

# Electronic Portfolios:

## Marketing Yourself Competitively in the Twenty First Century

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### Electronic Portfolios: Marketing Yourself Competitively in the Twenty First Century

**Learning Outcome:** To describe how an e-portfolio can market an entry level dietitian.

#### Abstract

Dietitians emerging from similar undergraduate and internship experiences enter a workplace that demands they distinguish themselves if they want to be selected for competitive positions and move up the career ladder. In one internship, dietetic interns market and distinguish themselves via the development of an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) utilizing html coding. E-portfolios are innovative and increasingly seen in the marketplace. An Internet search demonstrated e-portfolio training in universities, Internet encyclopedias, industry, and other sites outside of dietetics. E-portfolios harness Internet capabilities to provide a more efficient, timely and extensive portrayal of applicant skills. Unlike static projects, they can be developed to describe educational progression over time. E-portfolios can be utilized to demonstrate what the individual has learned, along with reflections on that learning and presentation skills. E-portfolios allow potential employees to present self-advocating information in a structured, easily accessible manner. Instead of simply telling about skills and professed abilities, potential employees can post specific projects and useful links on their e-portfolio site to demonstrate their qualifications in an innovative manner. While each e-portfolio is unique, sections such as educational background, work experience, project samples and site linkages are commonly present. Further, an e-portfolio can evolve over ones career. This dynamic aspect is essential because what is important for an entry level position may not be included five years later in an advanced job search strategy. E-portfolios offer dietitians an opportunity to market themselves to the local and global marketplace.

### The Benefits of an Electronic Portfolio

Without extensive work experience or an established reputation, an entry level dietetic position can be competitive and hard to come by. Most applicants send a resume to represent their skills. However, all resumes usually contain similar information and are constrained by the amount of content that will fit onto one page. Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) offer many career advantages to dietitians who strive to be unique and dynamic.

- Information provided is not limited by space constraints
- Personality can be portrayed through content, graphics, and color schemes
- Visual images are often easy to remember (Many employers might not remember a name but they will remember a face)
- Work experience and sample projects can be uploaded and viewed, not just described
- Computer skills can be demonstrated and not merely mentioned



The most intimidating part of creating an e-portfolio can be getting started. Begin by writing your thoughts on a piece of paper. Think about how you want your site to look and which sections you want to include. As you begin creating your site, these initial thoughts might change but starting with an outline can definitely save you some time in the long run.

Once you have your initial ideas about layout and design put them into action. You can either use html code or a design program to create your portfolio. If you use a program you do not have to know html coding, although it can be helpful, and most are relatively easy to use. There are a few different program options, such as Dreamweaver, to choose from. Do some research and find out which will match your skills and needs.

Finally, you need to find a web host for the wonderful site you have created. Many Universities have servers that allow each student to post a personalized web site for free. If you are affiliated with a University talk to the OIT department and see what your options are. You may also decide to go with a private web host. When choosing which provider to use remember to consider the following: cost, file type and size limitations, domain name registration, storage space, data transfer / bandwidth limits, advertisements, FTP access, and whether they offer technical support.

### Suggested Sections For Your E-Portfolio

The wonderful thing about an e-portfolio is its' ability to be personalized. Each one should have a unique style and character that is representative of the individual who created it. All e-portfolios should be professional, but some may use a fun and artsy layout while others might have a more reserved approach that portrays their skills and personality. There are many possible sections that can be included in an e-portfolio. Each section should be a representation of skills or talents you want to show potential employers. Your e-portfolio should be easy to navigate, allowing employers and other visitors to quickly identify sections of interest while being able to skip parts that they might not want or have time to read.



#### Personal Biography

This is a nice way to let people get to know you. It can contain information about your family, hobbies, school experiences, travels, and favorite things. You want it to be a window into who you are, but remember most people looking at the site won't have a lot of time so focus on the main points.

#### Dietetic Internship/Professional Development

This can be one or two sections depending on how many experiences you have had. Most internships are similar in the types of internship rotations. Therefore, it is important to focus on information that makes your particular internship or experience unique and different. You can attach samples of projects you worked on, personal comments about ways you developed your skills and talents, as well as general information about the various locations. Employers want people who are motivated so it is important to let them know you are passionate about the field of dietetics and are continually trying to learn more. Under the professional development section you can add any conferences you may have attended, any professional awards you have received, or notable academic submissions that have been accepted.



#### Resume

Although you will probably send a copy of your resume directly to specific organizations, the resume posted on your e-portfolio allows you to tell a more complete story. This resume can be interactive by posting samples of your work or linking to other sites pertaining to your project. Also, your web address is something that can be easily attached to the signature line of your email or printed on a business card. In these instances the people viewing your e-portfolio may not have a hard copy of your resume. Make sure this section is easy to navigate so that employers can find exactly what they are looking for quickly.

As mentioned previously, each e-portfolio should be unique and representative of the individual it is used to portray. Decide on sections that reveal important information about yourself. What information do you want employers to learn by looking at your e-portfolio? You may want to add a section about nutrition links that you enjoy or a feedback section to help make your e-portfolio better. The main point is that you want to sell yourself and show employers why you are the person they want for the job. Think about your own strengths and then design an e-portfolio that shows them off.

