



Packaging a Powerful Portfolio

What Is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a visual representation of your *abilities, skills, knowledge, characteristics* and *qualities*.

It evolves. It's a place to:

- Document all your business-related talents
- Store things related to your business growth
- Get a good sense of your assets
- See your potential and better communicate it to others

One size does not fit all

Skills, qualities, talents and knowledge come from many different places. Even the portfolios of identical twins would be drastically different from each other. It's unique to you.

Self-assessment helps

You need to know what you do well and what you want to do so you can present both your skills/abilities (*what* you can do) and your characteristics/qualities that speak to work style (*how* you do it).

Types of Portfolios

- Presentation case or binder
- Web site
- CD/DVD
- Video
- Drop-off/leave-with portfolio
- Mailing portfolio

A Well-Prepared Portfolio Should:

- Set *you* apart from the competition
- Help you dig deeper and rediscover all of your achievements
- Accentuate your professionalism and your professional development
- Document the scope and quality of your experience
- Demonstrate the results of your work or verify how you excel on the job
- Showcase your knowledge, skills, abilities and achievements
- Exemplify your unique qualities
- Back up your claims, substantiate verbal declarations and other information
- Show a record of your efforts at developing new skills, continuing education
- Highlight honors, awards, affiliations
- Help you communicate clearly, to find your focus and focus the conversation
- Boost confidence and strengthen optimism because of your readiness to surpass the competition

Notes

Portfolios will also help you:

- Establish the habit of documenting your accomplishments and results
- Assess your own progress in your business or career development
- See and evaluate the patterns in your own work preferences and values

Decisions, Decisions**Portfolio style: open book or zippered case?**

- Vinyl is the cheapest and least durable
- Leather is more expensive but can take more years of wear
- Cloth and wood are used more to create an interesting appearance
- Wood or metal can be simple and stylistic

Maintain a second, less expensive notebook to house all original documents.

What size?

- Smaller cases hold 8" X 10" enlargements and 8½" X 11" sheets of paper
- A larger size case, often 11" X 14," holds over-size photos and tear sheets

What length?

- Only the most important documents...*a portfolio is not a scrapbook!*
- 10-15 work samples that demonstrate the breadth and depth of your abilities
- A few excellent letters of reference rather than a dozen mediocre ones
- Items relevant to your *audience* that support your *purpose*

Formatting

- Make it easy to update and be able to stand alone without explanation
- Don't use any artifact larger than your portfolio, ragged edges scream "tacky"
- Label pictures with approximate date, location, credit and brief description
- Have legible, clear and concise writing with error-free copies of all documents
- Avoid text that is too lengthy, and multiple photographs of the same activity
- Use consistent font size and style, no more than three different styles
- Type should be computer-generated, no handwritten labels, dividers, or tabs
- Omit page numbers to make it easier for you to move around
- Have consistent headings and placement of documents

Material/supplies

Photo pages normally come in three types of material

- Vinyl is very clear, fairly rugged and reasonably priced but has problems
- Polyester overcomes some vinyl problems but is not as optically clear
- Mylar pages are clear and archival quality, but can be quite fragile and costly

Protective plastic sleeves or laminated pages

- Sleeves protect, laminated pages protect and keep in place

Holding the pages in the portfolio

- Least expensive is glued or fused
- Next is a metal comb binder setup
- A classier setup uses metal screws and posts

Tabbed indexes

- Use insertable tabs in case you decide to rename
- Use index tabs and/or title pages to divide each section

Copy bond

- Using plastic sleeves, 20# copy paper will be sufficient for documents
- For labels, use a slightly heavier paper to maintain position

Compiling Your Portfolio

Introductory Title Page: Introduce the theme

- For a conservative look use basic white, gray, buff or a marble swirl paper
- If a risk-taker, experiment with color, texture, line, font styles and dimension, but be consistent with your brand
- Typically, black print is the most formal
- Use an easy-to-read font

Table of Contents

- Chronologically - helps an individual who has been in a particular field over time demonstrate increasing improvement and accomplishment
- Functionally - works when an individual has varied experiences that need to be pulled together to demonstrate ability in specified areas

Possible Inclusions

Work-Related Activities

- Resume
- Professional affiliations
- Photos, newspaper clippings, media reprints
- Business licenses, permits
- Certificates of insurance
- Letters of reference (clients, vendors, employers)
- Evidence of specific skills
- Work samples (give credit to those involved)
- Accomplishments
- Awards, commendations
- Professional licenses, certification permits
- Publications, reports, published articles
- Training materials
- Samples of brochures, flyers
- Organizational charts, timelines, sample forms
- Customer surveys
- Major projects completed/participated in

Personal Qualities or Strengths – New to business or in transition?

Don't forget the activities that you might be taking for granted!

- Strengths to contribute
- Teamwork and people skills
- Contributing to your family
- Helping your friends or working on projects
- Raising a family and/or running a household
- Keeping fit and healthy; being member of sports team
- Volunteer projects, causes

First draft development

1. Research the desired style and materials
2. Review and assemble work samples
3. Develop a sequence for the samples
4. Write captions and titles
5. Create an introduction and table of contents

Notes

Putting It All Together

- *The key*

Developing a dynamic portfolio requires dedication to quality and thoroughness.

- *Packaging counts*

Purchase the highest quality materials you can reasonably afford but take caution to match your choices to your target market.

- *Be image-conscious*

Your portfolio should help to brand you. Be sure your materials have color and style continuity with your other collateral – business card, brochure, web site, office décor, etc.

- *Keep samples current*

Each item should be relatively current - generally no more than three years old - and preferably still in use.

- *Organize strategically*

In any case, place similar items together, key information closer to the front and put sections together according to what the client is looking for. Your customer should be able to easily and quickly review your portfolio.

- *Be specific*

Demonstrate specific proficiencies in your portfolio. For example, if you specialize in graphic design, consider including at least one example of cross-platform work. If you specialize in wedding or event management, consider including flow charts or timelines.

- *Leave something behind*

Choose one sample of your work to leave with the customer as a reminder of your talents.

Online Sources for Portfolios and Presentation Cases

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| www.dickblick.com | www.officeworld.com |
| www.quincyshop.com | www.masterg.com |
| www.vikingop.com | www.samys.com |
| www.portfolios-and-art-cases.com | |