



Easier Done than Said! – Marginal Gains

I know what you're thinking. The title is backwards. The proper saying is "easier said than done", meaning that most people have great ideas and intentions in conversation but when it comes to implementation, that's another story. Gym club owners are no different than other entrepreneurs and business people. We all get so wrapped up in the passion of the business and building the business that we have trouble finding the time to figure out a plan for gym equipment maintenance. While in general I usually agree with those that state "if you don't have a plan, you are planning to fail". I agree that is, unless you have a good habit or a worthwhile ritual.

So, in this case, what I'm suggesting is that you stop thinking about equipment maintenance or an inspection plan, and just do it! My reasoning for this is based on several articles that I've recently read on Sir David Brailsford. If you are not familiar with the name, he's the individual most responsible for turning around the British Cycling Program, and the person who has popularized the expression "marginal gains".

As a brief background, you should know that the British Cycling Program had gone for its entire span of creation winning only one medal, a bronze. Sir David was a cyclist, but not a champion, he was not a coach, and he wasn't a trainer. Just after the Athens Olympics in 2004 he was put in charge of managing the British Cycling program and winning medals. Not being sure what to do, and not having the money to hire the best coaches in the world or building the best training facilities, he just started doing "little things".

His first marginal gain during the Tour de France was standardizing the sleeping arrangements during the race ensuring that lack of rest was not an issue in performance. Next step was diet, nutrition, and fuel. Others were smaller, chains, rims, headgear, and more. His thought was that enough small or marginal gains would eventually add up to a big improvement. I believe we do this in coaching gymnastics. Marginal gains like toe point, and finger placement are all part of training and a performance. The key is that these little things start to add up and a collection of marginal gains adds up to large improvements.

With the long-term goal of a cleaner, safer, more marketable gym, we can all pick one very small thing that will add to the overall safety of the gym. Maybe it's always checking the lock on the uneven bar load binder before the children arrive. Or maybe it's walking the floor and feeling for splits in the foam or lost hair pins. Whatever it is, just do it. That one little action is easier to do than writing the plan. Start today and maybe next week you or a co-worker will add a second marginal gain and your maintenance plan has begun. It's easier to record what you're doing than writing what you intend to do. And as you continue to accumulate these actions, while setting an example for all staff, you will be adding up the marginal gains and approaching a habit of gym inspections and an overall safer gym.

Gym owners wear many hats in running their business and gym maintenance and safety is just one, and the overall idea of a cleaner safer gym will be a marginal gain in conducting more organized and efficient practices and yes a better business. Yes, marginal gains have a compound effect. Mmmm... Compound effect? Sounds like a good topic for another day.

Make it a fun and safe gym day!

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