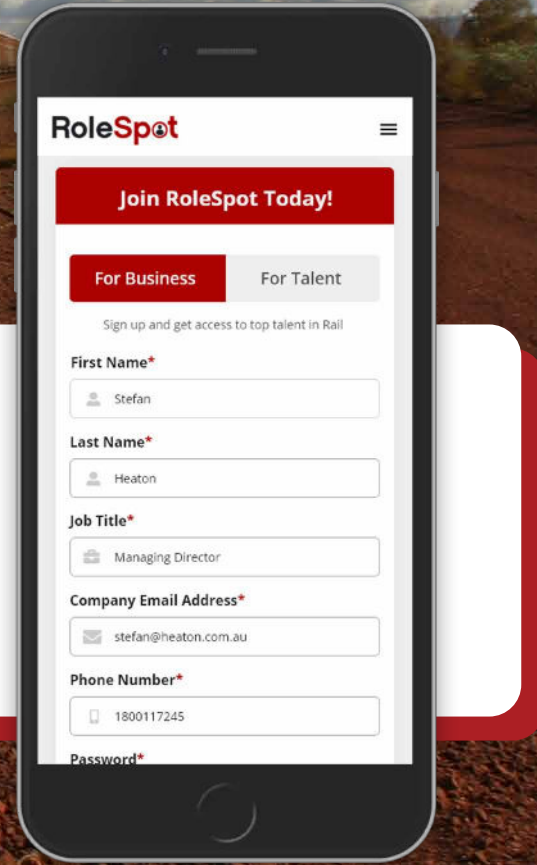




# Heaton Has Role To Play In Helping Overcome Rail Skills Shortages



With forecasts that Australia's rail sector is facing a serious skills shortage, a local start-up is well placed to help attract potential new workers to the industry.

According to a recent report published by the Australian Railway Association, the rail industry contributes around \$30 Billion to the Australian economy and employs more than 165,000 workers directly and indirectly in full-time equivalent (FTE) terms.

This comprises private and public operators, passenger and freight operators, track owners and managers, manufacturers and suppliers that operate in urban, regional and rural areas of Australia.

## Rail Skills Shortage

The rail freight sector is considered a critical component in Australia's future growth, however, new studies show the sector is facing a major skills shortage crisis.

New data released in October by the Australian Railway Association (ARA) confirmed urgent action was needed to meet an infrastructure skills crisis that was set to worsen over the next three years.

ARA chief executive Caroline Wilkie says the Infrastructure Australia (IA) reports on both infrastructure market capacity and infrastructure workforce and skills supply were welcome recognition of this critical issue.

"In 2023, skills demand will be 48% higher than supply, with the transport infrastructure sector set to be in the eye of the storm," Ms Wilkie said.

## Specialised Rail Talent Pool

For Heaton Rail and its start-up "RoleSpot", which provides professional and technical talent on-demand, these skills shortage concerns have increased interest in its offerings.

"From graduates to senior leaders - we specialise in providing skilled engineering, management, and specialist talent to the

rail industry," said Heaton Rail and RoleSpot founder Stefan Heaton.

An engineer by trade, Stefan has 10 years of professional experience in the rail sector, along with a background in working with incubation projects and start-ups.

"I spend a lot of my time within the rail industry, it used to be primarily engineering, but more recently it's been working with Execs and senior leaders with developing strategy and managing large teams, changes, issues, and imminent risks," Stefan said.

"Around five years ago, I started a business called Heaton Rail, which provides consultants, contractors and recruitment services to the rail industry.

"Through running Heaton Rail, I realised that there was an opportunity to completely digitalise the way businesses were finding and engaging contractors such as engineers, managers, specialists, and admin to provide a much more seamless experience that improved speed, quality, compliance and cost.

## RoleSpot Web Application

The web-based RoleSpot software solves a pain point that many businesses in heavy industries experience first-hand.

"I would describe it as an Uber ideation of how we can bring people and companies together," Stefan said.

"We make it super easy and really fast for companies to engage the right people, particularly if they need them on a contract basis."

Stefan began his "RoleSpot" journey around three years ago with a clear focus on developing a robust, easy-to-use system that would efficiently link rail companies with highly experienced and skilled white collar talent.

"I brought in a dedicated software team to build our RoleSpot software - and most

importantly we worked in consultation with industry from ground up," Stefan said.

"Our utopia is that we want to be the fastest way to find and hire contract talent within the rail industry.

"Simplistically speaking, we're kind of the Uber for the rail industry and its search for professional and technical talent.

## How It Works

RoleSpot is a market-leading technology application that allows businesses to find and hire top talent fast.

"Our platform aggregates and vets talent from every possible source including our own staff, job seekers, retirees, contractors, consultants, and even other businesses with underutilised workers, and enables companies to directly find, contact and hire them in the fastest way possible 24/7 via our desktop and mobile web app."

The platform is designed to allow individuals and companies to sign up quickly and easily.

"The system is supported by our expert team of recruiters, who are specialists within the rail and heavy industry space, and more specifically, white collar professional and technical talent."

These experts review and vet every profile to ensure they have the right skills and attitude before getting access to the platform.

"On the other side, RoleSpot works with companies to ensure their resourcing requirements for their businesses are understood so that we continue to sign up the right talent to the platform based on our client's needs.

"Signing up or posting a job on the platform as a business is free.

Once in, businesses have immediate access to an ever-growing talent pool and can engage with these vetted and available contractors on the spot.

"Every single process that you can imagine has been automated on the platform and we are continuously working on further refinements based on user feedback," Stefan said.

## Barriers to Traditional Talent Hire

Stefan says that in a market where people with the right skills are getting increasingly harder to find due to strong competition amongst the major industries - particularly from a booming mining sector - the ability to instantly access an up-to-date database of suitable applicants was a major head start.

It usually takes over 12 weeks on average to hire through traditional vacancy management, taking into account factors such as internal recruitment processes, tools, networks, competency and workloads.

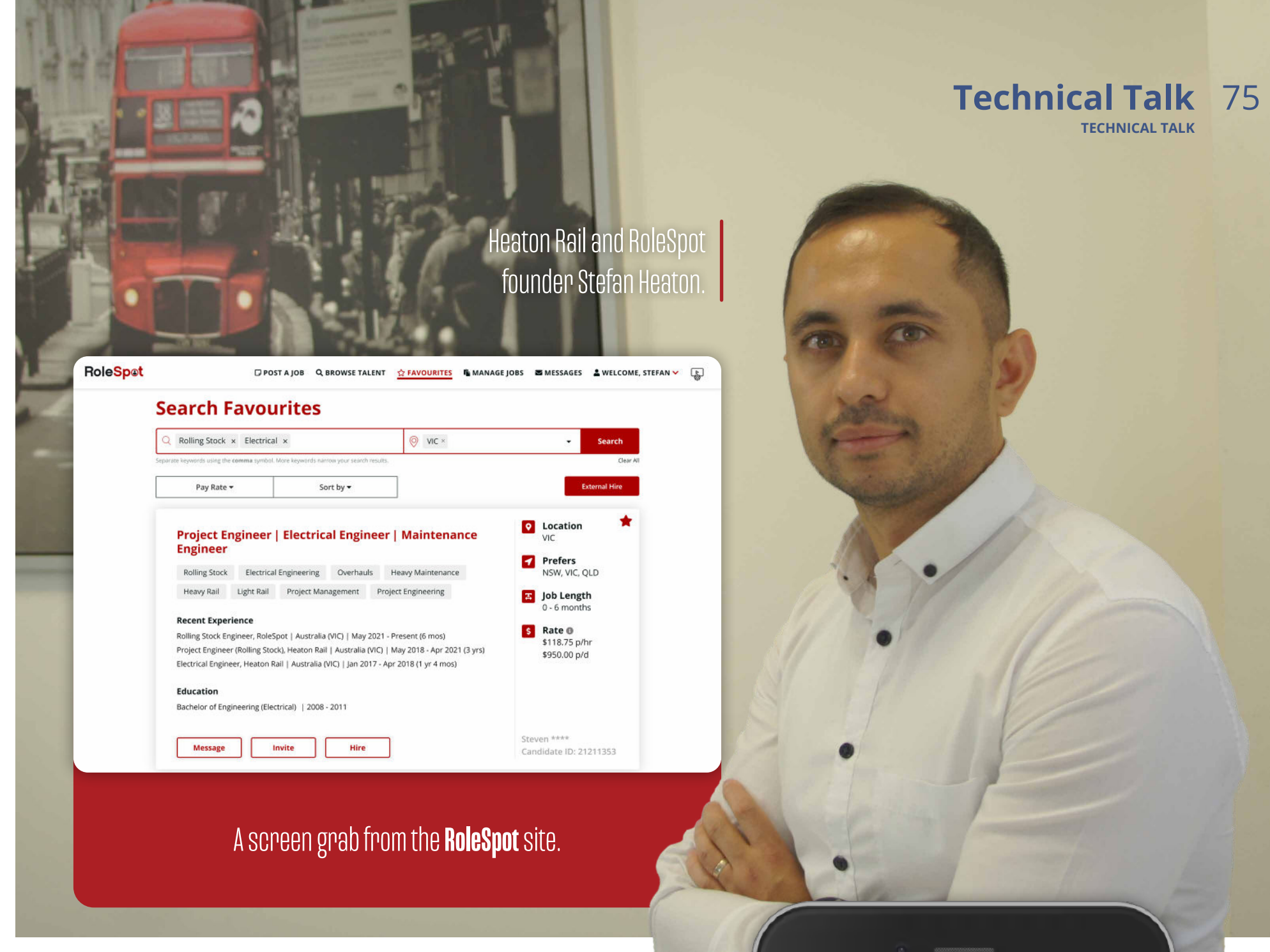
At the same time, there is a consistent growing requirement for contract labour to manage peak demand periods.

Hiring managers want to easily scale up and down their teams to work around workload peaks and troughs without just using an "approved supplier" that provides a subpar service whilst charging an arm and a leg.

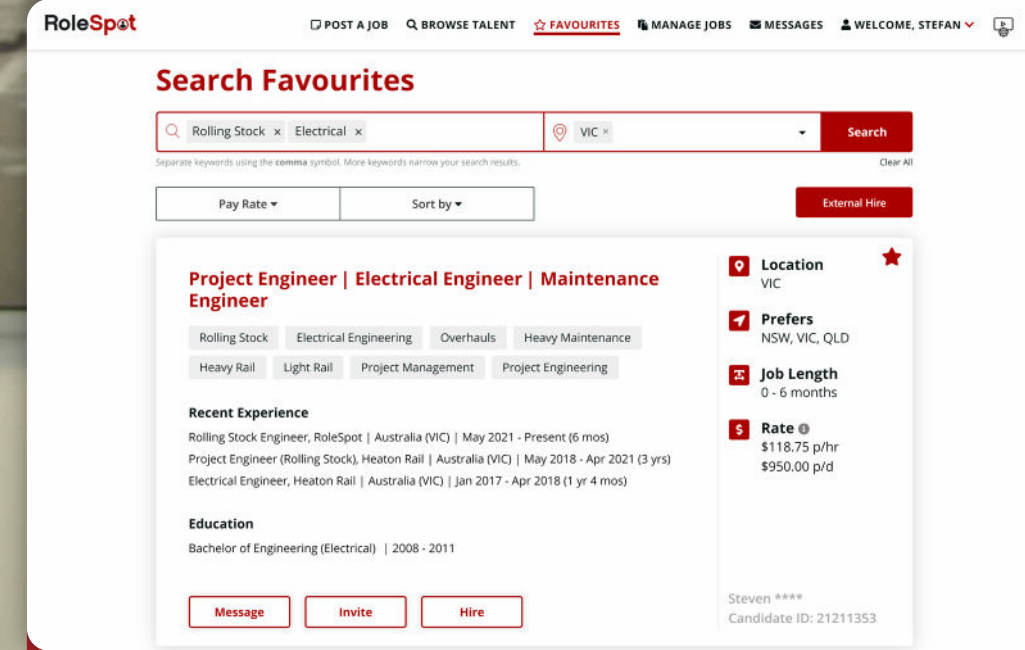
On the flip side, people chasing roles are wanting more interesting and diverse work that fits around their life - whether that means working a few days a week, few months a year, at the office, at home, a mix, or even completely remotely on an island in Fiji (with good internet of course)

"We have been seeing the transformation of the workplace as we know it for some time now. COVID has just accelerated this beyond what we could have ever imagined. Luckily with the groundwork we have done with technology and industry engagement over the last three years, we are at the forefront of leading this change."

At an operational level, RoleSpot does the hard work through careful vetting of each talent profile before accepting them onto the platform. This means that businesses



Heaton Rail and RoleSpot founder Stefan Heaton.



A screen grab from the RoleSpot site.

seeking skilled white collar short- or long-term contractors can be assured that they are seeing only the best professional and technical talent and can then hire them on-demand with minimal fuss, time, and cost.

## On-boarding Process

RoleSpot has the network, the tools and the technology to connect rail businesses with the right talent pool.

"We structured the journey of how we on-board a user to be fast and positive for both the candidate and the businesses engaging them," Stefan said.

"It doesn't make sense for a business to commission a project and wait six months for a project manager to officially start.

"This traditional route can cause significant deterioration in a project's delivery, targets and milestones."

"The initial RoleSpot online registration is a fast, simple 60 second process.

"For business profiles, we first work on understanding forecasted resourcing requirements to ensure that we have the right people on the platform to meet their business's needs.

"Establishing these requirements are a key part in ensuring we resource RoleSpot with a talent pool that fits our client's growing requirements.

"For talent profiles, our experts review applications against our current and forecasted requirements. If we think there is a fit, we undertake a screening call, usually via video, and if successful, our team get a digital profile set-up which can be changed at any time in the future if your experience or preferences such as rate, location, and job length changes.

"We are quite selective in who we let on the platform as quality is extremely important to us as it is for our clients."

Once a talent profile is set-up, any business

on the platform can search, contact and engage this person at the click of a button.

"Businesses can also post jobs, whereby our talent pool has access to a one-click application process.

"Posting a job on our platform is the most effective way to find talent on RoleSpot as it combines the power of our technology along with our expert recruiters working away in the background to get you the best result in the fastest way possible.

"As part of engaging a worker, our system automatically calculates the right rates based on agreed margins which you can see.

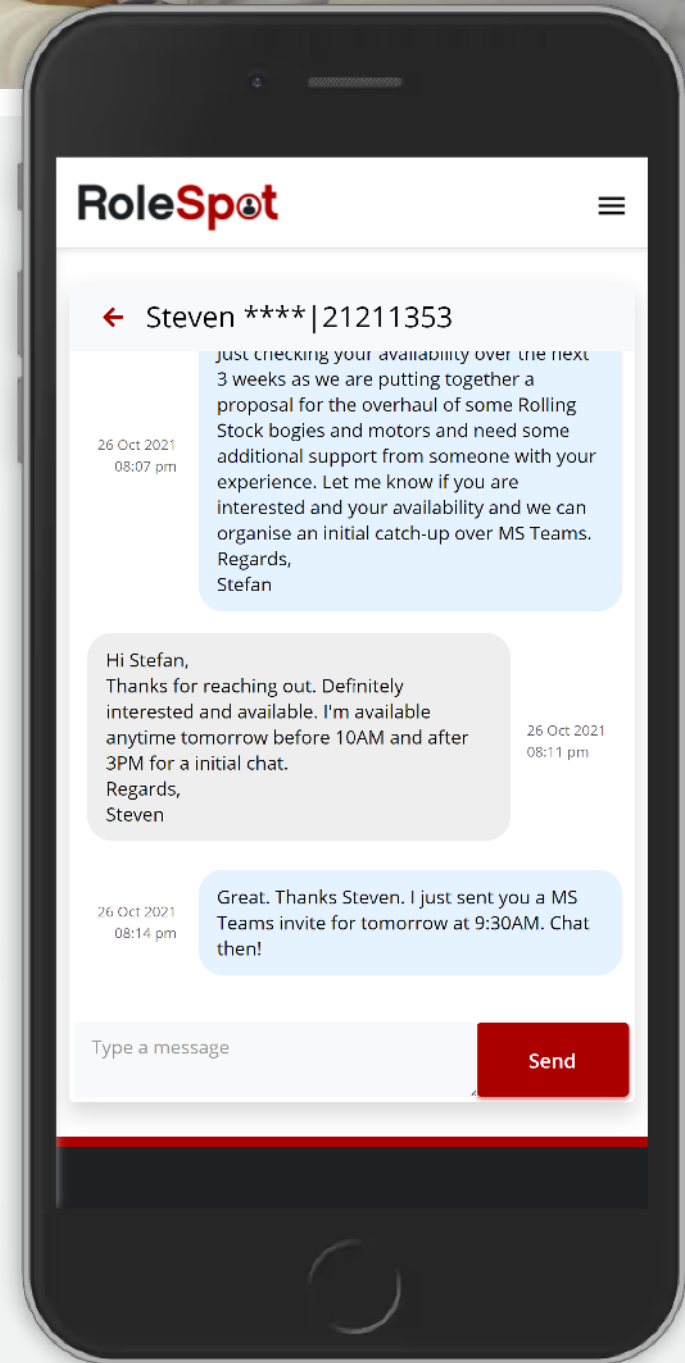
"Clients can negotiate directly with the person, or we have a team of expert recruiters always on hand to provide support," Stefan said.

Through the entire process, RoleSpot handles all vetting, verification, compliance, and administrative tasks such as contracts and worker payments. From a business perspective, you simply engage a resource and receive an invoice against digitally approved timesheets.

"It is important to note that even though we may be considered a technology start-up, we are actually heavily people first. We are not here to create technology to replace human beings, but for it to be an enabler to bring the best people together to do amazing things."

RoleSpot is also looking to venture into other heavy asset industries such as mining, oil and gas, defence, aviation and maritime in the near future. **AMR**

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