

# Quantum Habits

Incremental Changes, Incredible Results

## PROLOGUE

The ability of the self to change its behavior is known as self-regulation. It considerably improves human behavior's flexibility and adaptability, allowing individuals to modify their activities to a wide variety of social and situational demands. It provides a crucial foundation for free will and socially acceptable action. It benefits both the individual and society. Successful self-regulation appears to play a role in a variety of desirable outcomes, including the performance of tasks, work and school and success, mental health and adjustment, popularity, and good interpersonal relationships.

One of the proven ways to self-regulate, or change behavior, is through small changes in habits. If you incrementally increase each variable that underpins your behavior, you will see a considerable overall improvement. This has been called the Accumulation of Marginal Gains effect.<sup>1</sup>

Breaking bad or addictive habits and replacing them with good ones helps build the desired self.

A new identity emerges with an improved set of behaviors that are more beneficial to the individual and society.

This is the power of Quantum Habits.

## THE POWER OF QUANTUM HABITS

British Cycling's fate changed forever when a new performance director, Sir David John Brailsford, found himself hired by the governing body for professional cycling in the United Kingdom.

A century of dismal performance had thrown a dark shadow, almost a stigma, on British riders. Only one gold medal since 1908, and an even poorer Tour de France record, did not inspire pride and success. Because of the team's well-documented underperformance, one European manufacturer refused to provide bikes to the team for fear of damaging sales. What a slap in the face for British cycling.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3505409/>

They had to do something, so they hired Brailsford to put British Cycling on a more positive track in the hopes of overcoming their dreadful and humiliating history. Brailsford was adamant about applying the concept of "the accumulation of marginal benefits." Implementing small improvements, even as little as 1%, would provide exceptional outcomes in "everything cycling."

That is exactly what happened.

Brailsford's strategy included continually measuring and monitoring crucial variables like riders' power production and training modifications aimed at particular shortcomings, like Bradley Wiggins' relative weakness in mountain racing. It included a more comprehensive approach, including technical breakthroughs, athlete psychology, improved daily living, and conventional components of success like physical conditioning and tactics.<sup>2</sup>

The race is generally won by the rider who creates the greatest power for the longest time while weighing in as light as possible with minimal wind resistance. All of this can be converted into data.<sup>3</sup>

At the "quantum" level, the following incremental changes underwent accumulation.

- Apply alcohol to tires to help them grip better.
- Increase bicycle seat comfort.
- Add electrically heated oversHORTS to the riders' outfits to help support and maintain appropriate muscle temperature.
- Use biofeedback sensors to keep track of each exercise.
- Use a wind tunnel to test aerodynamics.
- Figure out which massage gels provided the fastest relief for painful muscles.
- Hire a surgeon to teach people how to wash their hands properly to avoid becoming sick.
- Select the mattress and pillow to provide the finest night's sleep.
- Paint the inside of vehicles used to transport bikes white to make it easier to notice dust, which reduces performance.

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1. <sup>2</sup> Slater, Matt (5 February 2013). *How Dave Brailsford and Team Sky stormed cycling*. BBC Sport. Retrieved 11 April 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Moore, Richard (2014). *Mastermind: How Dave Brailsford Reinvented the Wheel*. BackPage Press

These changes accumulated over time to provide amazing outcomes far sooner than anticipated, in this case, less than one year. One advantage to this system of identifying things to change is that it fosters a constant team focus on the task. It helped build teamwork.

Brailsford began his career as a program director before moving on to performance director in 2003.

Great Britain won two gold medals in cycling at the 2004 Olympic Games, their best showing since 1908.<sup>4</sup> In the following years, the cycling squad racked up multiple world titles in track, road, mountain bike, and bike motocross racing.

The British squad dominated the road and track cycling events at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. An impressive 60% of the gold went to Great Britain. Four years later, the British team set seven world and nine Olympic records in the London Olympics.

In 2012, Bradley Wiggins won the Tour de France. Chris Froome, a teammate, won the next year and three more. The British had won the Tour de France five times in six years. The greatest successful run in cycling history was built on modest and regular gains. Between 2007 and 2017, the British won 178 world championships, 66 Olympic or Paralympic gold medals, and five Tour de France races.

Use the same strategies as the renowned bikers to get desired outcomes.

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<sup>4</sup> Slater, Matt (14 August 2008). "[How GB cycling went from tragic to magic](#)". *BBC Sport*. Retrieved 11 April 2014.

## HEALTHCARE

One of the leading causes of death in the United Kingdom is preventable medical errors. It claims the lives of more people than car accidents. "Preventable" is the essential word here. These errors should not occur. However, they do regularly.

Why? One of the main reasons is that some physicians are hesitant to recognize their faults and flaws because they are concerned about the impact on their reputation and the possibility of legal action. Consider an alternative approach in which physicians are forthright, transparent, and always seeking ways to improve.

Virginia Mason, a Seattle hospital, employed the "honesty" strategy. Employees were urged to write complaints if anything went wrong, such as mistakenly giving the incorrect prescription. This enabled the hospital to make minor adjustments, such as changing the labeling to make prescriptions more clearly identifiable under time constraints.

This dedication to continual improvement also led to the revelation that a newly arrived patient had been given a color-coded bracelet that said: "Do Not Resuscitate" rather than one that said, "Drug Allergies." As a result, writing was printed on the wristbands. It was yet another sliver of progress.

This was just the beginning. They began employing checklists in the operating room to enhance clinical cleanliness and change the ergonomic design of surgical equipment. Each improvement was small, but they quickly added up.

Virginia Mason has supervised an astounding seventy-four percent drop in liability insurance rates after implementing the new strategy. It is presently considered one of the world's safest hospitals.

## AVIATION

Aviation is a business that benefits from marginal gains. It continually seeks methods to improve, no matter how tiny, to fly safely.

In the 1940s, for example, there were several unexplainable B-17 bomber mishaps. A psychologist was hired by the business to perform an inquiry. He discovered that the controls that managed the flaps of B-17s were similar to those that held the landing gear and that they were situated next to the other. Pilots made a mistake of confusing them under the stress of a tough landing.

A little rubber wheel was added to the landing gear switch, and a small flap shape was affixed to the flap's control as a fast workaround. The buttons now had a clear significance and could be quickly recognized when pressed. This was a little alteration,

a minor tweak to the cockpit designs, yet it had a significant impact. These kinds of mishaps vanished overnight.

This strategy has been used by airlines for decades, with surprising results. In 1912, eight of the fourteen US Army pilots perished in accidents, accounting for more than half of the total. The accident rate for major airlines has reduced to only one impact per 8.3 million takeoffs in 2014.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.agcs.allianz.com/news-and-insights/expert-risk-articles/how-aviation-safety-has-improved.html>

## **WHAT IS A HABIT AND HOW DO THEY RELATE TO SUCCESS?**

A habit is a behavior or routine that automatically displays regular performance. Habits act as energy-saving behavioral patterns in reaction to a stimulus. Habits are established through repetition.

Small but consistent positive changes to habits lead to impressive and surprising results.

Good habits and small changes can compound into remarkable success. The quality of life becomes dependent upon the quality of our habits. Better habits lead to a better life. An incremental and lifetime plan for sculpting improved habits helps achieve what you want in life. Science backs this up.

Integrating behavioral and cognitive science shows how our feelings, thoughts, and moods shape our fundamental behavior. Principles regarding fundamental behavior can help you build a family, a business, or an empire.

## **A SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE**

According to studies, around 40% of people's regular tasks are conducted in almost identical conditions every day. Associative learning is how habits form. ' We discover patterns of conduct that enable us to achieve our objectives. We repeat what works, and when behaviors are repeated in a stable setting, we establish connections between signals and reactions, according to a researcher.

Habits that we have developed throughout the course of our lives take up a large portion of our everyday lives. Practice has the advantage of being automatic, since we do not always see patterns in our behavior. According to studies, over 40% of people's everyday actions are carried out in almost identical conditions. Associative learning is how practices evolve. We discover patterns of conduct that enable us to achieve our objectives. We repeat what works, and we establish associations between signals and responses when we repeat acts in a stable environment.

What exactly are habits?

Scientists emphasize the neurology of habits, emphasizing how they have a distinct brain imprint. You use your associative basal ganglia to learn a response, which includes the prefrontal cortex and supports working memory so you can make choices. The information in your brain gets rearranged when you repeat the action in the same situation. It switches to the sensory-motor loop, which maintains representations of cue response connections but no longer keeps track of the objective or result. This change from goal-directed to context cue response sheds light on why our routines are so inflexible.

There is a twofold mind at work. We behave in ways that fulfill the anticipated goal when our deliberate mind is engaged, and we are usually conscious of our objectives.

Intentions may shift swiftly because we have the ability to make conscious judgments about what we want to do in the future, which may vary from what we have done in the past. Our habits, on the other hand, operate mostly outside of consciousness when the habitual mind is engaged. We can not simply define how or why we do what we do, and they evolve slowly over time. Our thoughts do not always work together in the greatest manner. You cannot make yourself modify your habitual conduct even if you know the correct response

Participants in a research project were instructed to taste popcorn. As predicted, fresh popcorn was preferred to old popcorn. People who had a practice of eating popcorn at the movies ate exactly as close as participants in the new popcorn group when they were offered popcorn in a movie theater. When people's attentive, deliberate minds are readily distracted, they revert to their old habits. We are not thinking about what we are doing 40% of the time. Habits enable us to concentrate on other things. Willpower is a finite resource, and when it runs out, we revert to our old behaviors."

What can we do to alter our habits?

The goal of public service announcements, educational initiatives, community workshops, and weight-loss programs is to improve your everyday routines. Are they, however, effective? These commonplace approaches have a high rate of effectiveness in improving motivation and desire. You will nearly always leave with the impression that you can and want to change. The programs provide you with the necessary information and goal-setting skills, but they only target the purposeful mind.

According to research on the "Take 5" initiative, 35% of those asked to believe they should eat five fruits and vegetables every day. Based on that outcome, the nationwide campaign was successful in instilling in people the importance of eating five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. When you ask what individuals are eating, though, the data changes. Only 11% of participants said they had achieved their aim. The program altered people's goals but did not affect their habits.

When it comes to modifying habitual behavior, according to Wood, there are three important elements to keep in mind. To begin, you must first disrupt old routines and create a window of opportunity to act on new goals. Someone who relocates to a new place or changes employment is in the ideal situation to break old habits and form new ones. It is simpler to build a new behavior when the lines for current patterns are deleted. Make tiny modifications if you cannot change your whole surroundings by transferring cities. If you want to lose weight or eat healthier, put unhealthy items on the top shelf, out of reach, or at the back of the freezer instead than in front.

The second point is to remember the importance of repetition. According to studies, forming a new habit might take anywhere from 15 to 254 days. Finally, reliable context cues are required to initiate a new pattern. If the action is repeated in a certain environment, it is simpler to retain. Flossing after brushing helps you to use brushing as

a reminder to floss. Reversing the two habits is less effective than developing a new flossing habit. The importance of having a beginning line cannot be overstated.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140808111931.htm>

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