his clients are loath to play up their high points. It's usually the frequent job hunter, he said, who is most comfort-

able at self promotion.

"Everybody needs to brush up on those skills," Cole said.

Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps, agreed.

"Candidates should remember that their No. 1 goal during a job interview is to sell themselves," he said. "This is a job seeker's one shot at convincing the interviewer. It's not a time to be timid or shy."

Still, interviewing is a delicate balance between putting yourself in the best light and sounding haughty, he noted.

Technology stocks still realm of opportunity

By PAUL P. KOSCAK JR.

Middletown Press Business Editor

MIDDLETOWN — Boston-based Fidelity Investments is causing a small stir in the marketplace as the mammoth investment house sheds some of its technology stocks.

But, then again, when you're one of the nation's largest brokers, even a few percent here or there translates to millions of shares. That's bound to draw lots of attention. Could it be a signal that technology stocks have had their day in the sun?

"Is technology over?" Advest Branch Manager Soll Goldenthal, retorts. "No way!"

Fidelity sold 18.46 million shares of Mi-

cron since September, when the fund held 19.62 million, or 9.51 percent of Micron's outstanding shares. Fidelity also sold shares in Sun Microsystems Inc., National Semiconductor Corp. and other semiconductor and technology companies, according to filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Goldenthal views those changes as simply a cycle, an industry plateau when the excitement surrounding a company's hot commodity — or the company itself — begins to wane.

By their nature, he reasons, technology stocks first draw investors who understand research and technical advancements, such

as people involved with engineering or computer science. These initial investors cause the stock to rise, attracting still others who spot the growing opportunity. Finally, as the stock surges even more, it catches the eye of speculators.

"It's the greed factor," Goldenthal said. "They don't want to miss out on something."

As for Fidelity's reasons for dumping some of its high-tech equities, that too would be, well, speculation. At times huge brokerage houses may buy and sell shares to create attention or hype, Goldenthal theorizes.

"Hype creates excess demand," he said.

"It creates problems for the buyer and seller."

He cites the stock of defunct Coleco Industries, a West Hartford manufacturer of computer games and the famous Cabbage Patch Doll.

"I had clients who couldn't see an end," he recalls. "They said it would reach 100. Well, it went from 65 to zero."

Goldenthal contends that technology stocks should be judged that same as any stock.

Investors should first research the company, check out its debt, its competition and its marketing plan. He also recommends reviewing the stock's price history.

"Look for higher highs and lower lows," Goldenthal said.

So where could the next technology cycle start again?

Companies developing products for the Internet or Internet-related industries are the current hot tickets, he said. "It's the same way PCs were 12 to 15 years ago."

For instance, Goldenthal cites a product demonstration he recently observed by Space Tech IMC, a Massachusetts company that develops software capable of producing three-dimensional images. "It was fascinating," he said. "IBM is one of their clients."

Blasts at Pratt & Whitney plant send workers home

By PAUL P. KOSCAK JR.

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CHESHIRE — When Middletown resident John Peplau, a Pratt & Whitney machinist, arrived to work in Cheshire Monday afternoon, he found the parking lot deserted. The plant's first shift had been sent home because of several explosions that rocked the workplace.

"They said the place wasn't safe," Peplau said of the explanation managers gave him. "They were dry-ice bombs, they sound like several M80s."

An M80 is a high-powered fire-cracker. In this case, Peplau said

dry ice was sealed in plastic soda bottles. The pressure from the evaporating ice ruptured the container, causing the concussions.

The disturbances occurred as Sunday's deadline for a new contract between Pratt & Whitney and the International Association of Machinists draws near. The talks take place as 32,000 members of the Machinists' local at Boeing continue a walkout that began Oct. 6. Pratt supplies engines for many Boeing

planes.

Neither the Machinists' union in Cheshire nor Pratt & Whitney officials would comment on the shenanigans or the status of the contract talks, but company spokesman Mark Sullivan didn't seem surprised.

"Given the fact it's a week before the talks end, people's emotions tend to get high," he said. "Sometimes someone does something silly."

One first-shift employee, who declined to be named, said the blasts

caused him to become disoriented.

"There were several explosions," he said. "One almost blew me out of my chair."

Cheshire police and fire officials said they received no calls from the company for help.

Pratt & Whitney management is proposing measures that would affect seniority and health benefits. Peplau, who has worked for Pratt & Whitney for 18 years, said a company-supported "10 percent clause" would give the aircraft manufacturer the ability to shield up to 10

percent of the workforce from layoffs and other personnel assignments, regardless of seniority.

The company is also asking workers to pay a percentage of health-benefit costs. Currently, health-benefits are provided free, he said.

"The workers have sacrificed for three years, while company profits keep going up," Peplau said.

Although both sides have released no public statements as a result of a confidentiality agreement, negotiations are expected in part to focus on raises, which have been frozen for

hourly workers since 1992. At that

time, union leaders and state officials gave Pratt a package of concessions and tax breaks worth about \$32 million in an effort to slow the rate of job cuts.

In Connecticut, Pratt has cut its hourly work force by almost a third — from more than 8,990 just two years ago to the current workforce of about 6,100 workers.

The union is expected to vote on the new contract Sunday at 1 p.m. at the New Haven Coliseum.