

Self-Branding

- In what areas do you have superior knowledge or expertise?
- What do you do particularly well, perhaps better than most others?
- What do you most enjoy doing? What do you hate?
- What target audiences have you come to know and understand?
- As a result of your experience what do you know best?

Positioning strategy:

- **It's authentic.** The position is an honest reflection of what you are capable of. It plays to your strengths. It can have aspects that are aspirational, but only if you have the knowledge, experience and firepower to truly deliver what the positioning promises.
- **It's exclusive.** The position is focused on what you do best. It reflects an understanding that you can't be known for everything, but you can be known for something.
- **It's polarizing.** The position is designed to appeal only to a limited group of prospects. Some prospects will be attracted and some won't.

Socrates said, "The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear." Said another way, to be successful, we must align our practices with our position.

Portfolio Tips

As a graphic designer, your [portfolio](#) remains your primary [branding and self-promotional vehicle](#). To help you craft a well-rounded collection of work samples that packs a serious punch, [The Creative Group](#) recently released a new guide, [Creating and Presenting a Powerful Portfolio](#).

The information is based on surveys of advertising and marketing executives, as well as insights from creative thought leaders and our staffing teams who interact with hiring managers daily and have a keen sense of what employers look for when reviewing portfolios. Here is some advice from the guide:

1. Start Strong, End Strong.

Open with [your best work](#). Your lead sample should not only highlight your design talent but also serve as a conversation starter about the skills you bring to the table. The items that follow should fuel further discussion about your core strengths. End with a bang by making your second-strongest piece the last one the reviewer sees.

- [Don't forget to craft a compelling resume. Click here for 7 tips.](#)
- [See the award-winning resume that landed one designer his dream job.](#)
- [See these designer's personal branding materials](#)

2. Don't Put Style Above Substance.

In a survey by our company, advertising and marketing executives said the [most common portfolio mistake is including work that doesn't show value](#). Provide context by labeling each piece with the client's name, the project's objective and your role in developing the finished product. Most important, make note of positive outcomes, such as increased sales, [greater brand awareness](#) or cost savings. Simply put, play up your problem-solving prowess and ability to boost the bottom line.

3. Show the Right Number of Samples.

You want hiring managers and potential clients to gain a good sense of your [creativity](#), technical expertise and range. But you don't want to overwhelm them. It's best to feature seven to 10 samples in a hard-copy portfolio. You can include more samples in an online version, as long as the navigation is intuitive and the pieces are well organized.

How to Present Your Creative Portfolio

More Portfolio/Interview Advice

1. Be Aware of What You Wear

You need to be aware of how you are presenting yourself. Employers will get an impression of you the moment they see you. Research the company you are interviewing for.

2. A Rock Steady Shake Gets the Gig

A firm handshake and direct eye contact will let employers know you are confident. Introduce yourself and tell them what you are there to show.

3. Be Your Own Biggest Fan

You have to convince employers what you already know—you're damn good! Don't make excuses about your work or belittle your work. If you *are* unhappy with a piece in your portfolio, it shouldn't be in there. If you don't believe in your work, how can you expect employers to?

4. Excitement is Contagious

Give them a show. You don't have to whip out a cane and top hat and start tap dancing, but you need to present your work enthusiastically and confidently. A well-organized portfolio is essential to an effective presentation. If you are enthusiastic about your work, the employer will gain confidence that you will be enthusiastic about working with them.

5. Follow Up and Follow-Through

After you have wowed the employer with your artistic prowess and presentation, ask for their business card. Having a successful interview is only the start of a lasting relationship. You will need to follow up with them. Just remember, no one likes a stalker. Be respectful of how often you contact them.

Nothing builds confidence like success. I walked away from the convention with several great contacts and opportunities that continue to benefit me today. It's a tough market out there. Go in with guns blazing and show 'em what you got!

Remember that your book is never a finished project: You will constantly need to update and revamp it to reflect the job market and your skill set. While it's true that developing an online and hard copy of your portfolio requires significant time and effort, consider it a long-term career investment.