

# HOLLYWOOD

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KIRK James Torrance avoided the combined lure of the bright lights, the small and silver screens and the glamour of life in downtown Los Angeles to return to his native Scotland and a working life at SNP HQ. Kirk is a new media strategist and very clued up on what's hot and what's not when it comes to harnessing technology for the Independence cause. We'll ask him to explain more about the front cover Stickybits barcode in our next issue. Meanwhile read on.

EVERYTHING I've ever read or heard suggests that the people who are most happy in life – the ones others really look up to – all say the same thing: that the greatest joy in life doesn't come from wealth or praise or high honours. It comes from achieving something worthwhile, something of lasting value.

That's why I work for the SNP, that's why I work for Scotland.

My name is Kirk James Torrance. I'm a new media strategist working at headquarters and I'm tasked with developing tools and ideas to bring a new dimension to the politics of our country.

**stickybits**

Having been born in Paisley and raised in South Africa, I came back to Scotland to study at the University of Abertay, Dundee. It was at this time I was given the opportunity to vote for the first time in the 2003 Holyrood elections.

My parents are both Nationalists, particularly my father who decided to join the Party whilst walking home from school one day at the age of 12.

And I was interested to find out that two men named Torrance helped save Robert the Bruce's life in 1306. Maybe I'm related!

Nevertheless, I wanted to make my own mind up about whom to vote for despite family ties. In so doing, I felt a duty to read all the literature and listen to each person who came to the door.

It was quickly apparent to me that the SNP shared my optimistic and ambitious hopes and dreams for myself as a citizen, for Dundee as a city and for the country as a nation.

I graduated in 2005 and went on to work in London at a company that was (and still is) changing the way films and television programmes were being made. As a consultative sales & marketing executive, I was tasked with encouraging production companies to use new media technologies in order to become more efficient and cost effective in producing and distributing content.

It was an exciting job and I loved meeting and doing business with new and interesting people from creative industries all around the world.

By 2007 I was regularly stationed in Los Angeles, dealing with the major film studios and enjoying the Los Angeles lifestyle of sun, sea and margaritas.

Then one Monday morning (May 7 2007) at a Venice Beach café having breakfast – with a big smile on my face – I read an article in the Los Angeles Times about the Scottish Parliamentary elections and how the SNP had won the previous week. It was such an exciting realisation, and I hoped that the election of the first SNP Government in history would be a watershed moment for Scotland, one where our ambitions started to match our talents.

It wasn't until late 2008 when it was obvious to me, while alternating monthly between London and Los

Angeles, that my hopes had been realised and that Scotland had become an attractive place once again, rich in opportunity.

Following the SNP success in Glasgow East, I decided to say farewell to Hollywood and come back to Scotland with my experiences of working in film and new media. I wanted to be part of what I knew would be a defining period in Scotland's history – the road to, and birth of an Independent country.

The renowned Scots writer Alasdair Gray said once that people understand who they are through the medias that represent them. This is true and I wanted to create media, but also to be part of empowering others in creating



*Kirk in Hollywood.*

“ I wanted to be part of what I knew would be a defining period in Scotland's history — the road to, and birth of an Independent country. ”

positive and ambitious media about Scotland and the nation's place in the world. Doing so would enthuse, educate and inspire people, raise the bar and contribute to our collective success going forward as a confident and modern 21st Century country.

Back then I had no idea that in January 2010 I'd be privileged to be asked by Peter Murrell to join his team at Headquarters and be directly involved in helping to inspire candidates – and through them, the country – around the SNP's positive vision for Scotland.

#### **What Has Social Media Ever Done for us?**

It is easy to see how some of our fellow Scots can't see the light, and continue to vote for opposing political parties out of habit and for reasons that might have been best for them ideologically (or otherwise) 50 years ago when the world was a very different place.

Certainly film, newspapers and television media have, over time, helped convince many in Scotland that we're too wee, that our best days are behind us – that we're incapable of surviving on our own. Paranoia is addictive. It sells newspapers and fosters the combative spirit of choosing a side and sticking to it regardless of logic or reason.

The truth is that you cannot convince people of a position by arguing and boring them with tired points no matter how obvious and correct they are to you. The only way to get rid of the logical fallacies of the Unionist parties and some media outlets is by demonstrating what we stand for.

We can achieve this by creating our own media, by engaging with people both online or offline. We can enthuse our fellow citizens with a positive new-media, which we create based on our record in Government, our known and trusted team and our positive and ambitious vision for our country.

Firstly it is important to realise that the idea that simply sending an email, or messages via Facebook or Twitter, will automatically bring electoral success is far from reality. Using these new tools to connect to and communicate with voters is not a magic bullet which will deliver votes for our candidates by default.

Like most things in life, the means by which an effective new media campaign must be fought is complex and demanding and can only be achieved by careful planning and coordination. To give you some idea, let's look at what it took to deliver a successful outcome in the Obama 2008 election campaign.

The success of Obama's new media campaign did not occur by accident, Obama had:

- An immensely talented new media team
- A well thought out new media strategy
- Access to the right software systems
- The right level of commitment from the Democratic Party
- The right level of investment in new media tools
- The record and history of the Democratic party
- Commitment of the Democratic party faithful
- Buy-in from previously inactive supporters of the party
- Buy-in from large sections of the youth across America
- A positive and inspirational vision for America
- Obama himself was an outstanding candidate

The SNP today is in a perfect position to improve on the Obama campaign's success in using these new tools. Three years on from that campaign's victory, a lot has changed in how people use the internet. These changes provide us, as a Party, a fantastic opportunity to get our messages across to people in a way that has never been possible before.

We have the team, the strategy, the right systems and commitment from the Party. We have the investment in new media, a terrific record in Government and commitment from the Party faithful. We have a positive and inspirational vision for Scotland and, in Alex Salmond, an outstanding and respected leader.

What we need is, for supporters of the Party to get directly involved with creating and distributing information online with the same passion and determination you have demonstrated over the years in offline campaigning.

**Get Your Digital Independence and Join the Revolution**

To be a contender you need to be on Facebook.

62 per cent of the adult population of Scotland is on Facebook, with the fastest growing segment of the population being 55 – 65-year-old females.

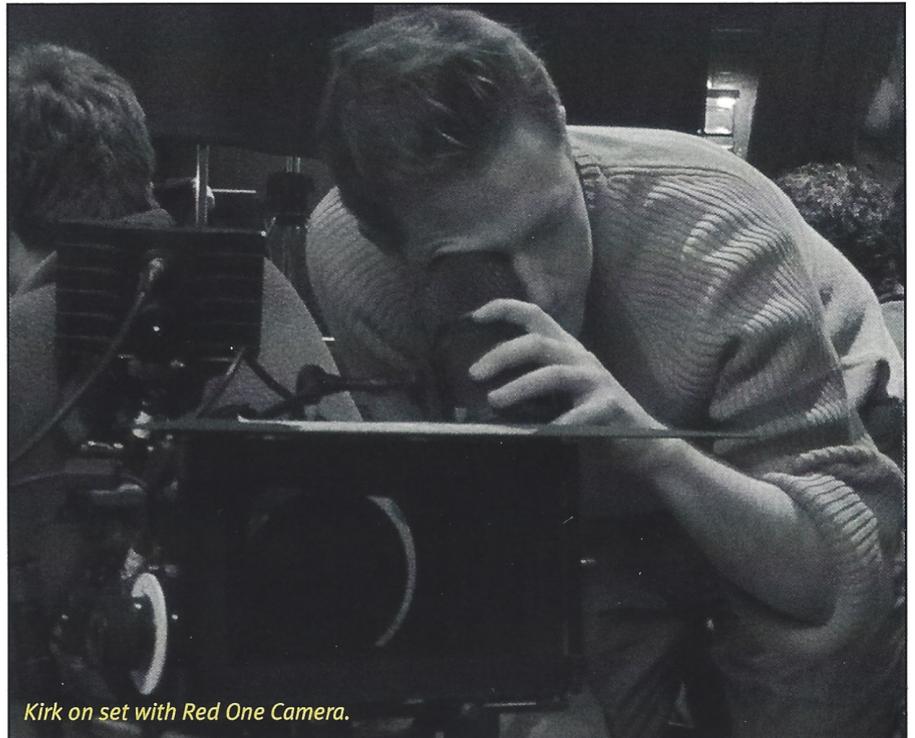
The truth is that people don't realise how influential they actually are. Social media allows you to leverage that influence and, done correctly, you can help the SNP get our messages out to as many people as possible across social networks.

You doing this will go a long way in helping bring balance to political debate by ensuring that any bias or

advertisers. This is because people buy people first.

The opportunity social media presents us with is the ability to amplify the rate at which our ideas and vision for Scotland are shared with the people we come into contact with.

In the time taken to make one telephone call to a prospective voter, you can update every person connected to you on Facebook about how and why you think they should vote SNP. They can then do likewise with minimal effort, and the resulting effect is cumulative and exponential.



*Kirk on set with Red One Camera.*

**“ In the time taken to make one telephone call to a prospective voter, you can update every person connected to you on Facebook about how and why you think they should vote SNP. ”**

unsubstantiated claims by our opponents are quickly nullified.

Personal recommendations (or word-of-mouth marketing) from person to person have been a cornerstone of the SNP's increasing success over the last 76 years. We certainly didn't get much help from the traditional media over that period. Instead it has taken countless conversations across doorsteps, telephone lines and dinner tables.

People listen to and trust their friends and families much more that they would

#### **Document Everything**

When people first start using Facebook or any other social network, they often are unsure of how to interact or what to say.

The rule of thumb is that you want to create value for your audience – whether that audience is three people on a doorstep or 1,000 people connected to you on Facebook. Always remember the 'so what?' principle – ask yourself whether you are providing something of value to your audience.

It can be an insight, a piece of relevant information or your thoughts on something.

If you have a genuine interest in others, are keen to connect with people and provide value in a relationship, then you will do well in digital canvassing.

Be careful what you do online, obviously. But don't be afraid to tell people about where your campaign team is going. Take photos, record short videos. Document everything, if only to demonstrate what you and the Party are doing locally, but know this: that what you share online will form part of the historical record and will be researched by future generations in their attempt to understand this moment in time. This is both a privilege and a great responsibility.

#### The typical tools are:

**Facebook** – create a profile (if you haven't already done so) and create real connections to people you already know and those you'd like to get to know in your constituencies.

**Twitter** – this is a place to tap directly into conversations about any topic you can imagine. It is a powerful tool that gives you instant access to debates and discussions.

Through the new SNP.org you can start an online campaign, create an event, volunteer and recruit others to follow the Party online, help the Party as a volunteer or join the Party as a member.

You can produce content, follow the cabinet on Twitter and Facebook, monitor what the opposition and the press are saying and doing, then raise your voice in pointing out inaccuracies and bias.

Every supporter can amplify their current efforts by reaching further than they could ever physically do by going door-to-door alone.

Together we can make Scotland better by sharing relevant information that enriches peoples' lives and, in doing so, demonstrate what the SNP is all about.

Sharing is caring: so be ambitious, be creative and be part of our new media revolution.

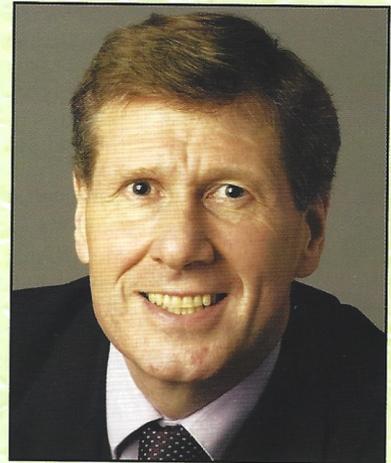
**A SIGN of the times? As the Holyrood election closes in, more and more people are turning to the SNP to protect Scotland from a London-centric agenda. In March Kenny MacAskill campaigning in Edinburgh Eastern found backing from a hitherto unexpected source. As the campaign progresses more are sure to follow.**

## an excellent msp and a hard worker

### SAYS VETERAN LABOUR CAMPAIGNER

A FORMER Lothian Labour council group leader and local campaigner gave her backing to SNP Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill in his campaign for re-election as an MSP for the Edinburgh Eastern constituency.

Kenny won backing from veteran campaigner Phyllis Herriot, who was a prominent councillor in Edinburgh for 15 years. The work that Phyllis has done in and around the capital is well known, indeed she is a well thought of character and her support, coming from a Labour background, is all the more welcome. She said: 'Kenny has been an excellent MSP and is a hard worker. Any people I have referred to him have been impressed, indeed he has gone into their whole problem and attended to it. I'm very impressed with his work.'



Leaflets being distributed in Edinburgh Eastern by the SNP now carry a message from Phyllis saying: 'Kenny is my MSP and I think he's doing a great job for the area. I know Kenny believes in our community and that's why I believe in him. In May I'll be voting for Kenny.'

The record that we are standing on, not just in Edinburgh but throughout the country, is attracting folk like Phyllis. Her support also shows how weak the Labour Party is when faced with the record and ambitions that the SNP has for Scotland. Kenny was naturally delighted to welcome Phyllis' endorsement: 'I am delighted that Phyllis Herriot is backing me. She is a wonderful woman who has done great service to Edinburgh. Her support is important as she is widely respected in the Edinburgh community for her long-standing and tireless campaigning for just causes. It's great she is on my side.'

Phyllis, who was awarded an MBE in 2009, was a councillor in Edinburgh for 15 years until 1982, first as a member of the old town council and then on Lothian Regional Council. She was Labour group leader in Lothian for three years and social work convener for more than a decade. She said she had quit the Labour Party over the Iraq war: 'I resigned from the Labour Party, so they can't say I'm betraying them. They have betrayed themselves on Iraq - and everything else!'

Party Chief Executive, Peter Murrell also welcomed the backing for Kenny, telling Independence Magazine: 'Every convert from Labour is yet another crack in the public face of the Labour Party. As they head towards the election we will be faced with the same tired old "cannae dae", scare tactics designed to divert the public from the facts and the truth. Support like this helps to blow away the smokescreen of half truths and misrepresentation that we will face. I would ask that all Independence Magazine readers tell at least one friend or wavering voter of Phyllis' decision.'