



# From lifeguard to leadership

forging a career in the holiday industry with Cranfield Executive Development and Parkdean Resorts

**'Staycation' may be the buzzword in the UK right now, as uncertainty over foreign travel and quarantine rules thanks to the coronavirus pandemic encourages many to holiday closer to home. But, for the UK's largest holiday company, its focus is not on encouraging holidaymakers to stay local, but rather its employees, who it wants to be able to grow, develop and forge a career within their business.**

Parkdean Resorts is collaborating with Cranfield Executive Development to enhance its leadership and development offering to employees, to enable it to attract and grow talent at all levels across the business.

Ian Byrne, Head of People – Talent, at Parkdean Resorts, explains: "People can tend to view jobs with companies like ours as seasonal roles, rather than as a potential career, and we really want to change that. Holiday parks aren't just something that happens in the main summer season. We are a real, multi-million pound business that operates like any other, and we want to grow our own and develop the talent we have within."

John Addison, Leadership Development Manager, adds: "Within our business, we have a lot of operators. That's great, because we get things done and that's really important. But, we also need people with the ability to think strategically, to understand and produce vision, to have that direction of travel, and to inspire people to come with them on the journey. We need people with a tangible understanding of what it means to be a leader within a modern organisation.

"Our vision as a company is to be everyone's favourite staycation, so we need a leadership team who are strong enough and have the skills to inspire and drive performance from everybody else to help us achieve that."

Parkdean Resorts has selected seven senior managers that bosses believe have the potential to become the next leaders of the business. The chosen cohort will undertake a bespoke two-year programme to grow and develop their skills, including taking part in leadership and management development training with Cranfield Executive Development. If successful, the programme could then be rolled out to other high-potential employees within the business.

Ian said: "When you hear Cranfield, you think 'elite', and that's what I want this programme to be. We are investing financially significantly in each of these seven people, and I want it to be something that's not only different from what we've done before at Parkdean Resorts, but is something different for the learners themselves, so they can see how much they are recognised and valued."

John added: "The people we've identified aren't necessarily the most senior within the business, but we've spotted potential in them to be the next leaders of the company. They've just got that magical spark that tells us they are going to do great things if we can invest in giving them the skills and development they deserve."

The cohort includes one employee who began their career at Parkdean Resorts working as a lifeguard at one of its 67 holiday parks, and has since worked their way up to their current role.

John continued: "I think it's really exciting. We can say to people, if they want to develop a career, Parkdean Resorts is a great place to do that. Whether you're working on the hospitality side, out on a park, in the central office, or you're in a senior leadership position, you can progress at any level within the business.

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“Of course, we know there will be some people who don’t want to do that. They might love what they do and not want to do anything else, and we want to support them in that. But, if people do want to develop their career, we want to make sure they have the support to do that in whatever way they see fit.”

Ian added: “With Cranfield’s help, we have now got something in place that will enable people to start working on a holiday park and then end up in 10 years’ time as a CFO of the company. We can tell people that they can have a very long, happy and healthy career at Parkdean Resorts, which is fantastic because, ultimately, we’re a family – we want people to stay with us and grow within us.

“We’re working on our employee value proposition this year, and this is something that we believe will really help us become that employer of choice. If you want to go on holiday, we’re all over the papers and adverts on TV – we are well known – but, for those that want a career in the industry, we’re not at all.”

Camilla Jonsson, Portfolio Director at Cranfield Executive Development, said: “We are very pleased to be working so

closely with Parkdean Resorts and look forward to great things to come. They are very visionary about what they want to offer their employees, and we seem to have a real match of cultures, which makes the prospect of our collaboration even more exciting. They are ambitious; they want to act now, and I think their vision together with our expertise will result in a really strong offer that they will be able to give to their employees moving forwards.”

Echoing this sentiment, Ian added: “It really is very exciting. There’s so much going on in the industry at the moment, and I don’t believe any other organisation is investing so heavily into its people at this stage, at this level, at this time, because of everything that’s going on. I think that’s something we as a business need to celebrate.

“Yes, we are in a global pandemic. Yes, we’ve been closed for many, many months. Yes, we’re now really busy because everyone wants a holiday in the UK at the moment, but our people are still our most important asset, and we are developing them at all levels.”

## About the companies

### Cranfield Executive Development

Cranfield Executive Development is consistently ranked as one of the top two providers of customised learning development in the UK, and among the top 10 in Europe. Its programmes draw on the expertise of faculty from Cranfield School of Management, which is one of an elite group of Schools worldwide to hold the triple accreditation of: AACSB International (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), EQUIS (European Quality Improvement System) and AMBA (the Association of MBAs).

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### Parkdean Resorts

Parkdean Resorts is the leading operator of holiday parks in the UK, with approximately 2.5 million holidaymakers staying with us each year. We own and operate 67 award winning holiday parks nationwide in coastal locations and areas of natural beauty across the UK with a wide range of accommodation options including static caravans, lodges and glamping as well as touring and camping pitches. Our team’s commitment to ensure we offer the best possible experience for our holidaymakers has earned us at least one British Travel Award every year since 2010, most recently winning two gold awards for Best UK Family Holiday Company, and Best UK Holiday Parks and Lodges Company at the 2020 Awards.

Parkdean Resorts provide a wide range of accommodation, together with on-park facilities including bars, restaurants, amusement arcades and indoor and outdoor swimming pools for use by both holiday guests and holiday homeowners.

The Group sold over 600,000 holiday packages in 2019 to mainly families with 75% being for 5 or less days. The Group has over 31,000 pitches across its parks with a mix of Parkdean-owned hire fleet, touring and camping pitches and owner-occupied pitches. Of the 31,000 pitches, 21,000 have been leased out to ‘owners’ to place their own holiday home upon.

W: [www.parkdeanresorts.co.uk](http://www.parkdeanresorts.co.uk)