**Transcript**

**Tina Brunet:** What happens when you apply for a professional job nowadays? In most cases, potential employers will shortlist the applicants and then do some research on you before they invite you in for an interview. What does this research involve and if you are one of the shortlisted applicants, how can you ensure that you increase your chances to land that interview?

Today we speak with three people who know the answer to this question. I am with three recruiters - Shraw Shekhar, Phillippa Whiteman and Laura Patten. All work with Randstad recruitment and have graciously volunteered their time for us today.

I am your host Tina Brunet. A warm welcome to you all. We see many jobs advertised that have a long list of things that an employer is looking for. Do I need to meet all of the criteria listed to be successful in an interview? We'll start with Shraw.

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** The first question everybody has in their head is how to recognise if you're a good fit and when you are looking through that job description online, the first few things that you're going to have to recognise to be a good fit would be researching the company obviously and looking at the type or the role type itself and comparing that with the skill sets that you have.

For example, if you're looking at a job that specifically mentions you need to have a specific amount of year of experience with specific technical skills, that would be something that you should start shortlisting as the type of role that could potentially be suitable for you. Once that happens, then you will start realising looking at the company's culture, the values, the beliefs, the mission statements - you will eventually figure out whether the type of work that you're going to be doing and the company that you're working with is what you believe in. If you are going to work for a specific company that would be something to first and foremost shortlist and understand.

**Tina Brunet**: So if you do look at that list Shraw and see the criteria that you’ve mentioned, what if you are lacking in some of that criteria? Which one of that actually matters versus ones that I guess could be more negotiable?

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** Sure, good question. So I think the first thing that would be acceptable is if they mentioned you need to come from a specific sector. If this role is with the financial industry and you want to apply for this role and you have not had skills in the financial sector or industry, if they have mentioned in that skill set that you need to come from there, then of course that is a prerequisite that you should follow. However if they've mentioned having Adobe Illustrator as a technical skill would be preferred and if you do not have that skill, that's completely fine. So it's really pinpointing the things that you know are sort of necessary and what's not.

**Tina Brunet:** And if you don't have some of those I guess more optional skills and you are applying for that role, is there some way that you can I guess, highlight that in your application or should you mention that you don't have those skills so should you opt to not mention that at all?

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** Good question. I think you should definitely highlight that you don't. If they have mentioned that it is a prerequisite and that you need to have it, definitely mention that you don't but you can mention that you are taking up a course. So for example, you can mention you're currently doing if you are interested in this particular area of a skill set, that you are looking at growing then definitely speak to them about how you want to be able to do an online course in this area if the organisation actually allows you to do Learning and Development. That would be something that would also stand out to them, knowing that you are you know, taking the initiative to do so.

**Tina Brunet:** So Pip, you have seen thousands of applications for jobs and worked with employers who come to you to help find that perfect candidate. When someone applies for a job, what are some things that they can do to try and get shortlisted and move to that next step in realising success?

**Phillippa Whiteman:** Of course. So a lot of what applicants don't realise is the sheer number of applications that we receive per one role. Depending on the job role itself, we normally get around a minimum of 60 but that can go up right up to 100 - 200. So the first thing candidates are actually up against is the sheer number of applications that are coming through and then you realise how time poor the internal teams can be and the amount of time it actually takes to go through and read a resume.

So first of all is to get a really good understanding of what employers are doing when they are shortlisting. Most of the organisations now have internal recruitment teams that they do lean to, to help and support and first of all what they normally look at is if there's key selection criteria that they look at. The main thing is when you are going through a role, is is it asking you to do a key selection criteria? If it is, do you align yourself with that and you need to make sure that when you are putting through your resume together that you're tailoring your resume to that key selection criteria.

So some of the good things it's really worth having in mind is that you may have around two or three different resumes and that might be depending on what you're actually applying for and that really is to make sure that you are having your head and shoulders above the rest of the applicants in the in the application. I think as well as looking at the PD (Professional Development). So, do you identify with the role itself? Do you look at what keywords they're using in that application in the position description and even in the job ad? They'll be certain buzzwords that will kind of stand out to you and kind of help you identify and it's really important to make sure that you put those in there in that resume.

Also, one of the key things to really look at is and it's really simple, is making sure that you tailor your cover letter to the organisation. Make sure that spelling, punctuation and grammar is a huge important part for them and acknowledging who you're going to be supporting your cover letter to. Make sure that you don't copy and paste and if you do copy and paste, make sure as well that you really do just give a second eye of opinion on that as well.

**Tina Brunet:** And Shraw mentioned earlier about the key selection criteria and when you are not able to meet all of the requirements. How can you position yourself for the requirements that you may not meet when you're filling out those forms so that you can still stand out above the ones I guess, that make those requirements?

**Phillippa Whiteman:** Yeah, I think it's really important to realise that no one ever is really going to identify and be able to hit every part of that key selection criteria. If they do, they’re probably in the role already and they’re probably looking to move out of that role because they're looking for the next challenge. So you always need to kind of really have a think about what you do have as your strengths and those that you do feel like you, you may not hit, you might have the transferable skill set fall and almost look at it as that weakness as an area to improve and it to become an opportunity.

So, identify those weaknesses of where you do have, where you may not actually have that skill set but actually then look at going well, what I would do is, yes I don't have that skill set but what I do have is XY and Z that will become an opportunity for me to build on and then become a strength.

**Tina Brunet:** And you mentioned about the resume. You said three different resumes that you may have that you could position yourself for differently with three different roles that you may be applying for. Can you unpack that a little bit more for us because often a lot of our clients or in fact a lot of us have just the one resume? What is distinct about having those different resumes and what are we I guess, trying to come across with having those different versions of the resume?

**Phillippa Whiteman:** Yeah no, good, good question. The best way is to give you an example. So for instance, I'm in recruitment and recruitment has probably about four or five different components of the role itself. So we have a sales element of our role. So I might have one resume that is purely around sales and it's really driven on KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), targets, achievements and what I've done. Sales always identify with numbers so it's always really important to make sure that you've got those available on your resume.

The second part of our role is about the actual recruitment and matching resumes. So for me, if I wanted to go into more of an internal based role, I might look at more of the account delivery that we do in recruitment and I might look at kind of how I match my resumes, my fill rate that I work with. The third part that we look at is depending on if we work on projects and if I want to go into more project-based role, I might identify that I've worked on X amount of projects, what the outcomes were, the delivery targets etc. so it's really breaking down the role type to identify where you want to go and what you want to drive.

**Tina Brunet:** So it's really just highlighting the areas I guess that make you stand out for that specific role when you're applying in always - not just the cover letter.

**Phillippa Whiteman:** Gone are the days where roles are very regimented and your position description is very black and white. It's now looking that roles will have different elements to it and people will have in their career, they might have three or four different careers. They might identify that they might start within a role where it's doing more reception. Then they might move into more of a marketing role. From there, they're going to move into more of sales/delivery role.

So it's really important to think about where your resume is going and when you're going through the application process, you're probably applying for various different roles and instead of having to change it every single time, if you've got certain areas where you can look at it, then that's going to make it a lot easier for you in the long run.

**Tina Brunet:** So Laura, we spoke a little bit about the do's and the don'ts when applying for work. Can you extend on that a little bit further and talk to us about some of the things that we should and shouldn't do when applying for a job.

**Laura Patten:** Absolutely. I think you should always be really proactive in your job search. I think that you should respect the company's given processes and SLAs (service-level agreements) around getting back to candidates in shortlisting but I think you should always take a job search into your own hands and manage that process as much as you can yourself.

**Tina Brunet:** Okay. So sometimes when we apply for work, there's often a contact person listed to refer to should we need to find out more information or obviously the company's name is often listed as well. Is that something that clients should pursue in contacting that person or emailing the company and asking them more about the role, or is that more of a needs to basis?

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** Absolutely. I think once you've sent off your application and respect the timeframe they've given you. So they may they will contact all applications 30 days after the advert has closed when you then reach that period, I think it's more than unacceptable to be kept in the loop. Find out where your status is that because quite often it might just be they haven't screened through and by you contacting them and calling them, you're actually putting your application to the forefront of their mind. So I think as long as you're not I guess, pestering and repetitively calling, I think you have the ability to warrant something about your application - whether it's just an update or to say that we are screening and we'll get back to you shortly.

**Tina Brunet:** And sometimes when we apply for work, the organisation's values and missions are something that we research before we apply. Should we in the cover letter or in our statement identify that we understand the organisation's ethos, values and missions? Is that helpful for the organisation to know that we've done that bit of research or does that bring our application front of mind for them?

**Laura Patten:** Absolutely. I think your cover letter is a chance for you not only to talk about your own successes and skills set but also your chance to identify the company, why that company in particular is something that suits your ethics and values and also the understanding of the role. So it's really your chance to speak about the business, the role and then also your skills that relate to them.

**Tina Brunet:** So Pip, I'd like to talk to you about disclosure which is a really big issue for our clients. What are your thoughts on when people should disclose their disability and how would it be best to do so in your view?

**Phillippa Whiteman:** Firstly Tina, there's no right or wrong answer for this one. It really comes down to the applicant. Some candidates decide that they are really comfortable and they're very confident and I think as well it's really important to know that you're interviewing the client just as much as they're interviewing you. It's really important that when you are on the job search, this role for you could be your next career. We work with a lot of clients who are in the disability space and it is a key question that does come up a lot. It really comes down to the candidate. I can't stress that enough. Some candidates decide that they want to say from day one, others may decide that they want to do it when they come to an interview. In terms of how Randstad operates, I can honestly say that we wouldn't disclose anything until it comes to them in an interview because for us, when we're shortlisting, when we're screening, we know we don't know anything else, we could really go on the resume and then we go through from a conversation from a screening with candidates. So for us, it really comes down to that interview process with the clients where we then might give them a call and let them know in case there's any extra special circumstances that they need support with on the day getting there.

**Tina Brunet:**  And do you find that employers who mention that they have an inclusive policy on disability are more open to receiving applicants that may have disabilities?

**Phillippa Whiteman:** I think the main thing to really take away from that is for candidates to decide that when you are going to that interview process, the interview really is there to have that honest and open conversation with the client then and it's only when you're in that interview with them that you'll get a really good understanding from them as to how inclusive they will operate and a key takeaway for applicants to think about is, if clients are taking a long time to decide how accessible everything will be, do you really want to work for a client that might not be able to kind of provide the level of service that you do need ?

**Tina Brunet:** Okay. Shraw, finally if someone gets a rejection letter, should they bother to apply with the same organisation again?

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** A hundred percent. The reason I say that is because when you're applying for a specific job, it could actually be for a different department and when another role comes out it could be for a completely different department. I would never say just because you got a rejection letter from one area of the business that you shut yourself out completely from the other areas of the business. At the same time you never know that at that point of time your skill sets may not have been the best fit for that role but if there was another role you never know that opportunity can actually work, so don't hold yourself back.

**Tina Brunet:** So how does the client know what they should have done differently? Would you to encourage or suggest that they contact the employer and get feedback on their application?

**Shraw** **Shekhar:** So if you have put in an application and you're waiting for that closing date and you got a rejection letter, definitely give them a call and ask them why your rejection letter was given to you. However, if you actually went for that face-to-face interview, it's always a lot better for you to call out the HR or the Hiring Manager if given the number directly to ask feedback as to why you didn't get it. That feedback would be a lot more detailed and a lot more insightful for you to be able to understand what you should be doing for your next interview. Always take that with an open heart because you know it's always good to have constructive criticism.

**Tina Brunet:** Thank you to each of you for coming in today. If you are someone who is thinking about looking for work or perhaps changing roles this year, you can connect with our own employment consultants at Vision Australia who are able to help guide and support you to achieve your goals. You can find more information at [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org).