



(L-R) Nic Cola, Peter Hooper, Jan Rieche and David Anderson

## **Best Small Recruitment Firm of the Year**

### **GreenCollar Talent**

During tough times the old adage that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger is little consolation. But for the founders of Sydney-based GreenCollar Talent, winner of this year's FEMA for Best Small Recruitment Firm of the Year, it proved true.

The day in October 2009 that the environmentally conscious business opened was the day the stockmarket crashed. Then, the Federal Government's carbon pollution reduction scheme, on which its business plan was built, was shelved.

It was what Peter Hooper, chief operating officer and founder, along with Jan Rieche and James Schulz, describes as "definitely backs to the wall stuff. We were really concerned. Our business plan had fallen by the wayside and we had to start thinking creatively about what the industry really needed. I think the reason why we are where we are now is due to all the misfortunes we had at the start."

GreenCollar Talent, represented in Canberra and opening in Perth, services the renewable energy, AFOLU (agriculture, forestry and other land use) carbon management, technology and sustainability markets. It has grown to employ six recruitment staff and has a consulting business with 11 staff.

Mr Hooper says that because it initially struggled for brand awareness it created a not-for-profit think tank offering free events with big-name speakers. The aim was not only to promote the GreenCollar Talent brand, but to provide information on issues such as climate change.

The Best Small Recruitment Firm of the Year award, open to firms with less than 20 active employees, recognises business models which provide continued value to the business and its clients' business. For GreenCollar Talent this has included helping emerging businesses lacking sophisticated means of recruitment but also the means to pay substantial recruitment fees. It developed systems to help them – spreading out fee payments, for example.

Mr Hooper, "a closet greenie", sees a bright future for the firm which now has about 45 customers, but says: "A lot of people are saying, 'you are in the right industry, it is emerging', but I don't think they understand how difficult it can be at times because it is so subject to government policy changes."

But regardless of the fate of the current government's carbon tax, companies are recognising that change lies ahead, with big firms developing sophisticated financial models and some seriously considering alternative energy options, Mr Hooper says. "We are finally starting to get a big recognition out there."