

TUNE



HOW TO BECOME A **TRACK STAR**

YOUR GUIDE TO TRACKING FOR
PERFORMANCE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

WELCOME TO BOOT CAMP

Conditioning for Tracking Success

Well done! You've mastered the basics of digital tracking for marketing campaigns. Unfortunately, in 2020, everybody else has, too. I can't afford that many participation trophies, so here's a pat on the back.

Now, you have very important decision to make:

Are you going to coast along with the crowd? Or do you want to pull away from the pack?

I'm ready! ➔



Good! I knew you were a winner!

With a little determination and this white paper, I can teach you to condition your tracking skills to excel where others simply maintain. You'll master the methodology of digital performance tracking. You'll learn how to make it a game changer for your business. You'll sweat. You may swear. You might even cry. But I promise you — and Coach never lies — that it will all be worth it when you cross that finish line as a track star.

In this white paper you'll learn:

- ★ Why healthy tracking practices are important
- ★ The areas you need to build tracking strength
- ★ What measurements you should be taking
- ★ How to avoid tracking injuries with proper form
- ★ Why you need to cut out cookies
- ★ Tips for building the perfect team
- ★ and everything else you need to know to become a track star

In today's competitive environment, digital marketing is a marathon, not a sprint. So let's get training!

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1 WHY GETTING IN SHAPE IS IMPORTANT

Benefits of Strong Tracking

As marketers, tracking is core to everything we do. It's where our strength comes from.

Think about it. What keeps campaigns running? Informs opportunities for optimization? Holds you (and your teammates) accountable? Tracking!

Now, I'll let you in on an industry secret: Healthy tracking is just the baseline. *Strong* tracking is the mark of a track star.

Like strong core muscles make it easier to do physical activities, a strong tracking system makes it easier to power marketing efforts. It gives your business an edge, allowing you to push further and faster than the competition.

When your tracking system is weak, your marketing efforts as a whole will be unhealthy. Other track stars — affiliates, influencers, publishers, and more — will leave you in the dust for advertisers who can keep up with them.

I could go on, but you get the idea.

Continue ➔

Tracking is how advertisers measure return on investment (ROI). In performance marketing, tracking ties events to conversions, and gives affiliates credit for the results they deliver.

Performance marketing: a marketing strategy in which advertisers pay only after a specific action is completed. For more, read: [Intro to Performance Marketing](#).

2 WHERE TO BUILD STRENGTH

Marketing Channels

Pop quiz time: Which channels should you focus on to gain the most tracking muscle?

If you said all of them, that's great, love the enthusiasm, but you're going to pull something. Even track stars are only so good at so many things.

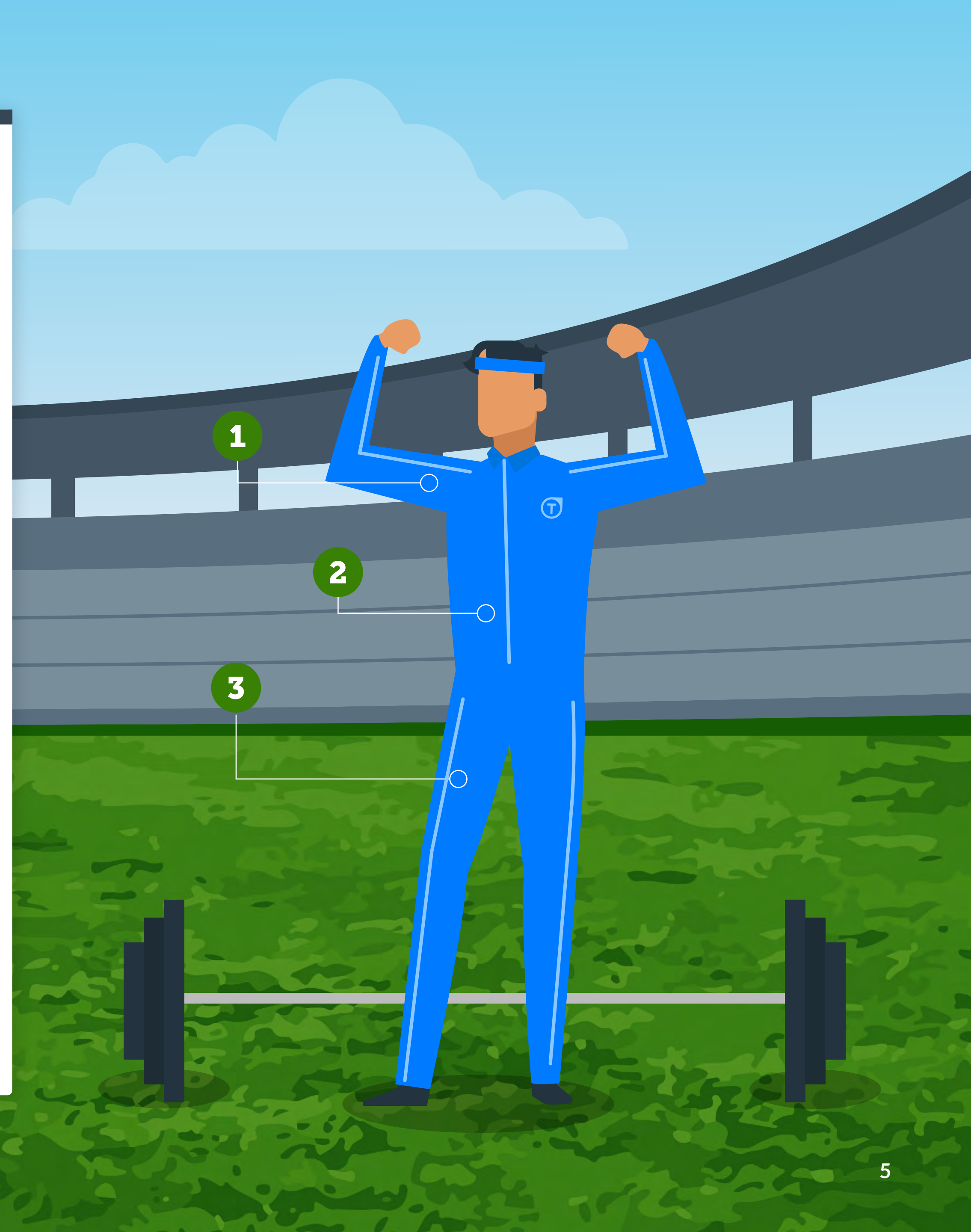
Your tracking should be strongest in three core channels:

- 1 Desktop
- 2 Mobile Web
- 3 Mobile App

What's more, you need to build muscle *equally* across these channels. If you're weak in one, that leaves the others vulnerable to injuries and setbacks. We'll talk more about that later.

Bottom line: If you're serious about being a track star, you have to work (out) across online *and* mobile channels. No skipping app day.

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3 WHAT MEASUREMENTS TO TAKE

Campaign Metrics

Setting goals and recording progress toward them is a key part of every conditioning program. What do you want to achieve? What will tell you that you're on the right *track*? (Ha! That's a Coach joke for ya.)

Metrics will.

Some of the most common metrics tracked in marketing campaigns:

- 1 Impressions
- 2 Clicks
- 3 Conversions*
- 4 Installs

Continue →

* Conversions are simply a desired action. Some examples: sales, registrations, form fills, downloads, leads, engagements, etc.

Bored? Too bad! The best track stars get granular about what they're doing to improve, and you will, too. The devil is in the details, they say. So find that devil and put him to work!

You can set up your conversion tracking links to provide detailed information about your metrics, such as:

- ★ Product SKU
- ★ Country of origin
- ★ Sale amount
- ★ Date and time
- ★ Device type
- ★ New vs returning customer

Continue →



How do conversion links provide this information? Through parameters and macros. [Learn more about them](#) or [check out some examples](#).



There are also some things we do *not* want to track. Why? Because it's illegal and you don't have permission, that's why.

I have a zero-tolerance policy for tracking any of the following. So do the Feds.

Coach's DO NOT TRACK list:

- ★ Personally identifiable information*
- ★ Children under 13†

(See all this fine print? You don't want to get involved with this stuff, unless it's absolutely, positively necessary for your business. If that's the case, here's my advice: lawyer up.)

* *unless*, you have a legitimate reason to collect that information; notify consumers what data you are collecting, why you are collecting it, and how you will use it; obtain consent to do so; *and* comply with all other rules and guidelines in the following legislation:

- I. General Data Protection Regulation ([GDPR](#))
- II. California Consumer Privacy Act ([CCPA](#))
- III. California Online Privacy Protection Act ([CalOPPA](#))

† *unless*, you publicly describe your practices for personal information collected online from children; provide direct notice to parents what you are collecting and why; obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting and using a child's information; do not disclose a child's personal information to third parties; *and* comply with all other rules and guidelines in the following legislation:

- I. Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule ([COPPA](#))

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4 USE PROPER FORM TO AVOID INJURIES

Methods of Tracking and Attribution

You're determined. You know what to work on, what to measure. But you're still a rookie. Before moving up, you need to understand two concepts: how different muscles work, and which exercises will strengthen them without injury.

The muscles are your marketing channels. The exercises are your tracking methods.

Put the right ones together, and you get strong tracking. Put the wrong ones together, and you get weak tracking, or worse: broken tracking.

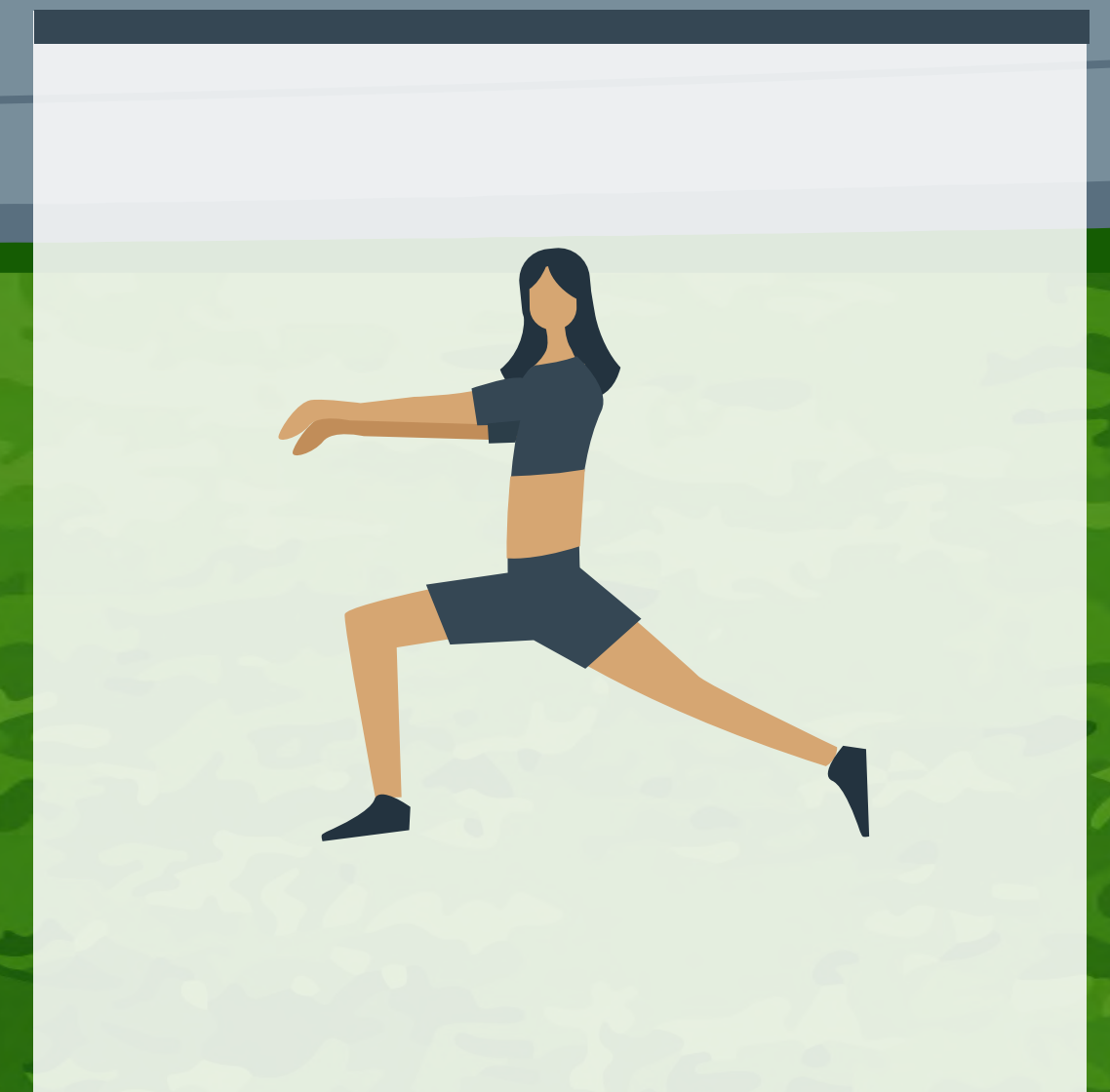
Muscles | Marketing Channels

- 1 Desktop
- 2 Mobile web
- 3 Mobile app

Exercises | Tracking Methods

- A Pixel tracking
- B Postback tracking
- C Javascript SDK tracking
- D Clickless tracking

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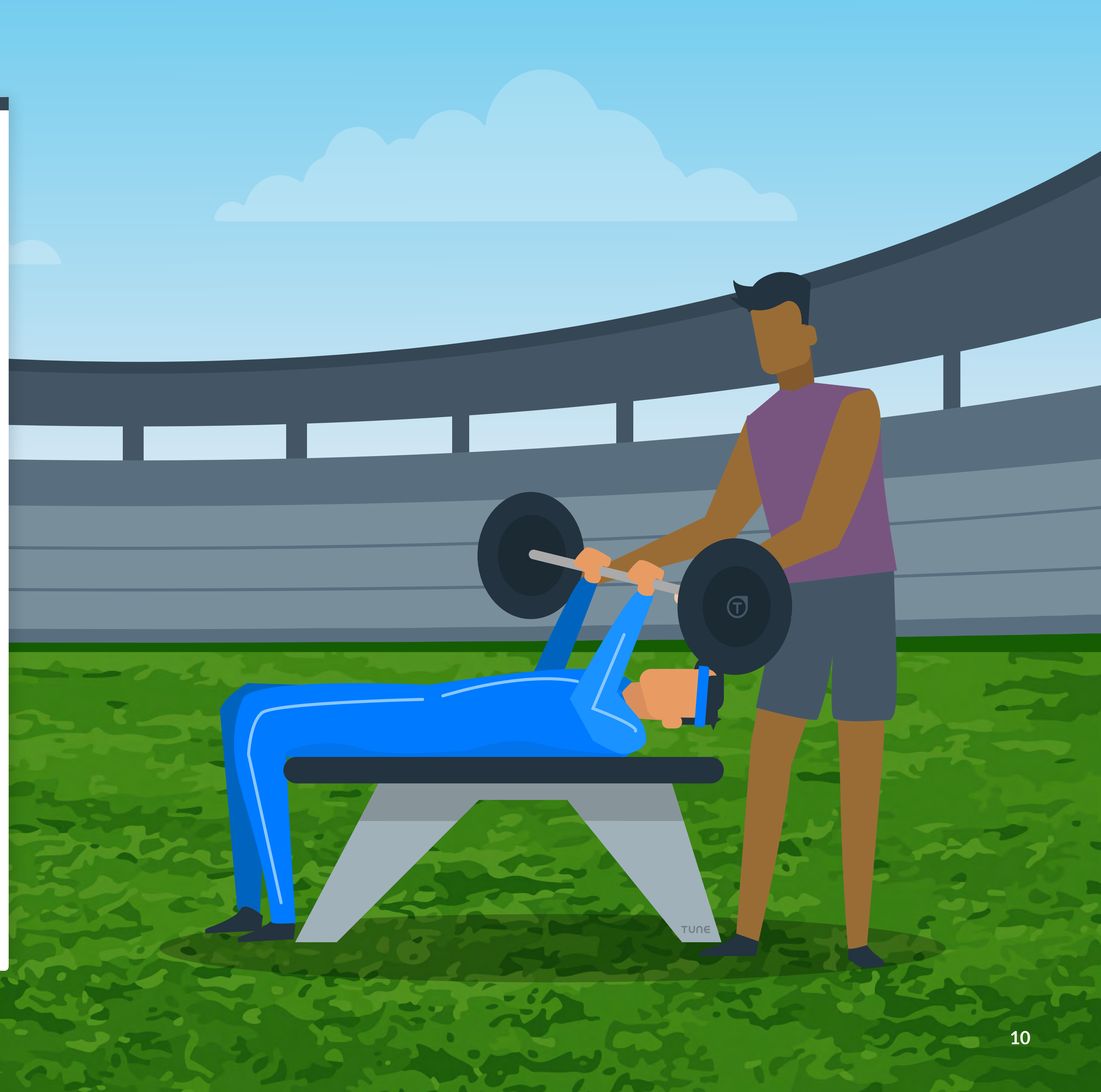
Sometimes, you need a spotter to help you through some tricky exercises. That's OK, and pretty common in performance marketing. You can't do it all by yourself, nor should you. There's no "i" in track star, after all.

Spotters | Specialized Solution Providers

- ★ Partner/channel management platform (ex.: [TUNE](#)) to provide the infrastructure for tracking, offer/partner management, and payment
- ★ Specialty channel tracking software provider (ex.: mobile measurement partner [MMP]) to measure performance in complex or unconventional channels

This is the point where I like to take a quick timeout and lose the mixed metaphors for a second, because this is complicated. I'm going to break down which tracking methods apply to which channels, and how they work together.

Continue →



Tracking Methods: Where and How They Work

A Pixel tracking

- ★ Where does it work? Desktop
- ★ What connects the dots? Browser
- ★ [Technology](#): client-side calls (pixels, cookies)

B Postback tracking

- ★ Where does it work? Desktop, mobile web, mobile app
- ★ What connects the dots? Specialized solution providers, you (the advertiser) through an internal system that tracks arriving and converting users (such as an RMS or CRM system)
- ★ [Technology](#): server-side calls (postbacks)

C Javascript SDK tracking

- ★ Where does it work? Desktop, mobile web
- ★ What connects the dots? Browser
- ★ [Technology](#): client-side local storage (JavaScript code snippet, tag manager)

D Clickless tracking

- ★ Where does it work? * Desktop, mobile web, mobile app
- ★ What connects the dots? Promo code
- ★ [Technology](#): pixel tracking, postback tracking

Continue →



Tracking Methods: Advantages and Disadvantages

Note the overlaps in channel coverage. Anything stand out to you?

Excellent! That’s exactly right: Postback tracking and clickless tracking work everywhere.

But Coach, I know you’re thinking, *why on this smartphone-covered Earth would anyone choose pixel tracking when it doesn’t work on mobile?*

Beats me, kid. I assume they have their reasons. I’ve listed some of them below to help you think it through.

A Pixel tracking	B Postback tracking	C Javascript SDK tracking	D Clickless tracking
Advantages: ✓ Easy to set up ✓ Easy to share data via cookies Disadvantages: ✗ Inaccurate ✗ Unreliable ✗ Prone to fraud ✗ Only works for non-mobile web traffic in browsers that allow tracking cookie storage (i.e., does not work on mobile devices or in Apple Safari, period, and will not work in most browsers soon)	Advantages: ✓ Accurate ✓ Reliable ✓ Versatile ✓ Easy to troubleshoot ✓ Able to attribute across channels ✓ Independent from browser restrictions ✓ Works on mobile devices Disadvantages: ✗ Technical (requires engineering work or a specialized solution provider) ✗ Difficult to share data with non-technical partners	Advantages: ✓ More reliable than pixel tracking ✓ Less sensitive to browser restrictions than cookie-based tracking Disadvantages: ✗ Initial setup is slightly more involved than with standard pixels ✗ Some browser restrictions may still apply ✗ Does not support cross-channel as postbacks do ✗ Difficult to troubleshoot	Advantages: ✓ Easy to use and share promo codes ✓ Works almost anywhere Disadvantages: ✗ Relies on the user inputting the promo code ✗ Limited to conversions that use promo code fields (like checkout pages)

You would think the cons of pixel tracking would dissuade marketers from relying on it, right?

You'd be wrong. Plenty of people still use cookies and pixels to track their digital marketing campaigns in 2020.

Here's what I think.

I think those people want to go for the sprint, so they use pixel tracking, because it will get you there fast. Thing is, you can't have pixel tracking without cookies, and cookies are bad for your (tracking) health. What's worse, pixel tracking only works for desktop web, and then only some of the time. Even if you got pixel tracking set up in record time, you would *still* need a solution for tracking mobile apps and mobile web. So really, when you choose pixel tracking, you're just creating more work and headaches for yourself.

Why wouldn't you use a tracking method that works across channels, like postbacks? Why not use postbacks, promo codes, *and* javascript SDK tracking to cover every channel and situation, instead of pixel tracking to cover just one channel? *That's* what I'm talking about! *That's* track star level! And you want to be a track *star*, don't you? Not a track *wannabe*? Then you've got to be ready to *put in the work*!

That's my one motivational speech for the day. Hope it worked.

Time in!

Continue ➔



5 CUT OUT COOKIES AND OTHER JUNK

The Limits of Cookie-Based Tracking

What? That last chapter too serious for you?

Or did you think you could become a track star without making some sacrifices? That this was going to be easy as *pie*? A *cake walk*, even? (Boom! Coach puns for days!)

When I said cookies are bad for your tracking health, I meant it. Cookies will only hurt you in the long run.

They will weigh down your campaigns, trip you up when you least expect it, and hold back how far your marketing can go. Cookies will also break your tracking if you try to use them anywhere other than desktop web. Sometimes, pixel tracking breaks there too, and you won't know why.

But here's the kicker: Cookie-based pixel tracking only works on desktop web, and it *barely* works there. Soon, it won't work at all. That's because all major browsers are blocking tracking cookies by default.

If you want to read up on the science, be my guest:

- ★ [Apple ITP introduces full third-party cookie blocking](#)
- ★ [Google Chrome blocks third-party cross-site cookies by default](#)
- ★ [Mozilla Firefox blocks third-party tracking cookies by default](#)

Continue →

Cookies aren't worth it. Don't let them tempt you with promises as empty as their calories!

Still not convinced?

Just remember this: Cookies do not work on mobile devices, and [global smartphone use](#) is increasing every year. That's how the cookie crumbles. (Couldn't help myself.)

6 BUILDING THE PERFECT TEAM

Technology Platforms and Partners

Where has the time gone? You're almost to the finish line, metaphorically speaking. ("Metaphorically Speaking" is my middle name.)

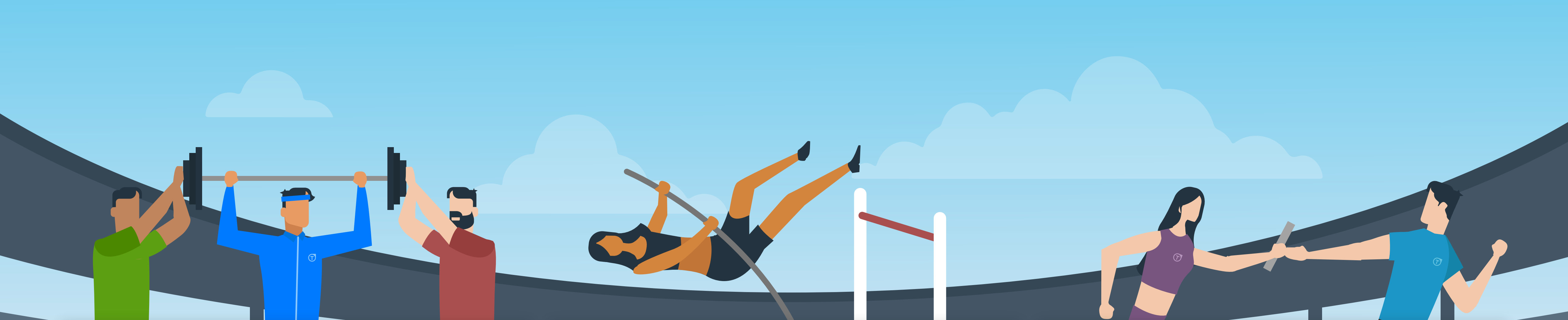
The best track stars didn't become stars overnight, and they didn't do it alone. You won't, either! Recruiting the right team is vital to your long-term success.

When building an all-star team, the two most important things are your playbook and your roster. How are you going to beat the competition? Which teammates have the specialized skills you need to win?

Coach's Track Star Team Roster

- ★ **Spotters** - Specialized Solution Providers
- ★ **Special Teams** - Technology Integrations
- ★ **Relay Racers** - Marketing Partners

Continue →



Specialized Solution Providers

Partner/channel management platform

- ★ **Example:** [TUNE](#)
- ★ **Skill:** Server-side (i.e., postback) tracking, cross-channel attribution
- ★ **Why you need it:** Postback tracking requires a tracking system and the technical expertise to implement it.

Specialty channel tracking software provider

- ★ **Example:** AppsFlyer, Adjust, Branch, Oplytic
- ★ **Skill:** Mobile app attribution, app store attribution, mobile linking
- ★ **Why you need it:** Mobile app tracking requires a software development kit (SDK). MMPs provide the SDK.

Technology Integrations

Technology Integrations | [Learn more](#)

- ★ **Example:** Invoca, RevTrax, PX
- ★ **Skill:** Specialized services, such as tracking calls or online-to-offline conversions
- ★ **Why you need it:** For those who plan to go to the tracking Olympics, and want to cover every angle to get there.

Marketing Partners

Media Partners | [Learn more](#)

- ★ **Example:** Honey, Swagbucks, Sovrn, Ziff Media

Agency Partners | [Learn more](#)

- ★ **Example:** Acceleration Partners, Streamline, SmarterChaos, All Inclusive Marketing

Networks

- ★ **Example:** BrandCycle, Tapjoy, Fluent, A4D

[Continue](#) →

7 HOW TO BE A TRACK STAR

Going for the Gold

Well, champ, you're ready. You have all the pieces of the puzzle. Now you just have to put them together.

Let me give you one last piece of advice: When you've finally run the race, and you're at the finish line waiting for your results, it may look like a photo finish — but you can bet your last cookie it's not.

Here are the things that separate the gold medal winners from the runners-up.

	Strategy	Channels Tracked	Tracking Methods
Gold 	Tracking everything on every channel.	Desktop Mobile web Mobile app	Postback Javascript SDK Clickless
Silver 	Tracking desktop & mobile apps well, but on separate platforms. Refusing to connect marketing channels for greater accuracy and insight.	Desktop (ex.: affiliate program) Mobile app (ex.: user acquisition campaign)	Pixel Postback MMP
Bronze 	Tracking one channel, desktop or mobile Ignoring multi-channel partnerships and the capabilities required to address them.	Desktop or Mobile	Pixel or MMP



When you really analyze your performance, you'll find that success comes down to answering these questions:

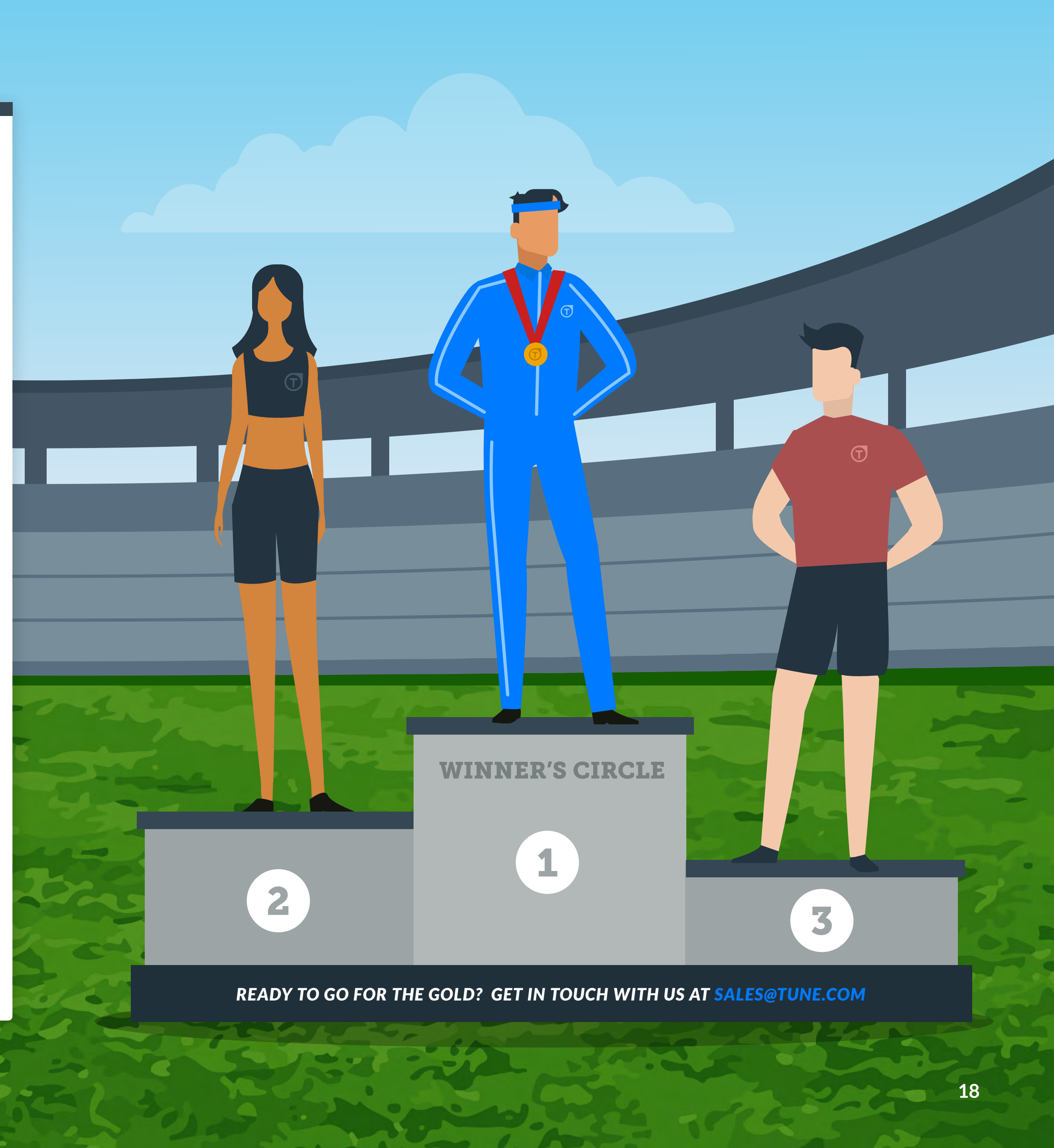
- ★ How are you prepared to track any transaction, from any partner?
- ★ How integrated are your partnership teams? Are they communicating? Working together?
- ★ Are you taking part in all the traffic you can get?
- ★ Are you even *in* the race?

Answer those, and you'll be golden from here on out.

Now go make me proud.

About TUNE

TUNE builds technology that powers successful marketing partnerships across mobile and web. The TUNE Partner Marketing Platform is the industry's most flexible SaaS platform for building, managing, and growing partner programs for Advertisers and Networks. Headquartered in Seattle, TUNE is trusted by innovative affiliate marketers, the largest performance advertising networks, and iconic brands across the globe. For more information, visit www.tune.com.



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