**Originals: How Nonconformists Move the World**

By Adam Grant

Reviewed by Unity Puente

**About the Author**

Adam Grant is a leading expert on how we can find motivation and meaning and live more generous and creative lives. He has been recognized as one of the world’s 10 most influential management thinkers and Fortune’s 40 under 40.

Adam earned his Ph.D. in organizational psychology from the University of Michigan and a B.A. from Harvard University, magna cum laude with the highest honors.

**About the Book**

*Originals* is about how to champion new ideas and fight “groupthink”. Using surprising studies and stories spanning business, politics, sports, and entertainment, Grant explores how to recognize a good idea, speak up without getting silenced, build a coalition of allies, choose the right time to act, and manage fear and doubt; how parents and teachers can nurture originality in children; and how leaders can build cultures that welcome dissent.

“Originals is one of the most important and captivating books I have ever read, full of surprising and powerful ideas. It will not only change the way you see the world; it might just change the way you live your life. And it could very well inspire you to change your world.”

- Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and author of *Lean In*

**Three Themes:**

- Speaking Up
- Timing
- Cultivating

Blue Sky Leadership Consulting works with organizations to leverage Strategic Thinking and Execution Planning and we encompass many of the principles in these books into our Four Decisions™ methodology and development of your company’s One Page Strategic Plans. Need to grow top line revenue? Improve bottom-line profits? Build accountable and trusting teams? Improve cash flow? Develop leadership team members? Contact us for a free consultation.
Creative Destruction
The Risky Business of Going Against the Grain

The last time you had an original idea, what did you do with it? Although America is a land of individuality and unique self-expression, in search of excellence and in fear of failure, most of us opt to fit in rather than stand out. The pressure to achieve leads us to do the opposite. We find surface ways of appearing original, without taking the risk of actually being original. When it comes to the powerful ideas in our heads and the core values in our hearts, we censor ourselves. There are so few originals in life because people are afraid to “speak up and stand out.

- Originals are people who take initiative to make their visions a reality.
- The hallmark of originality is rejecting the default and exploring whether a better option exists.
- Advocating for new systems often requires demolishing the old way of doing things, and we hold back for fear of rocking the boat.
- Having a sense of security in one realm gives us freedom to be original in another.

Blind Inventors and One-Eyed Investors
The Art and Science of Recognizing Original Ideas

The biggest barrier to originality is not idea generation—it’s idea selection.

False Positive: Segway - Time magazine called it one of the biggest technology flops
- Inventor was too quick to settle to truly solving transportation problems
- Not open to feedback from employees
- Products don’t create value, customers do

False Negative: Seinfeld - One greatest TV programs of all time
- We are quick to reject novelty
- As we gain knowledge about a domain, we become prisoners of our prototypes
- We often speak of the wisdom of crowds, but we need to be careful about which crowds we’re considering.

Book Review: Originals
Out on a Limb
Speaking Truth to Power

At some point, we’ve all considered voicing a minority opinion, protesting a policy that doesn’t make sense, championing a novel way of doing things, or standing up for a disadvantaged group of people. What are the right times to raise your voices, and what steps can we take to get heard?

Research shows that the mistakes we regret are not errors of commission, but errors of omission. If we could do things over, most of us would censor ourselves less and express our ideas more.

Fools Rush In
Timing, Strategic Procrastination, and the First-Mover Disadvantage

Procrastination can be conducive to originality. Procrastination may be the enemy of productivity, but it can be a resource for creativity. Some of the most original thinkers and inventors in history have been procrastinators.

• Carmen Medina, CIA analyst in the 90’s.
• Recognized a problem of poor method to share critical information across the intelligence community.
• Instead of printing reports, share over classified internet
• Rose the ranks to Deputy Director of Intelligence
• 2008 – Intellipedia (Wikipedia for intelligence agencies)
• Won the Service to America Homeland Security Medal

Martin Luther King, Jr. final speaker at March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He knew about 5-minute speech two months prior yet was still working on it in the middle of the night.
• “I have a dream” was not in his original script.
When you procrastinate, you’re intentionally delaying work that needs to be done. You might be thinking about the task, but you postpone making real progress on it or finishing to do something less productive. You buy yourself time to engage in divergent thinking rather than foreclosing on one particular idea. As a result, you consider a wider range of original concepts and ultimately choose a more novel direction.

**Timing accounts for 42% of the difference between success and failure for start-ups.**

Research shows that in American culture, people believe strongly in a first-mover advantage. We want to be leaders, not followers. Scientists rush to make discoveries ahead of their rivals; inventors hurry to apply for patents before their adversaries; entrepreneurs aspire to launch before their competitors. If you’re first out of the gate with a new product, service, or technology, you can move up the learning curve earlier, gobble up prime space, and monopolize customers.

**Pioneers:** First movers, initial company to develop or sell a product

**Settlers:** Watch and learn from the pioneers

### Goldilocks and the Trojan Horse
*Creating and Maintaining Coalitions*

- Lucy Stone, Women’s Suffrage Leader
- First woman in America to keep her own name after getting married.
- First woman in Massachusetts to earn a degree.
- First American to be a full-time lecturer for women’s rights.
- Inspired Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
- 27 years after her death, 19th Amendment passed

### Enemies Make Better Allies Than Frenemies

In The Godfather: Part II, Michael Corleone advises, “Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.” But what should we do about people who don’t fall neatly into either category? Typically, we view our relationships on a continuum from positive to negative. Our closest friends have our backs; our greatest enemies are actively working against us. But research shows that we need to draw two independent axes: one for how positive a relationship is and a separate one for how negative the relationship is. Along purely positive and wholly negative relationships, we can have connections that are both positive and negative. Psychologists call them ambivalent relationships. You might know them as your frenemies—people who sometimes support you and sometimes undermine you.
Our instinct is to sever our bad relationships and salvage the ambivalent ones. But evidence suggests we ought to do the opposite, cut our frenemies and attempt to convert our enemies. Ambivalent relationships actually cause more stress and health problems than purely negative relationships. When it comes to frenemies, Forrest Gump said it best: you never know what you’re gonna get. At least enemies are predictable.

Goldilocks pitch: Originality is what everybody wants, but there’s a sweet spot. It it’s not original enough, it’s too boring or trite. If it’s too original, it may be hard for your audience to understand. The goal is to push the envelope, not tear the envelope.

Rebel with a Cause
How Siblings, Parents, and Mentors Nurture Originality

• Firstborns typically set up for success, benefitting from undivided attention, time and energy.
• Younger siblings have the higher propensity to take risks
• Older siblings tend to have more conventional careers
• Laterborns tend to be more rebellious
• Baseball players: birth order predicted which brother tried to steal more bases

Patterns are not set in stone. Birth order doesn’t determine who you are; it only affects the probability that you’ll develop in a particular way.

When many of us make decisions, we follow a logic of consequence: Which course of action will produce the best results? If you like to challenge the status quo, you operate differently, using instead a logic of appropriateness: What does a person like me do in a situation like this? Rather than looking outward in an attempt to predict the outcome, you turn inward to your identity. You base the decision on who you are---or who you want to be.

When we use the logic of consequence, we can always find the reasons not to take risks. The logic of appropriateness frees us up. We think less about what will guarantee the outcome we want, and act more on the visceral sense of what someone like us ought to do.

Nouns are better than verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your artwork is creative.</th>
<th>You are a creative.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you help?</td>
<td>Can you be a helper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please don’t cheat.</td>
<td>Please don’t be a cheater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Drink and Drive</td>
<td>Don’t be a Drunk Driver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent and Teacher Actions

- Ask children what their role models would do
- Link good behaviors to moral character
- Explain how bad behaviors have consequences for others
- Emphasize values over rules
- Create novel niches for children to pursue

Rethinking Groupthink

*The Myths of Strong Cultures, Cults, and Devil’s Advocates*

**Groupthink:** the tendency to seek consensus instead of fostering dissent.

Groupthink is the enemy of originality; people feel pressured to conform to the dominant, default views instead of championing diversity of thought.

> “Don’t bring me_________________; bring me________________________.”

A culture that focuses too heavily on solutions becomes a culture of advocacy, dampening inquiry. If you’re always expected to have an answer ready, you’ll arrive at meetings with your diagnosis complete, missing out on the chance to learn from a broad range of perspectives. Getting problems noted is half the battle against groupthink; the other is listening to the right opinions about how to solve them.

Rocking the Boat and Keeping it Steady

*Managing Anxiety, Apathy, Ambivalence, and Anger*

The positive power of negative thinking.

**Strategic optimists:** Anticipate the best, staying calm, and setting high expectations.

**Defensive pessimists:** Expect the worst, feeling anxious, and imaging all the things that can go wrong.
Most people assume it’s better to be a strategic optimist than a defensive pessimist, but defensive pessimism is a strategy used in specific situations to manage anxiety, fear, and worry. When self-doubt creeps in, defensive pessimists don’t allow themselves to be crippled by fear. They deliberately imagine a disaster scenario to intensify their anxiety and convert it into motivation. Once they’ve considered the worst, they’re driven to avoid it, considering every relevant detail to make sure they don’t crash and burn, which enables them to feel a sense of control.

**Actions for Impact to Unleash Originality**

**Individual Actions**

*Generating and Recognizing Original Ideas*
- Question the default, challenge the status quo
- Triple your number of ideas
- Immerse yourself in something new
- Procrastinate strategically
- Seek more feedback from peers

*Voicing and Championing Your Original Ideas*
- Balance your risk portfolio
- Highlight the reasons not to support your idea, transparency upfront on the challenges
- Make your ideas more familiar, find what will resonate with your audience
- Speak to a different audience
- Be a tempered radical

*Managing Emotions*
- Motivate yourself differently when your committed vs. uncertain
- Don’t try to calm down, apply your excitement
- Focus on the victim, not the perpetrator
- Realize you’re not alone
- Remember that if you don’t take initiative, the status quo will persist

“*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.*” – Margaret Mead
Actions

What thought, or idea had the biggest impact on you today?

What is one specific action you will take TODAY from what was discussed?

HOW will you implement this action?

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Calendar of Events

First Friday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 7:30 – 9:00 [Sponsor: UTSA EMBA Alumni Association]
- Oct 5
- Nov 2
- Dec 7th

Wine & Cheese Wednesday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 5:30 – 7:00 PM [Sponsor: Haworth]
- Oct 10th
- Nov 7th
- Dec 5th

Second Tuesday – Wittigs 401 William St. Corpus Christi 5:30 – 7:00 PM [Sponsor: Wittigs & Haworth]
- Oct 9th
- Nov 13th
- Dec 11th

Fourth Thursday – Haworth 2 E Greenway Plaza #100 Houston 11:30 – 1:00 [Sponsor: Haworth & Wittigs]
- Oct 25th
- Nov 15th
- Dec 13th

Fourth Friday – Alpha Home 419 E. Magnolia Ave. San Antonio 8:00 – 9:30 [Sponsor: Alpha Home]
- Oct 26th
- Nov 16th
- Dec 14th