

Insight Sheet

Topic: Portfolio Creation

The *portfolio* has been traditionally used as the key mechanism for showing professional skills to potential employers. It reflects you. Mistakes and shoddy quality, slick layout and innovative materials. All of it speaks to an employer about who you would be as a member of his/her firm. And yet it is widely overlooked by students. Specifically, it is not approached as an opportunity for growth, for expanding one's creativity, or separating the applicant from the crowd. Will your portfolio speak of your professionalism and uniqueness, or of a lackadaisical attitude and abundance of mediocrity?

Creating an effective portfolio means addressing the following criteria:

- including the key elements
- avoiding mistakes that detract from professionalism
- avoiding generic, uncreative techniques
- conveying the correct message

Uncreative Techniques:

1. boring bindings (e.g., curly plastic, plastic strip, staples!)
2. plastic covers (can feel cheap and have a poor tactile statement)
3. untrimmed edges (i.e., the boring white border and/or black border trim)
4. themes that go nowhere
5. quotes from famous people...that are not carried through the document/theme
6. inserting an image you did not shoot (make it creative and make it yours)

Mistakes:

1. poor image quality (i.e., fuzzy)
2. spelling checking
3. insert resume and call it good! (i.e., be sure to redo/format it to match pg layout and portfolio style)
4. too much white space

Key Elements:

1. resume (integrated, not inserted)
2. descriptions of work (but NOT a dull statement of the course, title, etc.—comment on what you learned, strove for, etc)
3. your design philosophy (you have one, right?)
4. YOU—where is your personality in the document? Were you afraid to step out and show it?

References:

- Litton, Harold. (2004). Portfolio Design, 3rd Ed. W.W. Norton & Co.
- See also www.portfoliodesign.com