

Before going big you need to go small.

Rahul

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1 Introduction

Habits!! What strikes your mind when you hear this word?? Maybe you thought how you practice everyday football is your habit, or completing your homework is your habit, or maybe even saving money is your habit or maybe something else you do on regular basis. But what really is definition of habit?? Yes, like you practice football everyday is habit, you do your homework everyday is your habit, and of course saving money is your habit. Actually, what we do on regular basis and we're just used to is what we call habit, whether its about consuming a pack of cigarettes or reading a book a day.

Psychology states habit as an automatic reaction to a specific situation. Which is true, how many times you pick your phone and find yourself scrolling Instagram Reels or how many times you turn your TV on as you get to your couch? Yes, our habits are bound to situations and sometimes to places too.

As you may wonder but habits played a major role in everyone's life. How many times you wash your hands?? At what time you wake up?? How much time you spend playing your favorite sport?? Do you brush your teeth before sleeping?? This all are part of your life and you do them at perfect

time and that's what we call Habit. We all are shaped by our habits. From waking up early in morning to writing a diary before you switch off your lights, this all small habits can change your life in a wonderful manner.

2 A Surprising Fact

Do you know? Up until 2002, the British Cycling team was a joke. I mean, seriously, over the course of their 76 year long career, they had only brought home one Olympic gold medal – only one!!!

Thankfully, there luck took a turn for better one day in 2003, when Dave Brailsford joined as the Head of British Cycling Team and from then, they never looked back.

But what magic Sir Dave done to the whole team that they won 60 percent of Gold Medals in 2008 Olympics which were held in Beijing, China. Well, that was not magic, for sure. Actually, it was all started by small changes introduced by Sir Dave and other coaches to the team, they re-designed the bike seats to make them more comfortable and rubbed alcohol on tires for better grip. They asked riders to wear electrically heated overshorts to maintain ideal muscle temperature while riding and use biofeedback sensors to monitor how each athlete responded to a particular workout. The team tested various fabrics in a wind tunnel and had their outdoor riders switch to indoor racing suits, which proved to be lighter and more aerodynamic. That's how Dave and team managed to improve in unexpected areas. They even tested different types of massage gels to find out which one led to fastest muscle recovery. They even hired a surgeon to teach each rider the best way to wash their hands to reduce chances of getting cold. They didn't stop there. They even asked riders to use specific pillows and mattress that led to best night's sleep to each rider.

As these and hundreds of other small improvements accumulated, the results came faster than anyone could have imagined. And five years later in 2008 Olympics, Brailsford team dominated the road and track cycling events and won fourteen cycling medals (eight gold, four silver and two bronze) in total. And journey doesn't stop here, four years later, when the Olympic Games came to London, the Brits raised the bar as they set nine Olympic records and seven world records. That same year, Bradely Wiggins became the first British cyclist to win Tour de France. The next year, his teammate Chris Froome won the race, and he would go on to win again in 2015, 2016, and 2017, giving the British team five Tour de France victories in six years. During the ten-year span from 2007-2017, British cyclists won

178 world championships and sixty-six Olympic or Paralympic gold medals and captured five Tour de France victories in what is widely regarded as the most successful run in cycling history.

3 Marginal Gains

But, How did all that happened? How does a team of previously ordinary athletes transformed into world champions??

When asked by Dave himself, he referred his strategy as "The Aggregation of Marginal Gains"

Brailsford said, "The whole principal came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improve it by 1 percent, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together."

Hence, we can say Habits are the compound interest of self-improvement. If we start today by improving our habits and review it after a year we'll find an important insight:

$$(1.01)^{365} \simeq 37 \tag{1}$$

Then by the end of the year they will be 37 times better than what they were when they started. Life is a continuous improvement endeavor and if we keep on improving the compounds start adding up.

At the beginning, there isn't a difference between making a choice that is 1% better or 1% worse; it won't impact much today. But as time goes by, the small improvements or declines compound and soon there's a big gap how it make difference in our lives. This is why small choices add up over the long-term even if there's not much difference at the time.

Most people love to talk about success, but the truth is that most of the significant things in life aren't stand-alone events, but rather the sum of all the moments when we chose to do things 1% better or 1% worse. Aggregating these marginal gains makes a difference.

So we should divide our big goals into dozen of small ones and then achieve them. For example, if you want to drop your dress size, that's your goal. Your actions might be do 50 press-ups every day and don't eat any cakes, sweets or chocolate! It might be run 3 miles 3 times a week and 15 minutes of Pilates every day. You get the idea, actions we can do, goals we can only achieve when we have done the actions.

4 Conclusion

Whether or not you watch sport, the 2016 Olympics demonstrated the phenomenal success of the 1% theory. Team GB achieved even more medals than London 2012 as more sporting bodies adopted the training method and 1% principle so successfully engineered by Sir Dave Brailsford and executed by British Cycling.

But 1% isn't the preserve of sport; its being successfully implemented by many individuals by shrinking their target, changing the mindset, making the changes and reap the rewards.