

Building a Freelance Portfolio — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a published, client-winning portfolio. Work through one section per module: define your positioning and pick your hero projects, write persuasive case studies, build and publish the site, then launch and measure it. Fill in every field and template, because a half-built portfolio sitting in drafts books no clients. By the end you will have made every decision and produced every asset needed to go live.

Strategy: What a Portfolio Is Actually For

Lock in who your portfolio is for, your one-sentence positioning, and the three to five hero projects that will anchor it.

Worksheet: Choose Your Beachhead Niche

Brainstorm options for each filter, then circle the one niche where all four overlap most strongly. This is the audience your portfolio will speak to first. Treat it as a hypothesis you can revise later, not a permanent label.

Skill: what I am genuinely good at or can master quickly

Demand: a market with money and a recurring need for that skill

Affinity: an industry or audience I understand or enjoy

Access: people in that niche I can already reach

My chosen beachhead niche (where all four overlap)

Worksheet: Write Your Positioning Statement

Use the formula I help [specific client] [achieve specific outcome] through [your service]. Draft three versions, then choose the clearest one to place at the top of your portfolio above the fold.

Specific client I help

Specific outcome they get

The service that delivers it

Draft 1 (full sentence)

Draft 2 (full sentence)

Final positioning statement

Exercise: Score and Shortlist Your Hero Projects

List every project you could possibly show. Score each from 1 to 5 on result, relevance, craft, story, and permission, then total them. Keep your top three to five and shelve the rest.

- Which projects scored highest, and do they point at the work you actually want more of?
 - Did any technically strong project score low on relevance because you do not want to repeat it?
 - For your top projects, what is the permission situation, and how will you handle any you cannot name openly?
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Checklist: Strategy Module Complete When

- I have chosen one beachhead niche where skill, demand, affinity, and access overlap
- I have a single positioning sentence that names who I help and the result I create
- I have scored every candidate project with the five-criteria rubric
- I have a final shortlist of three to five hero projects, strongest first
- I have noted permission and naming for each shortlisted project

Case Studies: Turning Work Into Proof

Turn each hero project into a persuasive STAR case study backed by numbers, testimonials, and before-and-after proof.

Worksheet: Draft One Case Study With STAR

Complete this for your strongest project first, then repeat for the others using the case-study template. Keep each section tight; aim for 300 to 600 words total across the whole case study.

Result headline (one line that states the outcome)

Situation: who the client was and the context

Task: the specific problem or goal

Action: the key decisions and steps, told as a short story

Result: the outcome with at least one number

Client quote (if available, with name, role, and company)

Single call to action at the end of the page

Exercise: Mine Your Projects for Real Numbers

For each hero project, hunt for at least one specific number you can stand behind. If you have no analytics, quantify scope, speed, or volume instead. Message a past client if you need a performance figure.

- What is one specific, believable number you can attach to each project?
- Where vague adjectives like impactful or successful appear in your drafts, what number can replace them?

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- Which clients could you message this week for a result figure or a testimonial, and what will you ask?
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Worksheet: Spec Project Brief (For When You Have No Clients Yet)

Use this to manufacture a credible portfolio piece. Invent a realistic client and a real, recognizable problem in your niche, then solve it to a professional standard and label it honestly as a self-initiated concept.

Invented client name and market

The real, recognizable problem I am solving

Constraints (budget, timeline, brand rules)

The goal I am setting so I can show a result against it

How I will label it honestly (concept or self-initiated project)

Deadline I am giving myself to finish it

Checklist: Case Studies Module Complete When

- Each hero project has a result headline that leads, not the brief
- Each case study follows situation, task, action, result
- Every claimed result is backed by a number, a name, or a before-and-after
- I have at least one specific, attributed testimonial
- If I lack real clients, I have two or three credible, honestly labeled spec pieces

Build and Publish: Your Portfolio Platform

Choose a platform, lay out the four essential pages, and publish a fast, mobile-friendly site that asks for the inquiry.

Exercise: Pick Your Platform and Commit

Compare two or three platforms against your real needs, then choose one home base and at most one supplementary network. Set a deadline so you do not spend weeks deciding.

- Which platform shows your specific kind of work in its best light, and why?

- What is your home base, and which one network will you use for discovery?

- What custom domain will you buy, and by what date will the site be live?

Worksheet: Map Your Four Essential Pages

Plan the content for each core page before you build. Keep the path to an inquiry short and obvious, and write the about page for the client rather than as a diary.

Home: positioning statement, featured case studies, primary call to action

Work: order of all three to five case studies, strongest first

About: who I help, the result I create, and why I am credible

Contact: the single specific ask and what happens next

My one primary call to action used site-wide

Checklist: Pre-Launch Quality Pass

- Every link works and there is no placeholder text
- Every word is proofread, with zero typos
- Images are compressed and exported at web-appropriate sizes
- The site is tested and readable on a phone-sized screen
- The contact form was submitted as a test and the message arrived
- A real photo, a custom domain, and at least one trust signal are in place
- One trusted person found my best work and the way to hire me without hesitation

Launch and Grow: Getting Eyes and Inquiries

Distribute the portfolio to the right people, measure qualified inquiries, and keep the site fresh so it keeps earning work.

Worksheet: Your Distribution Plan

List the specific people and places you will put the portfolio in front of, starting with the warmest channels. Warm contacts convert fastest, so begin there.

Warm network: people I will tell directly that I am open for work

Communities: niche groups, Discords, or forums where my clients gather

Profiles I will update with the portfolio link (LinkedIn, Instagram, email signature)

One case study I will repurpose into posts this week

My regular cadence for sharing portfolio content

Exercise: Set Up Measurement and Diagnose Conversion

Install a simple analytics tool and start logging inquiries. After a few weeks, use the data to diagnose whether your issue is positioning, proof, or distribution before you change anything.

- Which analytics tool will you install, and which three numbers will you track?
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- What single question will you ask every new inquiry to learn its source?
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- If you get visitors but no inquiries, is the likely culprit unclear positioning, weak proof and call to action, or low traffic, and how will the data tell you which?
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Checklist: Quarterly Refresh Routine

- Re-scored every case study with the selection rubric
- Added any new project that beats my current weakest piece
- Retired or rewrote the weakest visible piece (one-in, one-out)
- Updated my positioning statement if my niche or services shifted
- Re-tested speed, mobile layout, and the contact form
- Booked the next quarterly refresh in my calendar

Your Action Plan

1. Choose one beachhead niche where skill, demand, affinity, and access overlap
2. Write a single positioning sentence using the I help, achieve, through formula
3. Score every candidate project and shortlist your three to five strongest
4. Write your strongest case study with STAR, leading with the result headline
5. Mine each project for at least one specific, believable number
6. Build two or three honestly labeled spec pieces if you lack real client work
7. Choose one platform, buy a custom domain, and build the four essential pages
8. Run the full pre-launch quality pass, including a real mobile and contact-form test
9. Announce the portfolio to your warm network and repurpose one case study into posts
10. Install simple analytics, log every inquiry's source, and book a quarterly refresh

