Your Online Multimedia Presence

for the BigMarker Career Development Series

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Overview

This Online Multimedia Presence conference is complementary to the Career Development Series. It is a strategic approach.

Strategy is just as important to beginners as it is for those in industries and settings in which digital portfolios are becoming common. Even a 'killer' e-portfolio can't serve as your electronic business card unless people can remember it and find it. Search engines read text, not images. So placement of old fashioned text is all-important in getting a search presence.

There are many cheap and simple Hollywood-level tools now available to create animations, virals, music demo's, lectures etc. The big cost is now time to sift through what software is available and the learning curve budget.

A collection of multimedia skills merely gets you started. But even if you decide (sensibly) not do it all yourself and pay for some professional help, these skills could save you a lot of time and money. The professional will, after all, be asking you questions like "who is your target?" "what do you want to convey?" "what's your budget?". You'll have a head start if you've already thought this through.

About Us

Dr Tom Benjamin: psychologist in Sydney, Australia has been researching games/virtual worlds and new media applications. In a matter of weeks he was able to go from a complete 'unknown' on the Web to some first page rankings alongside big names in show business. As a government researcher, Tom has had the luxury of decades of time to test out hardware, software, techniques, props, and special effects: *I have looked past claims by vendors and evangelists that multimedia miracles are easily created by very young children in mere minutes. Even when such claims are (rarely) true, when you add those minutes on each software programme together they stretch out to weeks and months.*

I have spent thousands of hours installing software, developed simple animation techniques, converted files, filmed different materials under different lighting, scoured shops for cheap props - in other words done many of the things job-seekers would have had to learn the hard way and would likely never have budget, let alone the time to try. From this I have assembled

a set of very affordable materials and short cuts that will allow short films using many special effects we have come to associate with Hollywood and Pinewood."

Margaret Penhall-Jones has almost a decade's experience in advisory and consultancy roles in the areas of human resources, recruitment and change management in Government and more recently in the private sector. Margaret is a trained Counsellor and conducted a private counselling practice for ten years. She is also a writer and author

The Digital Portfolio

Job-seekers are under ever more pressure to impress. The purpose of this conference is to provide a set of tools that job-seekers can use selectively to enhance their e-portfolios. The purpose is NOT to add to their pressures with yet more high cost, time-draining distractions but quite the opposite – to give short cuts into the world of multimedia that has only very recently been opened up to amateurs with minimal budgets.

e-portfolio Strategic Essentials

- Customisable
- Easy to access
- Flexible
- Subfolders
- Easy to find
- Easy to navigate
- Multi-user branching for different audience

Job-hunting is demanding work. If you set up an elaborate portfolio then don't get that particular job you have to go on to the next opportunity. You need to quickly re-tailor it to your next audience.

Unless you are an experienced webmaster, the easiest way to achieve the above is by using an existing blog or e-portfolio hosting service. To create and host your own would require you to access your server via FTP or other upload and naming system. You then take on all the basic responsibilities of checking links, let alone checking search engine optimisation.

Think of an e-portfolio the way you would think of a new business suit. You can over-dress or under-dress for a job interview. A designer suit (or a t-shirt) might impress some but put others off. The same goes for a web page – too simple and you look out of date, too flashy and you seem wasteful - too ambitious and it may hang or crash, a sure way to lose the audience. Get others to look at your pages. If you can't obtain professional help in design it may be best to stick to safe methods such as the major social media platforms like Linkedin rather than designing your own portfolio media.

The intended use is to allow creation of short customisable scenario-setting grabs – think of a 30-second Superbowl commercial. Advertisers spend millions to get those precious seconds.

Nothing would be more dangerously distracting to a job-hunt than a full multimedia studio. Singing in multitrack or cavorting in front of a blue screen is great fun – but it may have no value whatsoever to a personnel officer reviewing your CV. The blue screen is just one of the many dazzling techniques only just very recently available on the home computer. But countless hours could be wasted in frivolous uses of such powerful technology. This conference is intended to structure the introduction of the technology so that it serves practical ends. Our hours of experimentation will save the reader from many dead ends and wasted effort. Remember, your time is far more costly and valuable than the hardware involved.

Your 30-second Grab

TV studios spend thousands on 'the 30 second ad". It is their lifeblood. A job seeker is trying to attract the attention of someone with a similar busy attention span.

So the first point is that the multimedia we discuss as part of your portfolio has a modest aim – short sequences, say 30 seconds to a few minutes, that quickly set the scene for a 'Hero's Journey'

- Not just you as hero. No. You want to make <u>the person who is hiring you</u> feel like a hero for hiring you. Thus, you want to take them with you on a 30-second Hero's Journey.

To do this you must draw on archetypal images. An <u>archetype</u> quickly triggers connections in the viewer's brain. Animation, role development, context, and voice all contribute to involvement with an archetype. Many a scary monster is not actually seen until the last scene and turns out to be only someone in a rubber suit. The objective of archetypal media is to get the audience involved, loving, fearing, or hating the sock puppet, the man in the rubber suit, the clip art face, the plastic soldier. Symbolic attachment is easy to create because it fills deep needs.

Examples of this are themes such as news broadcasts. In real life, most adventures today begin with some sort of brief newscast –ie- "a scientist believes that the cure to Cancer lies in the …", "police are seeking help from the public in identifying a …", "We want your calls on the open line as to whether you support …". A news cast makes the viewer feel they're part of 'history'.

A newscast's 'live report' can be animated from the humblest materials. It can be a sock puppet. Animation programmes such as *MovieStorm* and *iClone* provide full 3D sets that can be montaged with live sets. It's easy to have an 'international reporter'. The sky is not even the limit! For example, it cost me next to nothing to set up an 'interplanetary news desk':

http://www.tom.com.au/news.htm   Animation software would allow me to have avatar reporters 'from around the Solar System'.

How you would apply such concepts to job-hunting is by using archetypal images that might appeal to employers, related to their industry. A character might be made to appear inside a computer or silicon chip, on board an airplane, in outer space, in a remote field location etc. The hero's journey may solve a problem that commonly faces the employer, such as dealing with customers or cutting costs.

Try to picture your audience as someone in need – what do they need? Where would they expect to find it? Who would they expect to bring them solutions?

Humour at your own risk

The job-hunting process is taken as a serious affair and caution is needed trying to be funny. While we've all seen comedy shorts go viral on YouTube, humour varies greatly across cultures and you risk putting people off.

However, animated shorts can with a little effort be quite charming. They can lift a dry subject. Your face can be lifted from still photos and pasted on as a 'skin' to an animated avatar character in software such as iClone or MovieStorm. In this way you can appear side by side with an animated figure or in a chroma-key scene.

Where do I start?

The first place any movie producer looks is at the script. This summarizes the characters, sets, actions, and dialogue. These, in turn, determine the actual materials best suited to deliver the impact. Thus, before buying anything, the first thing to acquire is some script ideas. The logical place to start is identifying your audience.

The US Bureau of Labour Statistics O*Net site has classified thousands of jobs in terms of skills and interests:
http://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Abilities/
http://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/

If you haven't already started this process you should start by assessing yourself and your audience along lines similar to these –ie- what skills do I want to emphasise? Thinking skills? Problem solving? People skills? These will help determine your themes.

Think about yourself as the news story. How might you portray your skill and experience as newsworthy? This might give you ideas for quotes or scenarios.   –ie- "A scientist announced today that blah blah … We've

interviewed leaders for their comments..", , "We're awaiting your calls on the open line…".   All these evoke the archetype of something newsworthy.

From the script is derived the storyboard. A spreadsheet or Powerpoint is perfectly equipped to flesh out the movie. Indeed, a good spreadsheet storyboard could be just as effective in introducing some stories as a movie. The point is that the movie is not an end in itself. If the dot points in a paper CV did the trick and landed you a job why bother with the movie version? The same applies to the audio track. If an audio .mp3 alone or in a 2D slide show does the trick, save the movie gimmick for your hobby after you land your day job.

Start with free web-hosted resources. Leading the pack here at the moment are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wordpress, Blogger, MySpace, Linkedin and Google+. These not only host your e-portfolio – they give you tools to create it online. You could do much of this for free from an internet café without even owning a computer. All you need is a password and you can edit it from anywhere. You could hear about a job opening and have a custom-tailored site ready before you make your phone call.

Nor should this be dismissed as the poor or second-rate option. Importantly, WordPress blogs in particular are optimised for search engines to find them! They have the sort of HTML tagging and structure that makes it easy for the search engines like Google/Bing/Yahoo to troll for information. Search engines also follow social media. That gives you search engine potential for free. All this without buying anything!

Freeware

Assuming you have a standard computer and feel that multimedia is warranted, the first acquisitions will be software. In other words, a lot of movie making can be done without filming or buying anything. Pre-existing clip art, video and sound clips can be used. Clip art can be used as background sets and animated as characters. The tools to do this are either already on your computer, available for free download with your license, or downloadable as freeware.

First look at your own computer. It should have as part of the Windows (..Mac or Linux) license a story board creator in the form of Clip Art (Excel, Powerpoint), Photo Editor (Paint), Audio Capture & Editing (Sound Recorder), simple animation tools (Excel, Powerpoint) Movie Editing and Video Special Effects (Movie Maker), and media players (Quicktime, Flash). If these are not yet installed, some may be downloaded.There are Open Source versions like Open Office and Mac owners have equal if not better versions.

Next comes freeware. Audacity leads the pack here, giving multitrack and audio special effects capability. Kristal and other audio editors can be obtained, often bundled with podcast microphones. BitMorph and WinMorph allow creation of simple animations from stills. An animated .gif creation software programme is useful in quickly decomposing a movie into individual

frames that can be used in other software. Specialized online, open source, cheapware and freeware programmes abound. At the least, these can serve to create scenes and special effects.

So the first thing is to conduct an audit of what you already have. It is not surprising to find that a job-seeker already has access to a full video-editing software suite such as Movie-Maker or iMovie available. Don't assume 'old versions' are obsolete. Sometimes these early versions are easier to use. The main issue is whether they can read and write files to common formats like .avi .wmv .mov or .mp4.

Find out what's installed and, importantly, how to use it. There's no free lunch here. Complex software requires training time.
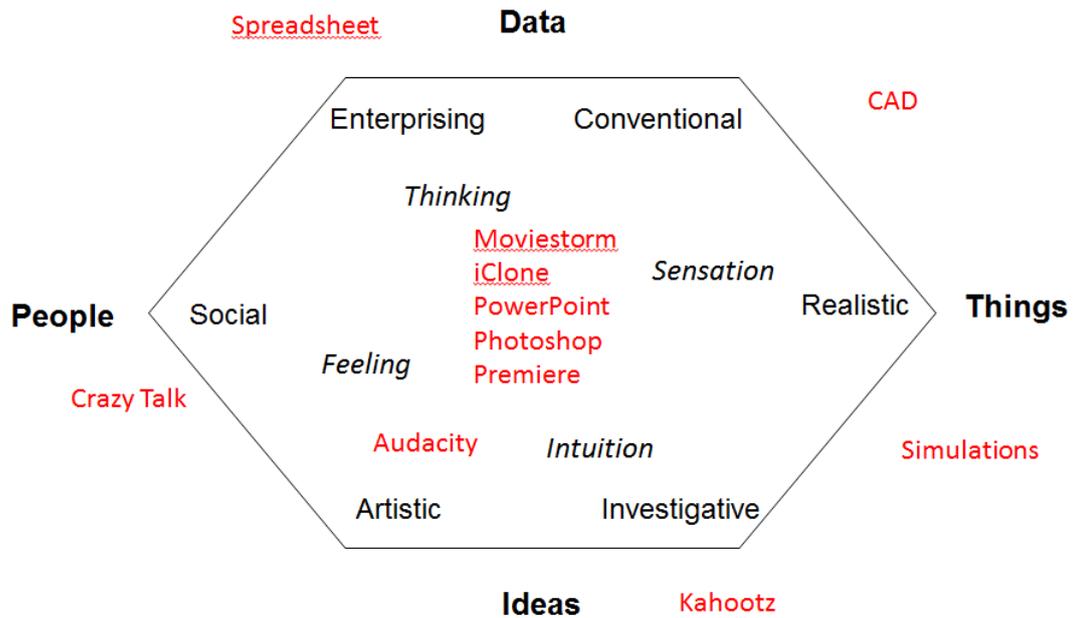
Cheapware

Next comes 'cheapware'. By this we mean software that would have cost $100,000 decades ago that now sells for under $100.

There is a systematic way of working out what you want. Careers can be roughly grouped into interest categories using the model developed John Holland (1973). The six Holland dimensions have been reduced to a simpler set of: Data, People, Ideas, and Things. Multimedia techniques and software packages tend to specialize in one or the other of these. For example,

- Crazy Talk is devoted to facial animation, hence is good for People and Ideas.
- Moviestorm and iClone animate people in scenes, hence are good for People with Things.
- Audio is good for Ideas as is artistic software and abstract scene-creation tools like Kahootz
- Still images and spreadsheets are good for portraying Data.

Music is useful for backing-tracks across all of these applications. Animation is good for exotic and surreal sets. A good source of ideas can be found in any video shop. Countless modern films have a 'special edition' DVD that has 'behind the scenes' or 'the making of …' sections. These show all of the tricks that create illusions such as King Kong picking up Ann Darrow or the 300 Spartans fighting. They are well worth watching.

So the answer is that no one of these programmes does it all. Each will have its place in your studio. They are good value for money. The diagramme below shows how different software might suit different audiences and themes.

Data

Spreadsheet

Enterprising   Conventional

CAD

Thinking

Moviestorm
iClone   Sensation
PowerPoint
Photoshop   Realistic
Premiere

People   Social   Things

Feeling

Crazy Talk

Audacity   Intuition

Simulations

Artistic   Investigative

Ideas   Kahootz

The above is only a guide. Each of these programmes takes time to master. Time is one of the most important considerations in job-hunting.

We emphasise flexibility as a key part of your strategy. Whether you just stick with text or decide to plunge into multimedia you need, either way, to be able to tailor a presentation to each particular job and employer. It would be a major sidetrack to master software not likely to be relevant to your job quest.

For example, someone applying for 'people'-related positions in the above diagramme might want to create or display audio content such as role-plays. The software at the opposite end of the spectrum, to do with 'things', would be more suited to engineers showing their designs and simulations in 3D animations. On the bottom of the above vertical axis we see that those seeking creative positions in the arts or sciences might use software that creates abstractions. At the top of that axis, such abstractions would have little relevance to an application as an auditor or quality control inspector. These are only cautions, not guides.

Live action as a last resort

A digital camera tempts us to step in front of it and introduce ourselves "Hi. I'm Tom Benjamin. My skills are … I'm seeking a position …etc."

Some folk are glamorous and accomplished enough to be successful in selling ourselves this way. But an e-portfolio is about selling your work as well as yourself. Examples of work are often written documents or ideas. These may not lend themselves to a live movie.

Live action remains hard to do. At least digital cameras now takes decent shots in all levels of lighting. This allows your live action footage to be

combined with green screens, rear projections and animations. Live footage excels with sensory material and animation with large scenes.

For example –ie- live footage might show a Roman emperor eating something, which could be hard to animate, while animation could show the emperor addressing a multitude in the Coliseum, which would be hard to do live. Similarly, an animated Roman sandal doesn't give the feel for the dust and pain of walking miles on a thin piece of leather. A real foot with a real sandal filmed walking on gravel toward a blue screen, however, can become a scene of a soldier crunching toward Rome.

Digital cameras transmit to the computer via a USB or Firewire port. Not all computers have the drivers available to receive video input. A scanner can import pictures and, as a last resort, you can film the film using another camera. The very minimalist solution would be a digital still camera and a Web Cam. Even a modern mobile phone has some movie capture facility. The primitive images captured with such devices can prove very effective when combined with animations and video special effects.

The video editing suite, in the minimal case Windows Movie Maker or iMovie, is what ties all of this together. The idea is to plant the characters and sets in the viewers' minds such that different representations of them in poor light and low resolution will still be recognisable. This allows animations and live footage to be combined into a convincing whole. Blue screen (chroma key or green screen)[1] allows live footage to be blended with other live footage. However, it is the most resource-intensive technique. If used sparingly, it can make a movie more realistic.

Using the simplest animation tools, for example, an object or entire scene can be made to move across a screen in PowerPoint. This technique won Ken Burns many awards. The foreground object and backgrounds can both be animated .gifs. The same effect can be obtained by using chroma-key. But even with all this movement it still might be unrealistic.

Scenes can be 'brought to life' with a mix of audio, animation, blue-screening, and different lighting effects. Spielberg created the screen's scariest-ever T-Rex with a brief silhouette against trees and lightning followed by faint foot thumps, synched with waves in a cup of water. The audience was scared long before the T-Rex appeared. A plastic dinosaur movie could become very, very scary with the addition of the simple live prop of some real blood and meat, available from any butcher. It was the script that made Spielberg's T-Rex scary.

It is even possible to place a sock puppet in front of a live computer screen. This is the equivalent of the professional movie studio technique of 'rear projection', in which actors stood in front of a gigantic film screen background.

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[1] See Appendix for creating this with Movie Maker

Even with sock puppets, live action should be the last resort. It should serve a purpose. The order of choices, based on impact, ease, and cost, should be

1) text
2) static (still) shots
3) audio, voice and music
4) face animations
5) character/object animations
6) miniatures
7) audio synchronization
8) full-scale footage
9) chroma key (blue screen)

Starting from the top - Can we do it with text alone? If no or maybe, go on. Will pictures + text be enough? if no or maybe, go on …etc. In other words, start from the simplest methods before moving on.

Archetypal Media

So often we see expensive video gear used at its lowest common denominator – filming an interview. Indeed, web cams are designed for this very thing. They only have enough resolution to frame a single face close up and are useless with details at any distance. But combining live footage from a movie camera with animation and chroma-key opens up whole new realms of possibility. As I like to put it in a nutshell

– *With conventional video practices, you can film an interview between a few people. With my integrated media techniques you could interview Elvis with Cleopatra on the Moon.*

In other words, just about anything you can conceive can be put on film. You could put yourself, your plastic soldier, and Julius Caesar on board the Titanic or into the middle of an archive public domain movie scene[2], taking advantage of its multimillion dollar special effects, famous voices, and sound tracks.

But there are other more important applications of 'integrated media'. What the term refers to is carrying the attachment to a character or object across different media. This is nothing new. *Tinkerbell* in the 1904 stage play was nothing more than a spotlight flashing around the *Peter Pan* stage. Yet when the light was dimmed as the poisoned fairy was about to breath her last, audiences literally wept and screamed their belief in fairies to save her.

It was discussed in Greek Theatre. The interactive British Pantomime tradition embodies this as audiences suspend disbelief. They accept lead male boys played by women and heroes' mothers played by men. Audiences to this day weep, hiss, boo and scream "look behind you!" warning about the villain.

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[2] www.archive.org has many out-of-copyright films that can be downloaded for free

See http://www.youtube.com/user/tomcomau#p/u/15/sFM1Qvx5sd8 created from "Do you believe in fairies?"
http://www.archive.org/details/peter_pan_0707_librivox

Indeed, this key element of audience participation was noticeably missing from the 1953 Disney film version. It is doubtful that any cartoon, 3D, or A-list actress playing Tinkerbell can ever have as much emotional appeal as J.M. Barrie's humble 1904 lantern light did to a live audience.

A well-conceived character can be credible across the most primitive media. Digital imaging can add a lot to a character. The canned facial and body movements available from CrazyTalk and other 3D suppliers are far more subtle than can readily be created with a puppet. Even sophisticated puppets like *the Muppets,* with teams of hidden operators, are no more lifelike.

One simple way to get viewers to identify with a puppet or avatar is to use a morph programme to introduce it –ie- take a shot of the person to be represented then morph them into the puppet or avatar.

Such far-fetched movie techniques might not seem appropriate for someone going for an interview for a job as accountant. Generally, this would be the case. Such a scene could, however, be used as part of a quick advertising grab to introduce what would otherwise be boring material. You can have a character walking around a spreadsheet. You could even make the spreadsheet talk with the software programmes described above. You can animate anything. The art is in making people care about the animated character.

If one follows careful stages of film development it may become obvious in the first rounds that some elements will be more powerful if merely left in text, 2D or audio track alone. Mystery dramas on 'old fashioned radio' build suspense and atmosphere very well. These broadcasts survive today on the Web and make a very good model for audio productions.

Full cinematic effects can lose potency with over-exposure. Engaging the imagination by limiting the dimensions, as with audio alone, shadow puppets, and 2D slide shows can actually add variety to the overall experience.

Use In Job-Hunting

Multimedia is fun in itself. As a hobby this would be sufficient justification. However, if the intention is to use the multimedia clip as an introduction to an employer, the movie-making process can become a time-consuming side-track. There is no formula for making movies for job-hunting. As Holland's model would predict, a movie to help someone land an accounting job would be quite different (if even a sensible idea at all) from one to help with a webmaster's job. The best advice we can give is

Put yourself in the viewer's seat.

What might catch the employer's eye (or ear)? What problems do they have to which hiring you might be the solution? How well would this applicant fit in to our workplace?

The purpose of a movie is to showcase things that must be seen and heard to be appreciated. It can be a 'call to adventure'. The movie could also prominently refer back to the media that the viewer will most likely be use such as the CV. –ie- If the job-seeker will be using a spreadsheet in the day job, the introductory movie might film the spreadsheet and highlight its central role in proceedings. A spreadsheet is a 'cockpit' or 'control room'. A typical airplane movie shows the aircraft occasionally but most action is in the cockpit. The external world is where the aircraft's action takes place but all of the action for the pilot takes place in the cockpit. The movie could make the tasks within a job seem the exciting part of the adventure – the place where things are made to happen.

All the above considerations are clearly not resolvable by merely buying software. This complexity is why movie and advertising creative directors command such high salaries – even if they don't always get it right.

The Budget

As should be clear from the above, particularly with all the free resources available, the biggest investment and budget item will be the learning curve with multimedia. Those programmes most evangelically peddled as 'easy for primary job-seeker children' can often be the most frustrating when one tries to adapt them to something new or put them to any serious work. If their existing characters and sets aren't suitable it can become very difficult to turn them into what you want. Even the simplest functions like 'save' and 'open' can become buried in these programmes under countless cutesy-pie icons. Professional grade programmes, however attractively cheap their prices, suffer similar useability drawbacks.

So the audit of 'what you already have' must include an audit of 'who knows how to use it'. Anyone taken in by the seductive line that 'kids can easily figure all this out' will be in for a rude shock as those minutes of learning and trouble shooting for each programme mount up into days and months. What applies to a selective group of 17 year old computer enthusiasts with an IT or creative arts teacher cannot be extrapolated across the whole user spectrum.

The way to learn software is to use it. The day of the paper manual is waning. There are scores of little icons and moves to memorize. For example, one animation programme promises that "Students of all ages can create fantastic three-dimensional environments". But just to import a single image requires the following sequence: *notepad > canvas > import > make pattern.* Given the confusing terms such as 'notepad', in wide use elsewhere with other meanings, who would remember this? - only someone using it regularly. And that's just one programme. It is common to use dozens of programmes to create a brief movie clip.

But none of the above should be discouraging. The skill set is demonstrably far less complex than that for earlier generations producing the traditional job-seeker portfolio. After all, one person at a desk could create an entire show, whereas dozens of persons were required just for the orchestral portion of the traditional movie or play, let alone actors, costumers, make-up artists, set hands etc.

To help work out a strategy of 'try before you buy', the attached table adds up a budget for a multimedia studio. It is assumed the key items are already standard for the job-seeker attending this conference –ie- the computer and office software. Even if you operate from an internet café, you have some of the tools such as the ability to set up a free Wordpress.com or Linkedin account.

A full set of multimedia tools beyond the basic should remain comfortably below the $1000 mark.. If you use freeware it is a '$0' expense. Even starting from scratch, the entire capital investment for a Hollywood-level studio should be under $3000. Compare that with the price of a single tuba for the orchestra in a school play! – and tuba's are not without their learning curve, as any tuba-learner's neighbour can attest.

So excuses for not entering into this new world of movie-making should not be economic ones. They should be sensible ones like questions as to whether any of this will help your job quest, whether the time devoted might better be applied to other things like your paper CV, and whether there is already too much digital content in your life. Hopefully, what you have seen above has answered some questions. By starting from your core script, based on your audience, and working outward across integrated traditional and digital media, pausing when things are working well before plunging on, you are actually taking little risk and spending scarcely any money. There should be little scope for things to go wrong, plenty of backup systems, and plenty of opportunities away from the glowing screen.

Promotion & Advertising

Record companies and movie studios have traditionally spent high proportions of total costs on promotion. Many an expensive movie has lost money at the box office. Your job-hunt multimedia will be useless if no one can find it.

There are many books and websites available with advice on creating e-portfolios. Our next advice is

Look at some other people's e-portfolios

We mean go beyond just looking at them. See how they get found on the web. If you use tools like the Google Keyword Tool you can see what search terms are common or merely keep track of searches that led to sites you've

found. There are countless web sites that can help you with search engine optimization (SEO).

Business Card v Beacon websites

Think of your e-portfolio as a business card or a beacon: You can hand it out indiscriminately, mail it, or hand it out to people you've met in some other way. This is similar to the Web. We would call a web site or blog that merely has all your details (including how to contact you) a 'business card' site. Like a paper card you have to hand it out to people and hope they keep it. We call a web site you want people to come across in searches a 'beacon site'. Which is better?

Use both!

If you have a domain name that is impossible to memorize and unknown to search engines it could still be used in an email link. On the other hand, you may be dealing with employers or human resources people who are busy or who you hope may remember you to contact you at a later date. In such a case the easier to remember the better. But these 'premium' domain names like tom.com or coke.com come at a high price. Something to the point like 'www.tomlookingforajob.com might be cheap but self-defeating.

At the top of the scale you may hope to set up an e-portfolio so exciting that it goes viral and attracts <u>relevant</u> visitors (potential employers) whom you've not previously met. You can have a paid Google Ad or hope that it rises to the top of a search page through 'organic' rank. The term 'organic' refers to natural or unpaid rank. This is mainly achieved through the number of prestige inbound links to your page. But most of us do not have the Nobel Prize website giving direct links to our personal sites. There are companies that claim to offer inbound links but these can be seen as 'black hat SEO' scams by the search engines and work against you.

The safest approach is to start with a 'business card' site –ie- one to which you direct people. This means you have to first contact them through normal channels then give them links to your site. If you use a Blog site like Wordpress.com it will have correct structure and tagging built in. You can use it as a hub to refer to your resources like documents, images and movies. You can tailor different blog pages to different employers.

Using this hub technique we've set up an entire TV-radio-movie conglomerate supported by the greatest promotion machine in world history – the search engines.

www.radio-tom.com
www.tv-tom.com
www.movie-tom.com

More importantly, do a search just on the keywords such as 'radio tom' 'tv tom' or 'movie tom'. Depending on your location they could come up on page 1 of Google/Bing/Yahoo. From Australia, some of these have the #1 ranking. When I meet someone they'd only have to remember 'that guy named Tom from Australia who makes movies'. In other words it is a beacon and a business card.

Such would have cost $millions a few decades ago. It still does. It's just that YouTube, Google and Wordpress are spending those $millions – not us. They, in turn, are hoping that millions of their viewers will buy those products they advertise. Whether such services will remain free forever is beyond our scope – take advantage while you can.

Remember that even a 'killer' e-portfolio can't serve unless people can remember it and find it. Search engines can't read images. So placement of old fashioned text key words in your web pages is all-important in getting a search presence –ie- for some months 'tv tom' lagged behind my other sites. Looking at the site I realised that the phrase 'tv tom' didn't actually appear in the text. I hadn't been thinking about SEO on that term at the time I'd created it. The search engines were not so intelligent as to work this out. They read text. Merely inserting 'tv tom' into a relevant part allowed the engines to find it and it moved quickly to search page one.

Software

The purchase price of a 3D animation package capable of lip and motion synchronization to sound has now plummeted to below the $100 mark. This, however, is misleading. The biggest investment is your time installing and setting up, let alone learning how to use, the software. The following list is in general terms only, as the principles stay the same but freeware and cheapware products appear and disappear and prices drop on a weekly basis:

Graphics
- Fonts collection (can merely use standard supplied Microsoft)
- Vector clip art (can merely use standard supplied Microsoft)
- Bitmap editor: Windows MsPaint,
- Advanced bitmap editor such as Painter, Photoshop
- Morphing software (including freeware)
- Template-rendering editors such as Xara Webstyle, Logo Creator, Button Factory
- Vector editing is a standard feature of MsOffice applications, particularly PowerPoint, but advanced features such as vectorizing require programmes such as Illustrator, Freehand, or Extreme
- Simple 2D cartoon emoticons available free with Microsoft Chat

Audio
- Basic sound editing suite such as Windows Sound Recorder or the Mac iLife suite

- Advanced sound editing such as freeware Audacity
- Other freeware bundled with microphones such as Kristal, Magix
- CD collections of special effect sounds
- Full podcast studios with mic, mixing desk, and software can be purchased for $150-$400

Midi and sample players for original music composition
- Midi sequencer and editor such as freeware Anvil Studio
- Powertracks or RealBand
- Midi composition programme such as Band in Box or Jammer
- Wave file sequencing such as GarageBand

Text to Speech converters
- Windows supplies a standard set of human and robot voices
- Adobe Captivate bundles higher quality voices
- High quality voices, such as foreign accents, require licensing arrangements

Presentation Software
- PowerPoint now incorporates videos and saves to .wmv format
- Mac Keynote, and open source equivalents
- Adobe Captivate

Digital Slide Show Software
- Magix turns still images plus sound into movies
- Microsoft PhotoStory is available as a free resource
- PowerPoint and Keynote can do much of the above

Movie Editing
- Window Movie Maker comes with Window XP, equivalent products are available from Ulead and Arcsoft;
- Mac has a video editing suite called iMovie
- Adobe Premiere, Magix
- PowerPoint can now create a movie

Special Effects
- Adobe After Effects
- Final Cut Pro is competitively priced but there is an Express version
- Many free effects are bundled with Windows Movie Maker and iMovie
- Special audio effects freeware such as pitch to midi or vocoding is available as freeware

Animation
- Simple animation is available with PowerPoint and Mac Keynote
- 3D animation is available from a variety of sources; MovieStorm is $75, iClone is $85; Kahootz $80, prices drop all the time
- Second Life and others make scenes and avatars available for free

Appendix: Full Studio Budget

Item	Training	Examples
Props & sets	Basic	towels, blankets, clip art, toys, photos
Story Board	intermediate	Excel, Powerpoint, Word, Browser,
	intermediate	Clip Art
	intermediate	Flash, Quicktime, Media Players
Photo Editing	intermediate	Paint, Powerpoint
	Advanced	Photoshop, Ulead, Magix
Audio Editing	intermediate	Audacity freeware, Kristal, Magix
Audio Effects	Advanced	Garage Band, Band in Box, Jammer
Text to Speech	Basic	Microsoft Sapi, Captivate
Sound Tracks	Basic	Downloadable sound tracks, bundled w/ video editors
Animation	Advanced	MovieStorm, Crazy Talk, iClone, Kahootz
Movie Editing	intermediate	PowerPoint, Movie Maker, iMovie, PhotoStory, Magix
Video Effects	Advanced	Premiere, After Effects, Photoshop, Serif, Pinnacle, Ulead
Computer	Basic	standard spec computer
Web Cam	Basic	
Movie Camera	Basic	digital movie camera
Lighting	Basic	
Microphone	Basic	
Chroma Screens	Advanced	sheets, tarpaulins, green cellophane over light