

SHOWCASE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH A CAREER PORTFOLIO



A career portfolio can be used in the job search as a creative alternative to the standard resume and cover letter. Popularly used in areas such as advertising, public relations, and education, the career portfolio is making inroads with employers in other areas as well.

Rather than simply listing your skills, activities, interests, education and experience, a career portfolio allows you to enhance the presentation of your skills by including examples of work such as writing samples, class papers, class projects, awards, transcripts, photographs, certificates, etc.

A prospective employer can gain a clearer picture of who you are and what qualifications you bring to their organization. Those facets of your personality, skill set and professionalism that might have gone unnoticed with a simple resume can stand out with the career portfolio.

So, show employers what you can truly do. Provide them with a look inside your abilities by creating a career portfolio of your work!

UNDERSTANDING THE CAREER PORTFOLIO

Why Create a Career Portfolio?

- A career portfolio can help illustrate your professional accomplishments, talents, abilities, activities, and attitudes to prospective employers.
- The career portfolio also serves as a marketing tool, offering employers a preview of your performance as a potential employee.

How Can a Career Portfolio Help in the Job Search?

- Markets your capabilities
- Documents the quality and quantity of your professional accomplishments
- Demonstrates prior work or learning experience
- Sets you apart from other candidates for the job position
- Illustrates proficiencies during or after an interview
- Helps you document your accomplishments and results
- Creates a personal database

HOW TO DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO

Step 1: Know Yourself

An effective portfolio needs to represent you and your strengths and should illustrate your skills, abilities and personal characteristics. For this reason, you need to know what careers you are interested in, the qualifications they require, and the skills, abilities, and knowledge that you have acquired that make you qualified when setting out to create your portfolio. As you begin, ask yourself:

- What do I do well?
- How do I accomplish the tasks that I do well?
- In what tasks do I want to take part?
- Who do I want to read my portfolio?
- Why am I creating a portfolio?
- How can I demonstrate my skills, abilities, and knowledge to my reader?

Step 2: Getting Started- Collecting Materials

In order to begin creating your portfolio you need to first gather your materials. Collect evidence of all your achievements, accomplishments, experiences, and skills or abilities. If you do not possess evidence, then consider constructing some items. The items you collect will vary according to your career goals; some general items to include are:

Community Activities

- Outline of a plan you designed for a program or presentation
- Records you maintained during an event or activity
- Feedback you received for helping with a project
- Agenda discussing what you accomplished
- Evaluation written by a supervisor or colleague
- Pictures of members participating in an event you helped plan
- Newspaper clipping describing event to which you contributed

Classroom/School Experiences

- Assignment with special comments from an instructor
- Picture or representation of a class project
- Report on a topic of special interest
- Outline of a presentation
- Transcript of grades, if applicable
- Positive evaluation received from an instructor or supervisor
- Summary of a research project
- Publication or impressive paper
- Assessment instruments and results

Academic Recognition

- Letter or certificate of scholarships or Dean's List
- Summary of scholarly research or projects
- Newspaper articles or other recognition of special honors
- Items focusing on extracurricular activities
- Award for participation in an event
- Award for placing in a competition
- Pictures of team or individual participation in an event
- Letter of recommendation from a coach, advisor, or any academic source
- Materials from conferences or workshops in which you participated or presented
- Awards and honors for leadership

Special Skills

- Handouts, letters, memos, reports, charts, graphs, brochures, etc.
- Documentation of knowledge of a foreign language
- Evidence of a hobby, craft, certification, or topic of special interest
- Evidence of computer or multi-media skills
- Samples of communication/writing skills

Work-Related Experiences

- Resume describing each job held
- Letter of recommendation from past or present employer
- Positive performance evaluation
- Recognition from supervisor or customer for performance
- Resume indicating relevant previous employment
- Training/workshop packets or handouts
- Annual report of accomplishments

Personal Attributes

- Autobiography
- Character references supporting your strengths
- Essay focusing on career goals or personal career statement
- Appropriate personal pictures

Step 3: Filtering the Materials

Only include items that are necessary to your career pursuits. The portfolio should be long enough to exemplify your assets, yet not so overwhelming in length so as to discourage a potential employer from reading it (15–25 pages is a good length). Consider tailoring your portfolio directly to a desired job. If the job asks for teamwork, public speaking, and computer and communication skills, then only include items that prove you possess these skills.

Step 4: Final Touches

The presentation of the portfolio is important. Include a table of contents, tabs, captions, and whatever else you would like in order for it to appear organized, reader-friendly, and versatile. Possible portfolio holders include binders, artist portfolio cases, and zipper cases. Clear sleeves to protect the materials can be purchased separately. Captions should be included in order to clearly state importance of the item for the reader.

You can make your portfolio stand out by adding a reflective essay in which you summarize the contents of the portfolio. This essay may include a stated purpose of the portfolio, an explanation behind the relation of educational and career goals to content of portfolio, and a reflection on what was learned from creating the portfolio, as well as what you plan to achieve in the future.

Step 5: Check it Out

Check for typos, spelling, grammar, and formatting problems. Then pass your portfolio on to a friend to look over. Talk through the sections of your portfolio with a friend, thinking about which parts you may elaborate on in an interview. If you plan to leave the portfolio with an employer, make sure that it is readable and self-explanatory.

Step 6: Sharing the Portfolio

If a portfolio is not requested prior to an interview, you can take it with you and offer it for viewing near the end of the meeting. It can also be displayed during the interview. However, leave the viewing option up to the employer so that he/she can either view it with you or after you leave.

Creating a scaled down version of a portfolio is another option. You can leave copies with the interviewer to keep. Make sure the copies are of good quality. Also, keep the items relevant to the position you are seeking.

Other options for allowing an employer to view your portfolio are through the internet, CDs, multi-media presentations, and audio/video discs. Electronic portfolios on the Internet are popular due to the convenient viewing and sharing of items. The following site can help you put together an electronic portfolio: <http://www.career.fsu.edu/portfolio>.

PORTFOLIO TIPS

- Collect items that represent a broad range of skills
- Select and tailor the items you include to match each job for which you apply
- Choose only the best examples of your work
- Design pages to have impact and to be easy to read
- Select artifacts that present concrete evidence of your skills
- Label each item for easy identification
- Make your portfolio unique and creative
- Make sure it is professional and typo-free



PORTFOLIO EXAMPLE #1 - Example for a Teacher/Educator

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Resume	2
Coursework Information	3
Sample from Research Course Project	4
Evaluation of Research Course Project	5
Letter of Recommendation from Research Statistics Professor	6
Letter of Recommendation from Previous Employer	7
Brochure from TeamStudy, Inc.	8
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Certificate of Psi Chi Membership	10
Academic and Professional References	11

PORTFOLIO EXAMPLE #2 - Example for a Criminal Justice Major

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Criminal Justice is not only my career goal but a dream of mine since high school. While attending XX University for my Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice, I have earned many certificates and awards. This portfolio illustrates my interpersonal skills and communication skills in the form of volunteer work and my ability to improve the lives of others. My commitment at all levels is evidenced by my work in a national professional organization.

I have overcome many obstacles and can motivate others by example. I have a great understanding and empathy for those who face adversity.

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LBJ Student Center Suite 5-7.1 • 512.245.2645 • CareerServices@txstate.edu