



Building a Professional Portfolio

A professional portfolio, in either electronic or hard-copy format, showcases your skills, experiences and accomplishments to a potential employer. A portfolio can help guide your conversation with the interviewer about your professional goals. It can include pieces from your professional work, education and training, volunteer experience and personal interests, and should be updated as you complete more projects.

Examples of Portfolio Pieces

Professional Materials

- Résumé, CV, generic cover letter (including references)
- Letters of recommendation
- Strong LinkedIn testimonials
- Performance reviews from your past or present employer(s)
- Projects you've completed with professional association/committees
- Examples of your work
 - Project documents
 - Sample forms/templates/processes you created
 - Evidence of soft/technical skills
 - Research assignments and publications
 - **Any documents should be nonproprietary; i.e., materials that are not protected by copyright or trademark that is not your own and are not exclusively owned by your current/former employer**

Education and Training

- Annotated list of trainings/workshops/seminars/conferences you've attended
- Brief course descriptions under professional certificate or specialized program title
- Degrees, certifications, licensures
- Awards or academic honors
- Internship information
- Transcripts (if you have a strong academic record)

Volunteer Work

- Nonprofit/charity/volunteer/community service work, with brief description of organization and your involvement with its mission or goals
- Leadership roles and community affiliations
- Photos from events you've produced/coordinated

Personal Interests

This section may not be appropriate for all candidates/professionals. Ensure that adding this section boosts your overall image.

- Training or independent learning, including new skills or languages
- Writing skills, especially if you're considered an "expert" in a particular area through a blog or Twitter feed

- Personal/professional mission statement
- Public speaking engagements in areas of personal interest
- Flyers/newsletters you've designed
- Research projects

Things to Keep in Mind

- Organization is key. Be mindful of logical organization so that you can find things easily as you reference them for a potential employer.
 - Most times you will have control of the portfolio, but if you will be passing it around, use tabs/dividers to differentiate sections.
- Write a short summary about your major projects. This helps you recall details about the experience and gives an overview to the reader.
- Portfolio formats:
 - The most common is the comprehensive binder that you maintain.
 - Create an abridged version if you would like the interviewer(s) to keep key pieces, such as your résumé; a few examples of your work; and an annotated list of training, skills, and relevant volunteer experience or accomplishments.
 - Generate an electronic portfolio with soft versions of these documents that you can easily share by weblink or email.
- You might want to keep a comprehensive portfolio and then create more focused portfolios that highlight work done in a specific professional area.
- Your portfolio should be used to enhance your interview experience, but make sure the focus is still on **you** and not your documents! Generally, it is more effective if you refer to your portfolio to provide an example in response to a specific question.

Resources

“Creating a Powerful Professional Portfolio,” Julie Perrine, *All Things Admin*, allthingsadmin.com
 Julie Perrine, CAP, CPS, is a personality strategist, personal brand analyst and administrative mentor. She teaches administrative professionals and entrepreneurs how to increase their professional opportunities and achieve more productive and meaningful relationships by using innovative technology, ideas and people.

“Creating a Professional Portfolio,” Louellen S. Coker, Devil Mountain Views electronic newsletter
http://ebstc.org/newsletter/1108/Article_2.htm

“Developing Your Professional Portfolio,” UNCF Special Programs Corporation
https://www.uncfsp.org/userfiles/files/Resource_ProfPortfolio_2012.pdf