

Portfolios: A Valuable Tool

As always, our goal is to teach the art of oral interpretation and provide you with skills for getting the scholarships you desire, entrance into the university of your choice, possibly getting internships in the area of communication and/or performance, and eventually getting a full-time job. One of the methods we use is teaching you to prepare a professional portfolio. These skills can be applied to any job area or can be used as the base for a performance portfolio.

For many people in creative positions using a portfolio is not a secret. It is a very necessary part of the job search...much like developing a good cover letter and resume. We'd like to share with you how this technique can work for people in any profession.

Reasons for Using a Professional Portfolio

A strong professional career portfolio provides direct evidence of your related accomplishments. It provides potential employers with a "snapshot" of your achievements to date, the type of work you've done, and the type of employee you will be. Rather than simply telling an employer about your skills, it provides evidence of them.

How a Professional Portfolio Should Be Used

A professional portfolio is typically presented within an interview situation. It should be neat, clear, concise and tailored to a specific type of position. For example, a student applying for a computer programming internship might present an example of a program he or she has written when asked about relevant programming experience. Additionally, a marketing communications intern candidate might present an example of marketing brochures that he or she has created when asked about previous marketing experience. A student seeking entrance into a performance program might present an example of areas of study and document of growth in those areas.

Contents of a Professional Portfolio

There are a variety of items that may be included in a professional portfolio. Contents selected should be relevant to your industry and should provide evidence of your skills/achievements to a potential employer. Example portfolio items include:

- Letters of Recommendation from Teachers/Directors/Employers/College Professors/Bosses
- Performance Reviews from bosses, teachers, peers
- Thank-You Notes or any note that document how you've helped someone else
- Awards, Scholarships
- Examples of Writing: Articles, Papers
- Examples of Projects
- Examples of Presentations
- Brochures/Fliers Created
- Academic Curriculum – list of courses studied
- Transcripts
- A fact sheet, in list form, that displays your skills and what you like to do
- A program from an event you planned or in which you participated as part of a class project or campus organization
- A list of conferences and workshops you have attended and a description of each
- Documentation of technical or computer skills
- Letters of nomination to honors and academic organizations
- Newspaper articles that address some achievement

- Videotapes or pictures that show you at work
- Philosophy of Performance
- Examples of Leadership
- Examples of Communication Skills
- Relevant Research

Types of Professional Portfolios

A traditional type of portfolio generally consists of a high-quality, leather-bound folder that attractively displays professional documents. Plastic sheet covers may also be used for an added professional look and to help protect valuable documents.

Another type of includes an electronic or web portfolio. This may be advantageous if your employer of choice utilizes web/electronic resumes in their search for interns.

Choosing Artifacts

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How could this piece demonstrate who I am as a performer?
- How does this piece relate to the competencies/standards I have learned?

Portfolio Artifacts and Standards

Knowledge of Subject Matter and Proof of Growth

- a. Class notes
- b. Reflections
- c. Essays
- d. Evaluations
- e. Journals
- f. Philosophy statements
- g. Projects
- h. Videotapes