Chapter 10

ePortfolios: From Business School to Business Office

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ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights the types of portfolios most frequently used in the business world or in preparation for entering a career. It shows that content in each area can be cumulative or separate. It will describe ideas for the types of artifacts to compile along with how to format them effectively and digitize them creatively. Compiling a digital portfolio is a strong contribution to a student’s learning path as well as providing a business professional with a means of collecting and preserving valuable projects. Continual reflection upon their work provides individuals with more confidence in their own worth as they embark upon their professional careers or justify their desires for advancement.

INTRODUCTION

Developing an innovative and original electronic business portfolio is one of the most effective tools that could be used by either the business professional or the student entering the business community. It constitutes a lasting comprehensive experience for both groups. Continual reflection upon their work arms students and business people alike with more confidence in their own competence and worth as they embark on their professional careers or justify their desires for advancement.

Unless people are unusually reflective and deliberately trace their intellectual and professional growth, most go with the flow of daily living and work needs. Many are not consciously aware of the paths that lead them from one level of knowledge or from one career to another. Whereas professionals keep pace with new requirements placed
upon them, most students move ahead according to the required collegiate curriculums. Students take the prescribed courses as directed without much reflection on their cumulative knowledge or recognition of the connection between these courses. Both groups, however, accumulate valuable experiences along their paths, sometimes forgetting how they actually got to some pinnacle of experience. Important anecdotes or incidents are tucked away in memory but are not documented otherwise.

Professional and business people are certainly aware of keeping their resumes up to date, although they may not do this until some employment crisis forces them to reflect and report on their accomplishments. Annual job assessment reviews often prompt scrambling through the papers or memories of the prior year to compile a report for the desired salary raise or promotion.

Similar to this situation, students find that as graduation approaches and career opportunities present themselves, preparing comprehensive resumes requires them to sum up their achievements and experiences. This is usually an onerous task. Rather than waiting until the end of the program, it may increase the students’ ability to comprehend the path of learning if they had to collect and preserve their work in a creative accumulative project, reflecting and assessing during the process.

Developing a creative portfolio can also help to guide writing a creative resume. Overall declarations of competence or experience in resumes are strengthened by providing concrete examples of these competencies and skills attained. Statements on the resume can be linked to the portfolio artifacts to show specific examples of projects or supporting documents for claims made by the interviewee. This is “show and tell” brought to life by the creator of a digital portfolio who not only proclaims that he/she knows about technological advances but can put them into practice, using them for creative enhancement of the traditionally static resume.

This chapter will confine itself to the types of portfolios most frequently used in the business world or in preparation for entering a career, showing that content in each can be cumulative or separate. It will describe ideas for the types of artifacts to compile along with how to format them effectively and digitize them creatively. It will give answers to “Why create a portfolio?”, “Who should have one?”, “What should be in it?”, and “How are portfolios created?”

**Portfolio Overview**

Although comparatively innovative in business settings, structured portfolios are not new to many other disciplines. Their uses range, depending on their purpose and their intended audiences. Whereas self-reflective portfolios serve as journals or organizers of activities and experiences, academic portfolios show student learning and progress or the development of skills. Professional portfolios are used in career determination or assessment of accomplishments as well as serving as demonstrations to validate claims of professional development.

Some portfolios consist of one’s own work while others, such as teachers’ portfolios, incorporate the tasks they developed for their students along with evaluations, exemplary projects, or external and internal assessments.

Another definition of portfolios is common in the financial world. There, a portfolio is a collection of monetary assets reflected in stocks, bonds, real estate, and personal possessions. Reallocating and shifting these assets for optimal return is the task of financial analysis. Borrowing from this description of an asset portfolio, another way of summing up one’s assets is by evaluating a collection of one’s personal achievements. These assets are perhaps more precious than mere monetary accumulations. It takes a lifetime of work to