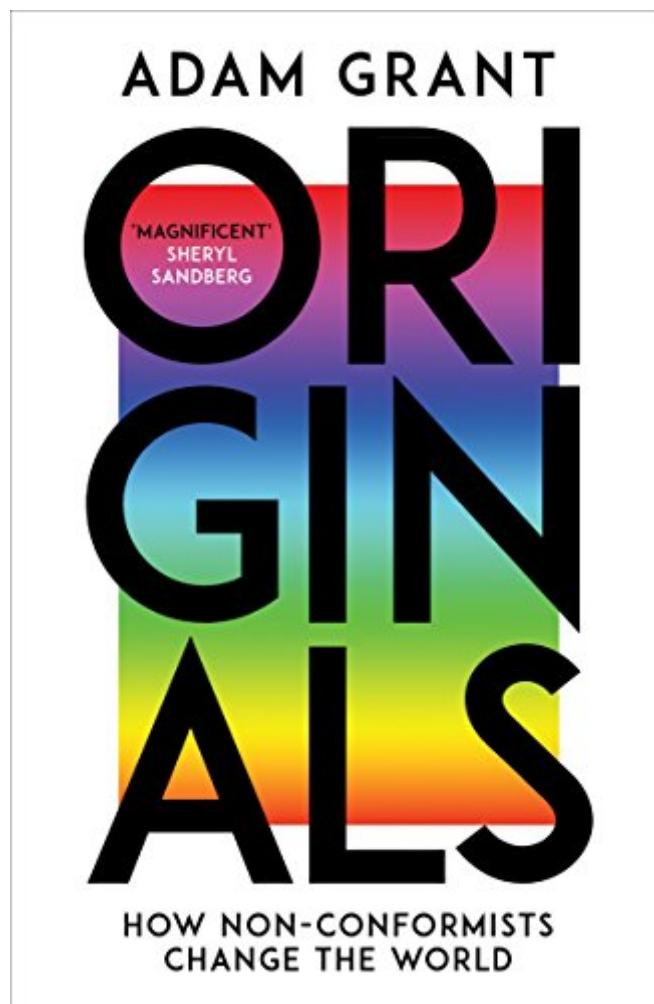


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# Originals: How Non-conformists Change The World



## **Synopsis**

Author examines how people can drive creative, moral, and organisational progress "and how leaders can encourage originality in their organisations. How can we originate new ideas, policies and practices without risking it all? Adam Grant shows how to improve the world by championing novel ideas and values that go against the grain, battling conformity, and bucking outdated traditions. 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. Parents will learn how to nurture originality in children, and leaders will discover how to fight groupthink to build cultures that welcome dissent. Told through dazzling case studies of people going against the grain, you'll encounter an entrepreneur who pitches the reasons not to invest, a woman at Apple who challenged Steve Jobs from three levels below, an analyst who challenged secrecy at the CIA, a billionaire financial wizard who fires employees who don't criticize him, and the TV executive who saved Seinfeld from the cutting room floor. Originals will give you groundbreaking insights about rejecting conformity and how to change the world.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World by Adam Grant

"Originals" is an entertaining social-science book on how we can become more original. Referencing research and many studies, best-selling author Adam Grant explores what it takes to be creative and champion new ideas. This enlightening 335-page book includes the following eight chapters: 1. Creative Destruction, 2. Blind Inventors and One-Eyed Investors, 3. Out on a Limb, 4. Fools Rush In, 5. Goldilocks and the Trojan Horse, 6. Rebel with a Cause, 7. Rethinking Groupthink, and 8. Rocking the Boat and Keeping It Steady.

Positives:

1. A well-researched, well-written book. It's entertaining and fun to read.
2. Interesting topic, the social science of originality.
3. Very good format. Each chapter begins with a chapter-appropriate quote and it's broken out by subtopics.
4. Does a good job of defining originality and staying on topic. By my definition, originality involves introducing and advancing an idea that's relatively unusual within a particular domain, and that has the potential to improve it.
5. In many respects this narrative resembles books from the likes of Malcolm Gladwell and Daniel H. Pink and that's not a bad thing.
6. The faults in defaults. To get Firefox or Chrome, you have to demonstrate some resourcefulness and download a different browser. Instead of accepting the default, you take a bit of initiative to seek out an option that might be better. And that act of initiative, however tiny, is a window into what you do at work.
7. The hallmark of originality is rejecting the default and exploring whether a better option exists.
8. Interesting tidbits of knowledge throughout the book. The word entrepreneur, as it was coined by economist Richard Cantillon, literally means "bearer of risk".
9. Debunks some myths or preconceptions that I carried.
10. Entrepreneurs who kept their day jobs had 33 percent lower odds of failure than those who quit.
11. Having a sense of security in one realm gives us the freedom to be original in another.
12. The barriers of originality. The biggest barrier to originality is not idea generation, it's idea selection.
13. The book is loaded with examples and interesting characters. The story of the great inventor Dean Kamen is a highlight.
14. When it comes to idea generation, quantity is the most predictable path to quality.
15. The limitations of originality. Our intuitions are only accurate in domains where we have a lot of experience.
16. An interesting and practical chapter on when to speak up and how to do it effectively.
17. Power involves exercising control or authority over others;

status is being respected and admired.<sup>14</sup> An interesting look at procrastination. Pioneers vs settlers. <sup>15</sup> Power involves exercising control or authority over others; status is being respected and admired.<sup>16</sup> How to overcome barriers that prevent coalitions from succeeding. <sup>17</sup> To form alliances with opposing groups, it's best to temper the cause, cooling it as much as possible. Yet to draw allies into joining the cause itself, what's needed is a moderately tempered message that is neither too hot nor too cold, but just right.<sup>18</sup> Interesting look at the impact of birth order as it relates to originality. <sup>19</sup> Laterborns were twice as likely as firstborns to support radical changes.<sup>20</sup> The evidence on birth order highlights the importance of giving children freedom to be original.<sup>21</sup> Observations to live by. <sup>22</sup> In general, we tend to be overconfident about our own invulnerability to harm.<sup>23</sup> Some lessons on groupthink. <sup>24</sup> The evidence suggests that social bonds don't drive groupthink; the culprits are overconfidence and reputational concerns.<sup>25</sup> Bridgewater has prevented groupthink by inviting dissenting opinions from every employee in the company.<sup>26</sup> The positive power of negative thinking. <sup>27</sup> Most people assume it's better to be a strategic optimist than a defensive pessimist. Yet Norem finds that although defensive pessimists are more anxious and less confident in analytical, verbal, and creative tasks, they perform just as well as strategic optimists.<sup>28</sup> A practical overview. <sup>29</sup> Actions for Impact

**Negatives:**

1. Social science is not a hard science. Though fun, entertaining and even enlightening we engineers are skeptical of it.
2. Limited use of charts and diagrams to complement the excellent narrative.
3. Lack of supplementary materials. I would have added an appendix explaining methodology used to come up with conclusions.
4. References included but no direct links to access them in the body of the narrative thus eliminating one of the great advantages of eBooks.

In summary, this was a fun book to read. The first section of the book on managing risks involved in generating, recognizing, and voicing original ideas I felt was its strongest. The second section dealt with the choices that we make to scale originality. The third section dealt with unleashing and sustaining originality, and Grant closes the book on emotions. The biggest criticism of this book is the fact that social science is not a hard science so some of the conclusions come across as coincidental or speculative. Grant is a master of noticing patterns but I still have a little reluctance to take all at face value. Interesting nonetheless, I recommend it!

**Further recommendations:**

- <sup>30</sup> *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* by Daniel H. Pink, <sup>31</sup> *Collaborate or Perish!: Reaching Across Boundaries in a Networked World* by William Bratton and Zachary Tumin, <sup>32</sup> *Outliers* and <sup>33</sup> *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell, <sup>34</sup> *Just Start* by Leonard A. Schlesinger, <sup>35</sup> *Switch* by

by Chip and Dan Heath, "Get Lucky: How to Put Planned Serendipity to Work for You and Your Business" by Thor Muller and Lane Becker "inGenius" by Tina Seelig, "Work with Me" by Barbara Annis and John Gray, "Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't" by Jeffrey Pfeffer, "The Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg, "Rebounders: How Winners Pivot from Setback to Success" by Rick Newman, and "Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" by Daniel H. Pink.

My personal bias—I love the work that Adam Grant does. So, read no further if that bothers you about my objectivity as a reviewer. Grant, a young, uber-smart and engaging professor at Wharton, might just be the latter-day Peter Drucker, only much cooler! In *Originals*, Grant teaches us how to develop new ideas and how to vet them; how to pitch those ideas to others; when to trust our gut and when not to; the difference between power and status and so much more! He also busts some interesting myths like how successful entrepreneurs are not hyper-risk takers—rather, they hedge their bets; how the creative problem solvers are often not experts in their fields; and, how procrastination can be your friend—every writer in the world should now rejoice! Grant uses academic studies, stats and stories from unexpected places to punctuate a well-orchestrated text. For example, he tells about how the show *Seinfeld* barely made it to TV and how it took a very special NBC executive with broad, varied experience to have the courage to put his reputation on the line. And as a huge *Seinfeld* fan, I personally salute him! Finally, I would encourage you to read Sheryl Sandberg's foreword, because not only does she do a very good overview of the book while praising the author for his talent, but she also praises Grant for his empathetic heart. When Sandberg's husband suddenly died, Grant dropped what he was doing and flew across the country to be with her in her darkest hours. Grant, like his book, is an Original!

This book is full of interesting and useful ideas on creativity, innovation, and management. The author draws from the findings of a great deal of academic research, which is very useful. He is, nevertheless, brief in explaining how the experiments have been carried out by his fellow academics. In presenting the findings as given, he allows little room for readers to judge for themselves the limitations, or validity, of the quoted findings. I also find the writing to lose focus at times. The book is written in plain English, which is easy and enjoyable to read. It is recommended for readers in general.

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