

Corporate Choir Competition

Building relationships with the corporate sector



Image courtesy of Hallé Concerts Society. PwC choir.

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Hallé Concerts Society



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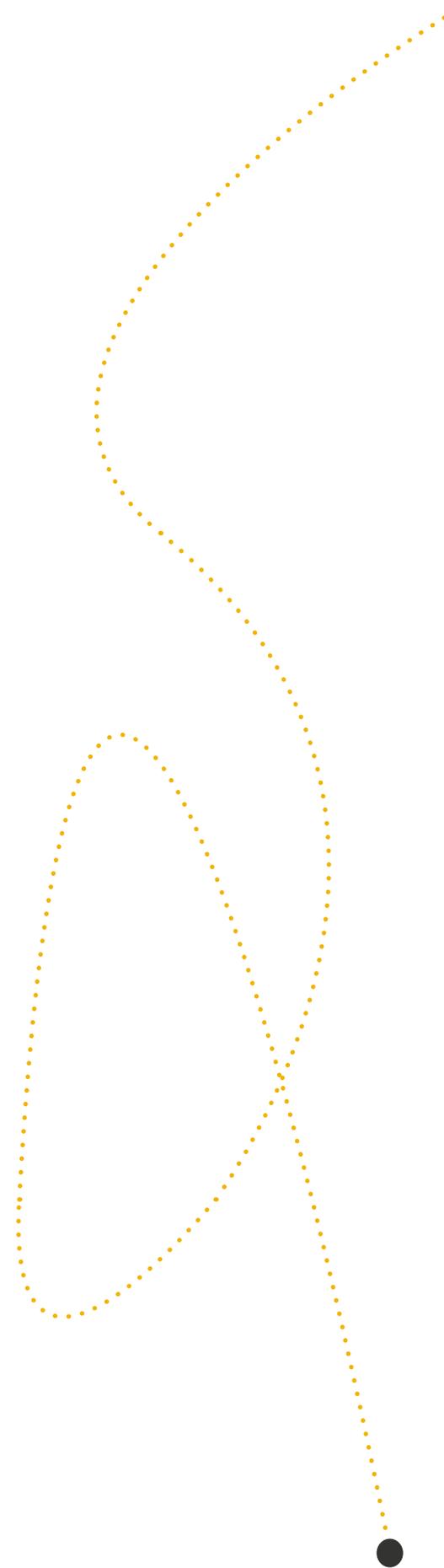
The Hallé ranks among the UK's top symphonic ensembles. It has a distinguished history of performances in this country and around the world and a commitment to building audiences and developing orchestral repertoire.

The Hallé's Corporate Choir Competition grew out of our work with Siemens. They were holding an event and their ice-breaker activity dropped out at the last minute. They contacted us to see if we could think of anything so we sent our choral director over. That experience sparked an interest in Siemens having its own choir.

Following this the Hallé submitted an application for the Lever Prize in 2013 (managed by the North West Business Leadership Team) based around our Arts Based Training work. We were awarded the Prize, which provided the cash to get the first year of the competition off the ground.

Since 2013, the Corporate Choir Competition has raised over £20,000 for the Hallé. But above and beyond that, it has enabled us to build meaningful relationships with the corporate sector.

As the appetite for the traditional Corporate Membership model has decreased in the corporate sector, we have found that the corporate choir initiative has filled the gap left by this. As with corporate membership it offers a cheaper entry level engagement for businesses, and for us it provides a route through to get to know organisations. From this we have then been able to recruit a number of sponsors — some at a high level — and build relationships with companies who otherwise we would have been unlikely to partner with.



How it works as a fundraising initiative

The Corporate Choir Competition sits within the fundraising department and consistently raises £6,000 to £8,000 each year, net of costs.

Businesses pay a fee of £2,000 to participate in the competition and all proceeds go to the Hallé Concerts Society. The fee covers five rehearsals with a conductor in the workplace. The choirs then come together to compete and the winner gets to sing on stage with the Hallé at the popular Christmas concert. Family and friends book tickets for the concert, generating additional income through ticket sales.

Although it does raise valuable funds, the benefits of the Corporate Choir Competition are much broader. The initiative is on brand, taking music to people, and it has enabled us to strengthen our relationships with the corporate sector.

All of the businesses involved are now part of the Hallé family. Some enjoyed having a company choir so much that they asked if they could continue all year round. We have developed bespoke sponsorship packages with those businesses, incorporating year-round choir rehearsals.

Benefits for the corporate sector

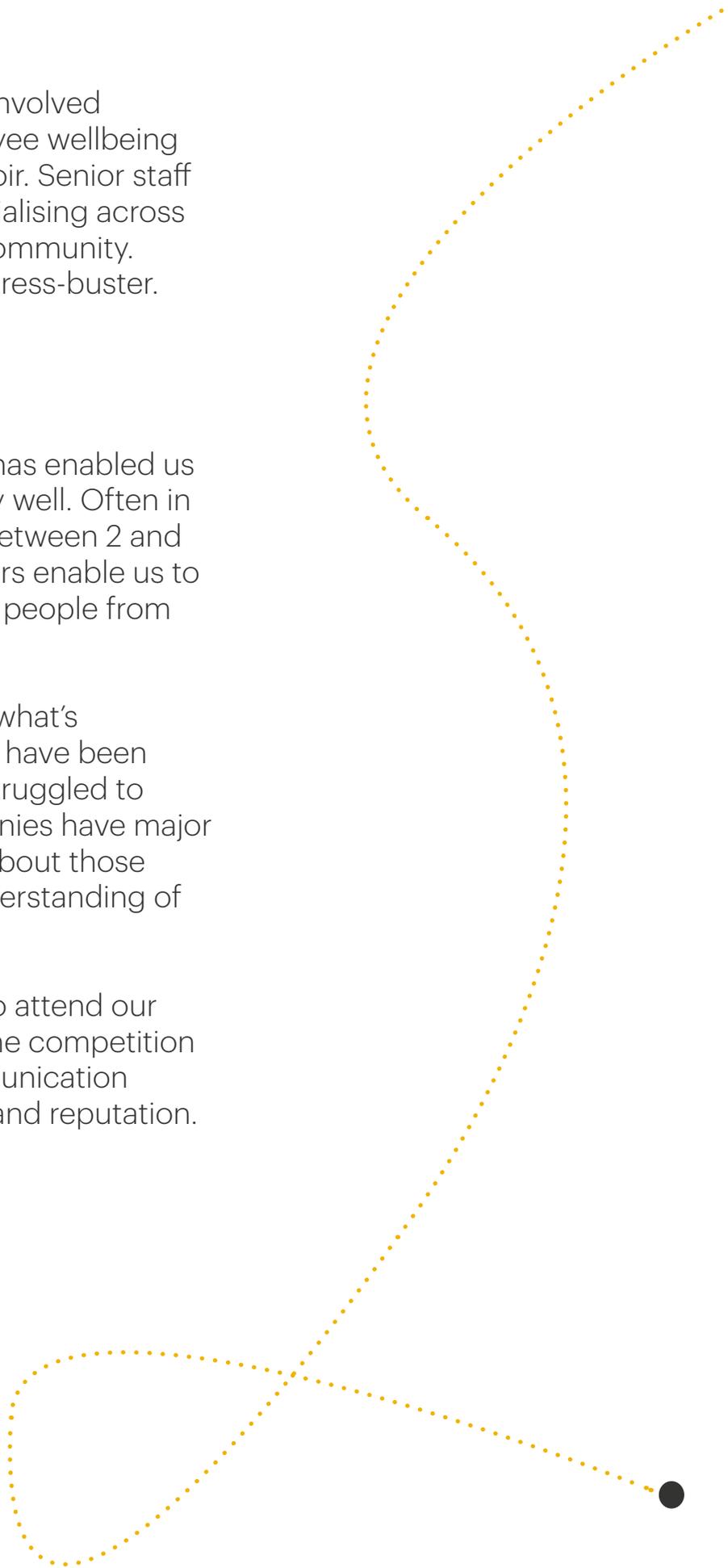
Businesses have been keen to get involved because they recognise the employee wellbeing benefits of starting a workplace choir. Senior staff get involved and it encourages socialising across teams and helps build a sense of community. Choir members also say it's a real stress-buster.

Benefits for the Hallé

Working with the corporate choirs has enabled us to get to know the businesses really well. Often in fundraising, you only get to know between 2 and 5 people from a company. The choirs enable us to get to know anything from 14 to 50 people from any one business.

The choirs also give us insight into what's happening on the other side. There have been instances when conductors have struggled to arrange rehearsals because companies have major projects going on. We get to hear about those projects and it helps shape our understanding of business priorities.

Anecdotally, a lot of businesses also attend our concerts with family and friends. The competition really brings fundraising and communication together, expanding our audience and reputation.



Recommendations

Look for ways to expand your contacts — getting to know whole choirs of people helps us build stronger and more sustainable relationships with companies. If a contact leaves, we will always have someone else we can speak to.

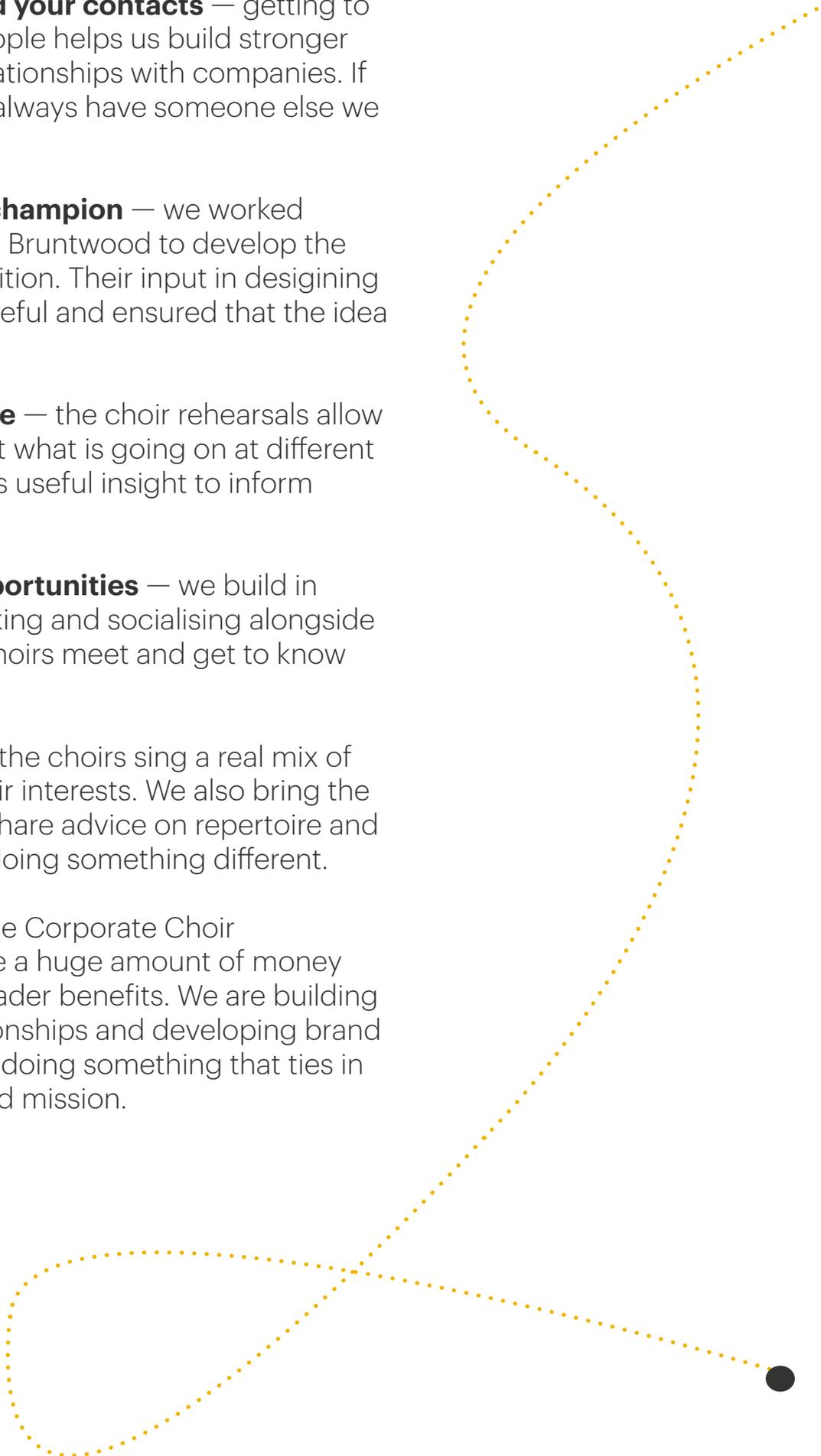
Work with a corporate champion — we worked closely with Siemens and Bruntwood to develop the Corporate Choir Competition. Their input in designing the initiative was really useful and ensured that the idea had legs.

Learn about their culture — the choir rehearsals allow us to visit and learn about what is going on at different companies. That provides useful insight to inform future fundraising asks.

Provide networking opportunities — we build in opportunities for networking and socialising alongside the competition so the choirs meet and get to know each other.

Be flexible and listen — the choirs sing a real mix of music, depending on their interests. We also bring the conductors together to share advice on repertoire and make sure each choir is doing something different.

Play the long game — the Corporate Choir Competition doesn't raise a huge amount of money but it provides much broader benefits. We are building valuable long-term relationships and developing brand reputation and loyalty by doing something that ties in closely with our vision and mission.





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