

PORTFOLIO POWER

GOALS:

- To learn what a portfolio is.
- To explore how portfolios can be used as a marketing tool in job search.
- To identify items to include in one's portfolio.

RATIONALE:

The world of work has undergone many changes recently. Job seekers need to revise their view of traditional job search methods. Job titles are gradually becoming obsolete as job descriptions become more flexible and transitory. Employers expect job seekers to demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit. Job seekers are expected to think of themselves as a corporation called 'Me Inc.' which is composed of marketable skills that are transferable to various jobs and situations. A portfolio is an ideal tool to use in this new climate.

Portfolios are living documents, and as such, are as much about process as they are about product. As the individual grows and changes, their portfolio will also grow and change to accommodate and reflect that growth. It will also be adapted to individual job interviews as well to reflect the employer's needs. They can be defined as:

“A collection of samples that communicates your interests and gives evidence of your talents. You use your portfolio to show others what you have accomplished, learned or produced.”

- Martin Kimeldorf

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart paper, markers and blank sheets of paper.

METHOD

Warm Up: My Time Capsule

A time capsule is a container that holds objects representing a quality or event we want remembered by others in the future. Ask participants to name a personal quality or accomplishment they want remembered about themselves and an object that would represent that quality.

Exercise 1: What I have going for myself is...

Ask the group to offer ideas about what employers are looking for when hiring a new worker. These may be job specific related to technical skills and knowledge or these may be soft skills related to attitudes and personal characteristics.

Divide the group into pairs. Give each group member a sheet of flipchart paper and markers.

Instruct them to make a list of all the skills and qualifications they possess for a specific job or for the type of work they are looking for by completing the statement:

What I have going for myself is....

Instruct them to help their partner by brainstorming their previous experiences, education and accomplishments. Allow ten to fifteen minutes to complete the lists.

Invite each participant to post their list and read it to the group.

Questions to Consider:

- What was the difficult part and what was the easy part of this exercise?
- In what way did your partner help?
- How did it feel to show and tell your skills to the group?
- How might this relate to creating a portfolio?

Theory: See Theory Box

Exercise 2: Artifacts

Divide participants into groups of three. Using the following suggestions, ask each group to select one of the possible job goals for this exercise:

truck driver
consultant
video graphics
web page designer
office clerk

video jockey
golf pro
talent scout
actor

fashion
tour guide
environmental
activist



Instruct each group to brainstorm and list:

- a) things, accomplishments, abilities, talents of importance in that field.
- b) ways to present these in the portfolio. Encourage creativity.

When they have completed their list (about fifteen minutes) have each group report back to the large group. Encourage more ideas and responses from each of the other groups as they make their presentations.

Exercise 3: My Portfolio

Considering their current job goal, ask participants to refer back to the first exercise and review their list of what they have going for themselves.

Ask them to consider if they would make any changes to that list now and do so.

Instruct participants to select their top four or five strongest attributes for their job goal, take one piece of paper for each attribute and brainstorm or sketch ideas of how this attribute could be represented in their portfolio.

Encourage group members to share ideas and ask for suggestions if they get stuck.

EVALUATION:

CREDIT:

Adapted from a workshop submitted by Carter Hammett, St. Stephen's Employment Resource & Training Centre, and Pauline Pitcher, Employment Assistance Services Program (Jewish Vocational Services of Greater Toronto and Skills for Change), Toronto

THEORY BOX

Portfolio – A Definition

The first syllable, port comes from Latin, meaning 'to move'. The second syllable, folio, means 'papers' or 'artifacts'. So, portfolios can be seen as a: ***portable collection of papers or artifacts***

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING YOUR PORTFOLIO

- Include not more than one item or artifact or type of sample on each page.
- Make the pages moveable, placed in clear plastic sleeves, so each piece can be shown separately.
- Include technical competencies, transferable skills and items that may demonstrate personality characteristics. A variety of things show you to be a well-rounded person. But, at the same time, target the content to meet the needs of the specific job.
- Survey employers, teachers, others in the field to learn what may be important requirements in your field and be sure to include the ones you have.
- Allow your personality to shine through, which may be an important consideration in finding a good organizational fit.
- Ensure that all grammar and spelling is 100% correct.
- Place your résumé near the front of the portfolio. Include a table of contents if using more than six or seven items.
- Title each item and be prepared to briefly provide critical information, such as date of accomplishment, skills used or learned as a result of a project, who you worked for or with to make it successful, and so on.
- Organize items or pages either chronologically or thematically, by skills.
- Get feedback from friends and others in the field to ensure that it is not only graphically pleasing but makes sense and tells the story you wish to convey.

THEORY BOX continued

GUIDELINES FOR USING YOUR PORTFOLIO

- When preparing your portfolio, be aware that there are ethical issues that always need to be considered. One important example of this is the sharing of material that might be considered confidential.
- Mention your portfolio in the pre-interview telephone conversation.
- Take your portfolio to every interview and be prepared to present it.
- Be aware that the interviewer may not have time to view your whole portfolio. Be prepared to show one or several samples.
- Add to your portfolio at any time, to illustrate on the job accomplishments, new learning and skills.
- Portfolios can be very helpful in self-evaluation, in a performance review and in continued career advancement. They can be used in an educational environment as a tool for Prior Learning Assessment and to support life long lessons.