The professional portfolio: A snapshot of your career

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Abstract: Create a list of your personal and professional goals, growth, and achievements.
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In nursing, the professional portfolio provides a record of your professional development where you can list personal and professional goals, growth, and achievements. The professional nurse portfolio is quickly becoming a primary tool for demonstrating and improving nurse competence.

Portfolio basics
A professional portfolio includes a number of core components.

Biographical information: Provide basic information about yourself, such as name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, birthplace, and registered nurse license number.

Educational background: List the educational program coursework you’ve completed and the degrees you’ve earned, including the institution name, dates attended, and the area of study.

Certification: Enumerate the number of certifications you’ve achieved, taking care not to forget the name of the certification, certifying organization, certification date, and certification renewal date.

Employment history: Describe your work history in a manner that offers an overview of your nursing knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Your goal in this section is to describe the full depth and breadth of your journey from novice to expert nurse.

Résumé: Develop a résumé of at least one page, making sure you
don’t exceed two pages. Identify work and educational experience along with certifications, beginning with the most recent in each category.

**Competency record:** Make copies of your annual competency record checklist. Highlight new competencies acquired within the last year.

**Personal and professional goals:** Copies of annual personal and professional goals along with evaluation of goal accomplishment should be included. Develop at least five professional development goals annually and evaluate them at the end of the year. Reviewing these forms allows you to reflect on your professional growth throughout your career.

**Professional development:** List obvious professional development experiences, such as the title and attendance date for mandatory training and staff development programs. Also include continuing-education certificates for agency, regional, state, or local programs. Other professional development strategies that aren’t quite as obvious include listing personal educational reading. Make a list and cite nursing and nonnursing articles and books you read for self-development. While you probably shouldn’t include your summer beach reads, books on leadership development and other areas of personal improvement are important to list. If you completed computer software self-learning programs, add those as well.

**Presentations, consultations, and publications:** Identify original presentations you developed individually or with others. Include consultations you might have provided with other units in your hospital or different healthcare organizations. For publications, include copies of the original article in addition to a photocopy and a copy of the newsletter or journal.

**Professional activities:** Document your participation in professional organizations and activities. Identify committees you serve on and the role you fill, such as member, co-chair, or chair.

**Community activities:** Include the name of the community organization, committee, or program on which you serve. Remember that the roles you perform with community groups can also demonstrate additional skills and areas of expertise.

**Honors and awards:** Identify and include all honors and awards you’ve received.

**Letters:** Include copies of thank-you letters from patients, families, peers, organizations, and others. Offer examples that reflect your broad range of expertise in the healthcare arena.

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