



Portfolios and Interview Strategies

By Jack Molisani
President, ProSpring Technical Staffing
www.prospringstaffing.com

About the Speaker

- President, ProSpring Technical Staffing
- Exec Director, The LavaCon Conference
November 6–9, 2008
Honolulu, Hawaii

Overview

- What is a Portfolio?
- Interview Strategies
- What to Put in Your Portfolio
- How to *Get* Things to Put in Your Portfolio
- Questions and Answers

Ground Rules

- Group Participation
- I welcome audience suggestions, anecdotes and opinions.
- Disclaimer: Anything I say is just my opinion—it's not true unless you try it and see if it's true *for you*.
- I'll present opposing points of view on certain topics and let you decide.

What is a Portfolio?

- A portfolio is a tool I use to walk potential clients down a path of understanding that
 - I am an expert in my field
 - I really have done what I claim
 - I can do the same for them...
 - ...and solve the problems *they* are having.

Interview Strategies

- Understand the job requirements.
- Use your portfolio to guide the interview exactly where *you* want it to go.
- Move the cycle forward (second interview, job offer, etc.)

About Portfolios

- People believe what they see, not what they're told.
- "Tell a story" is good, but showing an example is better.
- However, keep in mind a portfolio is *not* just a series of examples—it is a tool you use to walk a potential client/employer down a path of understanding....

Mechanical Basics

- Buy a nice leather (or faux leather) artist's portfolio.
- Use clear page protectors.
- Add tabs for each section.
- Label the tabs? It depends on how you plan on using your portfolio.
- I don't let an employer "scan" my portfolio. Remember, I'm walking him/her down a path....

What to Put in Your Portfolio

- A Project Plan
- Other Items

Project Plan

- Overview
 - Purpose/Objective of the Plan
 - Terms and Abbreviations
 - Change History
 - Changes Anticipated
- Project Description
 - Title
 - Purpose of the Document
 - Audience(s)
 - Scope
 - Prerequisites
 - Cross references
 - Estimated Length
 - Distribution Media

Project Plan

- Style and Standards
 - Use existing style guide, or create new
 - Use existing templates, or create new
 - Color or B&W
 - Authoring tools (printed and online)
- SMEs and Technical Reviewers
 - Sources of technical information
 - Subject matter experts (SMEs)
 - Who will review/ approve the plan?
 - Who will review/ approve the document?

Project Plan

- Risks and Issues
 - A “risk” is anything that could impact the project cost or schedule.
 - An “issue” is something that just needs to be decided.
 - Risk management (“shark mitigation”)
- Content and Schedule
 - Detailed content outline
 - Proposed schedule
 - Remember to adjust the schedule for holidays, vacations, etc.
 - Triage (Determine what can be done in the time/money available.)

Samples

- The Result of the Project Plan
- Other Items
 - Samples of Your Work (tailor the samples to the job)
 - But Also Include...
 - Advertisements
 - Data Sheets
 - Product Reviews

How to *Get* Things to Put in Your Portfolio

- Samples of Previous Work:
 - Be proactive: get permission *before* you need it.
 - Get it in writing.
 - Frequent backups make a happy life!
- If Needed, *Create* Samples
 - Create a project plan after the fact.
 - Create as many samples as you can with as many authoring tools as you can.
 - Rewrite something that's really bad (and then use it as your before-and-after example).

Awards and Recognitions

- Remember, you are positioning yourself as an expert in your field.
- Include awards, quotes, positive customer feedback, product reviews, etc.
- Volunteer in professional organizations and then include the recognition.
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to put a compliment/success story in writing—it's your marketing lifeblood!

Statistics

- Many companies look at user documentation (and hence technical writers) as a necessary evil, and only fund the minimum amount possible to get the job done.
- Why? Because they think documentation costs detract from the bottom line (profit).

Statistics

- Want companies to give you money?
Show how you can help the company save money or (better yet) *make* money.
- Put statistics in your portfolio.
Remember, people believe what they see, not what they are told.
Show how you made a difference...!

Before-and-After Sample

- Show a really bad “before” sample—the messier the better.
- Chances are the person will have a hearty soul-cleansing laugh and will say, “That’s how our stuff looks!”
- Then show a really good “after” sample. This *shows* you can make perfect clarity out of total chaos.
- At this point, the person *knows* you can help with their problem— ‘time to ***stop talking*** and wait for a let’s-move-forward statement.

Success!

- You walked the client/employer down a path of understanding that you are *the* person to hire:
 - Understand the job requirements.
 - You made a great first impression with a professional looking portfolio.
 - By the end of your project plan, the person *knows* you know what you're talking about.
 - You showed you can do what you said you could with examples you've created.
 - You showed you can help fix the client's problem because you already have for someone else.
- What more could they want? 😊

Questions and Answers

jack@ProspringStaffing.com

www.ProspringStaffing.com