



Business lessons from *Le Tour*

British cycling presents one of the most compelling recent case studies for how sustainable and consistent small changes can deliver quite staggering improvements in overall performance. With team INEOS rider Egan Bernal becoming the youngest rider in 110 years to win the Tour de France, David Brailsford's Marginal Gain approach to improvement once again proves its value.

Under his watch, Great Britain led the cycling medal table at the 2008, 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games, winning 14 golds, while British cyclists won 64 World Championships across different disciplines from 2003 to 2018.

In 2010, Brailsford was appointed manager of the new British-based professional team, Team Sky. As Sky Team principal he oversaw Bradley Wiggins', Chris Froome's and Geraint Thomas' victories in the 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 Tours de France. In 2019 he added another victory, this time for Team Ineos.

How – in the hyper-competitive world of elite sport, is this kind of sustained success even possible? The answer is actually not that complicated. As the man himself has explained many times, "The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by 1%, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together.

How does this apply to business?

Despite billions spent every year on training, CRM and all manner of other sales improvement technologies and "strategies", organisations remain as frustrated by under-whelming sales performance as they were half a century ago. Actually, they're more frustrated.

Over a 13-year period, revenue conversion - the effectiveness of pipeline or funnel conversion, has declined by 48%. From 3.7% in 2006 to 1.9% today.

Now consider a scenario where a meagre 0.5% improvement in revenue pipeline throughput can lead to a doubling of profit. How? Nothing overly complicated – just making margin gain improvements across the various stages of pipeline progression.

"An improvement of 0.5% in the rate of conversion of the revenue pipeline is enough by itself to double profitability – and valuation."



