# CAREERWORLD

## Building an e-portfolio: resumes are good. Are electronic portfolios better?

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As a journalism major at Arkansas Tech University, Ryan Casey McShane has spent his college career building a great background in writing and public relations. But he felt an ordinary resume couldn't do justice to his experiences. So McShane got creative. He put together an e-portfolio with copies of articles he has written, layouts he has designed, and other accomplishments.

Then he made it available online to potential employers.

The strategy has paid off, helping him land two internships with minor-league sports teams. McShane has added samples of his work from those experiences to his portfolio, enhancing its appeal to employers as he looks ahead to graduating and seeking full-time employment.

"My e-portfolio has been really helpful," McShane says. "Not only can employers view my resume on the site, they also have the ability to see the quality of my work."

Not a Facebook Page

E-portfolio pages differ from social networking sites such as MySpace or Facebook. An e-portfolio is an online display of your skills and talents. It's specifically targeted to employers or others you'd like to impress for educational or professional reasons. So it's more serious and comprehensive than information you share with friends.

An e-portfolio goes further than an old-fashioned resume, providing a variety of information about your background and capabilities in more than one medium. It can include documents, photos, and videos, among other possibilities. McShane's portfolio, for example, features ads he created, a complimentary letter about his work, and a YouTube clip.

Electronic portfolios can be ideal for artists, Web designers, and other creative types to show off their work without having to haul a big portfolio around. But almost anyone can make use of e-portfolios, including high school and college students.

Do you want to describe your experiences as a camp counselor? display work from a series of science fair projects? show photos of landscaping projects? Whatever your

accomplishments, you can showcase them in an e-portfolio to help you land a job or to enhance your application for college, a scholarship, or an internship.

Angela Voelker, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, uses an online portfolio to show off her skills as a designer. The architecture major cites her e-portfolio in application letters and encourages readers to check out her work online.

"An e-portfolio is especially useful if you're applying to jobs or schools far away from your current location," Voelker says. "I was able to have employers in North Carolina view my work … without going too far out of my way before having some feedback and potential interest in my work."

When George Mason University senior Jason Wray applied for a part-time job with VisualCV, a company in Reston, Va., it didn't hurt that he used the company's product, Web-based resumes, to develop his own attention-grabbing e-portfolio. He incorporated writing from class projects, photos of himself volunteering, and a reference from a professor. VisualCV officials were impressed. He got the part-time job--and had a full-time position waiting for him after graduation.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

"Jason's e-portfolio factored hugely into our decision to hire him," says Clint Heiden, the company's CEO. "It showcased his talent, strengths, competencies, and personality in a way that a traditional resume could never do."

Portfolio Basics

Want to develop your own e-portfolio? Here are some tips on getting started:

* Check out a portfolio hosting site such as Coroflot (www.coroflot.com), Carbonmade (www.carbonmade.com), or VisualCV (www.visualcv.com) to create your portfolio. Look at other portfolios hosted by the sites for ideas, but organize your material in a fresh and distinctive way

to reflect who you are.

* Show your best. Stand out by profiling your strengths. "Your extracurricular activities, athletics, and volunteering are good places to start," says Michael Neece, chief strategy officer at Pongo Resume, a Northborough, Mass., career development company. "Look at what your activities and school projects demonstrate about you. For example, volunteering in the school library helped you develop customer service and communication skills. Your athletic involvement demonstrated your ability to work on a team."

* Play it safe. Remember that when you put your information online, anyone in the world can access it. So don't include details that could cause trouble. Do not list your Social Security number or other personal information that might attract identity thieves. Stay away from language or images that some people might find offensive. And be careful not to borrow material from elsewhere without giving proper credit.

* Refine your work. Before going public, make sure your material is error-free. Check for proper spelling and grammar, and refrain from the informal style used in everyday online communication. If possible, have a teacher or friend with strong writing skills review the material before posting.

* Keep it concise. Although the online format allows you to add different types of material, keep individual entries brief and to the point. Don't forget that those who review your site will probably be busy professionals who don't want to waste their time.

* Spread the word. Once your portfolio is online, let people know it's out there. "Be sure to share information about how to access it with your friends, family, peers, prospective employers, and college admissions teams," says Kelly Driscoll, president of Digication, a provider of e-portfolio software in Providence, R.I. "Remember to include the Web address of your e-portfolio on your resume and in the footer of any e-mails you send related to your job search or academic advancement."

* Update regularly. After you have developed and posted an e-portfolio, make sure to update it as you acquire new experience and credentials. By keeping information current, you are more likely to make a positive and accurate impression.