

# How to Create a Killer Portfolio

By Jack Molisani

# About the Speaker

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# Overview

- What is a Portfolio?
- Portfolios, Theory Of
- Mechanical Basics
- 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 a potential client down a path of understanding that
  - I am an expert.
  - I really have done what I claim.
  - I can do the same for them *and solve the problems they are having.*

# Portfolios, Theory Of

- 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

- Printed or online? I say printed *and* online.
- 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
- The Result of that Plan
- Other Samples

Note: Tailor your samples based on who you are pitching to/interviewing with.

- Awards and Recognition (PR stuff)
- Statistics
- A Radical Before-and-After Sample

# 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
  - 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).
- 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.
- Then show a really good “after” sample.
- Chances are the person will have a hearty soul-cleansing laugh when they see the messy before and say, “That’s how our stuff looks!”
- The person now *knows* you can help with their problem—time to stop “selling” and wait for or initiate a let’s-move-forward step.

# Success!

- You walked the client/employer down a path of understanding that you are *the* person to hire:
  - You made a great first impression with a professional looking portfolio.
  - By the end of taking a person through 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

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