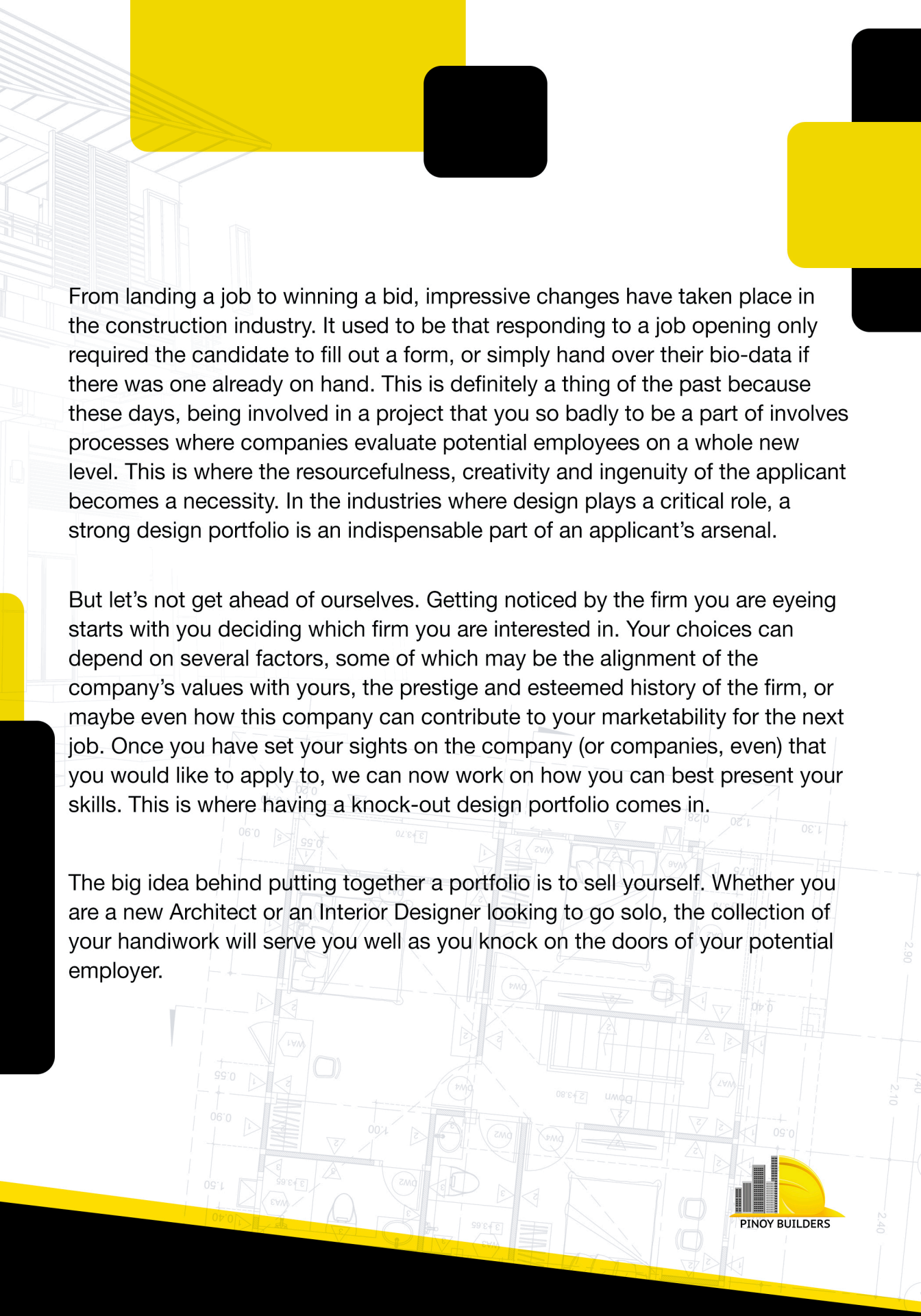




PINOY BUILDERS

# CREATE THAT KNOCK-OUT PORTFOLIO





From landing a job to winning a bid, impressive changes have taken place in the construction industry. It used to be that responding to a job opening only required the candidate to fill out a form, or simply hand over their bio-data if there was one already on hand. This is definitely a thing of the past because these days, being involved in a project that you so badly to be a part of involves processes where companies evaluate potential employees on a whole new level. This is where the resourcefulness, creativity and ingenuity of the applicant becomes a necessity. In the industries where design plays a critical role, a strong design portfolio is an indispensable part of an applicant's arsenal.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Getting noticed by the firm you are eyeing starts with you deciding which firm you are interested in. Your choices can depend on several factors, some of which may be the alignment of the company's values with yours, the prestige and esteemed history of the firm, or maybe even how this company can contribute to your marketability for the next job. Once you have set your sights on the company (or companies, even) that you would like to apply to, we can now work on how you can best present your skills. This is where having a knock-out design portfolio comes in.

The big idea behind putting together a portfolio is to sell yourself. Whether you are a new Architect or an Interior Designer looking to go solo, the collection of your handiwork will serve you well as you knock on the doors of your potential employer.

# 1. Know where you stand

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Generally speaking, the ideal place to start your process is by you being aware of how tough the job market out there has become. It will be to your advantage to show your employer that you are willing to grow and learn in their organisation. This means you need to remember that there are rules you need to follow, number one of which is accepting that you do not know everything.

Having said this, take some time to sit down and recall your experiences- whether in college if you are a fresh grad, or in the previous firms you have worked for- that your employer may benefit from.



## 2. Jog your memory

With a nice, fresh sheet- or a fresh file on your computer- think about the following questions and take as much time as you need in answering them.



### **If you're a college student:**

- What organisations were you a part of? You can further group this according to course-specific groups or those that are university-based.
- What positions did you have in those organisations you enumerated above? If you do not have a position, you can state the roles or the responsibilities you held as an active member.
- Say you really did not have any leadership roles, think about what this organisation taught you. Afterwards, see how these can impact the role you are assuming in the company you are applying in.



- On the other hand, if you're the type to be a member in two, three, four or even more than four organisations, think about how each of these have helped you. Then, arrange them according to their impact on your learning. When you rewrite or retype, put the one with the biggest impact at the top of your list. The org with the least contribution to your learning experience in school will most likely be the one you will not have to include in the information you will provide the firm.

### **If you've had some work experience:**

- Think about clients and projects that you have been exposed to, and list them down.
- Look at this list and group the projects according to type. Are the projects residential, commercial, corporate, hospitality or institutional?
- When you identify the types of projects you worked on, this can help you identify where your leanings are.
- If you are keen on applying for a project that you do not have the work experience for, you can present projects that you helped conceptualise. Whether they were constructed or not, this will still show your range as a designer.

This is the time to let your thoughts flow. Editing your answers can wait, and there will be an effective way to do this, too.

### 3. Recount your experiences

If you are not the type of student who would join school organisations, don't worry. Did you join design competitions? Great! We thought so.



Write down the names of the competition, and if possible the themes of each. Doing so will give your employer a preview of the kind of project or work that you lean more towards.

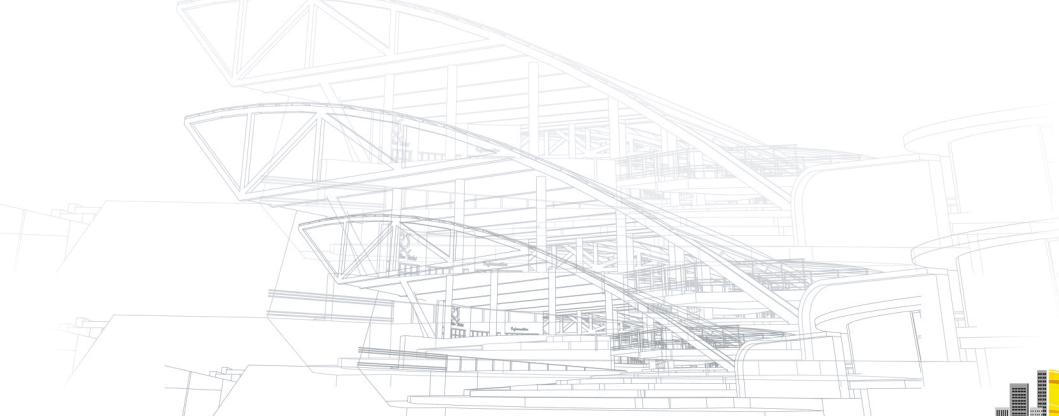
**The next step is to go over this list again and answer this question:**

What design problem did your work aim to solve, and how did your entry solve them? Knowing the answer will prepare you to explain in a brief but effective way the highlights of your participation to your employer. If you would like to go the extra mile, think about any memorable design problems- that one issue that persists and transcends other industries or disciplines- that you solved, which led to your winning. If you did not get an award for any of the competitions you joined, remember the learning that you gleaned from the exercise.

One of the key takeaways in group competitions while in college is the opportunity to learn how to work in a group. You learn your strengths and the areas you need to improve on.



Maybe you've been in the work force for several years and you're ready to move firms or even go solo? Show three to four of your best work per project type. This may be easier said than done, since you would like to show most of your work. Just think about your portfolio as the sneak preview to what you can do. This is the visual aid to your CV, which brings us to the next point.





## 4. Develop your CV

You are now a few steps closer to making your portfolio.



With the creation of a Curriculum Vitae (CV), you are giving your credentials in an orderly and chronological way. This should be both general and specific, depending on the sections contained in it. For example, you can be broad about the opening portion, which is a description about yourself and your career goals. No need to get into details here since your CV needs to be applicable to different companies. More details about you and your skills that will be more aligned with the company will be handled by the cover letter, which we will discuss in a moment.

Going back to your CV, here is a suggested outline that can guide you in the preparation:

- In narrative form, provide your reader with a brief description of yourself.
- State your career goals in 1-2 sentences
- Identify your core skills, specifically the ones that can and will be fully utilised in the firm like:
  - Freehand drawing for elevations, cross sections, and perspectives
  - Computer skills like AUTOCAD, Photoshop, Sketchup, and similar programs
- Write about your personal achievements, including the design competitions you joined, your time working at a part-time job, or the passion projects you did in your spare time.
- Design competitions you joined, whether as part of a team or as an individual
- Part-time work or even Passion Projects you did that is related to design and construction
- If you're still in school, provide your educational background, starting with the most recent school. If you're employed, enumerate your work experience, starting with the most recent company.

## 5. Add a cover letter

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Not to be mistaken for your cover page, an often overlooked portion of one's application is the cover letter. Think of it as your "elevator pitch" but in written form.

In your cover letter, provide information about yourself and how the company will benefit from your employment. Here are some tips on how you can prepare an effective cover letter:

- Mention how you will be an asset to the organisation. You can do this by including a couple of things that you do outside the field of design.
- Talk about what you hope to learn from the firm. This is one way to show them what values are important to you.
- Tell them what are you looking forward to. Doing this clues in your employer on the kind of character that you have.

Your cover letter gets your potential employer acquainted with you, so take time to make this document informative but not lengthy. The idea is to give them a preview of who you are, since the work that you have done will be seen in the portfolio you are preparing.

## 6. Provide a table of contents

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Your portfolio will have different sections for two reasons. First, it will help your reader navigate much faster through the various portions you have included. They may not have time to read through your submission, so a table of contents will help them go straight to the parts that they are more interested to know more about. The second reason is so it will be easy for you to edit and update your whole portfolio in the future.



## 7. Your Cover Page

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Your work is only as good as the people it will attract, so make an effort to make your cover page interesting. To give you an example, look through your Spotify playlist and check out some album covers. You will notice that there are some covers that are more attractive to you. If you are a voracious reader, think about the books that you were drawn to at the bookstore. Unless the book has been recommended to you, it is very likely that the first thing that made you pick up this book is the appeal of its cover. With this in mind, make that album cover or book cover your peg as you prepare your portfolio cover page.

The goal is to make your employer want to flip the page to see what your work is all about. Think of it as your very own announcement, especially since they have no idea about who you are.

## 8. Work on the second page

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Your portfolio is now taking shape!

We suggest that you articulate your design philosophy on the second page. This might come up in your interview so it is a good idea to be ready with it, and know it by heart.

## 9. Determine what's in and what's out

When selecting what images to include, go over your best work and narrow it down to your top 10. If your collection is not as extensive, work up towards this number.



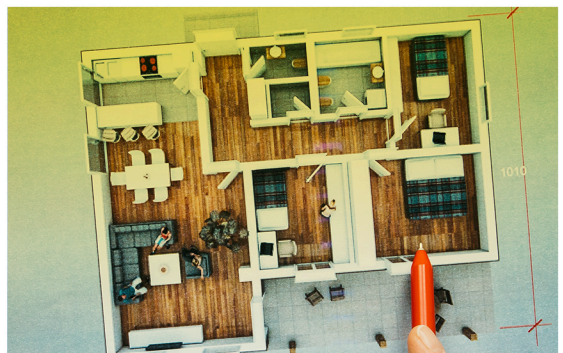
As a student, your work is done as a submission for academic requirements. Give the reader a background of each project to help them appreciate the outcome of the work. You may want to organise your work according to themes, type of project, or even chronologically. Whichever you choose, it will show that you have a good grasp of the importance of structure and organisation.

When you organise according to themes, your employer will be able to tell if you are a good fit in the firm's design style, even their company culture. On the other hand, showing the types of projects you are involved in creating will give them an idea of your design capabilities, making it easy for them to decide which group to hand you over to. Should you choose to present your work chronologically, the way you have improved your skills will be most evident.

Now, on the question of what to include and what to leave out. Be guided by "Think Best" and "Think Next" filter.

The "Think Best" filter refers to including the work that you are most proud of. Your portfolio is a summary of your "greatest hits", so to speak, so make sure the work you will include will highlight your abilities as a professional.

When you move to the "Think Next" filter, know that it is all about the work you've done in the past that will give your potential employer an idea of what you are capable of doing in the future. While "think best" shows your ability, the "think next" filter will be about your capability, or your potential



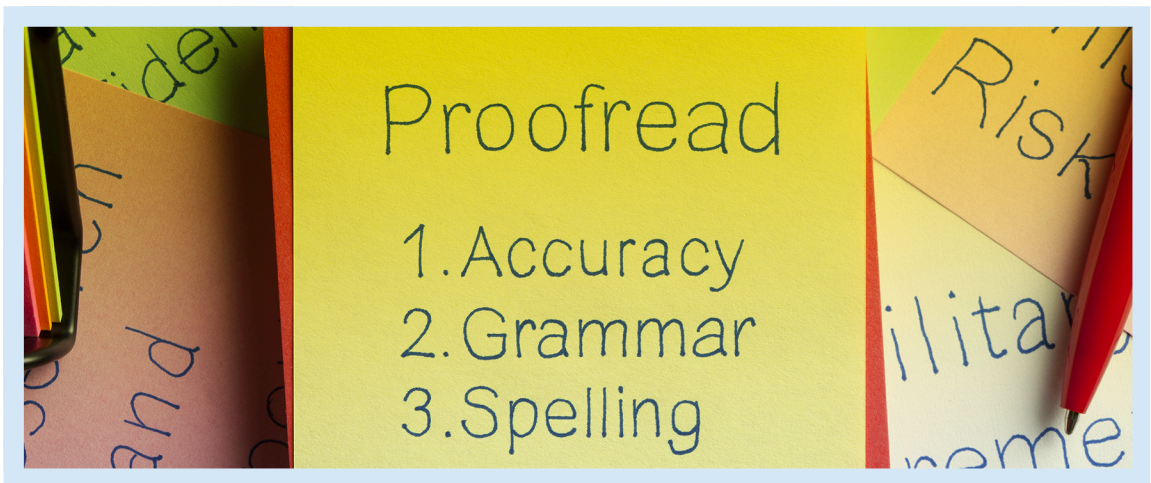


## 10. Get fresh eyes

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For both your text and the images on your portfolio, ask for the help of someone who can go over what you have written. This ensures that there will be no typos or grammatical errors, good proof that you are careful about the quality of the work you present.

In terms of the image, ask your proofreader if there is enough negative space on your body of work. It will be to your advantage if your work does not appear too cluttered because it will show that you have a clear idea of how structure helps in a presentation. Additionally, a good layout makes it easy for the images to be appreciated and absorbed.



## 11. Hard or Soft

You may be undecided whether to present your portfolio using an online link or by giving out hard copies. Here is a list of benefits as well as disadvantages for each choice that you may want to review before you make that decision.

Will you choose a hardcopy or printed portfolio?

A printed portfolio gives a client a more memorable experience compared to reading it from a computer. The ability to touch the paper and feel the texture, and the printed visuals are a leave a stronger impact on your reader. In addition, the information leaves a lasting imprint on their memory- ideally the kind of experience you would like an employer to have.

On the other hand, it is cumbersome to bring printed matter around. You will also need to have the proper holder or folder that will protect the contents and make it presentable every time. There is also the consideration of the costs when you print out multiple sets. Lastly, you need to consider also how your printed portfolio will be stored by yourself and by your employer.



Have you set your sights on a soft copy or online portfolio?

A digital portfolio will be easier for you to update and edit for current and future use. Sharing this will also be much easier, as well as presenting it. Should the need arise, there is also a number of options on how you can present it to a bigger crowd, giving you endless options on how to arrange and display your portfolio. With the efficiency and speed to share information online these days, having a website makes reach people much easier.

However, an online portfolio is less personal compared to showing printed versions. There is also the possibility of your work being used and reused without your permission.





## **Last but not the Least**

Whether you are a new graduate or just someone in search of new opportunities, you are looking at making a good portfolio because you are hungry, eager, aggressive and quite idealistic. These traits are all good, though sometimes they can make you unrealistic.

Being hungry is a good thing. It means you want to grow and learn, but be aware that it can also make you impatient and careless. With the ease of acquiring information these days, it is easy to think that you already know what you need to bring you to the work you want to have. Tread lightly. Listen more and talk less. Growing and learning will require flexibility and patience, especially as you chart your design journey. Take as much time you need to make your portfolio a knock-out, but more importantly, let the experience of preparing one rock your views to make you a better individual.