

Laid off, but better off

These New Yorkers turned getting the boot into a prime opportunity—and so can you. By **Jayme Klock**



Lynn Zuckerman Gray, 61
Upper West Side, founder and CEO of Campus Scout recruiting services (gocampuscout.com)

Her story: "In February 2009, I read an article about a program that helped unemployed financial-services professionals reinvent themselves," says Gray, who had been released from her position as a global chief administrative officer at Lehman Brothers the previous October. She enrolled in one of the program's initiatives, an intensive entrepreneurship course called FastTrac NewVenture (fasttrac.org), to learn how to start her own business. When it came time to decide on a specific project, her experiences recruiting college grads for Lehman gave her the idea to start a company that provides that service to others. "I discovered that 60 percent of entry-level recruiting was not done through on-campus [enlisting]. It was done very inefficiently, without planning," says Gray. "There was an opportunity to provide [these] services for firms who did not have staff or who had reduced their budgets due to economic factors." With just enough money saved to set up her corporation and pay for initial necessities, she started Campus Scout in April 2009. Gray gained her first paying client in early 2010, and she's since been invited to speak about her experiences at Harvard, Cornell and other institutions.

HER BEST TIP:
"Programs provided by NYC Business Solutions are free and provide great learning opportunities for those without an income."



David Arrick, 43
West Village, founder of Butch Bakery (butchbakery.com)

His story: A former real-estate attorney and self-proclaimed food lover, Arrick was laid off at the start of the recession, in 2008. Though he initially spent his newfound free time searching the Web for cheap recipes and doing pro bono work, he saw a gap in the near-saturated cupcake industry: "No one was targeting the guy market, so I did," he says. Arrick's business grew exponentially in its first few months, thanks to a public-relations rep he hired and social-media-based networking he did himself. "I also drew on my corporate contacts," he says. "I started showing up with awesome cupcakes at their offices." Since November 2010, the bakery has more than tripled its weekly sales. Arrick also developed a cookbook, due out later this year.

HIS BEST TIP:
"Make sure that you know your competition, identify your target market and have an exit plan should your venture not work out."

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Dana Ostomel, 34
East Harlem, founder of registry site Deposit a Gift (depositagift.com)

Her story: A few months before her wedding, Ostomel was let go from Cadbury Schweppes Americas Beverages, where she was working as an advertising manager. Years earlier, she'd dreamed up the idea for an online cash-gift registry (a website that lets recipients request money toward big-ticket items like first homes and graduation trips) but never had the time or resources to pursue it. "[My husband and I] had been saving up to buy an apartment," says Ostomel. "When that fell through, I used the down payment as capital for the site." She hired a programmer and designer to handle the tech side, and a publicist to help her gain momentum. Ostomel also relied on her professional experience, writing a creative brief to define her strategy. In its first year of business, Deposit a Gift has received mentions in more than 60 publications, including *Real Simple Weddings*, and the site's business has grown more than 200 percent since the beginning of 2011.

HER BEST TIP:
"I am a big believer in the informational interview. Get others to share what they've learned, and make connections."

PHOTOGRAPHS: LYNN GRAY: CAROLINE VONGEN NELSON; DAVID ARRICK: DANA OSTOMEL; BETH LEVENS