

Tips on Creating a Career Portfolio

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Finding a job after graduation can seem like a daunting task. Even if you worked while in school, you may not feel as though you know how to find a “real job”, that career position you have been training for over the past four years. There are no magic bullets but there are some things you can do to help differentiate yourself from other fresh college graduates that may be applying for the same positions.

The first step is to have a résumé that speaks to the employer. For help on creating a résumé make an appointment with the University Career Center, 110 Lanier Hall, career.center@gcsu.edu

Career Portfolio

Your résumé is a brief synopsis of your work experience. A career portfolio is a detailed collection of documents that provides substance and evidence to substantiate your résumé. The career portfolio is not something that you send with your résumé or that you leave behind during an interview. It is supporting evidence of your accomplishments and abilities that you share with the interviewer during your interview. Your portfolio should reflect your style, the breadth of your accomplishments, and the relevant skills and knowledge sets that an employer will recognize and value. It substantiates your points of differentiation.

To create your career portfolio begin with a suitable notebook or portfolio that allows you to add and remove items as needed placed in clear plastic sleeves. A white notebook that has the clear sleeve on the outside that allows you to put your name on the spine and a copy of your résumé on the front cover is appropriate. Doing this provides you and the interviewer cues during your interview to help remember important facts: the interviewer can easily see your name and you can easily see your résumé to prompt you if you draw a blank.

Contents of a Portfolio

The contents of your portfolio, like your résumé, should be carefully selected and customized for each interview to highlight those aspects of your experience, be it work, academic or personal, that will be most important to the employer with whom you are meeting. A table of contents will allow you and an interviewer to easily find those elements that are most important to them during the interview. Use dividers to organize your portfolio into three sections: the first section is the fundamentals of who you are to an employer; the second section is a demonstration of what you have done; and the third section is validation that others found value in your contributions.

First Section: Who I am

The first section begins with a current copy of your résumé. To make the most of your portfolio consider putting the necessary information that you will need to complete a job application after your résumé. Most job applications will ask for a list of former employers, including dates of employment, complete contact information, and possibly your salary/wage. In addition, a list of institutions where you have received training and the addresses for these is commonly required. A list of at least three professional references will be required. Your references should be individuals who can speak to your past work experience. Occasionally, you might be asked for personal references, consider these long time acquaintances who will speak to your character. Inclusion of your current transguide showing acceptable grades shows the breadth of the course knowledge you have acquired. If you have less than admirable grades consider a sheet listing the courses you have completed. Also include a copy of your experiential transguide. This document differentiates you significantly as very few schools do this level of tracking of service contributions by students. By preparing these documents and having them in your portfolio you will always have the complete information necessary if you are asked to complete a job application.

Be ready to answer common interview questions by preparing three to five sentence responses to these questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you leave your last position, or why are you leaving your current position?
- What are your goals?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a challenge you have faced and how you overcame it.
- What has been your most significant achievement?
- How would your last boss and colleagues describe you?
- What are your salary expectations? (this is rarely asked in an initial interview but you should be prepared)

Second Section: What I have done

The second section of your portfolio is the heart. Start this section with a one page summary of the major projects that you have done that are relevant to marketing or to the position for which you are interviewing. This is an elongated explanation of what you placed in the résumé. Consider having copies of this sheet with the same header information as your résumé. This page you might consider leaving behind after you have discussed the projects in your interview.

In this section you should put examples of your work that most closely relates to the position for which you are applying. These may or may not be from jobs that you were paid but can include client based papers/projects from classes, or examples of things you created as part of a volunteer experience where the skills and knowledge relevant to your desired position were learned or applied. It is likely that you have had one or more classes where you worked for a real client or did case work where the skills that an employer is seeking were learned and practiced. Even if you were not paid these client based projects, they represent your experience.

Some examples of projects and papers that might be common to marketing majors at GC that represent viable experience to a future employer include: business plans, strategic marketing plans, integrated marketing communications plans, distribution or pricing strategies for clients, marketing research reports, analysis of target markets, development of advertising or other marketing communications pieces, creation and analysis of databases, ... Include only the sections of the projects/papers that demonstrate the skills and abilities that you possess and that you wish to demonstrate your expertise in an interview.

Often these projects have been done in small groups, make sure that you can explain the entire project and highlight the role that you played. Teamwork is an important business skill. Having been part of a team that successfully met the goals of a client and/or course requirement shows future employers that you can be a team player for them as well. When working in teams make sure you always have a final copy, in electronic form for easy reproduction, of the original paper or project.

In your career portfolio it would very rarely be appropriate to include a copy of the complete final report. If you have several such experiences, inclusion of the entire report for each example will make your portfolio too cumbersome and not as useful. Your portfolio should be easy to flip through and see the breadth of your talents. As your experiences grow consider placing an extended executive summary or abstract of the projects or papers in the portfolio and include only the best example in its entirety. Make sure that if the information has any confidential details, such as budgets or recourses that you have masked the business name.

Not all work presented in your portfolio needs to be formal projects or papers that you have written. Perhaps you helped create a flyer for your church youth camp, wrote a press release for your sorority or fraternity's efforts in helping a local charity, or designed a web page for a small business. These represent work experiences that are likely to be relevant to a future employer.

As you select the items to include for any particular interview, think about the key skill or knowledge set that the item represents to the prospective employer. From the job placement announcement and your research about the company you should have an understanding of the important skills and abilities that the employer is looking for in a new hire. The interviewer will not have time to look at every item; you need to provide in a sentence or even a few key words a summary of each example. These small notes can be footers or headers across the examples, or might be labels or yellow sticky notes attached to the front of each example in the lower right corner.

Whatever you decide, be consistent throughout your portfolio. You want these notes to be easy to read as the interviewer flips through your portfolio. You also would like them to be interesting enough for them to take a moment longer and give further inspection to the example. A note that simply says "Flyer" is not as intriguing as "Flyer, three color printing, placed on campus bulletin boards".

Third Section: What others think of my abilities

The third section of your portfolio is to show your accolades. Consider including a letter that you solicit from someone that you feel can speak to your accomplishments. This may come from someone who has been a mentor, a leader, a teacher, a coach, ... to you. The person should be someone with whom you have had a close working relationship and who can speak easily about the skills and abilities that are relevant to the work place. If you have received awards or honors include the certificates or copies of the certificates. Letters of praise from organizations where you have volunteered or participated in a leadership role are worthy of on employers notice.

Be choosy in the items you include in your portfolio. You want them to speak well of you and to be credible. Think about what is meaningful to your prospective employer. Participating in a bike club as president may demonstrate leadership skills but it also indicates an interest that is not necessarily work related – biking. Most would see biking as a suitable recreational activity. However, president of an extreme sports group not only demonstrates leadership but might also be interpreted as someone who takes unnecessary risks. For the prospective employer, does the leadership skills you learned as president outweigh the potential risk taking behaviors that you might bring to the work place? Some organizations seek risk takers others will avoid them. Your research on the organization should help you to make an informed decision.

Using Your Portfolio

The final part of this portfolio is its use. When you walk into an interview have it on top ready to discuss. Do not leave it in your briefcase or on the floor next to your chair, ... Having it in front of you signals the employer it is something you will share with them. If you are using a notebook with your name on the spine, place the notebook so that the spine faces the interviewer – this keeps your name in front of them. Remember that the interviewer will be seeing many candidates; you need to distinguish yourself from the rest. Putting your name within their view as they talk with you makes it easier for them to remember your name. Do not rush to have the interviewer look through your portfolio.

After you get into the heart of your interview, an opportunity should present itself when you are talking about your experience, open the portfolio and turn it so that the interviewer can see your work. Consider directing them to specific elements that demonstrate a skill or ability that they have listed in their ad or have mentioned in the interview. Do not leave copies of your projects behind, or allow copies to be made. These were done with the understanding to the client that the information would not be shared or used by others.

Work Related - Client Projects

Students often ask how to list class related work on their résumé. The following are two elongated descriptions of student projects followed by an example appropriate for a résumé.

Cards From Heaven, Milledgeville GA. Spring 2007 Strategic Marketing Course client project.. Researched, developed, and presented a yearlong distribution strategy to aid Danish client in reaching the U.S. market. Plan included product assortment decisions

and channel decisions. The final project included a formal presentation including a budget and timeline. In small group as part of the capstone marketing course, worked with client to create a viable solution to her strategic distribution problems. Presentations were made to the client in a competitive environment with multiple teams vying for the clients' acceptance. Served as team captain, reported directly to the course instructor and served as the primary contact for the client.

Milledgeville Country Club, Milledgeville, GA. Fall 2006. Working in a small group in Advertising & promotions course, worked closely with general manager to develop a yearlong Integrated Marketing Communications plan to attract new members and increased participation of existing members at the country club. Project required research and analysis of the marketing environment and the assessment through a situation analysis that lead to development of the yearlong campaign. Campaign included development of proto type implementables, yearlong budget, and timeline. The completed project included written report and an oral presentation using PowerPoint to the client and other interested parties. Presentations were made to the client in a competitive environment with multiple teams vying for the clients' acceptance. Served as team secretary, kept log of meeting notes and posted on web page for team members, instructor and client to review.

Here is how they might look in a résumé:

WORK RELATED EXPERIENCE

Cards From Heaven, Milledgeville GA. Spring 2007 Strategic Marketing Course client project. As team captain, led 5 classmates to research, develop, and present a strategy to Danish client to penetrate U.S. market. Plan included product assortment decisions and channel decisions.

Milledgeville Country Club, Milledgeville, GA. Fall 2006. Small group agency project in Advertising & promotions course. Worked with manager to develop Integrated Marketing Communications plan to increase membership by 25% and participation of members by 75%.

Final Comments

There is not a standard template that you need to follow for creating your personal portfolio. The ideas presented here are not meant to cover all examples but provide a basic framework. The internet provides a plethora of examples. As your experience through interviewing and work increases you will gain a better understanding of those things that work best for you.

The best portfolio is one that provides employers with a reason to hire you!

Check Sheet for Creating a Career Portfolio

White notebook of appropriate size for contents with clear cover

Résumé on front cover

Full name in spine

Sheet protectors for contents

Dividers or tabs for sections

Inside Contents

Table of Contents

Section 1: Who Am I

- Résumé (put extra copies inside sleeve should additional people join the interview)
- List of former employers with complete contact information, dates of employment, wage/salary, and name of person to whom you directly reported
- List of institutions where you have received training and their addresses
- High school
- Colleges and Universities
- Any Certification programs or other relevant job training programs
- List of references
- 3-5 professional references
- 2-3 personal references
- 1-2 academic references
- Academic transcripts/ transguide
- Experiential transguide
- Answers to common interview questions and any research on current position

Section 2: What I have done

- 1 page summary of the major projects
- Examples of your work that most closely relates to the position , not entire projects, key elements that demonstrate your abilities
 - business plans
 - strategic marketing plans
 - integrated marketing communications plans
 - distribution or pricing strategies for clients
 - marketing research reports
 - analysis of target markets
 - development of advertising or other marketing communications pieces
 - creation and analysis of databases ...

include notes, footers or headers with brief description of purpose or example

Section 3: What others think of my abilities

- Letters of recommendation, not from people on your reference list
- Awards, honors, certificates of accomplishments
- Letters of praise
- Newspaper clippings or pictures demonstrating your skills or recognition of your abilities.



**School of Business School-wide
Assurance of Learning Rubric:
Communication Skills
Written Reports**



To support the mission of the university and the school, the faculty ...will: continuously improve the quality of our undergraduate and graduate programs by developing students' communication skills.

- o Learning Outcome Students in each program will receive individualized feedback multiple times on their written communication skills as they progress through the program. The school-wide rubric forms the core of course-level rubrics.

Assignment Date: _____ Project Title: _____ Career Portfolio _____ Course: <u>MKTG 4198 Strategic Marketing</u> Section/time: _____ Student Name: _____	Exceeds Expectations		Meets Expectations		Below Expectations	Not Used / NA
School-wide assessment items						
Is formatted and assembled in a manner consistent with standards as discussed in class and found on instructor web page						
Contains materials that are supportable and realistic						
Contains appropriate content with adequate depth						
Content is selected for clarity and emphasis and not simply an abundance of content						
Is assembled in a professionally acceptable manner						
E = Excellent; VG = Very Good; G = Good; AV = Average; P = Poor; and VP = Very Poor						

In preparing your career portfolio, follow the guidelines suggested in “Tips on Creating a Career Portfolio”.