



*Diploma Delegates*



*Performance Enhancement*

# Aggregating The Marginal Gains For Improved Performance

Article - 15 min read & content links



By the end of this article you will have a better understanding of the Marginal Gains idea, and how its philosophy can impact on performance.

“Aggregating the Marginal Gains” is a popular approach to managing performance that is easy to understand, engage with and put into practice.





## What is “Aggregating the Marginal Gains”?

The particular phrase “Marginal Gains” was coined by Sir David Brailsford while in his role as Team Principle on the Team Sky Olympic Cycling squad, but is built on the tenants of “Incrementalism” theory and has been used by organisations all over the world to improve performance.

The heart of the Marginal Gains idea is very simple. The theory at its core is that by making numerous small, yet meaningful changes to our working practices the cumulative effective to our performance is more significant than trying to initiate big, sweeping changes.



All organisations are a collection of specific processes designed to impact on the needs of its relevant area that contributes to the whole success of the organisations.

It’s easier, and arguably more impactful, to make small changes to each process rather than changing a whole process in one go. This applies to other areas of Management responsibility, such as skill development within a team, where smaller, incremental improvement to the knowledge, skills & behaviours of the team will reap more dividends in the long run than trying to equip them with everything all at once.

Big changes are challenging and disruptive to day-to-day operations, and advocates of incrementalism argue that it is much better strategy to optimise with a manageable tweak than go for the game-changing, radical, big idea.





## How to use it?

Check out this talk by Matthew Syed, author of “Black Box Thinking”, who expands on the idea of “Aggregating the Marginal Gains” and provides a number of examples of how some industries have used the idea to improve performance:

[Click Here](#)





## Why use it?

Here are some key benefits to adopting a “Marginal Gains” approach...

### 1 Small increases are more achievable increases

By seeking 1% improvement the likelihood of achievement increases.

The steps to taking a statistic up by 1%, or developing a colleague/team member to be 1% better at a task, is more likely to happen and will accumulate over time.

### 2 Little Wins keep us motivated

By regularly achieving smaller improvements over time towards the greater goal keeps employee motivation & engagement high and builds a culture of commitment.

Individuals in the organisation feel like they have momentum, and that their hard work is valued & contributing.

### 3 If it's not working you only have a Marginal Loss

You might find that your incremental steps are not having the desired effect. In this instance a Marginal Gain approach will allow you to re-strategise and find a new incremental way to improve performance with minimal fuss.

### 4 It makes the change permanent

Developing habit & consistent make new initiatives and ways of working a success. The incremental improvement over time will enhance the possibility of the Marginal Gain “bedding in” and becoming the new norm in a more sustainable glide path manner.



#### Further Reading:

If you'd like to know more about what was discussed in Matthew Syed's talk then check out his book:

“Black Box Thinking – Marginal Gains and the Secrets of High Performance”  
by Matthew Syed

