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Originals

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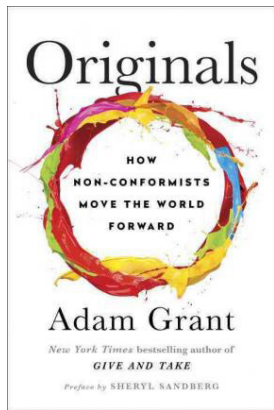
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MSR Bookshelf

Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World

By Adam Grant

Reviewed Tanner Hafen



If you want to be more creative, you should probably learn how to procrastinate better. This is just one of the surprising insights you can glean from Adam Grant's *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, a book about fostering original thought and creativity to

change your life, your work, and the world.

Grant is an organizational psychologist at Wharton and is well suited to write on this topic. Drawing on examples ranging from business executives to Serbian revolutionaries and coupling these examples with a wealth of academic research, he illustrates that what makes a person original isn't what you usually expect. He starts with the story of the innovative online glasses retailer, Warby Parker, (and points out his personal failure in not investing in Parker's original business idea). Through these examples, Grant illustrates how to do the following:

- Identify someone who is an original,
- Communicate and advocate effectively for original ideas,
- Introduce a new thought or way of doing thing with the right timing,
- Find the best people to work with when pushing an original idea,

- Predict originality in a person because of the (surprising) impact of family birth order, and
- Cultivate a culture of originality.

Throughout the book, material is presented in a humorous and thought-provoking way, which makes *Originals* an enjoyable and interesting read.

Though Grant uses somewhat larger-than-life examples to illustrate his points, he ably does so in a way that lets the reader apply the principles of originality to themselves. For example, in the section discussing the effects of birth order on originality, I couldn't help but think about my own family experiences in the context of his points, and I gained some valuable insights. The personal application of these principles can go beyond professional development.

Grant does an excellent job of challenging the reader's preconceived notions, presenting a new way to look at originality. For instance, did you know that Martin Luther King Jr. improvised the most memorable part of his "I Have a Dream" speech? Or that dramatically performing on the side makes a scientist more likely to win the Nobel Prize? Or that *Seinfeld* nearly didn't make it onto TV? Using fascinating stories and current research, Grant clearly and methodically explains that what we have been taught about original people and ideas probably isn't true.

Originals is a refreshing take on originality and what it takes to be an original in your own life. Grant provides a wealth of material to help the reader pursue that path, as well as providing a thoroughly enjoyable book to boot.