



culturehive[®]

Is the art important to art sponsorship?

Author: Nicole Newman

Independent Fundraising Consultant



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



“I would argue that, for corporate sponsors, the art itself - the performance, exhibition or commission - is the least important element of a sponsorship offer.”

Nicole Newman

Independent Fundraising Consultant



Published 2017

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/)

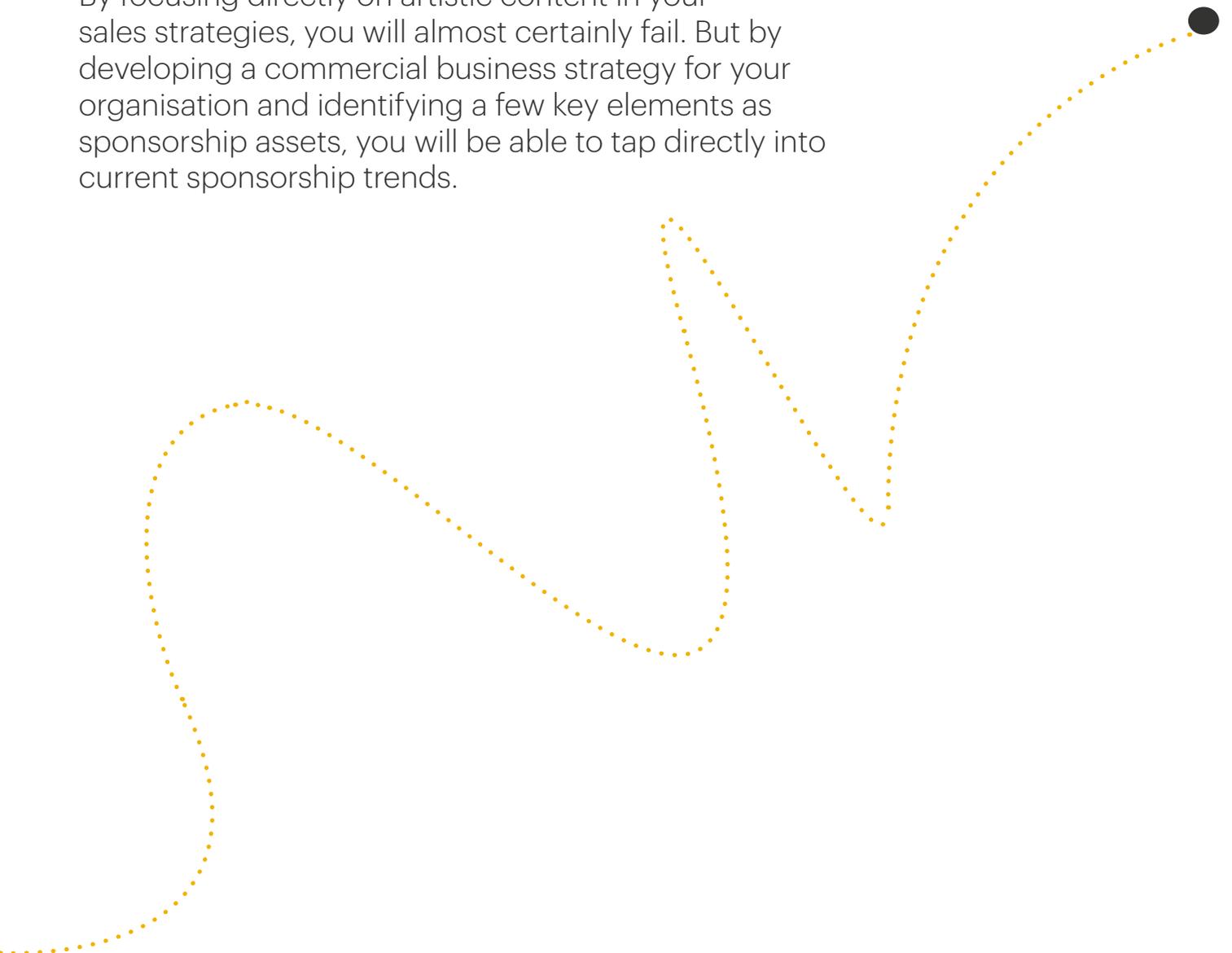
Is the art important?

A provocation

As fundraisers, we are often accused of “dumbing down” the art we are selling. We’re accused of not fully articulating the intellectual or aesthetic nuances of the work, of lacking in-depth knowledge of the subject we are selling. Otherwise - why aren’t supporters lining up to shower us with money? We’re obviously just not selling it properly.

This attitude is not only insulting, but naive – and unfortunately all too common. Irrespective of the quality of the work, without the right context for the art, sponsors will not engage. I would argue that, for corporate sponsors, the art itself - the performance, exhibition or commission - is the least important element of a sponsorship offer.

By focusing directly on artistic content in your sales strategies, you will almost certainly fail. But by developing a commercial business strategy for your organisation and identifying a few key elements as sponsorship assets, you will be able to tap directly into current sponsorship trends.

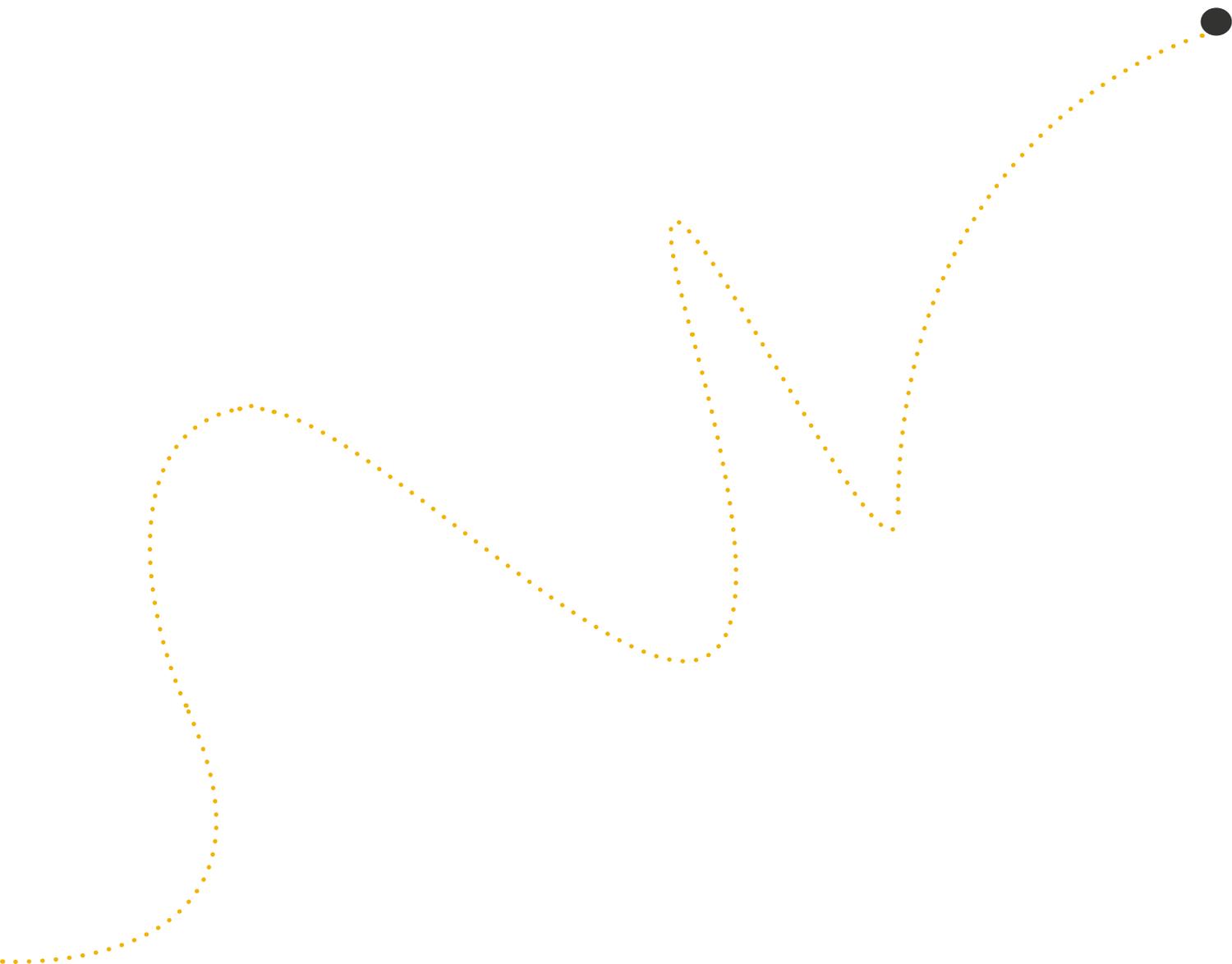


Sponsors want your audience not your art

Sponsors need innovative new ways of reaching audiences and maintaining customer loyalty. But 'traditional' benefits like branding and events are no longer exciting.

Working collaboratively to develop new digital technologies to understand audiences, and providing sponsors with exclusive content to enhance their social media platforms, has proved successful in other sectors.

- Take a look at [IBM's support of Wimbledon](#) and how they have provided technology that offers extraordinary insight into customer behaviour
- Think about sponsorship as a collaboration bringing together complementary skills and experiences
- Think about how you can meaningfully showcase your corporate sponsor's business to your audience, like Wimbledon has showcased IBM as a digital innovator

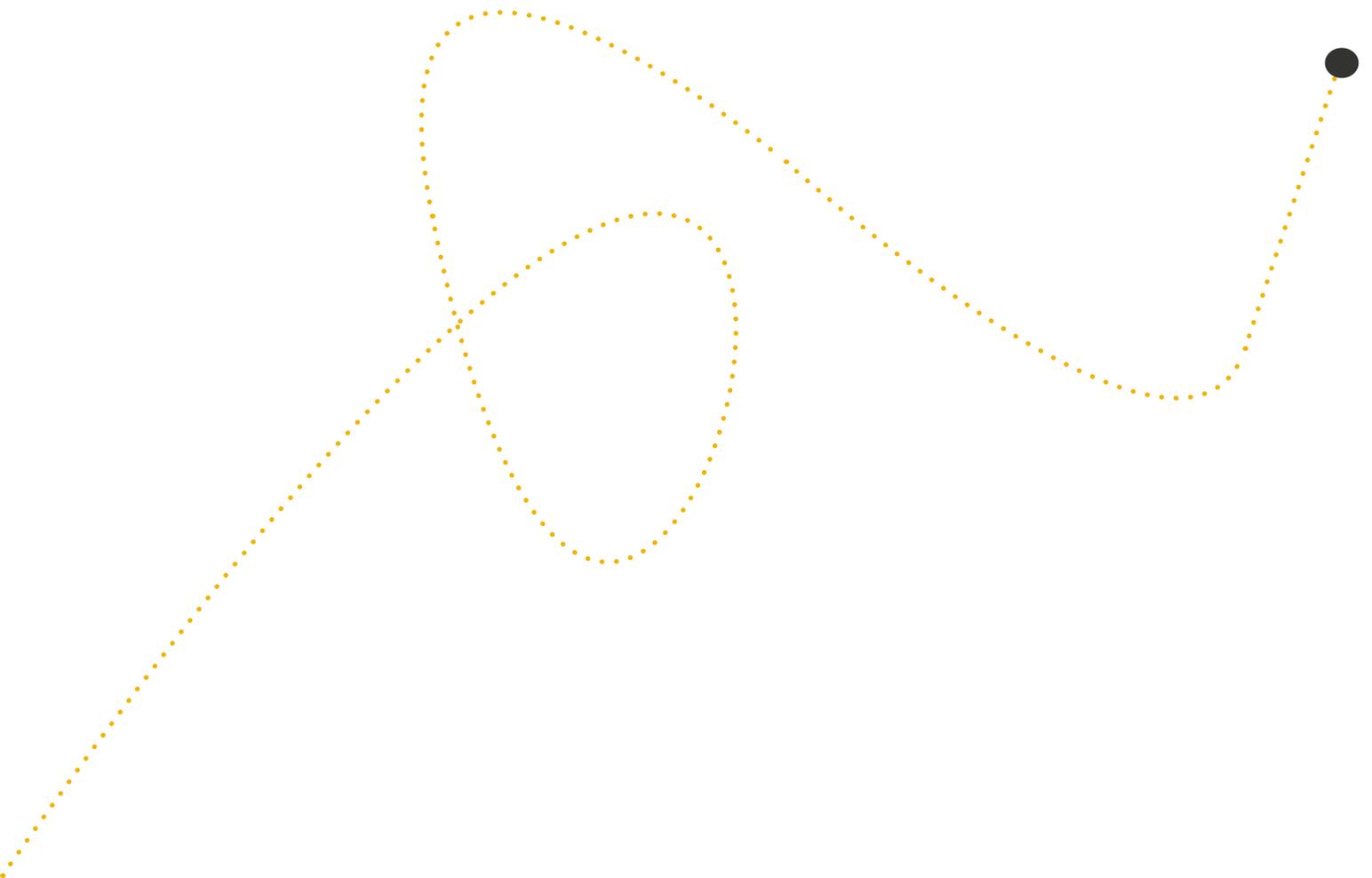


They are interested in the environment not the culture

If your overall audience experience is lacking, sponsors will be put off. This can be as simple as the venue you use being fit for purpose: decent catering, working loos and entertainment spaces.

Equally, it can mean the type of audience who attends: are they successful, wealthy, well dressed? Is there a smattering of well-known faces, or local dignitaries? Trivial though this seems, advocacy is an attractive benefit for sponsors and showing you can attract the right people is vital.

- Are there things you need to address in order to meet the expectations of a corporate sponsor?
- How does your audience compare to the audience your target corporate sponsor aims to attract?
- Is corporate sponsorship the right avenue for your organisation at this time?

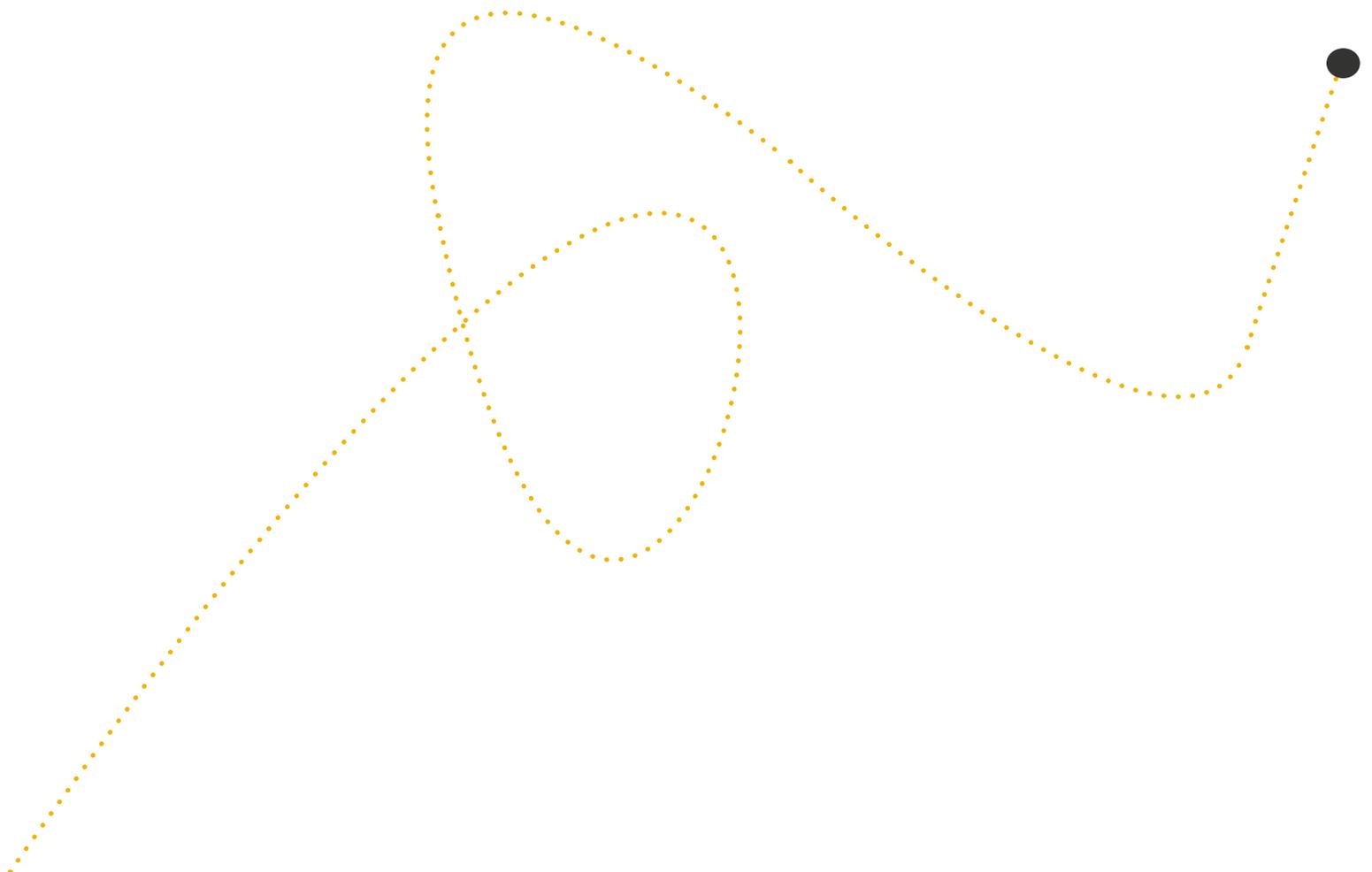


They need impact not output

Corporate sponsors don't just want to see education or outreach programmes; they want to see communication strategies that explain who you are and what value you provide.

Increasingly social impact is a core motivation for sponsors whose budgets are under greater scrutiny. Showing impact beyond the cultural sector is essential if you are to compete with other emotionally compelling causes.

- Take a look at [English National Ballet's Dance for Parkinson's project](#). It is a superb example of how an "elite" art form has been used to develop vital research into health and wellbeing.
- Think about your value beyond the arts — what is your social impact?
- How could you better evidence the impact of your work to convince sponsors, and other funders, of your value?



"Art for art's sake" is no longer a fashionable mantra

Art needs to work much harder to justify support from businesses in a challenging climate.

But I am playing devil's advocate. Without great art, we would be a much poorer society. Producing quality art is essential to success - it is the bricks and mortar that make you who you are. But like any welcoming home, it is the décor and furniture that is just as important.





culturehive.co.uk
learn from your peers online