

Starting Out Right

A Good Portfolio Puts You Ahead of Other Applicants

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Whether it's electronic or not, nothing says 'I can do the job' better.

PRESENTING A COLLECTION of your accomplishments in a portfolio to your prospective employer focuses the spotlight on you and gives you an edge in an increasingly crowded field of applicants. A portfolio demonstrates that you have what it takes to do the job that you want. It can come in physical or electronic form, or both.

"The key to differentiating yourself from the growing sea of applicants is to realize that your e-portfolio is a dynamic space to represent your professional self," said Stephen Dunnivant, Ed.D., associate dean of electronic learning at Gulf Coast Community College in Florida. "A Web-accessible e-portfolio, in addition to a well constructed vitae or résumé, could be an ideal ticket into your new job."

Although each portfolio is as unique as the individual it represents, it should include a few diagnostic images with explanations of why they are good examples of your work:

What were the challenges of this exam? What positioning devices were used? What other techniques?

Also include copies of your credentials, awards, evaluations, letters of recommendation, relevant professional and community service and professional memberships, like ASRT.

When Craig St. George, R.T.(R)(VI), program director and technologist supervisor in interventional radiography at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla., was a clinical

instructor, his students kept portfolios of diagnostic images through four semesters. The images and critiques not only demonstrated students' progress to their instructors, but also to themselves. The portfolios helped students think critically about their work so they could improve and expand their techniques, he said.

"A portfolio is a great talking tool to bring to an interview," Craig said. "It keeps the conversation going. It shows the time you've spent preparing to be a radiographer. It tells the prospective employer, 'I went to school and I've been preparing for this interview for the past two years.'"

Craig said he updates his own portfolio continually to help him advance professionally. His portfolio is evidence of his abilities and experience and provides credibility, whether he wants to serve on a committee or seek a promotion.

Angela Cashell, MRTT, AC(T), MSc., a clinical educator and instructor at the University of Toronto, said that a portfolio should be concise. "It is not a shoebox for your tax returns. You need to think about how each item relates back to a goal you've set or how the item demonstrates growth and development."

Keep it simple and honest, recommended Beth Weber, M.P.H., R.T.(R), RDMS, director of imaging services at Avera Hospital in South Dakota, and chairman of the ASRT Management Chapter. Include your experience on equipment and computer applications, but leave out the equipment you've only observed. And don't forget to abide by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Remove any information from images that could identify the patient and make sure you have permission from the imaging center or hospital to use the images, she said. *S*

