

Employability and Career Development Portfolio

Module: Employability and Career Development (LCLM4005)

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Word Count: 1,497

Task 1 – Comparing Two Job Adverts and Identifying Key Skills

The two lifeguard vacancies advertised by Virgin Active and Everyone Active demonstrate that although both organisations operate within the leisure industry, they place emphasis on slightly different aspects of the role. Virgin Active focuses on delivering a premium member experience alongside maintaining exceptional brand standards, whereas Everyone Active places greater emphasis on community engagement, accessibility and public health. Despite these differences, both employers identify a common set of employability skills that are essential for success, including communication, teamwork, professionalism, customer service and, most importantly, health and safety.

Throughout the Employability and Career Development module, we explored how employers increasingly value transferable skills alongside technical qualifications. This is reflected in both job advertisements. While qualifications such as the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification and first aid training are important, both organisations highlight qualities including remaining calm under pressure, communicating effectively with customers and colleagues, acting responsibly and working collaboratively. This demonstrates that employers are recruiting individuals who can contribute positively to the organisation rather than simply carry out routine tasks.

One of the strongest themes shared across both adverts is professional responsibility. Virgin Active expects lifeguards to maintain high brand standards while ensuring members remain safe through accurate safety checks and operational procedures. Similarly, Everyone Active requires staff to monitor pool safety, respond quickly to emergencies and maintain accurate records. During lectures, employability was described as combining knowledge, practical skills and professional behaviours, which reflects the expectations outlined in both vacancies.

The key skill I believe will have the greatest influence on my future career is professional judgement. Throughout my experience as both a lifeguard and Team Leader, I have learned that making the correct decision is not always the easiest one. While covering Duty Manager responsibilities, I was placed under pressure to reopen a swimming pool after chemical readings suggested it was unsafe. I followed health and safety procedures and refused until the water met the required standards because protecting customers had to come before operational pressures. This experience strengthened my confidence in making evidence-based decisions and reinforced the importance of acting professionally, a quality that will be essential as I progress towards becoming an Operations Manager and eventually opening my own specialist leisure centre.

Task 2A – SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a useful tool for evaluating employability because it encourages individuals to reflect on their current abilities while identifying areas for future development. During the module, we explored how self-awareness is essential for career planning, as understanding personal strengths and weaknesses allows individuals to make informed decisions about their professional development (Pool and Sewell, 2007). Reflecting on my own experiences has helped me identify the qualities that have supported my progression within the leisure industry, alongside the areas I still need to improve to achieve my long-term career goals.

One of my greatest strengths is my ability to remain calm and make responsible decisions under pressure. Working as both a lifeguard and Team Leader has required me to prioritise customer safety while balancing operational demands. I have developed strong communication, leadership and problem-solving skills through managing emergencies, supervising colleagues and dealing with members from a wide range of backgrounds. Being bilingual has also strengthened my communication skills by allowing me to support customers who may not speak English confidently. These experiences have improved my confidence in leading teams and making professional decisions, qualities that employers consistently value within the leisure industry (Yorke, 2006).

Despite these strengths, I recognise that I have areas for improvement. Public speaking is something I continue to develop, particularly when addressing larger groups or delivering formal presentations. I also have a tendency to overthink important decisions because I want to ensure I have considered every possible outcome. Although this often results in careful decision making, it can occasionally reduce my confidence. In addition, I would like to improve my written communication to produce reports and professional documents with greater confidence. Recognising these weaknesses gives me a clear direction for personal development rather than viewing them as limitations (Cottrell, 2021).

There are several opportunities available to support my career progression. Continuing my degree while gaining practical experience at Virgin Active allows me to develop both academic knowledge and industry experience simultaneously. Progressing into an Operations Manager role will expose me to budgeting, staffing and business management before I achieve my long-term ambition of opening a specialist leisure centre focused on wellness and recovery. However, there are also external threats that could affect my progression, including increased competition for management positions, changes in health and safety legislation and balancing full-time employment alongside university commitments. Remaining adaptable, committed to continuous learning and willing to seek feedback will help me overcome these challenges and continue developing my employability throughout my career.

Task 2B – Evidence of Employability

My employability has developed through a combination of higher education, professional qualifications and practical experience within the leisure industry. Throughout this module, employability was presented as more than simply gaining employment. Instead, it is the ability to apply knowledge, transferable skills and professional behaviours effectively within different workplace contexts (Yorke, 2006). Reflecting on my career, I have recognised that every role I have undertaken has strengthened these attributes and prepared me for progression into management.

My career began as a lifeguard, but I have deliberately sought opportunities to take on greater responsibility rather than remaining within the limits of my role. Progressing into Team Leader and Duty Manager positions required me to supervise colleagues, coordinate daily operations and make decisions that affected customer safety and business performance. This reflects the CareerEDGE model proposed by Pool and Sewell (2007), which suggests employability develops through experience, reflection and continuous skills development. Each new responsibility strengthened my confidence and demonstrated that professional growth comes from applying knowledge in increasingly challenging situations.

A defining moment in my development occurred while supervising pool operations during a chemical safety concern. Although there was pressure to reopen the pool to minimise disruption, I refused because the chemical readings did not meet the required safety standards. Challenging senior staff was uncomfortable, but the experience changed my understanding of leadership. I realised effective leadership is not about avoiding conflict but having the confidence to uphold professional standards, even when those decisions are unpopular. This reinforced the importance of accountability, ethical decision-making and protecting public safety, all of which are fundamental expectations within the leisure industry.

Alongside my workplace experience, I have invested in recognised qualifications, including the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification, First Aid, Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training and the Pool Plant Operator (PPO) qualification. Receiving the Colleague of the Month award early in my career at Everyone Active, alongside positive feedback from customers and regional management, reinforced my commitment to high professional standards. More recently, moving to Virgin Active has broadened my understanding of delivering premium customer experiences. Collectively, these experiences demonstrate that my employability has been shaped through continuous learning, reflective practice and a willingness to embrace greater responsibility, providing a strong foundation for my ambition of progressing into operations management before opening my own specialist leisure centre.

Task 3 – Career Goals and Personal Development Plan

Reflecting on my SWOT analysis has helped me identify realistic career goals while recognising the skills I need to continue developing. During this module, we explored how continuous professional development is essential for maintaining employability because workplace expectations and career opportunities constantly evolve (Cottrell, 2021). My short-term goal is

to continue progressing within the leisure industry by gaining experience in supervisory and operational management roles while completing my degree. I want to understand every aspect of a leisure facility, including staffing, budgeting and operations. I believe this practical experience will allow me to become a more effective manager because I will understand the responsibilities and challenges faced by every member of the team.

My long-term ambition is to establish my own specialist leisure centre focusing on wellness, rehabilitation and recovery for dancers, footballers and motorsport athletes. This goal reflects my passion for the leisure industry and my belief that successful businesses are built on strong operational knowledge, high safety standards and exceptional customer care. My previous experiences have shown me that leadership is about protecting people, supporting staff and maintaining professional standards, values that I want to embed within my own organisation.

To achieve these ambitions, I have developed a personal development plan. Over the next 12 months, I will continue developing my leadership by seeking additional management responsibilities at Virgin Active while improving my confidence in public speaking through workplace meetings and university presentations. I will also strengthen my written communication by actively seeking feedback on academic assignments. Within the next five years, I aim to secure an Operations Manager position while continuing to complete relevant industry qualifications. My progress will be measured through performance reviews, academic achievement, professional qualifications and increased management responsibilities. Following this structured approach will enable me to continue developing my employability while working towards my long-term ambition of owning a specialist leisure centre.

Reference List

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