



The Law of Incremental Gains

Mark Cavendish was recently crowned BBC Sports Personality of the Year and his success is part of Team GB's domination in cycling. The way they have achieved this has gone down in sports mythology, but has valuable lessons for all of us in every aspect of our lives.

Their success is down to the Law of Incremental Gains. This means making each element of both bike and cyclist just a little bit better. By the time hundreds of bike components and tens of muscles have been improved slightly, it adds up to one great gain in performance.

The same principle is used in business. A manufacturing company that saves just one penny per item or produces it one second quicker could save millions of pounds over a year.

It sounds like common sense, and of course it is. However January is now upon us and people will make resolutions aiming to radically change the habits of the previous year, decade or even lifetime. Not surprisingly, most people fail before the calendar even hits February!

We need to think differently. The Law of Incremental Gains is the way forward for all of us and can start today. The beauty of it is that it needs only a slight improvement, one so small that you barely notice and so the sacrifice seems negligible.

Start with half a scoop less of ice cream, or spread your butter a little thinner. Take five or six fewer chips or a little less sugar in your coffee.

Next you might try to walk a little quicker round the office or run up the stairs rather than walking. You might start going to bed five minutes earlier or take the kids to the park for a run around.

If you don't already exercise, go out for a ten minute brisk walk twice a week. If you do exercise, try to run an extra 100 metres, lift those weights one extra repetition or warm up for an extra five minutes before playing sport.

Every week make another small improvement and in a month you might find you're eating fifty fewer calories each day, burning a little extra fat and exercising an extra ten minutes each week.

Keep it up and by the end of the year you could be eating hundreds fewer calories and exercising for hours more, yet if you tried to do this overnight you would have fail within a fortnight.

So start now. Make an incremental change. Then put it in your diary to do the same next week.