

The Contrarian Marketing Lesson from the Olympics... for the Rest of Us

The value of being #1 is strong in our culture, recently evidenced by the hyperfocus on GOLD in the recent Olympics. Likewise in business, you've heard the company refrain many times: "We aim to be the best."



But in business, as in life, only one is the biggest, the fastest, or the cheapest. And, contrary to conventional wisdom, maybe you shouldn't aim for the top spot. Maybe organizations should focus on their best, not the best. Bottom line, you can still win when you don't get gold. Here are two ways to succeed by purposely not aiming for #1.

1. Create a new category that you can top. Oscar Pistorius did it at the Olympics as the first-ever double amputee.
2. Feature that you're not number one. Avis is the classic example. Knowing they wouldn't unseat Hertz as the top rental car company, they aimed to pull themselves out of the pack by proudly aiming for #2. Their slogan was also their business philosophy: We Try Harder. As a result, Avis turned a profit for the first time in over a decade and tripled their market share in only 4 years.

Can you win by creating a new category, by proudly being #2, or finding another way to stand out that is true to your organization's unique identity?



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