

Small, Incremental Adjustments to Make for Significant Gains



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“Monash University conducted a 12-week study of fully-laden 68 tonne B-Double road trains. The results showed that simply by using eco-driving techniques a 27% reduction in fuel consumption was achieved. The techniques used included anticipating traffic flow, skipping gears when changing up, changing gears at lower engine revolutions, and braking less forcefully and less often.”

I recently read the above statement on the Australian government’s Energy Efficiency Exchange website (eex.gov.au) and it made me think about how in business, we are often looking for opportunities to make big savings, boost productivity, increase profit margins and improve customer service and satisfaction; yet we often forget that we don’t necessarily require huge adjustments to influence the change we desire.

The above example shows how a focus on careful braking might be a small adjustment to driver behaviour, that results in a small fuel saving (and wear & tear savings), but when combined with multiple other small, incremental adjustments, significant change can result. Imagine what a 27% fuel saving is worth to a transport company!

In previous articles, I have covered how managing your fleet safety can result in significant savings and how the simple act of regularly monitoring tyre pressures can make a big difference, but what about all the other little stuff? How can you find all the small, incremental adjustments in your business, that will lead to significant outcomes?

Keeping in mind your company goals, consider the following:

Culture

- Encourage your team to find ways to increase productivity, reduce costs and improve the customer experience.
- Reward employees that show this sort of initiative.

Customers

- Service, Service, SERVICE! There couldn't be an easier way to maintain margin, improve repeat business, increase word of mouth advertising, reduce churn...
- Ask your customers how you could be serving them better.
- Do you have some customers that cost you much more than they are worth?
- Do you have some customers that you could be selling much more to?

Technology

Technology offers a myriad of opportunities to achieve the outcomes we're after but some of what's on offer either can't demonstrate a return on the outlay or might score high on affordability, yet eat up time (due to being too slow or having poor support.) Or it might have so many steps, or so many bugs, that it makes things worse than the old manual process!

It's also worth keeping an eye on trends to see what new opportunities are on the horizon, that might give you a competitive edge.

So it's essential to do your homework when investing in Hardware and Software Solutions...

Software

- Can the vendor demonstrate a proven track record?
- Can they also demonstrate a clear ROI?
- Can you find complete business solutions that "kill many birds with one stone" (such as simPRO's Job Management solutions).
- Are these solutions scalable as your business grows?
- Are they cloud-based solutions or will you also need to invest heavily in servers or additional hardware and infrastructure? • Can the vendor provide excellent support?
- Is the vendor known for their ongoing product development and innovation?

Hardware

- How much use is the product going to get?
- Is it fit for purpose? • Is it cost effective to maintain?
- Is it future-proof?
- Can cloud solutions remove the need for purchasing the device?
- Would faster hardware enable staff to be more productive?
- Are the warranty terms and support provided, going to be sufficient?

GPS Fleet Management

It would be remiss of me to not mention GPS Fleet Management, as I have been involved in the GPS industry since 2001 and have seen how the technology has transformed thousands of businesses. It becomes such an integral part of a business that customers wonder how they ever did without it!

Check my LinkedIn Profile for the many blogs and articles I have written on the subject, including how the many small incremental adjustments you make to your fleet management system add up to massive gains.

Please connect with me or message me if you'd like any further advice or assistance.

Suppliers

Review supplier relationships and ensure you're getting greatest value and best service. It sounds simple, but when did you last review your courier? When did you last review the way you purchase office consumables? Are you really getting the best value and the best service? Are you getting access to the latest and greatest product (as well as just the tried and true)?

Audit

In addition to reviewing suppliers, you need to review all aspects of the business, with a fine-tooth comb, to ensure you're running a tight ship.

Consultants

We can't all know everything and sometimes our judgement can be clouded, so often it's better to "call in the experts". This can also make sure that your audits and reviews are independent and free from emotion. This doesn't have to be expensive. Many modern Business Development Managers will be able to review your business in their field of expertise and offer a range of options and advice. The very best will also recommend a competitor product when their product is not a suitable fit.

Often it costs nothing to investigate your options and get the advice of the experts but, for truly independent advice, it's often best to pay!

Job/Workflow Management

Service companies need to review this as a priority, as this is where some of the biggest gains can be made. To discuss software and hardware solutions to assist with improving this aspect of your business, please feel free to contact me, or one of my colleagues at simPRO Software.

Operations

Anyone performing any kind of manual task will have room to improve their process to improve productivity. This is where it can be worth calling in the experts or looking at incentives, competitions or gamification to encourage operational efficiency within your workforce.

Marketing

It might sound like common sense but, if you're not constantly monitoring, benchmarking, measuring and adjusting your marketing strategy, bring in a consultant or get reading!

Monitor

Remember, the idea is to always be inching forwards, so when you have made the effort to implement the best processes possible, there needs to be a programme of constant review, audit and fine-tuning, to ensure the changes are being adhered to and further enhancements are being made, wherever possible.

This also means that certain adjustments don't go too far and have a negative impact - keeping a close eye means you can reverse any "mistakes" quickly and limit the impact.

Be Careful!

While it's important to audit your business to look for improvements, pure cost cutting, or working harder or faster rather than smarter, can be detrimental. In all of this, you need to be thinking about the end result for you, your staff and most importantly - your customers. If you end up completely destroying staff morale, or impacting quality in the pursuit of quantity, or cutting customer service measures to simply cut costs, you'll fall short of your goals and will likely go backwards rather than forwards!

In summary, we are often looking for the big ideas to take our businesses to the next level and often don't even look at cost saving measures or productivity boosting techniques until the business is under pressure. I hope I have shown that, just by keeping an eye out for small opportunities to save or to gain an edge, it can all add up to a significant positive change.