

C&T and Worcestershire

Notes from the presentation given to the Cultural Theme Group, 23 September 2010
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Introduction

C&T is a company of drama practitioners, web developers, artists, teachers, writers and technologists making world-class ways for people to develop their creativity, solve problems and change their world. C&T applies a blend of participation, drama, new technologies and the internet to a multiplicity of situations: primarily at the moment in schools, with community groups and disabled people, but increasingly in other contexts.

C&T is an Arts Council Beacon of Excellence; the work is benchmarked to international academic standards; C&T is regularly published and often invited to share its

practice internationally and has partnerships in Malawi, New York, Sydney, Washington, The Gambia and Tokyo.

In the last 5 years C&T has developed a completely original way of working that has transformed the company and grown it in terms of size, reach and ambition, with more than 25 active partners: British schools, academies and universities along with international partners, all using our ideas, collaborating and learning with each other using our projects and processes.

Example 1 – Everymap

C&T's 21st century take on the Mappa Mundi – making maps that capture not just the places and things important to the mapmaker, but their thoughts and feelings about their lives and where they live.

everymap.net is a mix of a sophisticated content management system and Google Maps. Participants use any form of expression, capture it digitally, and embed it into a map. C&T's facilitation encourages them to apply their own creative interpretation: these maps are personal, encyclopædic journeys, and they're unashamedly subjective.

Participation demands a mix of skills: teamwork and communication, creative authoring, digital media and ICT: both life and workplace skills. One application of Everymap is being devised with the Worcester Community Trust:

C&T will work with groups of the long term jobless to build life maps: both reflective maps that describe their journey to their current position, but also aspirational maps that chart out their future, either short or long term. C&T and the Trust are very excited about the potential of *Everymap* as a tool to help their long-term jobless clients.

Example 2 – Wisdom of Crowds

Wisdom Of Crowds is currently under development by C&T as a tool for consultation, planning and problem solving. It's based on Open Space Technology, a set of powerful, democratic processes enabling open debate on complex issues.

Wisdom of Crowds is a methodology that brings dozens, if not hundreds, of people together who share a common aim. Through a day-long, subtle facilitation process from C&T, smaller groups of people are autonomously created and dissolved as questions are discussed amongst people, who always have the option to "vote with their feet" and join another discussion or start their own.

An example might be a village community suffering from flytipping. An invitation goes out to everyone and anyone who has a stake in the problem: councillors, the police, social services and so on. But more important than any of them, local residents, who C&T would want in force. This could be 100 or more people.

The process ends with hard findings and, ultimately, an action plan in which all participants have a stake. In the national context of communities increasingly having to co-operate and solve their own problems, we think *Wisdom of Crowds* has enormous potential.

Summary

These are only two examples, each with more depth to discuss than time allows, but they demonstrate not only the breadth of C&T's work, but also C&T's unique approach.

C&T has been based in Worcestershire for 22 years. For the last 10, C&T's horizons have been set nationally and internationally. C&T has built strategic partnerships with willing partners, but so far those have been found further

afield. It makes sense for C&T to develop and prototype more new work in the West Midlands and specifically in Worcestershire if it can.

Question 1: What problems do Theme Group members face that could benefit from C&T's creative approach?

Question 2: How could the Theme Group and/or the Worcestershire Partnership build a partnership with C&T for mutual benefit?