Digital Business Portfolios: Categories, Content, and Production

Eleanor J. Flanigan
Montclair State University, USA

INTRODUCTION

Many people are oblivious of the structured paths that lead them from one level of knowledge or one career path to another. Unless they are unusually reflective and deliberately trace their intellectual growth, most people move along and go with the flow of daily living and daily work needs. Whereas professionals keep pace with new requirements placed upon them, students move ahead according to the required collegiate curriculums, taking the prescribed courses as directed. Both groups, however, accumulate valuable experiences along either path.

Students find that as graduation approaches, 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.

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.

Developing a creative portfolio can also help to guide writing a creative resume. Overall declarations in resumes are strengthened by providing concrete examples of 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 to know about technological advances but can put them into practice, using them for creative enhancement of the traditionally static resume.

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 acquire educational, professional, and personal assets. Enhancing this theme of portfolios as a collection of assets, Poore (2001) considers a person's business career as a portfolio of well-chosen investments.

DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS

Digital business portfolios are basically collections of artifacts used to validate claims made by the creator. These artifacts are in a creative variety of formats: text documents, Web pages, presentations, research papers,

assessment instruments, original projects, academic or external teamwork, internships, performance videos, certificates of achievement, spreadsheets, databases, digital images, and multimedia demonstrations. These digital portfolios serve the business student population as well as business professionals encouraging them to look critically at their work and analyze it objectively. Using the concrete examples of their achievements and growth, portfolio developers create technologically creative resumes with the portfolio artifacts to support statements of proficiency in their chosen fields.

In short, a portfolio is a demonstration of skills and abilities, containing evidence of growth and competence. Portfolios can be learning tools, job search tools, and career growth tools. The purpose of the portfolio to some degree dictates the artifacts collected as well as the format of the design.

TYPES OF DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS FOR ASSESSMENT, JOB SEARCHES, AND INTERVIEWS

Learning and Assessment Portfolio

Students create portfolios as part of classwork for assessment or for tracking their growth during their academic careers. While collecting the artifacts of learning, students realize that they have concrete evidence to support their perceptions of their own development. Their belief in their own growth is given support by looking objectively at the increasing complexity of their projects. Their self-assessment is substantiated by recognizing how their knowledge base changed comparing the artifacts from the beginning of their studies with the more sophisticated projects done toward the end of their academic years.

This reflection on one's work prompts another important area: that of developing the ability to be objective when assessing both the quality and/or quantity of materials used in the portfolio. Nicholson (2004) considers self-reflection as "the first step in knowledge construction" (p. 322). With encouragement from a teacher/mentor, the students have a chance to reflect upon their progress, do remedial work, and plan their paths for continued growth.

Students also find portfolios invaluable when pursuing internships or employment at the conclusion of their program. Learning portfolios preserve artifacts that later can become part of career portfolios. Thus

the initial portfolio done as a student provides a base or example for any future portfolio development. At many points in a work career, the employee frequently pursues further skills or education in a full degree program, a certification, or even a workshop. It is important that these achievements be documented to demonstrate growth or achievement to the employer, so the portfolio is the constant base ready to receive and preserve new artifacts.

Initial Job Inquiry Portfolio

In advertisements for employment, the candidate is often directed to send documents such as resumes or supporting material electronically. If the initial inquiry is made online, a small portfolio of work examples could be submitted along with an electronic resume as an e-mail attachment. The content of the portfolio would consist primarily of text documents including a resume and several work examples or a few highly compressed images. The portfolio creator must be aware that sending this type of portfolio has restrictions in that there are a variety of e-mail systems on the receiving end. Any portfolio sent electronically should be in the neighborhood of one megabyte of memory.

An alternative to actually sending the resume, text documents, or supporting images would be to compose a resume and cover letter with internal hyperlinks directing the reader to a Web-based portfolio. This type of portfolio can also take the form of an expanded Web resume or be an extensive multimedia Web-based presentation. This different strategy means that the original portfolio need not be restricted in size. In these cases, the portfolio is Web-based and simply linked from the job application materials.

The introductory portfolio differs in structure from a comprehensive portfolio in the amount of material available. The introductory portfolio might also be an electronic document tailored for each job application or initial inquiry, showing just the type of experience, skill, or education that best pertains to each company or position being sought. Thus the creator would pick and choose among the various artifacts in order to focus on the needs expressed by the employer or interviewer. This more personal, focused approach would show depth of preparation as well as forcing the prospective employee to focus on addressing the specific requirements of the job proposed.

Related Content

Tackling the Challenges of Acquiring Web Videos for STEM Hands-On Learning: Example of a Fake Hologram and a Proposed Learning Model
Yu-Liang Ting, Shin-Ping Tsai, Yaming Taiand Teng-Hui Tseng (2022). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/article/tackling-the-challenges-of-acquiring-web-videos-for-stem-hands-on-learning/304084

Science Mapping as a Learning-by-Doing Educational Technology Tool for Doctoral Education: A PhD Literature Review Experience Based on Science Mapping
Maryam Nejmaand Abdelghani Cherkaoui (2020). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 57-77).*
www.irma-international.org/article/science-mapping-as-a-learning-by-doing-educational-technology-tool-for-doctoral-education/258261

Applying the Polysynchronous Learning to Foster the Student-centered Learning in the Higher Education Context: A Blended Course Design
Fan Ouyang (2016). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 52-68).*
www.irma-international.org/article/applying-the-polysynchronous-learning-to-foster-the-student-centered-learning-in-the-higher-education-context/154896

Vision and Strategy for Developing a Successful Online Degree Program on a Shoestring Budget
Jeton McClintonand Michele D. Estes (2013). *Cases on Educational Technology Implementation for Facilitating Learning (pp. 253-271).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/vision-strategy-developing-successful-online/75276

What to Expect When You Are Simulating?: About Digital Simulation Potentialities in Teacher Training
Anna Sánchez-Caballé, Francesc M. Esteve-Monand Juan González-Martínez (2020). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 34-47).*
www.irma-international.org/article/what-to-expect-when-you-are-simulating/241256