



CAREER PORTFOLIOS

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What is a Career Portfolio?

A career portfolio provides a potential employer with concrete evidence of your skills. Unlike your resume that tells what you have done, a career portfolio offers tangible examples of your skills, education, experience and work for which you have received special recognition. These documents can be organized together in a binder, folder, or booklet. Many professionals are also creating on-line career portfolios.

Why Develop a Career Portfolio?

A career portfolio is an excellent tool to market yourself to potential employers. It may give you a competitive edge that will set you apart from other job seekers. A portfolio will assist you to document relevant employment and educational successes. As well, it will help you to visually keep track of your professional development. In addition, preparing a portfolio allows you to see how well suited your qualifications are when applying for a position.

When to Use a Career Portfolio

A career portfolio can be used in a variety of situations. It can be used to provide evidence of competencies in a job interview. This information is presented in person during the interview and is not usually sent with your resume or application form, unless the employer requests it. You may also use a career portfolio when you are making a career change, re-entering the workforce, or moving from industry to industry. It is an excellent tool for demonstrating transferable skills. Career portfolios can also be used when relocating to a different city and searching for work before the move. Remember, your career portfolio can be a key marketing tool in getting you the job you want!



Picture Source: www.inmagine.com

Who Should Use a Career Portfolio?

Specific occupations where career portfolios may be more popular are the following:

- Chefs
- Early Childhood Educators
- Managers
- IT Professionals
- Contract Workers
- Employment Counsellors
- Marketers
- Teachers

These professionals will use a portfolio to promote themselves in the competitive job market. Career portfolios are not being used that often in smaller cities like Kamloops, but they are frequently used in larger urban centres such as Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto. Employers in Kamloops really like the idea of portfolios, and when used, such a tool often gives candidates a competitive edge over those who don't use one.

How to Develop a Career Portfolio

Some questions to ask yourself when compiling information are **“Who is going to view your portfolio?”** and **“What position is your portfolio going to be evaluated for?”**

You want to show that you have tailored your portfolio to the specific job you are being interviewed for and that you are organized and creative when compiling information. When you customize your portfolio to the requirements of the specific job, it demonstrates that you have done your homework and understand the skills that the employer is looking for.

Some supplies and ideas to use when placing your documents into a package are:

- Sheet protectors
- Copies (keep the original copy of all items for yourself)
- Index tabs and/or title pages to divide each section
- Keep your portfolio a manageable size
- Scan documents, using colors and pictures to show your creative side
- Consider including page numbers if this makes it easier to add and move items
- Place sections together according to what an employer is looking for

A useful tool to assist you when developing a career portfolio is the P.E.A.K.S. categories. These categories can help you to organize the documents and the information that you want to include in your portfolio.

Briefly, P.E.A.K.S. represents:

- P** Personal characteristics that add value
(Examples may include copies of performance evaluations or letters of appreciation).
- E** Experience
(Examples may include letters referring to your contribution on coordinating an event or copies of marketing plans that you developed while volunteering for an organization).
- A** Accomplishments
(Examples may include documents such as awards or photos of you receiving an award).
- K** Knowledge
(Examples may include copies of certificates, diplomas and any other documents that highlight your knowledge and would assist you in the job that you are applying for).
- S** Skills
(Examples may include documents that outline your ability to complete certain tasks and/or showcase areas of expertise that would be of value to the employer).

*Adapted from **The Career Portfolio Workbook**, Frank Satterthwaite and Gary D'Orsi

What to Include in a Career Portfolio

The following list can give you ideas on what to include in your career portfolio:

Basic Work Search Information

- **Cover Letter and Resume**
Although an employer may already have a copy of these documents, it is a good idea to have additional copies available if needed. It also helps to keep everything related to the job in an organized package.
- **References or Letters of Reference**
A list of three to five employers who can speak positively about your work ability and skills (including full names, titles, phone numbers and e-mail addresses).

- **Skills List**

A list of the skills you have. For example, if the position you are applying for asks for strong computer skills create a bulleted list of all your computer skills and software that you have used.

Education and Training

- **Academic Transcripts**

Some organizations may request these to be sent with your resume

- **Awards and Honours**

A collection of any certificates or awards, honours and scholarships

- **Workshops**

A listing of all the relevant ones you have attended

Previous Employment

- **List of Job Achievements**

For example, employee of the year or month awards, promotions and special recognition from clients or management

- **Performance Reviews / Summary of Evaluations**

Evaluations from previous employers about you and your positive work performance

- **Writing Samples**

Consider including a sample of your writing style. For example, newspaper articles or a section of a handout or brochure that you wrote

- **Photographs**

Visual image of any unique or difficult work to explain

- **Report Samples**

Consider including the title page and table of contents to give an overview

- **Lesson Plans / Workshops / Presentations / Sample Speeches**

Course descriptions, lesson plans, and presentations that you have developed and delivered

- **Work in Progress**

List of activities and projects you are currently working on

- **Brochures / Marketing**

Showing where you have worked, or a sample of a brochure that you have constructed or community events that you have organized

- **Thank You Notes**
From clients, businesses, clubs / organizations and staff

Additional Information

- **Grants / Application Samples**
Supply a list of those applied for and/or secured
- **Criminal Record Checks**
Only if it is clean and it is requested by the employer
- **Drivers Abstract**
Only if the job description requires a lot of driving and your record is clean
- **Volunteering / Community Service**
A description or list of any community service activities and hours you have completed, especially if it relates to your career

And the list can go on and on.....

Additional Resources

Internet

www.stec.uvic.ca/tutorials/career-portfolio.html
www.academicadvising.studentservices.dal.ca
(Under Skills Development and Career Links Heading)

Books (found in the Work Search Centres' Resource Libraries)

The Career Portfolio Workbook, Frank Satterthwaite and Gary D'Orsi
Creating Portfolios For Success in School, Work, and Life, Martin Kimeldorf
Creating Your Skills Portfolio, Carrie Straub
Designing a Digital Portfolio, Cynthia L. Baron

Conclusion

Once you get the job you want, don't put your career portfolio to the side and forget about it. Continue to add and use your portfolio to your advantage when applying for a raise, promotion or new work assignment. It is important to remember that your portfolio is only as good as the documents in it. Also, keep in mind that showcasing your work skills helps to ensure future success.

