

Heaton Rail managing director  
Stefan Heaton

# RoleSpot, the rail talent app

Stefan Heaton talks about how technology is speeding up the process of filling talent gaps in rail businesses



IMAGE CREDIT: HEATON RAIL

Tech is influencing just about every aspect of our lives; how to travel, dine and date. It is also equally crucial in our professional lives, and that is where we come to a new idea that is democratising talent and opportunities in rail.

Stefan Heaton is managing director of Heaton Rail, the business that has pioneered RoleSpot, billed as “the fastest way for companies to find and hire top talent within the rail industry”.

Heaton, an electronic and electrical engineer originally, talks of a “custom-built online desktop and mobile web app” that vets and aggregates talent. This includes engineers, managers and specialists from every possible source including their own staff, job seekers, retirees, contractors, consultants, and even other businesses with underutilised workers.

According to Heaton, the concept “enables companies to directly find, contact and hire talent in the fastest possible way”.

“We have optimised, digitalised and automated existing manual recruitment, labour hire, contracting, and consultancy processes used by businesses to find and hire talent,” he told Rail Express.

“As a company, you get access to vetted talent in real time. You can message, post jobs, download quotes, hire talent and more all through our online platform in a few clicks.

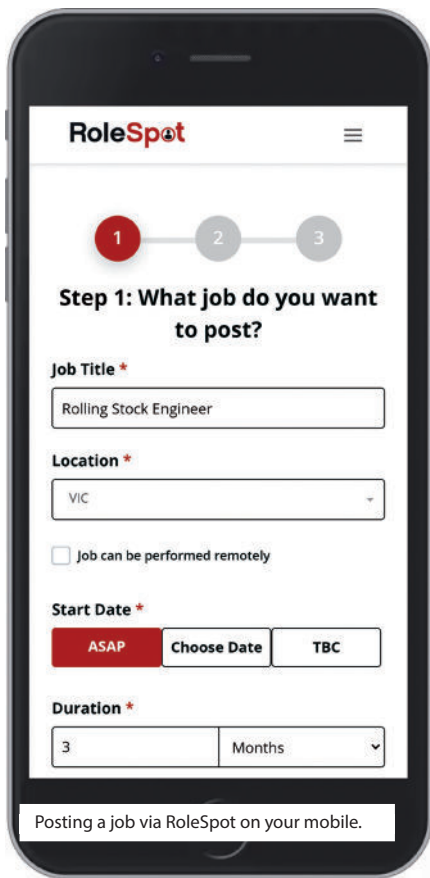
“When you hire a candidate through RoleSpot, we manage all worker payments and invoice you for works completed against

digital timesheets.

“As a candidate, you get access to opportunities that aren’t usually advertised and let companies directly connect with you about these opportunities. You can also work as an employee or under your own or businesses’ ABN if you wish.”

A screenshot of the RoleSpot 'Browse Talent' web interface. The page shows a search for 'Rolling Stock' and 'Engineer' in the 'VIC' region. The results list a candidate for 'Project Engineer | Electrical Engineer | Electronics Engineer | Reliability Engineer'. The profile includes details on recent experience (Project Engineer at Heaton Rail, Rolling Stock Engineer, Junior Engineer) and education (Bachelor of Engineering, Advanced Diploma of Engineering). The interface also shows filters for 'Pay Rate' and 'Sort by', and a sidebar with 'Location', 'Preferences', and 'Rate' information for the candidate Sarab\*\*\*\*.

A snapshot showing how businesses can access vetted talent in real time via RoleSpot.



### FROM WHERE DID THE IDEA COME?

Heaton said building RoleSpot was the logical next evolutionary step for their existing business, Heaton Rail, which provides engineering, management, and specialist talent to rail businesses all over Australia.

“At Heaton Rail, we are experts at what we do so much so that other agencies use us when things get difficult, however, we are still delivering our offering in a more conventional manner,” he said.

“When I step back and take a broader view, I think, we use Uber to reach our destination, Airbnb to book a holiday rental, eBay to shop, bank digitally and even search, find, and book a doctor online.

“We live in a digital world. Finding and hiring talent in the rail industry shouldn’t be any different,” Heaton said.

He said the benefits to using technology such as RoleSpot meant significant improvements to available options, quality, speed, compliance, and cost to name a few.

“Furthermore, similar business models have seen great success in various industries around the world with others inevitable to adopt a similar approach,” he said.

“My thinking was: do I want to sit back and watch this movement happen in rail or do I want to lead it? I guess the answer was obvious.”



### PROGRESS AS A BUSINESS

“We have been intentionally flying under the radar for the last two years as we have been focused on setting up our people, process, and technology,” Heaton said, answering a question about business growth.

“Everything that we have built has had input in one form or another from within the industry. Furthermore, the whole talent onboarding process and associated technology in RoleSpot has been built with security, speed, compliance, and usability in mind.

“We actually use this part of RoleSpot for onboarding new employees and contractors in Heaton Rail as it is the best that we have seen.”

Heaton said the company is focused on building used cases within smaller market segments in rail.

“We use the approach of plan-build-measure-learn-repeat,” he said.

“The good thing is that we have a very agile team from tech to operations so we can change quickly to user demands.

“With tech as an example, as soon as we get any feedback for changes, we look at the larger impact of the change requested, talk to other users and if it aligns with the greater vision, we design and deliver the changes, update our internal processes, publish our release notes to our users and subsequently measure feedback, all in a matter of days.”

### THE TIME IS NOW

Heaton said there were several reasons why the time was “now” for RoleSpot.

“COVID has actually contributed significantly to this,” he said.

He explained that most companies are going through or have gone through a process of huge transformation.

“Many businesses and their people aren’t the same as they were a year ago,” he said.

Heaton said that businesses are now more

welcoming of adopting new digital tools, and managers are actually open to flexible and remote working arrangements, with candidates starting to realise that a full-time permanent job might not be the best for them personally, professionally, and financially.

Heaton added that being part of this transition is “one of his favourite things”.

“We have seen candidates who have worked with the same company for years leave and come work for us instead because they know they can make more money contracting, they want the flexibility to work less days a week, they want to start their own business, or they just want to get more experience across multiple clients,” he said.

“Outside of COVID, the market is actually quite fragmented which makes things difficult when there is a skills shortage. This was one of the reasons why we started RoleSpot.

“Everyone is fishing from the same little pond. What we are trying to do is to bring all possible resources together in one hub and give companies access to this in the fastest possible way.”

Heaton said they had faced and withstood significant challenges on the road to developing RoleSpot.

“Having a great idea is just the one per cent of what determines success - strategy, team, and near flawless agile operational execution through good leadership is part of the remaining 99 per cent,” he said.

“Having obsessively studied, started, helped start, and invest in early-stage ventures, my team and I were prepared for the challenges ahead, and like all start-ups we have had our fair share of them, especially in the early days.

“Having the right team with diversity in skills along with a support structure such as an experienced advisory board in our case really helps quickly turn a challenging situation to one filled with opportunity.”