

Creative ways to present your portfolio

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

In this increasingly competitive job market, more employers are requiring portfolios from candidates. This practice is no longer just for traditional fields, such as graphic design; requesting samples of your past work has become part of the application screening and interview process. Your portfolio can be the visual and interactive presentation of your accomplishments that are not necessarily fully captured in your resume. The portfolio can showcase writing samples, copies of transcripts and degrees, documentation of computer and technical skills, letters of recommendation, copies of performance reviews and copies of awards you have received.

Most traditional portfolios are organized in a binder with a cover sheet that includes your name, contact information and a table of contents. If you have many samples or different categories of work, use dividers to separate each section. Keep your portfolio at a reasonable size. Provide a summary statement for each sample or example of your work including when it was done, the context of the project, the targeted audience, and what software or materials you used in the process. Most employers will keep the portfolio you present, so provide copies of your samples and keep masters for your own files.

You may want to explore submitting an electronic portfolio if you have large graphic files or multiple samples of work that would be expensive to print out. An e-portfolio has all of the elements that a traditional portfolio has, including your cover page, samples of work, summaries of projects, etc., but is presented to the employer on a CD, jump drive or through a website. Just as with a traditional portfolio, you want to make sure that everything is well-organized and consistent.

If you save your portfolio on a CD or jump drive, organize the files in the same order that you would present a traditional, hard-copy portfolio. Use common file formats for all the files, such as PDF, to ensure that employers can successfully open each, and title each file clearly and consistently.

If you have all of your work on a website, make sure that your website is professional and avoid placing personal contact information on your site such as your phone number and address. Contact information can go on your cover letter and resume, along with the website address. Most importantly, make sure that your website address is professional and not inappropriate. Test your website often to double check that links work and that you are able to download documents you have posted.

You can take advantage of trends, such as a Quick Response (QR) code, to show off your work. There are free online services for generating a QR code that links to your portfolio website. You can place the QR code on your resume and cover letter with a short summary underneath, such as “Please scan to link to my online portfolio.” A QR code or link to your website should never replace important information on your resume. It should just serve as an easy, quick way to view your online portfolio and additional examples of your work.

Have a friend or family member review your portfolio before you submit it and practice your presentation before your interview. Keep your portfolio current and tailor it for each job opportunity just as you would with your resume and cover letter. A strong portfolio will help you stand out as a candidate and provides you the opportunity to show off all of your achievements to a prospective employer.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to www.dws.state.nm.us.

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