

## Developing a Professional Portfolio

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A professional portfolio can be a powerful job search, networking and interviewing tool, regardless of your career field. The design of the portfolio gives you a chance to offer tangible evidence of your past accomplishments, qualifications and experiences. It is often helpful to start with compiling your job search materials into a general portfolio folder to stay organized and then select key items to create a targeted portfolio for your specific career goal. Ideally, the quality of your portfolio can help you stand out as a candidate who can generate good ideas and make measurable contributions.

### Benefits of the Portfolio:

- Provides tangible examples to your claims
- A selection of information that you want to emphasize to an employer
- Isolates specific information that connects you to a role
- Demonstrates your professionalism
- Increases your confidence

### When to use a Targeted Portfolio:

- The job interview
- Applying for further education
- Seeking a promotion
- Career change
- Networking conversations

Differentiate yourself from others at any stage in your career with a targeted professional portfolio.

### Develop a Targeted Career Portfolio

A successful job search is an active, targeted job search. To improve your chances of success, the materials you develop for your job search (including your resumés, cover letters and your portfolio) should be created with specific jobs or industries in mind. To assist you in developing effective, targeted resumés and cover letters, the Career Centre has created a **Resumé Guidebook** (visit [wlu.ca/career](http://wlu.ca/career)).

Portfolios vary greatly depending on the targeted career area. To determine the portfolio conventions of the field, it is recommended that you obtain advice from someone with that knowledge including: a career consultant, colleague, faculty member or industry expert.

Your **Portfolio** may be comprised of the following items:

- Career goal statement/philosophy
- Career research
- Resumé, cover letter and networking card
- Certificates or other training/co-curricular certification
- Samples of your work: i.e., brochures, reports, newsletters, writing samples, photos, artwork
- Outlines of projects you have developed/planned
- Letters of recommendation/ reference
- Information on professional organizations and affiliations
- Accreditations and recognitions, such as awards, thank-you notes
- Performance evaluations
- Transcripts
- Multimedia presentation demonstrating relevant skills (i.e., public speaking, video creation, teaching)

## References

A professional reference is any individual (other than a family member) who has seen you in a work setting and can comment on the quality of your work or your work style. Usually, you should include at least one person who has acted as a supervisor or manager. If you are asked for an academic reference, select a professor who is familiar with your accomplishments in the classroom. Tip: advised to obtain LinkedIn recommendations to enhance your online presence.

## Steps to Creating a Portfolio:

1. Gather and continue to add items to a job search folder that you might use for your future portfolio.
2. Review what you have gathered and your knowledge of the job you are targeting to identify what would best convey the message you want to send to each specific employer.
3. Portfolio content will differ from occupation to occupation. Research what a portfolio looks like in your field (typical categories, how it is presented). Purchase a vinyl/leather book/binder with clear plastic pages.
4. Select the items to create a formal targeted portfolio; this can be a hard copy and/or an online version (e-portfolio). Develop statements to highlight your contributions, consider using photo or video to demonstrate your abilities, past accomplishments and work samples. Include an index and clearly separate sections of work using dividers.
5. Share your portfolio, as appropriate, to highlight your qualifications.
6. Continually review and add to your portfolio for future career possibilities.

## Using the Portfolio to Create your Online Presence:

- Consider how your portfolio could add value to your online presence; create an online portfolio that is accessible to all web browsers. Note: you may need to obtain permission from past employers if there are confidentiality issues associated with obtaining work samples
- Evaluate the specific components of your portfolio and how they could add to your online professional image
- Monitor your online presence and identify gaps that components of your portfolio could fill
- Enhance your online presence by uploading publications, conference presentations, articles and other professional items from your portfolio

## Portfolio Considerations:

- Use good-quality copies in the portfolio and bring extras to leave behind as the employer may request to keep a copy. Consider providing links to your work if appropriate
- Maintain an up-to-date portfolio of job search materials and you will be in a good position to provide required material in a timely fashion
- Make multiple focused edits and ask others to proofread for grammar, spelling, layout and effectiveness
- Ask others in your career field for tips and suggestions on content for your portfolio

### Tips for using the Portfolio in the Job Interview

- Use Portfolio items to illustrate your claims, but offer items selectively to keep the focus on you
- Explain how the document is relevant to the competencies they are seeking, i.e., "I included this document to demonstrate my ability to...which also shows that I..."
- Do not allow your portfolio demonstration to take up too much of your time
- Do not force the portfolio upon employers, you may choose to leave items behind
- Always bring along good quality copies!