

Creating a Career Portfolio

Take time to think about your career and accomplishments. Your portfolio is your way of presenting yourself and your best work to prospective employers. Preparing your career portfolio could be the single most important piece of preparing for your job of interest.

From resume development, preparing to apply, interviewing, selling and presenting yourself, your portfolio will hold the key elements for each of these career tools. After completing your portfolio look over your resume; did you leave anything out? Review your summary of qualifications, did you show how you meet and or exceed all of the minimum qualifications along with reflecting how your knowledge, skills and abilities fit the job description?

When you have completed the task of putting your career portfolio together you will be prepared to speak about your work accomplishments with confidence. Do not be afraid to showcase yourself, think about it, the interview is all about you and your ability to perform the job duties of the job you are applying for. Your prospective employer will not know if you do not tell them.

Take copies of your portfolio with you to your interview to leave behind so that your prospective employer can take a look at you even after you have left the interview.

What is a portfolio?

- A visual representation of a person's abilities, skills, capabilities, knowledge, qualities and a representation of your potential.
- A tangible collection of a person's progress, achievements, contributions and efforts representing work-related events. (Remember that you may have developed skills while doing everyday activities.)
- Provides "evidence" of your potential by demonstrating what you have accomplished.

Why spend your time preparing a portfolio?

- Prepare for interviews.
- Communicate clearly.
- Showcase your skills, abilities and qualities.
- Demonstrate the results of your work.
- Establish the habit of documenting your accomplishments and results.
- Create a personal data base.
- Assess your own progress in your career development.
- See and evaluate the patterns in your own work preferences and values.

What should be in a portfolio?

What you include in your portfolio is up to you. Different items will be included, depending on your field and the job for which you are applying. Remember more is not necessarily better. Represent yourself and your work in a clear and concise manner.

- Career Summary and Goals: A description of what you stand for (such as work ethic, organizational interests, management philosophy, etc.) and where you see yourself in two to five years.
- Professional Philosophy/Mission Statement: A short description of the guiding principles that drive you and give you purpose.
- Résumés: One to two page summary of your education, skills, accomplishments and experience.
- Skills, Abilities and Marketable Qualities: A detailed examination of your skills and experience. This section should include the name of the skill area; the performance or behavior, knowledge or personal traits that contribute to your success in that skill area; your background and specific experiences that demonstrate your application of the skill.
- List of Accomplishments: A detailed listing that highlights the major accomplishments in your career to date.
- Samples of Your Work: A sampling of your best work, including reports, papers, studies, brochures, projects, presentations, etc. In addition to print samples, you can also include CD-ROMs, videos and other multimedia formats.
- Testimonials and Letters of Recommendations: A collection of any kudos you have received from customers, clients, colleagues, past employers, professors, etc. Include copies of favorable employer evaluations and reviews.
- Awards and Honors: A collection of any certificates of awards, honors and scholarships.
- Conference and Workshops: A list of conferences, seminars and workshops you've participated in and/or attended.
- Transcripts, Degrees, Licenses, and Certifications: A description of relevant courses, degrees, licenses and certifications.
- Professional Development Activities: A listing of professional associations and conferences attended and any other professional development activities.
- Military records, awards, and badges: A listing of your military service, if applicable.
- Volunteering/Community Service: A description of any community service and or volunteer work you have completed, especially as it relates to your career.

How should my career portfolio look?

- Introduction and table of contents.
- Use tabs or title pages to divide each section.
- Organize work samples into skill areas.
- Observe a maximum length of 10-15 artifacts.
- Do not use original documents.
- Using the same font style and size for all headings gives order and a consistent look.
- Make it easier to add and remove items do not use page numbers.
- Use sheet protectors or plastic sleeves. Do not three-hole punch items.
- Use quality paper.