

CTX

charity technology exchange



Changing lives through film.

"Everything was very straight-forward and helpful" – Nigel Humphries.

esc
understanding
through film:

Originally founded as a result of an initiative by another ESC – the English Shakespeare Company – Belfast's Educational Shakespeare Company uses the medium of film to try to create radical transformation in groups and individuals, particularly in marginalised communities and in prisons, schools and youth centres.

Nigel Humphries has a HND in Computing and has recently entered university as a mature student to study Computer Science and Information Systems. He uses his skills to volunteer for the charity, and looks after the organisation's IT infrastructure. "We produce films by getting people to tell their stories from the heart," he explains. As well as learning about the technical and practical aspects of filmmaking, the process enables participants to understand their own potential for change and personal growth. "It helps people see themselves," says Nigel.

ESC's projects range from 'shorts' about a single individual to more ambitious undertakings. "We've recently done a film based on Shakespeare's Macbeth, with prisoners, who are currently serving long terms in prison" says Nigel.

Himself a previous beneficiary of the scheme, Nigel freely admits to some scepticism when he first encountered the concept of using film to effect change. "I was cynical about it before I saw it in action," he says, "but it helped me – I turned my life around, and now I work for them!" he says. He points to a recent project attended by thirteen people referred by the probation service – just two went 'back in' to the system as against an average reoffending figure of around 55%.

Who are they?
Educational Shakespeare Company

Where are they?
Based in Belfast.

How big are they?
1 part-time paid employee, around eight volunteers.

What do they do?
Use film and filmmaking to help change peoples' lives.

What did they receive?
Microsoft Project Professional, Visio Professional, Office 2008 and Accounting Professional; Symantec Norton Anti-Virus (Enterprise Edition, and for Mac)

The outcome?
The charity has moved from ad hoc spreadsheets to a proper accountancy package.

www.esc-film.com

ESC's association with CTX was a happy accident. "We were looking around for new software – especially accountancy software – and I saw a mention of CTX in a newsletter," says Nigel. "At the time, we were doing all our accounts on various spreadsheets. I signed up and went through the catalogue - software from Microsoft and Symantec was there, and all that was payable was a ridiculously low admin fee. It was passed through the board immediately."

The need for upgraded software was such that cash would have had to have been found from somewhere in the absence of CTX donations. "We are funded by Lloyds TSB, which keeps us going on the basics," says Nigel, "but for years when we were making funding requests we didn't put in for administration, and we do find it difficult to raise money anyway. At the moment, we're starting to try to screen some of our films locally – but we need to get our name out there and market."

"Everything was very straightforward and helpful with CTX," Nigel continues. "When we are eligible again, we'll be ordering more copies of Office 2008 for Mac, as we use Apple Macs due to the video editing software. And I've mentioned CTX to three or four other charities. The admin fees are so cheap – and charities have to look after their pennies."