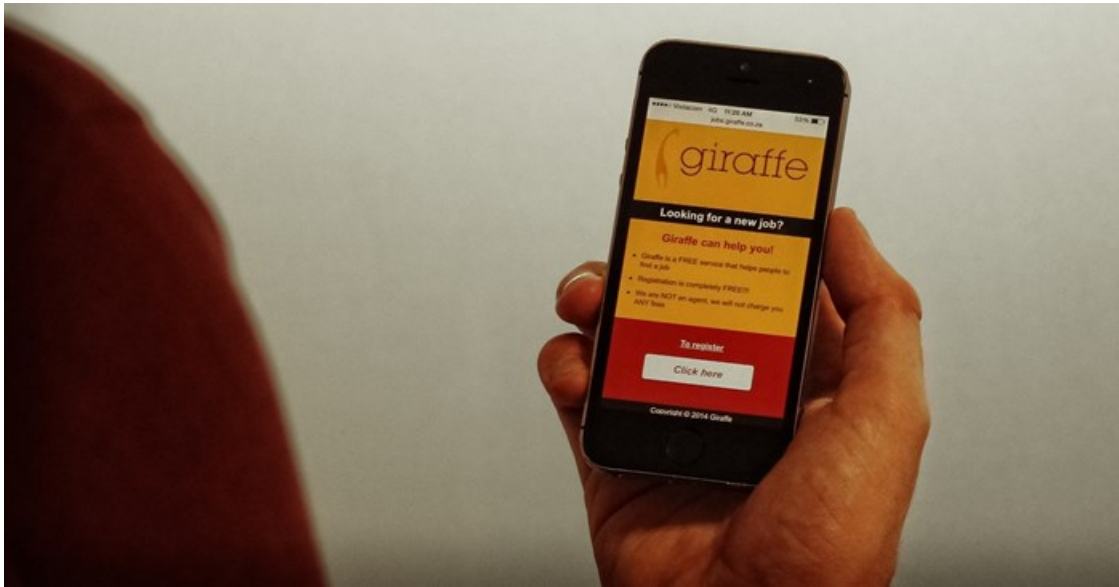


Tech trailblazers: Mobile recruitment made easy

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

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With the noble desire to positively impact SA's unemployment challenge, [Giraffe](#) created a mobile application to streamline the recruitment process for employers and jobseekers alike. The startup has since been recognised as a top technology startup in emerging markets, winning the global [Seedstars World](#) competition in 2015 and bagging the handsome \$500,000 investment prize.



How it works

Giraffe's focus is on matching people to medium-skilled jobs in major business sectors in South Africa. Businesses can submit their staff requirements online and Giraffe's recruitment algorithm will automatically identify the most suitable candidates from their base of ID-verified, screened candidate CVs – which jobseekers create for free with their cellphone. Giraffe's system then contacts candidates and can also arrange interviews. Because the entire recruitment process is automated, Giraffe's service is cheaper and faster.

We got in touch with Giraffe's CEO, Anish Shivdasani, to learn about the pearls of wisdom they've gathered – and pitfalls encountered – during their journey.

■ *How was the idea for Giraffe born and what makes the platform unique?*

Having previously worked in strategy consulting in the telecoms sector, we always wanted to do a mobile tech startup. Working in South Africa, we noticed that although mobile penetration is on par with the developed world, there are numerous socio-economic problems typical of the developing world – unemployment being arguably the biggest.

So we thought: How can we use the ubiquity of mobile to help reduce unemployment? Giraffe was born. Giraffe is unique because it is the fastest and cheapest way for businesses to recruit medium-skilled workers (people who earn between R3k and R13k per month), and the easiest way for jobseekers to access opportunities.

■ *What is your view on the power of mobile within SA's recruitment space?*

Everyone has a cellphone in South Africa, and even the low LSM segment is quite tech savvy. Since most people don't have computers or internet at home, the cellphone is the primary means for information and communication for most South

Africans. As such, mobile is a really powerful tool to connect jobseekers with employers.

■ ***Prior to the Seedstars award, how was Giraffe being funded?***

We funded Giraffe ourselves. Shafin and I, the two original founders, invested our own savings and did not take a salary for over a year while we built the platform.

■ ***What were the unexpected challenges your team faced during Giraffe's establishment?***

There are too many to mention! Establishing a tech startup is full of obstacles. The first version of the product didn't work that well: initial customer feedback was poor, jobseekers expressed concern that it was a scam, marketing was difficult and expensive. The list goes. But one thing we're good at (and the reason we're still going) is that our team is great at overcoming obstacles and solving problems.



Giraffe founders (from left): Bradley Cowie, co-founder of Giraffe; Anish Shivdasani, CEO; Shafin Anwarsha, head of product.

■ ***What is your vision for Giraffe? How would you like to see the company grow in the coming years?***

Our vision is to make Giraffe the largest platform for medium-skilled workers in the country. We want to guarantee every jobseeker that joins an interview within the first month, and we want to guarantee that businesses will be able to fill any medium-skilled vacancy within 48 hours. Ultimately we want to see the unemployment rate drop because of Giraffe. That would give us immense satisfaction because we would be making a significant positive social impact in South Africa.

■ ***What advice can you give other aspiring entrepreneurs?***

- If you really want to do a tech startup, go for it. You only live once and will never forgive yourself if you don't try.

- Make sure you have the stomach for it. Founding a startup is brutal, painful, tough and very depressing at times. There are actually more lows than highs and you need to make sure you have the resilience to get through the hard parts.
- Make sure you find the right partner(s). This is critical. Don't choose your friends - this is very dangerous. Instead, partner with a colleague, someone you work well with.
- Make sure you've saved enough money to last you 18 months at least. This is a big sacrifice but it is necessary if you want to make a meaningful go at it.
- Talk to other entrepreneurs, and get mentorship and advice from places like the Standard Bank Incubator. It's impossible to be successful on your own. Every entrepreneur needs mentors and advisors, even if they are informal. Standard Bank is doing a really great job at offering entrepreneurs work space, sponsoring startup competitions (including Seedstars that Giraffe won) and providing access to mentors.
- Make a business plan. It's critical to put all the numbers down on paper. The plan will almost never be followed exactly, but in business numbers are everything.
- Talk to customers early. Too many startups make products that customers don't want. Early customer feedback is critical to validate your idea.

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