

Comparison of job adverts

To identify the skills and knowledge expected for early-stage careers in hospitality, I reviewed four current UK job adverts: Barista (One Retail / Caterer.com), Waiter/Waitress (St. Ermin's Hotel / Caterer.com), Catering Assistant (Sodexo), and Supervisor - Pret A Manger (Moto Hospitality via Find a Job). Although the roles sit in different environments (coffee counter, restaurant service, contract catering, and unit supervision), the adverts show clear overlap in the capabilities employers prioritise.

Customer service is the strongest common requirement. The barista advert focuses on preparing drinks to a consistent standard while delivering friendly service at pace. The waiter/waitress advert emphasises staying attentive to guests, delivering food from the kitchen to the dining area, and supporting the shift with practical side duties. The catering assistant advert includes preparing and serving meals and maintaining a good service experience for students and staff. The supervisor advert frames service as a brand expectation and places responsibility on the supervisor to protect quality through daily leadership.

In terms of knowledge, the adverts imply an understanding of service standards and brand consistency. In the barista and Pret supervisor roles, consistency is presented as part of the product: the customer expects coffee and food to be the same quality every time. The waiter/waitress advert highlights standards such as health code compliance and safe food handling, showing that quality includes reliable processes, not only friendliness. The Sodexo advert reinforces this by linking the role to food safety, hygiene and clean service areas.

A useful difference between the adverts is the balance between technical skills and interpersonal skills. In the barista role, technical accuracy (recipes, machine use, and consistent drink build) directly supports customer satisfaction and speed. In table service, interpersonal skill is more visible because the employee is managing expectations, answering questions, and responding to issues in real time. The catering assistant role sits between these: it involves service interaction but also depends heavily on back-of-house accuracy, cleaning routines, and stock support. The supervisor role combines both types of skill by requiring operational competence and the ability to influence others through coaching and feedback.

Communication and teamwork appear consistently across all adverts, but at different levels. For waiter/waitress roles, communication is required to coordinate with kitchen staff, prioritise tasks, and avoid errors when handling multiple tables. In contract catering, teamwork is essential because preparation, service, and cleaning happen in parallel under time pressure. The supervisor advert extends teamwork into leadership: coaching, giving feedback, and partnering with the store manager. This progression supports a typical career pathway: starting as a reliable team member and moving toward taking responsibility for team performance.

Operational discipline is another shared theme. Food safety, health, hygiene, and cleanliness are explicit in the catering assistant advert and strongly implied in the barista and waiter/waitress roles through safe handling and clean work areas. The supervisor advert emphasises upholding standards in a high-footfall environment, where errors can quickly affect both customers and the business. From a business perspective, this reflects risk control: when routines are consistent, quality is protected and customer trust is maintained.

Role-specific skills differ. The barista role requires technical confidence with coffee preparation and equipment, alongside speed and consistency. The waiter/waitress role is more focused on service flow (multiple tables, attention to detail, and completing side duties to keep service organised). The catering assistant role emphasises supporting operations through hygiene, stock and deliveries, and working to clear guidelines. The supervisor role adds people management and commercial responsibility by leading teams, supporting targets, and responding to customer feedback.

Self-assessment and evidence of readiness

To evaluate my employability against these expectations, I used a SWOT analysis because it helps connect reflection to practical actions that can be measured and improved over time.

Strengths. My main strengths are customer service, organisation and adaptability. I have experience in hospitality roles that require working calmly with customers, keeping standards high, and managing busy periods without losing professionalism. I am comfortable with routine operational tasks such as opening and closing procedures, preparation for service, and maintaining cleanliness and stock presentation. I also learn

quickly when introduced to new teams or equipment. This matches the flexibility expected in fast-paced hospitality environments.

Weaknesses. The key areas for development are building more formal management knowledge and strengthening confidence when entering unfamiliar routines. While I can adapt, I want to reduce the time it takes to feel fully confident in a new environment and become more proactive in how I learn processes. In addition, I have supported colleagues and supervised tasks in the past, but I would benefit from structured learning in leadership topics such as coaching, handling conflict, rota planning, and understanding performance measures.

Opportunities. Hospitality offers clear progression routes, especially in larger organisations and contract catering providers that invest in training. Short qualifications such as Food Safety (Level 2) and introductory supervision courses are accessible alongside work and can strengthen applications for leadership roles. Working across different venues is also an opportunity: it builds resilience, broadens understanding of service expectations, and improves confidence with change. With consistent feedback, I can convert day-to-day experience into clear evidence of development.

Threats. Competition for hospitality roles can be high, and performance is influenced by external pressures such as understaffing, peak demand and customer complaints. Another threat is burnout; long shifts and irregular hours can affect consistency if recovery is not managed well. These risks make time management, stress management and professional boundaries important for long-term employability. They also highlight the importance of supportive team culture, linking to the leadership requirements in the supervisor advert.

Evidence of readiness. My work experience provides evidence that I meet core employability expectations. Regular customer-facing work demonstrates communication, professionalism and the ability to stay positive under pressure. Being trusted with opening and closing duties demonstrates reliability and attention to detail. In previous roles I have also supported colleagues during busy periods, which helped me practise prioritising tasks and communicating clearly. Small operational decisions such as restocking before items run out, keeping work areas organised, and supporting new team members help protect speed and quality. These behaviours align with what the adverts describe as essential for effective hospitality work.

Employment goals and personal development plan

Based on the SWOT analysis, my goals focus on progressing from strong operational performance into structured supervisory responsibility.

Short-term goals (0-12 months). I aim to strengthen performance in a barista or front-of-house role by improving speed, accuracy and consistency during peak periods. I will track progress through reduced errors (for example, fewer remakes or order issues) and through informal feedback from supervisors. I also aim to take on small leadership responsibilities, such as supporting the training of new team members, contributing to clearer shift handovers, and maintaining closing checks and standards. These are realistic steps toward supervision because they show reliability and build confidence in influencing how a team works.

Long-term goals (1-3 years). My longer-term goal is to move into a supervisory or assistant management role within hospitality or contract catering. This aligns with business study because it involves people management, service design and operational control. I want to contribute to improving performance by coaching others, maintaining standards, and developing awareness of costs and efficiency, including stock control and waste. Over time, I want to understand how daily operational decisions affect customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability.

Personal development plan. To address weaknesses and support progression, I will take the following actions:

1) Formalise management knowledge (within 6 months): complete a short course in supervision or leadership (coaching, feedback, basics of rota management). Resources: employer learning portal or a recognised online provider. Measure: certificate plus evidence of applying learning, such as successfully training a colleague and receiving positive feedback.

2) Build confidence in unfamiliar environments (first 3 months, then ongoing): request occasional shifts in different locations or with different teams and maintain a short reflection log after each shift to identify what changed and what strategies worked. Measure: reduced adjustment time and improved self-confidence ratings.

3) Improve commercial awareness (6-12 months): learn basic hospitality KPIs (sales, labour, waste, customer satisfaction) and discuss them with a supervisor to understand how targets translate into daily behaviours. Measure: ability to explain key KPIs and demonstrate actions that support them (for example, reducing waste and keeping service efficient).

4) Strengthen leadership behaviours (ongoing, reviewed monthly): volunteer for responsibilities in checks, stock rotation and team communication; request monthly feedback to identify the next development step. Measure: increased responsibility, improved feedback, and readiness for shift leader duties.

This plan is realistic because it uses workplace learning, focuses on measurable outcomes, and links directly to the common requirements across the four adverts: customer focus, teamwork, compliance, adaptability and, for progression, leadership and commercial understanding.

Reference list

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