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It's the winning not the taking part

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That awful line 'it's taking part that counts, not winning' reminds me of parents consoling their kids at sports day and politically correct types misguidedly believing that they are going to bring success to the majority by avoiding competition. I bet if we used that sentence with Ricky Ponting at the moment he'd wince and scowl, and we'd quite possibly have to locate the nearest exit.

The problem is that I can't think of a single occasion when 'just taking part' or 'being second best' is good: lost the bid, lost the contract, lost the customer. Who remembers silver medallists? Who came second in the F1 championship in 2008? Which political leader that has lost an election has gone down in history? The way I see it, taking part and not winning is no fun at all.

But winning creates energy, team spirit and momentum. At work and at play it makes us feel good, positive and pushes us on to greater things; and knowing your market, and your opposition, is a key part of the winning process. That's why good data strategy is a key to success. If you've got the data, make good use of it. Have a proper customer strategy driven by insights, get your trigger campaigns sorted, ensure you have a proper management dashboard to support decision-making.

A solid platform can make a huge difference and be a springboard for success. Just like the world's priciest footballers wear the highest-quality boots and F1 stars drive the best-performing cars, data experts need to have the best tools for the job. For example, we've seen a customer improve retention rates by 30% and lower the cost of acquiring new consumers simply by using a combination of Alterian's platform and existing customer data in the right way to improve campaign performance. It's a win-win for both the client and the customer.

Like all winners in life, data practitioners and their technology suppliers should constantly strive for new heights. Look at Usain Bolt: he wasn't satisfied with his 100m and 200m world record-shattering performances at the World Athletics Championships, saying he can shave more tenths off of the times! The best Enterprise Marketing Platform providers share the same characteristics. Alterian recently announced it is addressing the new social media market by acquiring Tegrifi to move into the social media space. Clients have every right to expect their suppliers to be on the ball with this type of progression, helping them win greater market share.

There's no doubt that times have become tougher and clients are harder to satisfy. But if you can demonstrate expertise, partnerships with the best technology vendors around, in-depth analytic capabilities and transparent marketing practices, you'll begin to instil confidence in existing and target clients.

So it's not just about giving a great presentation and congratulating yourselves on doing your best even if you don't win the business. You need to get everything in place to answer the brief, demonstrate your ability to handle the work once you've won it and show how the systems you have chosen for the job will underpin that. After all, who wouldn't want to be part of a winning team?

Alan Thorpe, commercial and operations director, G2 Data Dynamics



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