

Professional Employment Portfolios

Career Lab
Lucina Hall Room 235

What Is a Portfolio?

A professional employment portfolio is an interview tool used to answer questions and help the job seeker win the job. For years some professionals have encouraged candidates to actively demonstrate their skills by showing samples of their work during interviews. However, all job seekers can benefit from preparing their own professional employment portfolios.

Why Should You Use a Portfolio?

- An employment portfolio sets you apart from other candidates.
- It demonstrates your unique talents and abilities to the employer,
- The items in your portfolio illustrate your style, ability, and creative potential.
- Items in your portfolio can support what you tell the employer.

Getting Organized

Begin to plan the contents of your portfolio with self-assessment. Take inventory of your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Decide what skills and experiences you have that relate to the needs of an employer. Your goal is to make sure that during an interview you will be able to demonstrate your strengths and most marketable skills.

Next ask yourself, "What will I be asked during an interview?" Once you have a list of potential questions, choose items for your portfolio to help you answer them. You might include such items as

- A program from an event you planned.
- Awards, honors, certificates for special training
- Items you have created (e.g., teaching tools, art projects, special reports).
- Documentation of technical or computer skills that could benefit the employer.
- Letters of commendation or thanks from people you have worked with.

- Newspaper articles that address achievements.
- Reports of career-related work experiences (e.g., student teaching report or internship summary).
- Sample lesson plans or other papers you may have prepared as a part of your discipline

These items are just a few possibilities. Brainstorm—think of every possible item that might assist you during an interview. Then for each interview carefully choose the ones that will help you tell your story to win that job.

Presenting Your Portfolio

Keep in mind that your portfolio displays you to an employer; therefore it must present you in a professional manner. Make it "reader friendly" so that your interviewers can easily observe the skills you are trying to communicate.

Use a professional binder in simulated or genuine leather. Grey, black, navy, or brown are appropriate colors. The binder needs to accommodate 8½" x 11" sheets. The binder may cost \$25 or more. You can buy one at an office supply store.

Place your information and materials in clean page covers, which are available in packages of 100 at office supply stores for less than \$10. Organize your employment portfolio so that it tells your story.

Include a table of contents.

Inform the employer in your cover letter or on your résumé that you can bring to an interview an employment portfolio that demonstrates your skills. When the employer begins to ask questions, you can use your portfolio to support your responses.

Electronic Portfolios

In addition to your tradition portfolio, you may want to create an electronic portfolio. You can make the electronic portfolio available to employers as a supplement to your résumé. It can be on the World Wide Web or on a CD-ROM. You can set it up as a PowerPoint presentation or include a PowerPoint slideshow as part of your electronic portfolio.

Electronic portfolios are easy for employers to access and use, especially if they're on the web. If you include a "mailto" link in your portfolio, employers can contact you easily simply by clicking on the link and typing a message for you. Another benefit of having an electronic portfolio is that it shows employers that you are familiar with various types of computer technology and programs.

Before creating your electronic portfolio, create your traditional version. Include electronic versions of items from your traditional portfolio. For example, include the word processing files for your writing samples and your résumé, scans of appropriate photo certificates, and Adobe Acrobat (pdf) files of graphics such as brochures that you have designed. In Unified Technology Support labs you can scan photos, digitize images, and prepare other items for inclusion.

In addition to the kinds of materials in your traditional portfolio, you might include an expanded version of your résumé, audio and video clips, an e-mail link, a link to Ball State's web site as well as one to your major department's pages, a link to the curriculum for your major, and other appropriate links. Avoid personal information and inappropriate links—anywhere on your web site. Remember that anyone with much web experience can explore more of your web pages quite easily beyond your portfolio if it's online. You might want to put your online portfolio on a different server to prevent this kind of browsing by employers.

Resources

For more information about professional employment portfolios, be sure to visit the Career Lab in Lucina Hall 235. These are a few of the items available:

- Sample portfolios
- *Create Your Digital Portfolio*
- *Creating Your Skills Portfolio*
- *The Career Portfolio Workbook*
- *Proof of Performance*

Websites

- Career Center Publications: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications>
- Great Links to Explore: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/links> (Scroll down the page and click the category Résumés, Portfolios, Curriculum Vitae, Letters)
- Career Center: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers>
- Cardinal Career Link: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/careerlink>
- Career Management Action Plan (Career MAP): <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/cmap>
- Quest: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/quest>
- Quintessential Careers Portfolio: http://www.quintcareers.com/job_search_portfolio.html
- Quintessential Careers Sample Digital portfolio: <http://quintcareers.4jobs.com/SAMPLE-CAREER-PORTFOLIO-RES>

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