

Portfolio of competences

1. What is a portfolio of competences?

The idea of a portfolio came from artists who needed to show their work : photographs, paintings, sculptures... and for whom the classical CV was not adapted. The concept became popular in USA and in Canada.

A portfolio of skills or competences shows what we have done and what we are able to do, in what context and with whom. It is a testimony to our skills and competencies.

The portfolio can be in the form of a paper file and in addition be in digital format. We talk then about e-portfolio, which also allows us to showcase our digital skills. Surveys have shown the usefulness of e-portfolios when applying for a job. People also report that the e-portfolio gave them the feeling of a competitive advantage, especially when looking for a job abroad.

2. What can we do with a portfolio?

— Develop CVs: The portfolio of skills is the basic material for writing a CV. From all the information it contains, we choose the information that will be useful for the type of job targeted. A CV is used once : we write a CV each time we apply and each CV is different to fit the recruiter's expectations. The portfolio follows us during our life. It grows with our experiences.

— Accompanying a job interview: The portfolio is useful to prepare for the interview, to quickly recall our previous work experiences and the activities we have carried out. But it is also possible to bring our portfolio, or part of it, to the interview and show it to illustrate what we are saying.

— Getting an interview: If we have an online portfolio, it is useful to include the link in the CV as well as in the signature of the emails. If not all recruiters have the time or curiosity to go and see it, some will, especially if the CV is pre-selected. They will have a more concrete idea of a candidate by visualizing what he is capable of doing.

— Remembering what we have done and what we have learned: In a unique place, at hand, we have the summary and traces of our main activities.

— Make the link between different periods: The portfolio helps us to maintain a link between the different stages of our career path. By memorizing the organizations that accompanied us, the companies in which we did internships, it will make the accompaniment of the counsellors, tutors or trainers more effective.

— Compensate for a lack of professional experience: The portfolio makes it possible to value extra-professional activities and to link them to concrete skills. It is particularly useful for young people who have little work experience.

— Show our ability to produce something that shows our creativity. The portfolio is materialized by an object, a cardboard box, or by a virtual environment, a website.

— Undertake a validation of prior experience to acquire a certification or part of it, without prior formal training. The portfolio is the basic tool to engage in this process with confidence.

3. How to start a portfolio?

If we start from scratch, by trying to develop our life story, we can start to collect elements that will be part of the portfolio. This is a first step in highlighting the link between activities, experiences and underlying skills. A large sheet of paper divided into three columns allows us to write down experiences from our personal and professional life that are important and that can be linked to skills noted in the right column. They will be linked and in the centre will be evidence that can be included in the portfolio because it demonstrates mastery of the competency.

4. Introducing the concept of competence and portfolios

Several activities can be carried out, preferably in a group, to raise awareness of skills and competencies.

Organizing a market of skills and competences (Duration: 1 hr)

Activity	<p>Objective: to understand the meaning and importance of skills and competences</p> <p>This activity considers the concept of competence in a broad sense. It includes a classification and an exchange of competences.</p> <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Prepare a set of skills on cards (one skill per card).— Distribute the cards for all the skills to each participant and ask them to sort them into three piles (acquired, being acquired, not acquired).— Ask to rank them from most important to least important.— In small groups of two or three, discuss the proposed rankings and ask questions about the skills before discussing them with the whole group. <p>Option Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Mix all the skills, distribute three to five per person.— Start the skills barter. Each participant has the objective to build the best set consisting of three to five skills s/he considers most important.— Continue until everyone gets their skills set.— Discuss the results in small groups of two or three and then with the whole group.
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Compare CVs and portfolio of skills (Duration: 1 hr)

Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Choose a CV (make it anonymous if necessary).— Ask to analyse it to extract the skills shown by the CV.
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- Compare different CVs.
- Highlight the limitations of the information provided by the CV.
- Analyse a portfolio of skills: how are they presented and developed, in what forms?
- Discuss the complementarities between CV and portfolio (remember that to develop a CV, it is necessary to base it on a portfolio of skills and therefore to keep it up to date).

How to illustrate a competence? (Duration: 1 hour)

Activity

What forms can a competence take? How can I communicate about my skills and competences?

A set of cards with skills-competences is distributed. In groups of 3-4, participants are asked to give illustrations of the skills on the blank side of the card. Then each participant explains to the small group :

- a skill they have mastered
- an illustration of it
- how it was acquired
- the context in which it was acquired
- how it can be used in other contexts.



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