



Unit - 2

Design a Personalized Portfolio

Staff Training Solutions

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Speak about yourself using descriptive language.
- ✓ Apply the essential elements of cover letters and resumes.

Unit 2

Design a Personalized Portfolio

The Portfolio

Essential Components

The Bottom Line

Employers always consider the bottom line. Your goal is to present your skills in such a way that they can quickly recognize the value that you can bring to their team. Your portfolio is a marketing tool. Once it is organized and presented well, your portfolio should stand up to any interview.

We have already mentioned that a portfolio has been used for a long time for creative pursuits (such as art and design) and teaching, and that it can be presented in a binder with a picture holder on the front if desired. They can also be electronic or stored on a website.

What Should Be Included?

Essential sections for the portfolio will vary depending on the type of job and industry that you are working in. Only include the sections for which you have content. Any information you include should enhance your opportunity to market yourself.

Career Summary

This is a description of who you are through what you have done. You can include elements that are not in your resume (such as your work ethic, professional interests, philosophy about life and work, etc.).

Goals

Talk about where you see yourself professionally in one, two, and five years.

Personal Philosophy and Mission Statement

This is a personal statement about your guiding principles that define your purpose. Consider this your personal executive summary.

Resume

Include a good, clean copy of your resume. As well, have an extra copy in case someone in the interview panel needs one.

Know the company. If they would like a copy that can be scanned, simply format your resume as a plain text document (usually Times New Roman, font size 12) without any fancy formatting (bullets are replaced by dashes, letters all of uniform size, etc.).

Accomplishments

Include a detailed list of all your major career accomplishments to date. This is an important element in your portfolio.

This section should be branded to match your resume. Include a list of examples that you can refer to easily during your interview. Depending on the type of work you do, this section may be a paper or multimedia presentation. You can include comprehensive examples in this section.

Work Samples

These are often printed copies of the work that you have done, although they could be in a multimedia format. Include reports, papers, studies, brochures, projects, presentations, and so on. Make sure that they are crisp, clean copies. It's a good idea to use a plastic sleeve to protect your samples.

Research, Publications, and Reports

This is an area where you can highlight your writing, research, and conference submissions, for example.

Testimonials and Letters of Recommendation

Collect any compliments and testimonials and place them in this section. This section can also include copies of your performance evaluations and reviews.

Awards and Honors

This section includes your certificates, scholarships, and so on.

Conferences and Workshops

Include a list of conferences, seminars, training sessions, and workshops that you have participated in or attended. This can include completion certificates, a copy of the program highlights, or agenda.

Transcripts, Degrees, Licenses, and Certifications

It is rare for an employer to ask for your transcripts, but copies of degrees or other documents are often required.

Professional Development Activities

This is a list of professional associations to which you belong or for which you volunteer.

Military Records and Awards

You can detail your military service, if applicable.

Research, Publications, and Reports

Testimonials and Letters of Recommendation



Awards and Honors

Conferences and Workshops

employer). Depending on the type of work you do or intend to do, any conviction can affect your ability to be employed under bond, to work with children, or to cross international borders.

In addition, a conviction can interfere with identification or security clearances. If you apply for a credit card, for example, and your previous address happens to be a penitentiary, you may feel as though you have no hope, but that is not the case. You can obtain other types of identification (such as a pre-paid credit card, library card, etc.) and re-establish credit through utility or rental companies (if you rent a home) by paying all of your bills on time.

Speak with your parole officer, a representative from your bank, and a career counselor. (These resources can be accessed at no cost, in some circumstances, through state and provincial agencies). They can help you overcome some of these issues.

Temporary work assignments allow you to work on short-term assignments while gathering steady work references. This means that you will also gain credible access to the hidden job market and getting work based on referrals from your network (i.e., former supervisors) instead of trying to submit a resume that has gaps in it.

Ask parole officers, clergy, and career counselors for help securing work, and be open to their suggestions and help. Sometimes we ask people to help but then don't want to hear what they say. Yours is an awkward job search. You will need help.

Part of the common culture within the prison system includes substance abuse. If you were part of this group, stay involved with your counselors and support systems throughout your job search and as you undertake work.

A functional resume will emphasize your skills and put less emphasis on dates. However, employers are usually aware of this, and they will ask about gaps on your resume.

Returning to the Workforce after an Absence

If it has been a long time since you had a steady job, expect that there will be an adjustment period for you and your family. Having to be at work on time for every shift, preparing clothes the night before, making lunches, and ensuring that bus fares are on hand can take organization. These skills improve with practice.

Expect that you may have to prove yourself as a reliable, punctual, and trustworthy individual if your references are outdated. This can often happen to parents who have taken several years off to raise their children.

You may feel as though you are being challenged because of your decision to raise your family, but in many cases, you could be encountering wishful thinking by another parent who might have wanted to stay at home, as you did.

Work is healthy. Being a part of the workforce is a positive contribution that we make to society. Don't shy away from things that you need to do because they are hard; you can adjust.

Job Hopping

Job hopping, or frequently changing jobs, used to be a real negative on a resume. In some cases it still is, but to a lesser extent. Up until the 1980's, it was common for people to work for the same employer for 30 years or longer before retiring.

Economic shifts in the past several decades, as well as changing attitudes toward work, have resulted in people looking into the labor force more frequently than they did in years prior. Current figures say that people may change jobs between 10 and 15 times throughout their careers. These changes can be across different occupational categories. This means not only changing employers, but also the fundamental aspects of what they are doing to earn a living.

Job hopping is not necessarily perceived as negative when you are moving up and achieving your career goals. It can be important to manage the way that you leave a job, however, since you may want to return to that same company in the future for additional advancement or challenge.

Pre-Employment Testing

Many employers know that they can only get limited exposure to you in an interview. That is part of the reason your portfolio is so important; it highlights what you have done in the past. These days, many employers also test potential candidates to see what they can do that is specifically relevant to their workplace.

It is becoming increasingly popular for employers to ask that job seekers take part in pre-employment testing. From an employer's point of view, it assures them that a candidate has both the basic skills for a job and the skills that they report on their resume. You can look at testing as an opportunity for you to demonstrate your abilities, as well as your honesty in your resume.

Generate a list of tips for managing job testing.

Getting to a New Job in 60 Days

60 Days to a New Job

Your goal in coming to this workshop probably has something to do with finding a new job. If this is the case, the time to start is now. We have explored the components and value of resumes and cover letters, the first two elements of your entire portfolio. Now is the time for action on the job search front by setting action-oriented goals. If you do not set goals, you probably won't start your job search right away.

Research shows that we retain information for a very limited time. It also shows that unless you take what you hear in this workshop and get started within seven days, chances are very high that you will lose motivation.

If you are unhappy in your job, that could mean continuing unhappiness. If you are off work completely, then the need to get started is here for obvious reasons.

If you want to get from where you are today to a new position in 60 days, the following steps can make it happen:

Days 1 - 3

- ✓ Write, polish, and proofread your resume and cover letter.
- ✓ Have a trusted and excellent speller review both documents.

Days 2 - 5

- ✓ Complete the writing and gathering of information for your portfolio, and put it together in a dynamic presentation format.
- ✓ Have a trusted and excellent speller review your portfolio.
- ✓ Attend an interview skills workshop.
- ✓ Review your goals and affirmation.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Day 6

- ✓ Research companies that are in your target market/job area.
- ✓ Create a list of at least 25 contacts.

Days 7 - 8

- ✓ Start your active networking, using every resource at your disposal.
- ✓ Cold call and book informational interviews at 25 companies, as well as acting on any leads that they give you.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Day 9

- ✓ Relax.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Days 10 - 14

- ✓ Attend informational interviews; send thank-you notes to everyone you meet with.
- ✓ Continue to network; as your contacts grow, add to your list of companies, and contact them as well.
- ✓ Cold call and set up meetings with new companies.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Day 15

- ✓ Look at all the obvious job market opportunities (advertised jobs).
- ✓ Continue to network and explore unadvertised (hidden) opportunities.
- ✓ Attend interviews.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Day 16

- ✓ Relax.
- ✓ Review your resume, portfolio, and interview questions and make any changes needed.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Days 17 - 25

- ✓ Celebrate your success to date. You are working hard!
- ✓ Continue to attend informational interviews and send thank-you notes to everyone you meet with.
- ✓ Continue to network; as your contacts grow, add to your list of companies, and contact them as well.
- ✓ Continue to cold call and set up meetings with new companies.

- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Days 26 - 35

- ✓ If you are not getting the response that you expected from your inquiries and job search, enlist the help of a professional career counselor or coach.
- ✓ Review the steps that you are taking.
- ✓ Review the readability and success of your portfolio.
- ✓ Perform a scan of the labor market, including companies that you have already targeted. Consider contacting them again and following up.
- ✓ Check your notes carefully for any companies that you were going to call back, but may have missed.

Days 36 - 60

Continue to:

- ✓ Attend informational interviews; send thank-you notes to everyone you meet with.
- ✓ Continue to network; as your contacts grow, add to your list of companies, and contact them as well.
- ✓ Cold call and set up meetings with new companies.
- ✓ Repeat your affirmations every day. Include a visualization of yourself confident and happy in a new job because of your hard work and dedication.

Summary

This is an effective, active, and driven way to get what you want from your job search. It requires a great level of commitment and dedication from you, but that is as it should be since you are the one that will reap the rewards of your efforts.

Remember that:

- ✓ Your cover letter and resume introduce you to the company.
- ✓ Your performance during interview(s) and any testing, as well as the quality of the competition, affects your ability to get the job.

Unless you are in a period of serious economic recession or in an area that has been affected by some form of disaster, this approach should result in employment. Even in times of recession and disaster, this level of commitment will uncover any opportunities in your area.

Be open to happenstance: the idea that you can try things that are new or different. If your ideal job (one for which you are qualified and that exists in your area) eludes you, consider other options. Sometimes the best jobs we ever do are the ones we never expected, or that give us the opportunity to try something we never thought that we would do.

Getting the Lead Out

A job search can be a harrowing time for everyone. No matter how well we prepare a resume and portfolio, we can still run into trouble if we allow ourselves to stand in the way of our own success. This exercise allows us to get the big things that might stop us from getting the job we want on the table, as well as share some ideas to overcome them.

What are your biggest personal barriers to job search success?

What are you going to do, in the next seven days, to overcome or work around those barriers?

Goal Setting

Creating a Plan

We have discussed how to create a portfolio, so now it's time to get started! In the table below, write down the tasks that you need to address (including dates).

Before you list anyone on your reference page, you must ask his or her permission. Once you have your references in order, format the reference page to match the branding on your resume, cover letter, and portfolio.

If you have not worked in a while or do not wish your supervisor to know that you are looking for a job just now or you are freshly out of school, you have to be more creative.

Who are some other people who could make good references?

How References Work

Employers know that the information they get from a reference can be quite limited. Some employers do not even give out references any longer, although they may provide some kind of form response that verifies your dates of employment and job title.

Understandably, you won't want to ask for a reference from someone that did not like your attitude or the way you worked. However, what if the only manager you've ever had didn't like you? Employers know that personality conflicts exist and they know we cannot get along with everyone that we meet.

References know (or they should know) that they have to be careful about what they say to your potential employer. If the information they provide is interpreted to be harmful, it can actually hurt your reference as much as it hurts you. As a result, even if a reference doesn't like you personally, they may still provide you with a good reference. However, they can also couch their comments in such a way as to imply that they wouldn't hire you in the future or that they did not appreciate your work style.

Once you get through the interview and it seems reasonable to expect that your references will get a call, it is a courtesy to call your references and let them know that they can expect a call from a particular company. This also gives you the chance to advise your interviewer if your reference happens to be going on holiday or prefers to be called at a certain time.

Once you get the job, send a thank-you note to your reference. They have gone out of their way for you and will welcome a note from you.

Thank-You Notes

Why Thank-You Notes Are Important

Saying “thank you” is just as important as saying “please.” Sometimes, in the rush of our job search, we lose sight of the number of people who are helping us out. Developing your ability to thank people is a great life skill.

Throughout this course, we have mentioned a few occasions when it is good to write a thank-you note. In this section, we’ll spend a little time on this very important aspect of your job search.

When you are looking for a job, you are asking people to take time out of their busy schedules to help you. It is appropriate to thank anyone in your network who:

- ✓ Refers you to an employer (whether you get the job or not)
- ✓ Provides a reference
- ✓ Proofreads your documents
- ✓ Is your practice partner for interview or cold-calling practice
- ✓ Does something helpful for you
- ✓ Interviews you

People get a lot of e-mail these days, along with flyers and unwanted mail. Most people consider it a tremendous treat to get a piece of mail from someone who appreciates them, so make the effort to send a handwritten note. You don’t see many people with thank-you e-mails tacked up in their offices, but you do see people that hang on to a card that they received in the mail or that was hand delivered. These special cards may be tacked up on a bulletin board in their office, on their refrigerator at home, or on top of a mantel.

Designing a Thank-You Note

With the availability of specialty printer paper, you can print a thank-you card that matches the branding attached to your portfolio (particularly if you have a logo); or you could visit the card store and, for a very reasonable price, purchase a box of thank-you cards. Whatever option you choose, it is important that you handwrite the message inside. (Even if you are a messy writer, do your best.) This is a personal note; your message does not need to be long, only sincere.

Thank-you notes are becoming accepted practice in the job search industry, no matter the level of job you are looking for, and no matter if you are a man or woman. This is a good habit to develop. Putting your name back in front of that prospective employer or network doesn’t hurt either.

Crafting Your Message

Sample messages include:

- ✓ Thank you so much for referring me to John at Inco. This connection has really helped me in my job search.
- ✓ Thank you for inviting me for the interview yesterday. It was a pleasure to learn more about your company, and I look forward to hearing from you again.
- ✓ Thanks for letting me practice my interview skills. I feel much more confident about answering those hard questions!
- ✓ Thank you very much for proofreading my portfolio. I feel confident offering it to potential employers now. Your help has been invaluable.
- ✓ Thank you for being my reference. I have been given the job offer at MedEx and am looking forward to some big changes. I really appreciate your help.

In the space below, craft your own thank-you note.



Further Reading: