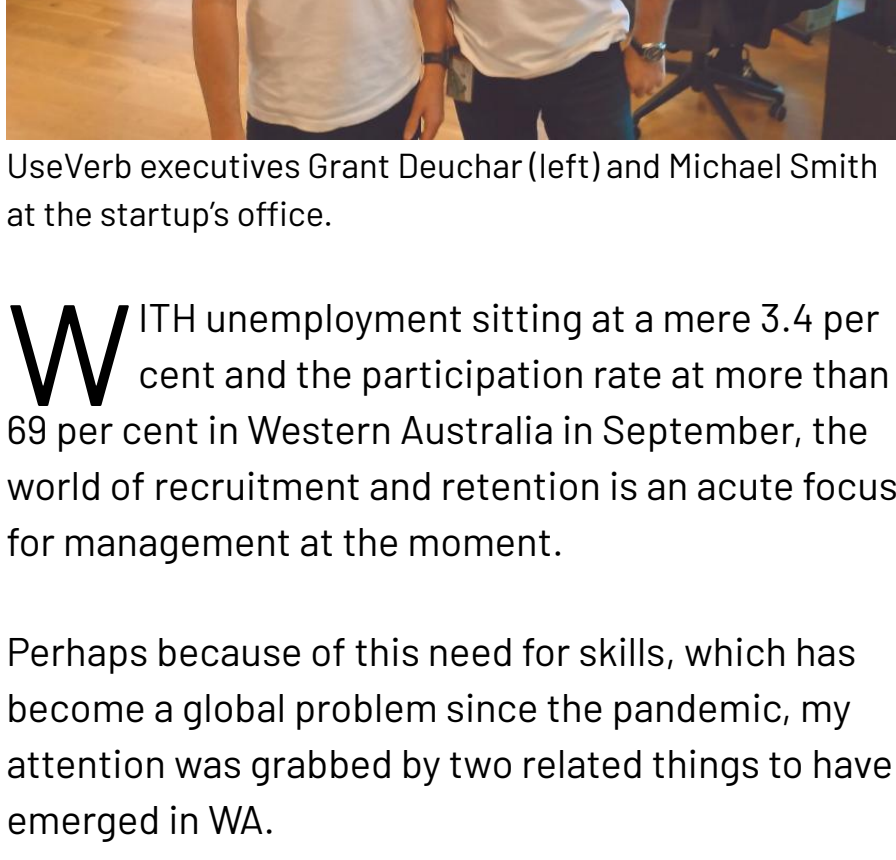


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Only good managers need apply

By Mark Pownall



UseVerb executives Grant Deuchar (left) and Michael Smith at the startup's office.

WITH unemployment sitting at a mere 3.4 per cent and the participation rate at more than 69 per cent in Western Australia in September, the world of recruitment and retention is an acute focus for management at the moment.

Perhaps because of this need for skills, which has become a global problem since the pandemic, my attention was grabbed by two related things to have emerged in WA.

One is a traditional management book, the other an edgier online tool from a local company with ambitions for world domination.

The book is by Brad Giles, the founder of Perth-based leadership and growth coaching consultancy Evolution Partners.

He officially launched his second book, Onboarded, to the market last month and was already enjoying prominence on the Amazon best seller list for books in specialist areas such as self-employment.

In a very different vein, Perth company UseVerb has gone public for the first time with the commercialisation of its key tool, a video-based aid for those applying for a job or those prioritising candidates, depending on which side of the employment fence you sit.

Both are focused on the fraught space around recruiting and retaining people in an age where career choice, employee expectations and the cost of finding and keeping the right people has evolved from the old hiring-and-firing practices of the past.

I will start with Onboarded which, I will admit I have not read.

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I did, however, attend an event with the author and got to hear about the drivers that led to this publication.

Everything Mr Giles said resonated with me.

His biggest point, underscored by using academic research, was that new employees are too often underwhelmed by the welcome they receive as they are thrown into a role and culture that is, in many cases, entirely new to them.

Mr Giles questions the efficiency of spending so much time, energy and, often, money recruiting the right candidate, only to leave them virtually to their own devices once they come on board.

There is the lack of inductions, the lack of training and, alarmingly, the simple lack of a welcome.

The author had plenty of anecdotes to share but one common issue he raised was that we tend to expend more effort farewelling employees than celebrating a new arrival.

To a degree, this reflects broader life as we know it. Funerals are, for instance, much bigger occasions than baby showers. We all understand this conundrum in the workplace.

The departing staff member, assuming they leave without a cloud over their head, typically has emotional attachments with colleagues and may well be recognised for having done a good job.

The newcomer may know no-one, while the quality and duration of their tenure is, for obvious reasons, unknown.

Nevertheless, welcoming someone into the fold and then making sure they have all the physical and cultural equipment, skills and support they need seems obvious.

This is particularly the case of current worker shortages, where hard-won recruits can easily find alternative employment and may well pass judgement on your processes in public.

Interestingly, Mr Giles suggested those with the most professional approach to recruitment had the most to risk from poor onboarding.

Those who made their way through the more process-driven selection process tended to have expectations that treatment would continue when they started.

Too often they were disappointed. OneVerb has addressed a very different part of the process.

It has created software that can easily edit and send a short video introduction of a candidate as part of a job application.

The firm, which has been working on its product for about six years, believes it has dual-use capability: employers would find the videos a useful tool to screen potential workers, looking for those who stand out when it comes to more human traits that are not apparent with a traditional curriculum vitae.

The firm also believes its chat system, designed initially to engage with candidates and keep them updated during the recruitment process, has the capacity to become a significant workplace communications tool beyond the point of filling vacancies.

It sees the small-to-medium enterprise as a key market, especially where casual employees often have less to provide in a written résumé and the communications channels are more ad hoc.

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