

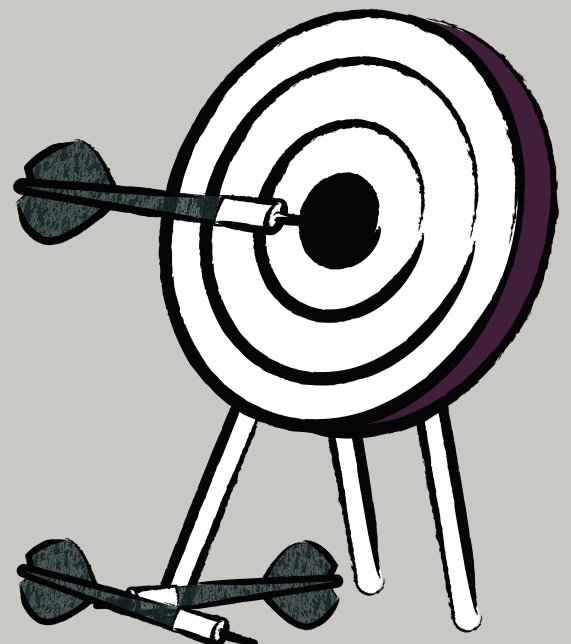


Chartered
Institute of
Fundraising

darnell consulting



TARGETING CHARITY OF THE YEAR PARTNERSHIPS: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE.



INTRODUCTION

In this guide to Charity of the Year (COTY) fundraising, we have outlined a set of six easy-to-follow steps that will deliver a framework for targeting partnerships. The guide is built from Darnell Consulting's extensive experience, both in-house, and helping many charities with their corporate fundraising and especially targeting COTY partnerships.

This guide is broken down into a series of steps, and we encourage any charity wishing to utilise this to take each step at a time. Breaking the process down into manageable stages, and tackling each methodically, is important. This brings the sort of structured and well-planned approach that will underpin success.

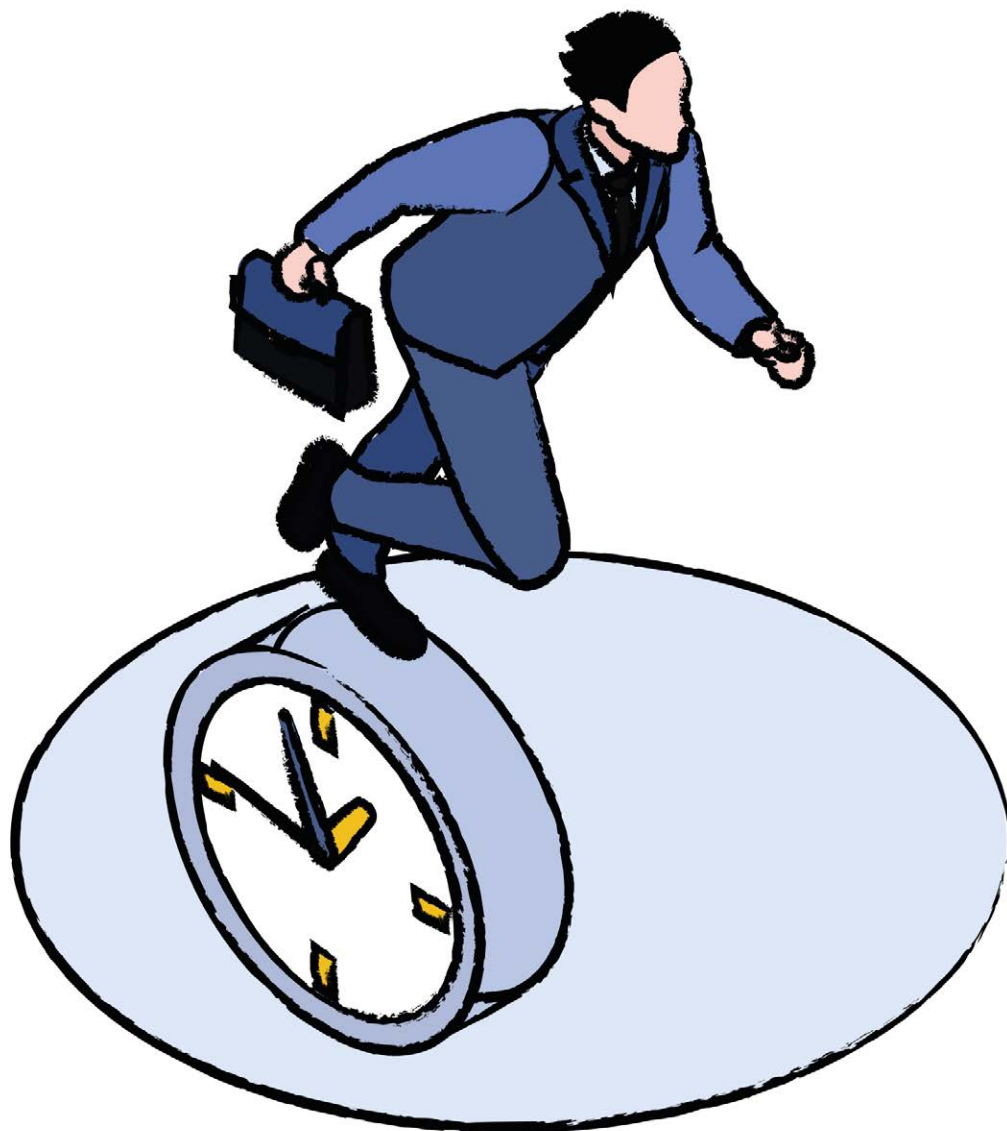
If you are reading this guide, then it is likely that you have already recognised the significance of COTY partnerships. However, it is worth pointing out that COTY is an important part of the fundraising mix for three main reasons:

- 1** So many companies focus on in-kind, volunteering, pro-bono support etc. but COTY partnerships are about **monetary support**
- 2** COTY partnerships are fixed term relationships (normally one or two-years duration) and they have structured application processes that **come around regularly**
- 3** In many cases these COTY relationships have 'ready-made' and **proven fundraising mechanics.**

As well as taking the information in this guide to support your corporate fundraising efforts, you can also cross reference this framework with the recent ***Chartered Institute of Fundraising Charity of the Year Insights Report 2024.***

This related report highlights the main attributes of the market for COTY partnerships and identifies the key trends.

STEP 1: **CORPORATE PROPOSITION**



The place to start with your COTY fundraising is to develop a compelling corporate proposition. This should set out:

- **the need that your charity addresses**
- **the solutions you have for that need**
- **why your charity is legitimately well placed to deliver the solutions**
- **what makes you different from other organisations**
- **a summary of outcomes that your charity achieves**
- **why it would be beneficial for a company to partner with your charity.**

Ultimately you need to tell a great story about why you exist and how you create positive change in society. For a potential COTY partner, the story needs to appeal to a broad audience i.e. the potential partner's staff.

You should also consider the benefits to the company working with you as its COTY partner, specifically, how will your charity inspire and engage the company's staff? Explicitly referencing things like providing powerful beneficiary case studies in both written and film format is going to be very important.

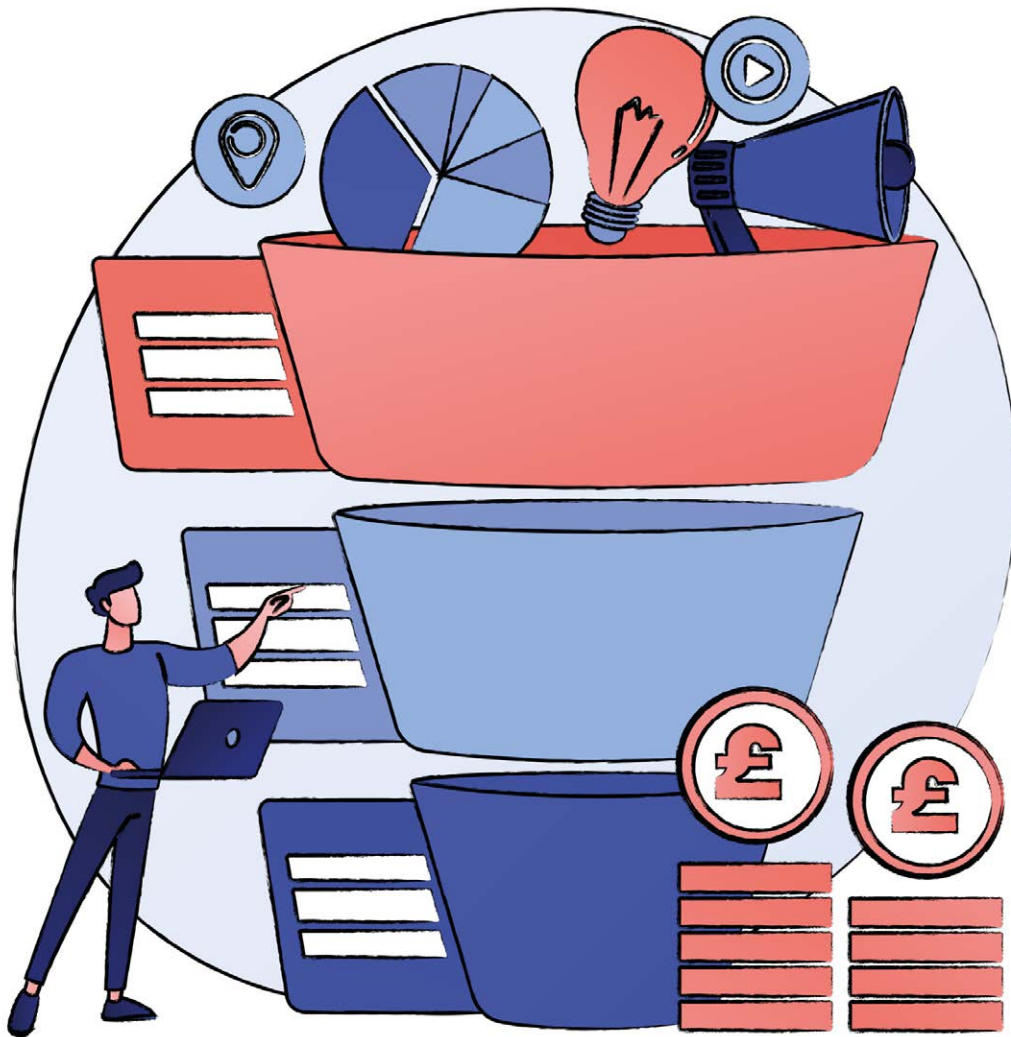
When building your proposition, you should also think about your credentials:

- **How have you worked with companies in the past?**
- **What were the outcomes of these relationships?**

You should obtain some testimonials from past partners that showcase why working with you was a rewarding experience for the company and its staff. A lot of charities do not have an array of well-known partnerships, but you can be creative in this area.

Even if you've had a relatively low-level relationship around volunteering or pro-bono support, you can still ask that company to give you a testimonial and talk about why the relationship was positive for them as a business.

STEP 2: BUILD A PIPELINE

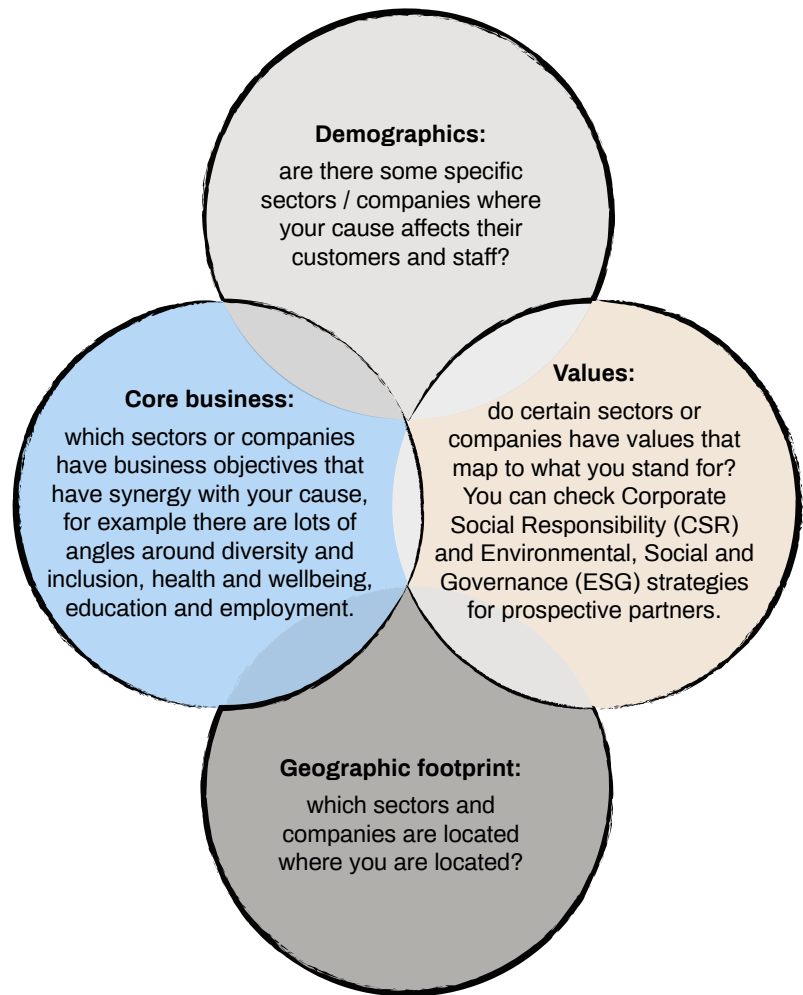


To have any chance of winning a COTY partnership you need to create a pipeline of suitable opportunities. This will require putting time and effort into research to build up the prospect pool.

You should use your corporate proposition to help you think about the sort of target companies that you have a fit with.

This will put some parameters around your research and help you put your research effort into the right places.

Some points to consider for this are:



It is worth remembering that research takes time and dedication and is an ongoing task. For that reason, it is important to communicate to other colleagues, including up the management chain, that research is not something that is likely to be completed quickly.

There are several ways you might go about this research aspect:

- **there is one COTY database product on the market which would help shortcut the process**
- **you can hire a prospect researcher**
- **or you can also do the research yourself.**

Some charities hire a temp or utilise an intern, but this usually gets mixed results because prospect research is a skill and requires some market knowledge.

If you are carrying out the research yourself, then beyond the obvious internet searches, we recommend setting up some Google alerts, utilising LinkedIn and looking at the partnership pages of other similar charities for COTY relationships they have had which may be coming to an end.

STEP 3: DIARISE ACTIONS



Targeting COTY opportunities requires certain actions to be taken at specific times. It is crucial to diarise when actions are required. This means looking at the first date when something is needed, such as an expression of interest or a nomination.

You should work back from the deadline and build time into your calendar to execute what is needed. This avoids last-minute panic – good outcomes rarely happen when things are rushed. It also enables you to plan for things like nominations as this may require some creative thinking (see below for some tactics related to nominations).

Diarising actions also assists with keeping your workload manageable as you can spot potential spikes and pinch points in activity. This is especially important if you are the only corporate fundraiser in the charity.

STEP 4: **BUILD STRONG** **INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS**



Like most aspects of corporate fundraising, to stand a good chance of winning a COTY partnership you are going to need support from various colleagues.

Some specific people you are likely to need to engage with are those involved in services and projects so that you can understand key priorities, desired outcomes and what some of the delivery looks like.

COTY fundraising is all about the company providing monetary support but increasingly some sense of value exchange is a useful add-on to help make you stand out and clinch a partnership ahead of other competing charities. It is also worth talking to services colleagues about

the scope for creating a sense of value exchange when approaching companies.

Many COTY opportunities require a staff nomination as the first step. Internal relationships will help you when seeking people to nominate your charity. A good tactic for securing nominations is to engage your supporter base. This is most easily achieved via an ask in your e-newsletter and social media. Securing the space for this ask is likely to need the support of individual giving and communications colleagues.

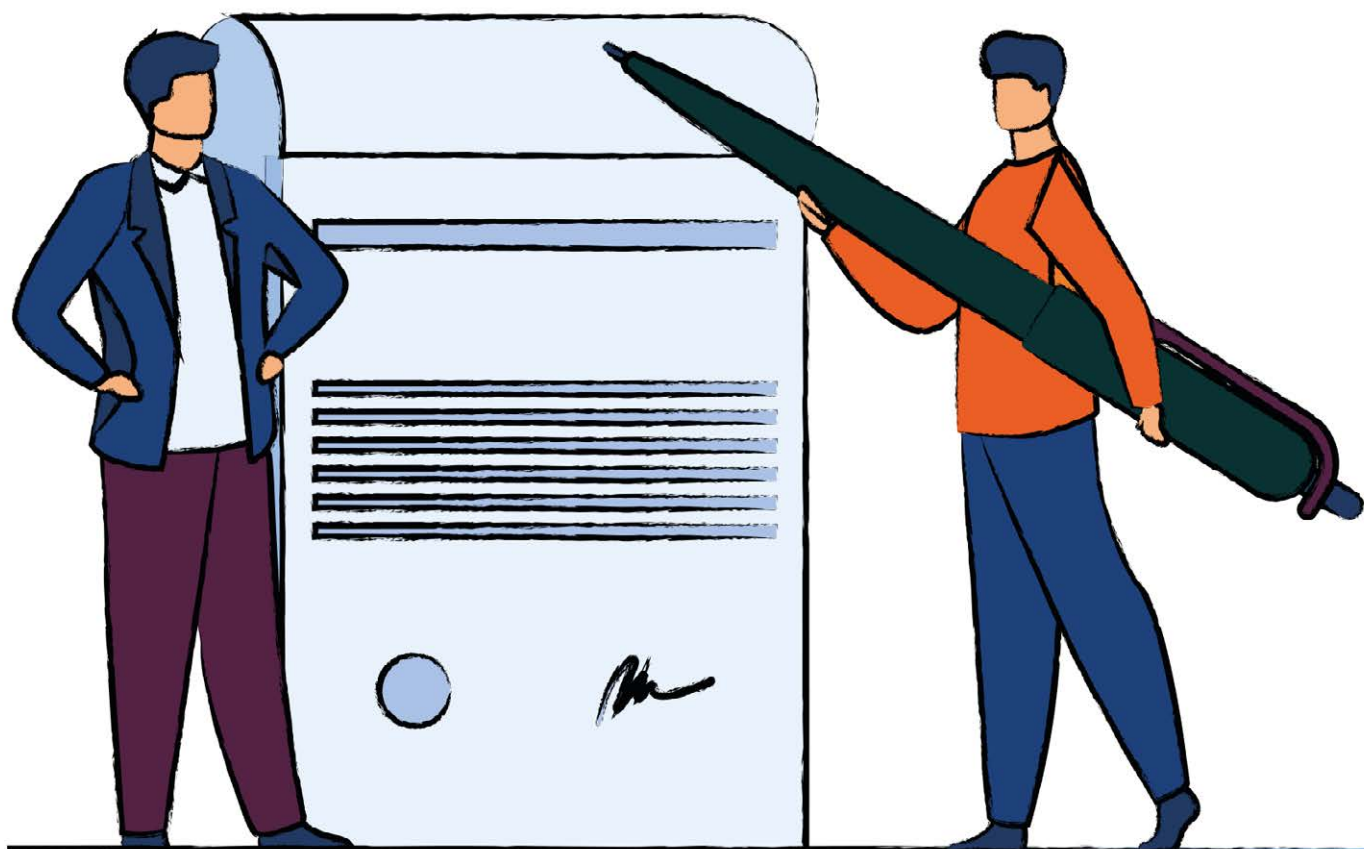
You should also hold conversations with these colleagues around provision of content. Communications and individual giving teams are responsible for creating a nice flow of compelling stories (including good pictures and some film content). Much of this content can be re-used to support proposals, and eventually COTY partnerships once you win one.

Another useful tactic for securing nominations is delivering an awareness talk for a prospective company's staff. With careful targeting you can approach companies that are on your prospect list, and suggest a staff talk, webinar or lunch and learn.

This normally leads to a situation where one or two people have really connected with what has been presented. By building the connection with these individuals they are likely to be happy to nominate you for their firm's COTY shortlist.

To achieve this, you need to liaise with specialist colleagues who can talk in-depth about something interesting and topical, again – diversity and inclusion and health and wellbeing are good angles.

STEP 5: **CREATE PROPOSALS** **THAT STAND OUT**



When submitting a proposal for a COTY partnership, it is important to stand out. Your proposition should help you here – remember the earlier point about telling a great story about why you exist. Highlight anything unique and interesting about your charity or how it solves societal problems.

Of course, your proposal should also specifically address any explicit requirements that the company has set out including account management and experience of working with companies.

A key attribute of any proposal is how you will inspire the partner's staff. Corporate decision-makers want assurance that a potential partner can

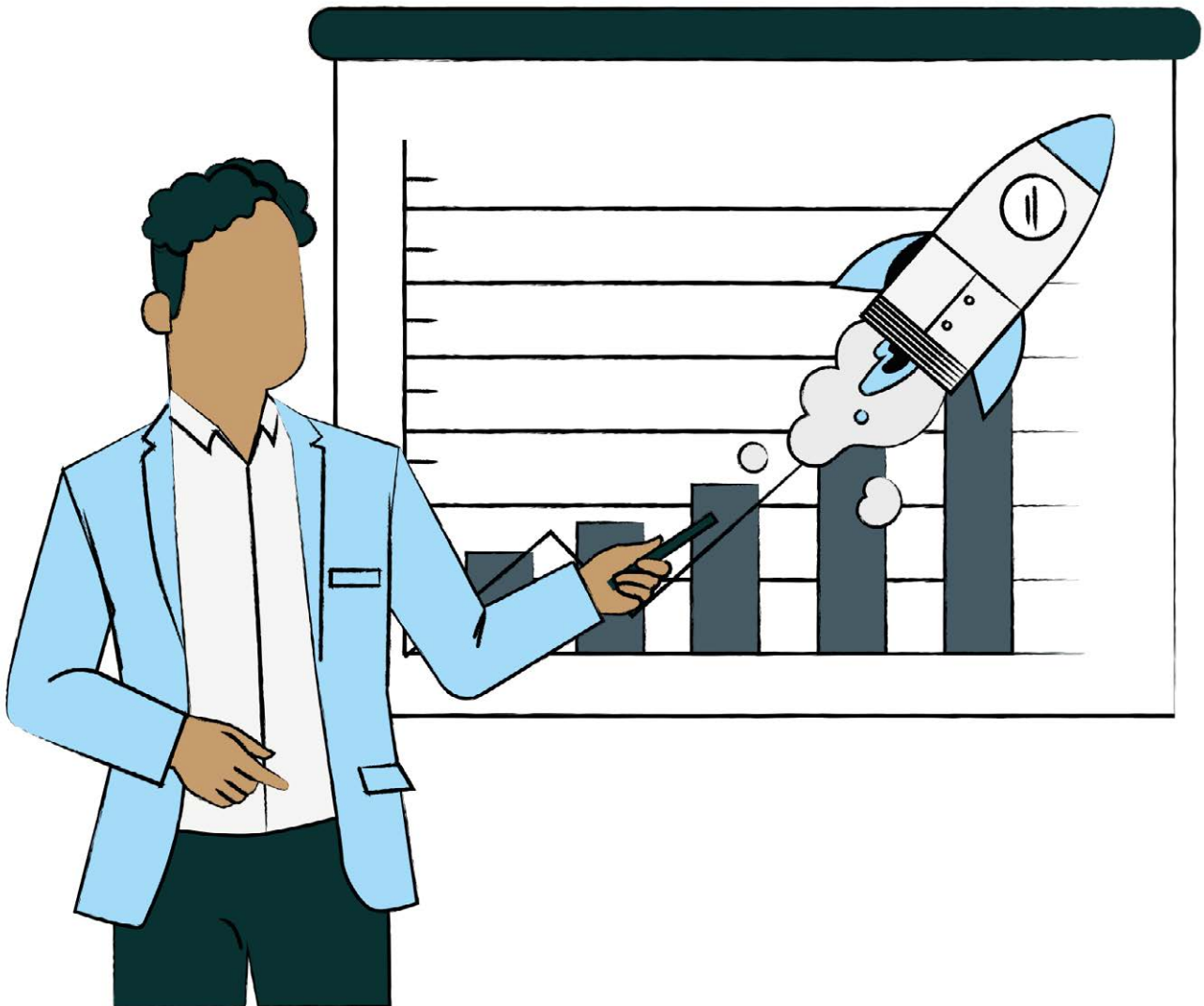
deliver engaging content to motivate staff – beneficiary case studies will be key. You should highlight the sort of content you can deliver e.g. via embedded links to stories on your website or social pages.

Most COTY partnerships have structured programs of activity that staff can engage with to raise money. However, you should spell out how you will engage with staff networks and champion groups, including, where necessary, being present at key events.

Companies want punchy, attention-grabbing communications. Whether you are completing an online application form or submitting your own proposal, word counts will be tight. Inspiring a company's workforce shares similarities with individual giving: you need to get someone's attention quickly and inspire them to act.

Individual giving and communications colleagues can deliver a shortcut by sharing their existing material from appeals and communications. Stating that you'll utilise these colleagues to give communications immediate impact is a good tactic, remember to mention images and film as well as written content.

STEP 6: **PRESENTING WITH IMPACT**



Some COTY selection processes may require you to make a presentation either over a video platform or in person. You should check what the process entails when submitting a proposal and begin to think about the presentation stage. Before you are invited to a presentation you should be clear about which colleagues are needed and tip them off to avoid having to scuffle around for diary space with the right people.

Once you are invited to a presentation then the content should bring your proposal to life. As stated above, the story about why you exist is crucial. Presentations often fail when there is a lack of cohesiveness. Everyone

should be clear on what their role is. In our experience the following is a good starting point:

- **somebody to talk articulately about the why you exist and the work you do – either a senior leader or a programmes or services person**
- **a beneficiary to bring to life what you do, the impact it has and to push the emotive aspect**
- **whoever is going to account manage the partnership should talk about how the charity will inspire staff, the support they will provide and any previous partnerships with companies**
- **It is stating the obvious, but you should also allow time for a couple of practice runs. Charities that win COTY partnerships usually appear coordinated, unified, well prepared, and there is an easiness between colleagues that makes the presentation flow.**

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would underline that COTY fundraising requires an inspiring proposition, a strong pipeline of opportunities, creative thinking, cross working between internal departments and good planning.

Winning a COTY partnership takes time. It is highly unlikely that you can start a programme and secure income in under 18 months. This is where using good KPIs can help you to communicate progress even when partnerships have not been secured. Tracking things like the number of opportunities in your pipeline, how many partnerships you've been nominated for or asked to submit a proposal for, and how many proposals have been submitted, all help to track progress.

The last point is a reminder to be authentic and use the power of storytelling. COTY partnerships are driven by inspiring the partner's staff to raise money. The ability to tell a compelling story is what will make you stand out from the crowd.

For further information take a look at the Guidance and Resources area of the Chartered Institute's website and visit www.darnellconsulting.com.