

## 10. Leverage The Power Of Your Achievements



# Career SNACKS\* To Go

\* Self-help Navigation Aid for Career Knowledge

*Bite-sized  
Ideas for  
Career  
Independence*

Grown and Packaged by <sup>This</sup> **SNACK** 

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# Career SNACKS To Go

Everyone who works is impacted by rapid changes occurring in the employment marketplace. Entire industries emerge, grow and decline over the course of a few years. Stable employers reorganize and downsize as economic pressures increase. Change and uncertainty is here to stay, but the resulting chaos is also a time of opportunity for those who are prepared. The worker who's ready for the future will have reinvented her- or himself as an independent economic entity—like a business—that can be called “Me, Myself and I, Inc.,” or **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>** for short. This **Career SNACK To Go** offers practical advice for taking an exciting step forward in creating your own version of **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>**.

## 10. Leverage The Power Of Your Achievements

An achievement portfolio is a powerful new tool to help you stand out in the crowd in a highly competitive work marketplace. Your achievement portfolio is a compact collection of information about **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>** which supports your resume with objective evidence. It can be a tremendous asset in a variety of ways, depending on your personal circumstances.

### What Can An Achievement Portfolio Do For You?

- Quickly and objectively prove the claims on your resume (without replacing it)
- Reflect your professional growth as you move from position to position
- Improve the chances (studies show by 10%) for **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>** to land a position
- Increase your self esteem, especially at times of transition (the “Damn, I’m Good” effect)
- May be useful documentation for getting a loan to start a new business or support getting educational credit for work experience

### What’s in your Achievement Portfolio?

Your achievement portfolio will contain documents, photos, drawings and/or samples which provide objective evidence supporting the information about **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>** on your resume; include your personal career plan, if you have one. The suggested structure for an achievement portfolio on the next page includes general examples of elements which you can customize to fit your situation. Include any additional evidence that may help strengthen the case for an employer to hire **MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup>**; leave out anything which does not show you in the best light.

Remember that the accomplishments you include in your achievement portfolio do *not* have to be job-related. If you’ve done something as a volunteer or as a hobby which demonstrates an important skill, by all means include it.

## Suggested Structure and Content for an Achievement Portfolio

Section	Critical Items	Optional Items
1. Your Resume and Plan	Current resume Current resume cover letter A statement of your personal vision	Marketing/Promotion Plan for <b>MMI, Inc<sup>SM</sup></b>
2. Education and Training— Formal and Informal	Diplomas Certificates of mastery or completion Licenses Scholarships or grants received Participation in vocational competition Transcripts or other educational records	Teachers' evaluations List of competencies mastered Standardized or formalized test results Reports of attendance at workshops, lectures
3. General Work Performance	Letters of reference Employer evaluations Military records Examples of problems solved Records of activities in professional organizations Evidence of leadership qualities	Attendance records Past job descriptions Description of experience as a consultant or temporary Earnings records
4. Evidence of "Information" Skills	Samples of your writing Evidence of public speaking Evidence of presentation skills Records of language skills Software developed and/or used Paper documents or replicas of forms, charts, printouts, budgets, plans, spreadsheets created or used	Graphs or tables produced Documents authored or prepared Technical reports prepared Desktop publishing samples Internet designs created Grant or loan applications
5. Evidence of "People" Skills	Negotiations conducted Leadership experiences, photos or records Organization chart showing employees or contractors supervised Union activities Evidence of conflict resolution skills Mentoring, tutoring, teaching, coaching and training activities Meetings or conferences led Working with people of other cultures	Interviews conducted Community activities, photos or records Team member evaluation of people skills Sample progress reports of people supervised, led, trained or coached Projects, committees and teams served on
6. Evidence of "Physical Mastery" Skills	Performance records showing speed, accuracy, productivity, complexity, sales figures Things built or grown, evidenced by samples, video, slides, photos or multi-media	Equipment operation qualifications Technical directions or manuals mastered Driving records Evidence of physical agility and activities mastered
*7. Evidence of Extracurricular Activities	Volunteer experiences Intercultural or international experiences	Documentation of unusual or special experiences, (e.g., scuba diving or entering a regional art contest)

\* Extracurricular activities can be critical for documenting traits or skills that you want to emphasize.

## What Will Your Achievement Portfolio Look Like?

Your achievement portfolio will consist of two parts. The first is a location where all the contents are collected and stored. You might use an accordion file, a loose-leaf binder, a file drawer or briefcase. This “private” file doesn’t need to be fancy because its purpose is simply to collect and store your information in one place. It should be expandable to grow with your career, and carefully organized so you can quickly select any item to put into your “presentation” file.

The second part of your achievement portfolio is a smaller “presentation” folder to hold items you’ve selected to show others—for example, when you’re going to an employment interview or a performance review. This may be a professional leather portfolio or an inexpensive, colorful plastic folder with page protector sheets. You should choose it to reflect who you are and what you wish to communicate about yourself. This presentation part of your achievement portfolio should *never* contain more than seven or eight items specifically selected for the occasion.

## How Will You Use Your Achievement Portfolio?

Your achievement portfolio will be useful whenever you talk with someone about your work; for example during a job interview or a performance review discussion. It’s unlikely that an interviewer will ask you about your achievement portfolio since it’s not a traditional tool, and you shouldn’t insist that the interviewer look at everything you bring. So how can you effectively use your achievement portfolio? As you go through the interview, keep in mind key words—such as “strengths”, “accomplishments” or “tell me about...” where you can respond by bringing out one or two items to demonstrate something the interviewer is asking about.

If no opportunity arises in the course of your discussion and it seems appropriate, at the conclusion you may want to ask if you can show one or two pieces of documentation to support what you’ve discussed. And even if you don’t use the material you brought, think about how much more confident you’ll feel having it available.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q. Should I leave my achievement portfolio with an interviewer if requested?*

A. Generally, no. Most items will be your original documents and you should keep them with you. You may want to prepare copies of certain items to leave behind if appropriate.

*Q. How can I represent proprietary information, such as software developed for an employer?*

A. Be prepared with a written description and a statement by someone who can confirm your work.

*Q. What if I need a piece of documentation which I didn’t bring to the interview?*

A. The best approach is to mention its existence and offer to send a copy.

*Q. Documenting “people” skills is difficult. How can I show my abilities with people?*

A. Photos of yourself working with people are often useful. Written commendations from others can be helpful. A flyer from a workshop or event can also represent people skills.

*Q. If I’m not looking for a new position, should I still create an achievement portfolio?*

A. Absolutely! Not only is it a great boost for your self-esteem, but it can also be a powerful marketing tool within your organization (e.g. performance review documentation).

## An Achievement Portfolio In Action

Emilio is an engineer who made the jump from a declining aerospace industry to the dynamic world of telecommunications. In between, he and his wife took a year “off” to teach English as a second language in Tokyo. Back home, he came to enjoy his telecommunications engineering work but a merger caused his unit to be disbanded and he had to look for another position within his

employer's growing organization. He was invited to interview for a position in a specialty where he had no experience, but he knew his strong project management skills would assure that he could do the job.

He took a few items from his achievement portfolio to the interview. As the interviewer led Emilio into her office, he noticed a number of pictures on her desk that showed her working in an international setting. When the interviewer questioned whether he'd be able to adapt to a new specialty, Emilio knew exactly what to do. He showed her his certificate for teaching English as a Second Language in Tokyo. The interviewer could see tangible evidence of Emilio's ability to adapt to a different culture and language, and from her own international experience she knew this ability was a transferable skill that Emilio could bring to the new specialty as well. The interview lasted well beyond the scheduled time as Emilio and the interviewer shared international experiences, and Emilio got the job.

### **Your Action Plan**

1. Use the structure and content ideas above to pull together the elements of your own achievement portfolio.
2. Organize it in a "private" file that's easy to update and expand.
3. Spend some time thinking about and choosing the right presentation folder.
4. Before you go to an interview, customize your presentation folder by including items of particular interest for this employer. In advance, have in mind a selected item or two for quick reference to support the claims in your resume.

For additional information on topics in the **Career SNACKS To Go** series, please refer to *Me, Myself and I, Inc.; 10 Steps to Career Independence*, published by Impact Publications, Manassas Park, VA; 1998.