

Original

Adam Grant—2016

1: Creative Destruction

- What made the difference was how they obtained the browser. If you own a PC, Internet Explorer is built into Windows. If you're a Mac user, your computer came preinstalled with Safari. Almost two thirds of the customer service agents used the default browser, never questioning whether a better one was available.
- The employees who took the initiative to change their browsers to Firefox or Chrome approached their jobs differently
- Without a vuja de event, Warby Parker wouldn't have existed. When the founders were sitting in the computer lab on the night they conjured up the company, they had spent a combined sixty years wearing glasses. The product had always been unreasonably expensive. But until that moment, they had taken the status quo for granted, never questioning the default price.
- In one study, elementary school teachers listed their favorite and least favorite students, and then rated both groups on a list of characteristics. The least favorite students were the non-conformists who made up their own rules. Teachers tend to discriminate against highly creative students, labeling them as troublemakers. In response, many children quickly learn to get with the program, keeping their original ideas to themselves. In the language of author William Deresiewicz, they become the world's most excellent sheep.
- **If you think** like most people, you'll predict a clear advantage for the risk takers. Yet the study showed the exact opposite: Entrepreneurs who kept their day jobs had 33 percent lower odds of failure than those who quit.
- Managing a balanced risk portfolio doesn't mean constantly hovering in the middle of the spectrum by taking moderate risks. Instead, successful originals take extreme risks in one arena and offset them with extreme caution in another.
- In one representative study of over eight hundred Americans, entrepreneurs and employed adults were asked to choose which of the following three ventures they would prefer to start:
 - One that made \$5 million in profit with a 20 percent chance of success
 - One that made \$2 million in profit with a 50 percent chance of success
 - One that made \$1.25 million in profit with an 80 percent chance of success
- **The entrepreneurs** were significantly more likely to choose the last option, the safest one. This was true regardless of income, wealth, age, gender, entrepreneurial experience, marital status, education, household size, and expectations of how well other businesses would perform. "We find that entrepreneurs are significantly more risk-averse than the general population," the authors conclude. These are just preferences on a survey. But when you track entrepreneurs' real-world behavior, it's clear that they avoid dangerous risks. Economists find that as teenagers, successful entrepreneurs were nearly three times as likely as their peers to break rules and engage in illicit activities.

2: Blind Inventors and One-Eyed Investors.

- When we bemoan the lack of originality in the world, we blame it on the absence of creativity. If only people could generate more novel ideas, we'd all be better off. But in reality, the biggest barrier to originality is not idea generation—it's idea selection.
- If originals aren't reliable judges of the quality of their ideas, how do they maximize their odds of creating a masterpiece? They come up with a large number of ideas. Simonton finds that on average, creative geniuses weren't qualitatively better in their fields than their peers. They simply produced a greater volume of work, which gave them more variation and a higher chance of originality. "The odds of producing an influential or successful idea," Simonton notes, are "a positive function of the total number of ideas generated."
- If you want to be original, "the most important possible thing you could do," says Ira Glass, the producer of *This American Life* and the podcast *Serial*, "is do a lot of work. Do huge volume of work."
- But there is one group of forecasters that does come close to attaining mastery: fellow creators evaluating one another's ideas. In Berg's study of circus acts, the most accurate predictors of whether a video would get liked, shared, and funded were peers evaluating one another.
- **Instead** of attempting to assess our own originality or seeking feedback from managers, we ought to turn more often to our colleagues.
- It is when people have moderate expertise in a particular domain that they're the most open to radically creative ideas.

Artistic hobby	Odds for Nobel Prize winners relative to typical scientists
Music: playing an instrument, composing, conducting	2x greater
Arts: drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting	7x greater
Crafts: woodworking, mechanics, electronics, glassblowing	7.5x greater
Writing: poetry, plays, novels, short stories, essays, popular books	12x greater
Performing: amateur actor, dancer, magician	22x greater

- A Representative study of thousands of Americans showed similar results for entrepreneurs and inventors. People who started businesses and contributed to patent applications were more likely than their peers to have leisure time hobbies that involved drawing, painting. Architecture, sculpture, and literature.
- Being a creator in one particular area doesn't make you a great forecaster in others. To accurately predict the success of a novel idea, it's best to be a creator in the domain you're judging.
- Instead of limiting access to the ideas and leaving it up to managers to decide which ones to pursue and implement, Warby Parker made the suggestions completely transparent in a Google document. Everyone in the company could read them, comment on them online. And discuss them in a biweekly meeting.

3: Out on a Limb

- When we're trying to influence others and we discover that they don't respect us, it fuels a vicious cycle of resentment. In an effort to assert our own authority, we respond by resorting to increasingly disrespectful behaviors. The most shocking demonstration of this vicious cycle occurred when researchers asked people to work on a task in pairs, and gave one person power over what tasks the other would have to carry out to earn a shot at a \$50 bonus. When the power holders were randomly assigned to learn that their peers admired and respected them, they chose mostly reasonable assignments: for the \$50 bonus, their peers would have to tell a funny joke or write about their experiences the previous day. But when power holders learned that their peers looked down on them, they retaliated by setting up some humiliating tasks, such as telling their partners to bark like a dog three times, say "I am filthy" five times, or count backward from five hundred in increments of seven. Just being told that they weren't respected nearly doubled their chances of using their power in ways that degraded others.
- **As iconic filmmaker** Francis Ford Coppola observed, the way to come to power is not always to merely challenge the Establishment, but first make a place in it and then challenge and double-cross the Establishment"
- As Medina gained respect for these efforts, she accumulated what psychologist Edwin Hollander called idiosyncrasy credits—the latitude to deviate from the group's expectations. Idiosyncrasy credits accrue through respect, not rank: they're based on contributions. We squash a low-status member who tries to challenge the status quo, but tolerate and sometimes even applaud the originality of a high-status star.
- This is called the Sarick Effect, named after the social scientist Leslie Sarick.
- In both situations, Griscom was presenting ideas to people who, had more power than he had, and trying to convince them to commit their resources. Most of us assume that to be persuasive, we ought to emphasize our strengths and minimize our weaknesses. That kind of powerful communication makes sense if the audience is supportive. But when you're pitching a novel idea or speaking up with a suggestion for change, your audience is likely to be skeptical. Investors are looking to poke holes in your arguments; managers are hunting for reasons why your suggestion won't work. Under those circumstances, for at least four reasons, it's actually more effective to adopt Griscom's form of powerless communication by accentuating the flaws in your idea.
- **When** people presented drawbacks or disadvantages, I would become an ally. Instead of selling me, they've given me a problem to solve.
- "The job of the investor is to figure out what's wrong with the company. By telling them what's wrong with the business model, I'm doing some of the work for them. It established trust," Griscom explains. And speaking frankly about the weaknesses of the business in turn made him more credible when he talked about the strengths. "You need confidence to be humble, to front-run your weaknesses," Griscom says. "If I'm willing to tell them what's wrong with my business, investors think, 'There must be an awful lot that's right with it.'
- It's humanly impossible to tap out the rhythm of a song without hearing the tune in your head. That makes it impossible to imagine what your disjointed knocks sound like to an audience that is not hearing the accompanying tune. As Chip and Dan Heath write in *Made to Stick*, "The listeners can't hear that tune—all they can hear is a bunch of disconnected taps, like a kind of

bizarre Morse Code.” This is the core challenge of speaking up with an original idea. When you present a new suggestion, you’re not only hearing the tune in your head. You wrote the song.

- This explains why we often under communicate our ideas. They’re already so familiar to us that we underestimate how much exposure an audience needs to comprehend and buy into them.
- When Harvard professor John Kotter studied change agents years ago, he found that they typically under-communicated their visions by a factor of ten. On average, they spoke about the direction of the change ten times less often than their stakeholders needed to hear it. In one three-month period, employees might be exposed to 2.3 million words and numbers. On average during that period, the vision for change was expressed in only 13,400 words and numbers: a 30-minute speech, an hour-long meeting, a briefing, and a memo. Since more than 99 percent of the communication that employees encounter during those three months does not concern the vision, how can they be expected to understand it, let alone internalize it? The change agents don’t realize this, because they’re up to their ears in information about their vision.
- There is no such thing as the Sarick Effect, and there was no social scientist named Leslie Sarick. I made them up to demonstrate the mere exposure effect. (For the record, Rufus Griscom is a real person, as is every other person in this book.)
- Interestingly, exposures are more effective when they are short and mixed in with other ideas, to help maintain the audience’s curiosity. It’s also best to introduce a delay between the presentation of the idea and the evaluation of it, which provides time for it to sink in. If you’re making a suggestion to a boss, you might start with a 30-second elevator pitch during a conversation on Tuesday, revisit it briefly the following Monday, and then ask for feedback at the end of the week.
- At work, our sense of commitment and control depends more on our direct boss than on anyone else. When we have a supportive boss, our bond with the organization strengthens and we feel a greater span of influence. As I envisioned the boss who gave Medina the confidence to speak up again, I pictured someone agreeable—warm, trusting, and cooperative—so I was surprised when Medina described Mike as “prone to cynicism and mercurial.” Her portrait of him fit the profile of a more disagreeable manager, one with a critical, skeptical stance toward others. Disagreeable managers are typically the last people we seek when we’re going to go out on a limb, but they are sometimes our best advocates.
- As much as agreeable people may love us, they often hate conflict even more. Their desire to please others and preserve harmony makes them prone to backing down instead of sticking up for us.
- If you’re perched at the top, you’re expected to be different and therefore have the license to deviate. Likewise, if you’re still at the bottom of a status hierarchy, you have little to lose and everything to gain by being original.
- But the middle segment of that hierarchy—where the majority of people in an organization are found—is dominated by insecurity. Now that you have a bit of respect, you value your standing in the group and don’t want to jeopardize it. To maintain and then gain status, you play a game of follow-the-leader, conforming to prove your worth as a group member. As sociologist George Homans observed, “Middle status conservatism reflects the anxiety experienced by one who aspires to a social station but fears disenfranchisement.” The fall from low to lower hardly hurts; the fall from middle to low is devastating. “

- From the outside, the prospect of speaking up against Steve Jobs might seem a losing battle. But given his disagreeable tendencies, Jobs was exactly the kind of person who could be confronted. Dubinsky knew that Jobs respected those who stood up to him and was open to new ways of doing things. And she wasn't speaking up for herself; she was advocating for Apple.

4: Fools Rush In

- **Employees** who procrastinated regularly spent more time engaging in divergent thinking and were rated as significantly more creative by their supervisors. Procrastination didn't always fuel creativity: if the employees weren't intrinsically motivated to solve a major problem, stalling just set them behind. But when they were passionate about coming up with new ideas, putting off the task led them to more creative solutions.
- Procrastination may be the enemy of productivity, but it can be a resource for creativity.
- Productive mediocrity requires discipline of an ordinary kind. It is safe and threatens no one. Nothing will be changed by mediocrity.... But genius is uncontrolled and uncontrollable. You cannot produce a work of genius according to a schedule or an outline.
- Da Vinci realized that originality could not be rushed. He noted that people of "genius sometimes accomplish most when they work the least, for they are thinking out inventions and forming in their minds the perfect idea.
- **During the address.** King's favorite gospel singer, Mahalia Jackson, shouted from behind him, "Tell 'em about the dream, Martin!" He continued with his script, and she encouraged him again. Before a live crowd of 250,000, and millions more watching on TV, King improvised, pushing his notes aside and launching into his inspiring vision of the future. "In front of all those people, cameras, and microphones," Clarence Jones reflects, "Martin winged it."
- Along with providing time to generate novel ideas, procrastination has another benefit: it keeps us open to improvisation!
- Sucheta Nadkarni and Pol Herrmann studied nearly two hundred companies in India, the firms with the highest financial returns were the ones whose CEOs rated themselves the lowest on efficiency and promptness
- In a classic study, marketing researchers Peter Colder and Gerard Tellis compared the success of companies that were either pioneers or settlers. The pioneers were first movers: the initial company to develop or sell a product. The settlers were slower to launch, waiting until the pioneers had created a market before entering it. When Colder and Tellis analyzed hundreds of brands in three dozen different product categories, they found a staggering difference in failure rates: 47 percent for pioneers, compared with just 8 percent for settlers. Pioneers were about six times more likely to fail than settlers. Even when the pioneers did survive, they only captured an average of 10 percent of the market, compared with 28 percent for settlers.
- **Being** original doesn't require being first. It just means being different and better.
- The time at which we reach our heights of originality, and how long they last, depends on our styles of thinking. When Galenson studied creators, he discovered two radically different styles of innovation: conceptual and experimental. Conceptual innovators formulate a big idea and set out to execute it. Experimental innovators solve problems through trial and error, learning and evolving as they go along. They're at work on a particular problem, but they don't have a specific

solution in mind at the outset. Instead of planning in advance, they figure it out as they go. To paraphrase writer E. M. Forster, how can I know what I think until I see what I say?

- According to Galenson. Conceptual innovators are sprinters, and experimental innovators are marathoners.
- To sustain our originality as we age and accumulate expertise, our best bet is to adopt an experimental approach. We can make fewer plans in advance for what we want to create, and start testing out different kinds of tentative ideas and solutions. Eventually, if we're patient enough, we may stumble onto something that's novel and useful. The experimental approach served Leonardo da Vinci well: he was forty-six when he finished painting *The Last Supper* and in his early fifties when he started working on the *Mona Lisa*. "Only by drawing did he truly come to understand, was his vision clarified," one scholar wrote; another observed that "Leonardo works like a sculptor modeling in clay who never accepts any form as final but goes on creating, even at the risk of obscuring his original intentions."
- The more experiments you run, the less constrained you become by your ideas from the past. You learn from what you discover in your audience, on the canvas, or in the data. Instead of getting mired in the tunnel vision of your imagination. By looking out into the world you improve the acuity of your peripheral vision.
- Sprinting is a fine strategy for a young genius, but becoming an old master requires the patience of experimentation to run a marathon. Both are paths to creativity, yet for those of us who aren't struck by a bolt of insight, slow and steady experimentation can light the way to a longer stretch of originality.

5: Goldilocks and the Trojan Horse

- **The more strongly** you identify with an extreme group, the harder you seek to differentiate yourself from more moderate groups that threaten your values.
- In a clever experiment, Stanford researchers Scott Wiltermuth and Chip Heath randomly assigned people in groups of three to listen to the national anthem "O Canada" under different conditions of synchrony. In the control condition, participants read the words silently while the song played. In the synchronous condition, they sang the song out loud together. In the asynchronous condition, they all sang, but not in unison: each person heard the song at a different tempo. The participants thought they were being tested on their singing. But there was a twist: after singing, they moved into what was supposedly a different study, where they had a chance to keep money for themselves or cooperate by sharing it with the group. The few minutes they spent singing shouldn't have affected their behavior, but it did. The group that sang together shared significantly more. They reported feeling more similar to each other and more like a team than participants in the other conditions.*
 - *In an experiment led by Yale psychologist Erica Boothby, people liked chocolate better when they tasted it at the same time as another person. I hate chocolate, so this experiment would not have worked with me—but their follow-up study showed that eating disgustingly bitter chocolate was even more unpleasant when tasted simultaneously with someone else. Apparently, both positive and negative experiences are amplified when we share them, leading to even greater feelings of similarity.

- Finally, Perry made a move that flew in the face of every piece of wisdom she had heard about influence; she simply stopped telling experts what it was she was trying to create. Instead of explaining her plan to generate wireless power, she merely provided the specifications of the technology she wanted. Her old message had been: “I’m trying to build a transducer to send power over the air.” Her new pitch disguised the purpose: “I’m looking for someone to design a transducer with these parameters. Can you make this part?” ,The approach worked
- Researchers Debra Meyerson and Maureen Scully have found that to succeed, originals must often become tempered radicals. They believe in values that depart from traditions and ideas that go against the grain, yet they learn to tone down their radicalism by presenting their beliefs and ideas in ways that are less shocking and more appealing to mainstream audiences.
- Shifting the focus from why to how can help people become less radical. In a series of experiments, when people with extreme political views were asked to explain the reasons behind their policy preferences, they stuck to their guns. Explaining why gave them a chance to affirm their convictions. But when asked to explain how their preferred policies work, they became more moderate. Considering how led them to confront the gaps in their knowledge and realize that some of their extreme views were impractical.
- To form alliances, originals can temper their radicalism by smuggling their real vision inside a Trojan horse. U.S. Navy lieutenant Josh Steinman had a grand vision to open the military up to outside technology by creating a Silicon Valley hub. Steinman knew he would face resistance if he presented a radical, sweeping proposal for rethinking the navy’s entire approach to innovation, so he led with a more tempered pitch. He presented some new technology for doing real-time updates in the air to Admiral Jonathan Greenert, the chief of naval operations. Intrigued, Admiral Greenert asked what would come next, and Rear Admiral Scott Stearney threw a Softball question at Steinman, inquiring about how the military should think about the technical future. “That’s when we threw the strike,” Steinman recalls. “Sir, the future is going to be about software, not hardware, and we need an entity of the U.S. Navy in Silicon Valley.”
- A few months later, after other junior officers made similar cases about the importance of software, the CNO gave a speech advocating for the idea, which also circulated around the Pentagon. Not long afterward, the secretary of defense announced an embassy in Silicon Valley. Steinman leveraged what psychologist Robert Cialdini calls the foot-in-the-door technique, where you lead with a small request to secure an initial commitment before revealing the larger one. By opening with a moderate ask instead of a radical one, Steinman gained allies.
- Coalitions often fall apart when people refuse to moderate their radicalism. That was one of the major failures of the Occupy Wall Street movement, a protest against economic and social inequality that began in 2011. That year, polls showed that the majority of Americans supported the movement, but it soon fell apart. Activist Srja Popovic marvels that its extreme positioning alienated most of its potential allies. Its fatal error, he argues, was naming the movement after the radical tactic of camping out, which few people find attractive. He believes that had the group simply relabeled itself “The 99 Percent,” it might still exist. The Occupy name “implied that the only way you could belong was if you dropped everything you were doing and started occupying something,” Popovic writes. “Occupying is still just a single weapon in the enormous arsenal of peaceful protest— and, more to the point, one that tends to invite only a certain type of dedicated person...Movements, which are always fighting uphill battles, need to draw in more casual participants if they are to succeed.” “The 99 Percent” is inclusive: it invites everyone to get

involved and to use their own preferred tactics. By tempering the brand of the movement and broadening its methods, it might have been possible to gain the support of more mainstream citizens.

- For insiders, the key representative is the person who is most central and connected in the group. For the suffragists, that was clearly Stanton and Anthony. But for outsiders, the person who represents the group is the one with the most extreme views
- Our instinct is to sever our bad relationships and salvage the ambivalent ones. But the evidence suggests we ought to do the opposite: cut our frenemies and attempt to convert our enemies. In efforts to challenge the status quo, originals often ignore their opponents. If someone is already resisting a change, the logic goes, there's no point in wasting your time on him. Instead, focus on strengthening your ties with people who already support you. But our best allies aren't the people who have supported us all along. They're the ones who started out against us and then came around to our side.
- Justin Berg, the creativity expert at Stanford.
- **To come** up with something original, we need to begin from a more unfamiliar place.
- Instead of the three-ring binder. Berg gave some participants a more novel starting point: an in-line skate for roller blading. They were no longer captives of the conventional: they generated ideas that scored 37 percent higher in originality.
- The most promising ideas begin from novelty and then add familiarity, which capitalizes on the mere exposure effect we covered earlier. On average, a novel starting point followed by a familiarity infusion led to ideas that were judged as 14 percent more practical. Without sacrificing any originality. As Berg points out, if you started the experiment with a pen rather than an in-line skate, you'd probably end up with something a lot like a conventional pen. But by starting with something unexpected in the context of job interviews, like an in-line skate, and then incorporating the familiarity of a pen, you can develop an idea that is both novel and useful.
- Frances Willard was the quintessential tempered radical. "Under Willard, nothing seemed radical," writes Baker, even "as she was moving toward more progressive causes." Her actions offer two lessons about persuading potential partners to join forces. First, we need to think differently about values. Instead of assuming that others share our principles, or trying to convince them to adopt ours, we ought to present our values as a means of pursuing theirs. It's hard to change other people's ideals. It's much easier to link our agendas to familiar values that people already hold.

6: Rebel with a Cause

- Younger brothers were 10.6 times more likely than their older siblings to attempt to steal a base.
- We assume that younger scientists will be more receptive to rebellious ideas than older scientists, who become conservative and entrenched in their beliefs with age. But remarkably, birth order was more consequential than age. "An 80-year-old later born was as open to evolutionary theory as a 25-year-old firstborn"
- Laterborn's have typically been half a century ahead of firstborns in their willingness to endorse radical innovations."
- When we use the logic of consequence, we can always find 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 a visceral sense of what someone like us ought to do. And this tendency can be influenced by birth order.

- In one study, people ranked their siblings and themselves on school achievement and rebellion. High academic achievers were 2.3 times as likely to be firstborn as lastborn. Rebels were twice as likely to be lastborn as firstborn,
- **Adler** argued that because firstborn children start life as only children, they initially identify with their parents. When a younger sibling arrives, firstborns risk being “dethroned” and often respond by emulating their parents: they enforce rules and assert their authority over the younger sibling, which sets the stage for the younger child to rebel.
- Years ago, researchers found that from ages two to ten, children are urged by their parents to change their behavior once every six to nine minutes. As developmental psychologist Martin Hoffman sums it up, this “translates roughly into 50 discipline encounters a day or over 15,000 a year!” When the Holocaust rescuers recalled their childhoods, they had received a unique form of discipline from their parents. “Explained is the word most rescuers favored,” the Oliners discovered.
- While reasoning accounted for only 6 percent of the disciplinary techniques that the bystanders’ parents used, it accounted for a full 21 percent of how the rescuers’ parents disciplined their children. One rescuer said her mother “told me when I did something wrong. She never did any punishing or scolding—she tried to make me understand with my mind what I’d done wrong.” This rational approach to discipline also characterizes the parents of teenagers who don’t engage in criminal deviance and originals who challenge the orthodoxies of their professions. In one study, parents of ordinary children had an average of six rules, like specific schedules for homework and bedtime. Parents of highly creative children had an average of less than one rule and tended to “place emphasis on moral values, rather than on specific rules,” psychologist Teresa Amabile reports.
- **If parents** do believe in enforcing a lot of regulations, the way they explain them matters a great deal. New research shows that teenagers defy rules when they’re enforced in a controlling manner, by yelling or threatening punishment. When mothers enforce many rules but offer a clear rationale for why they’re important, teenagers are substantially less likely to break them, because they internalize them. In Donald MacKinnon’s study comparing America’s most creative architects with a group of highly skilled but unoriginal peers, a factor that distinguished the creative group was that their parents exercised discipline with explanations. They outlined their standards of conduct and explained their grounding in a set of principles about right and wrong, referencing values like morality, integrity, respect, curiosity, and perseverance. But “emphasis was placed upon the development of one’s ethical code,” MacKinnon wrote. Above all, the parents who raised highly creative architects granted their children the autonomy to choose their own values.
- **There’s a** particular kind of explanation that works especially well in enforcing discipline. When the Oliners examined the guidance of the Holocaust rescuers’ parents, they found that they tended to give “explanations of why behaviors are inappropriate, often with reference to their consequences for others.” While the bystanders’ parents focused on enforcing compliance with rules for their own sake, the rescuers’ parents encouraged their children to consider the impact of their actions on others.

- Highlighting consequences for others directs attention to the distress of the person who may be harmed by an individual's behavior fueling empathy for her. It also helps children understand the role that their own actions played in causing the harm, resulting in guilt.
- Emphasizing consequences for others can motivate adults, too. "Hand hygiene prevents you from disease" vs. "Hand hygiene prevents patients from catching diseases"
- The sign on the left had no effect whatsoever. The sign on the right made a significant difference: merely mentioning patients instead of you led medical professionals to wash their hands 10 percent more often and use 45 percent more soap and gel.
- Moral standards are forged in part by what parents say after children do the right thing. The last time you saw a child engage in good behavior, how did you respond? My guess is that you praised the action, not the child. "That was really nice. That was so sweet." By complimenting the behavior you reinforce it, so the child will learn to repeat it.
- Not so fast, says an experiment led by psychologist Joan Grusec. After children shared some marbles with their peers, a number of them were randomly assigned to have their behavior praised: "It was good that you gave some of your marbles to those poor children. Yes, that was a nice and helpful thing to do." Others received character praise: "I guess you're the kind of person who likes to help others whenever you can. Yes, you are a very nice and helpful person."
- **Children** who received character praise were subsequently more generous. Of the children who were complimented for being helpful people, 45 percent gave craft materials to cheer up kids at a hospital two weeks later, compared with only 10 percent of the children who were commended for engaging in helpful behavior. When our character is praised, we internalize it as part of our identities. Instead of seeing ourselves as engaging in isolated moral acts, we start to develop a more unified self-concept as a moral person.
- Affirming character appears to have the strongest effect in the critical periods when children are beginning to formulate strong identities. In one study, for example, praising character boosted the moral actions of eight-year-olds but not five-year-olds or ten-year-olds. The ten-year-olds may already have crystallized self-concepts to the degree that a single comment didn't affect them, and the five-year-olds may have been too young for an isolated compliment to have a real impact. Character raise leaves a lasting imprint when identities are forming.
- But even among very young children, an appeal to character can have an influence in the moment. In an ingenious series of experiments led by psychologist Christopher Bryan. Children between ages three and six were 22 percent to 29 percent more likely to clean up blocks, toys, and crayons when they were asked to be helpers instead of to help. Even though their character was far from gelled, they wanted to earn the identity.
- Bryan finds that appeals to character are effective for adults as well. His team was able to cut cheating in half with the same turn of phrase: instead of "Please don't cheat," they changed the appeal to "Please don't be a cheater." When you're urged not to cheat, you can do it and still see an ethical person in the mirror. But when you're told not to be a cheater, the act casts a shadow; immorality is tied to your identity, making the behavior much less attractive.
- **In light of** this evidence, Bryan suggests that we should embrace nouns more thoughtfully. "Don't Drink and Drive" could be rephrased as: "Don't Be a Drunk Driver." The same thinking can be applied to originality. When a child draws a picture, instead of calling the artwork creative, we can say "You are creative." After a teenager resists the temptation to follow the crowd, we can commend her for being a non-conformist. When we shift our emphasis from behavior to

character, people evaluate choices differently. Instead of asking whether this behavior will achieve the results they want, they take action because it is the right thing to do.

- We can afford to give children a great deal of freedom if we explain the consequences of their actions on others and emphasize how the right moral choices demonstrate good character. This increases the odds that they will develop the instinct to express their original impulses in the form of moral or creative actions, as opposed to deviant ones.
- When psychologists Penelope Lockwood and Ziva Kunda asked college students to list what they hoped to achieve over the following decade, they came up with perfectly ordinary objectives. Another group of students was instructed to read a newspaper article about an outstanding peer and then list their goals; they aimed much higher. Having a role model elevated their aspirations.
- If we want to encourage originality, the best step we can take is to raise our children's aspirations by introducing them to different kinds of role models.
- After original achievement themes in American children's books rose by 66 percent from 1810 to 1850, the patent rate shot up sevenfold from 1850 to 1890. Children's books reflected the values popular at the time, but also helped to nurture those values: When stories emphasized original achievement, patent rates typically soared twenty to forty years later.

7: Rethinking Groupthink

- Land's response was all too typical: In a study by strategy researchers Michael McDonald and James Westphal, the worse companies performed, the more CEOs sought advice from friends and colleagues who shared their perspectives. They favored the comfort of consensus over the discomfort of dissent, which was precisely the opposite of what they should have done. Company performance only improved when CEOs actively gathered advice from people who weren't their friends and brought different insights to the table, which challenged them to fix mistakes and pursue innovations.*
 - There's a common belief that creativity flourishes when criticism is withheld, but this turns out to be false. It became pronounced in the advertising age of the 1950s, when Alex Osborn introduced the notion of brainstorming, with the second rule being "withhold criticism." The assumption was that criticism would discourage people from trying wild ideas, yet original breakthroughs ^ come after more criticism, not less. In one experiment in the United States and France, people were instructed to brainstorm, and randomly assigned either "not to criticize" or "feel free to debate, even criticize." The groups that debated and criticized weren't afraid to share ideas, and they generated 16 percent more ideas than those that didn't. In high-stakes creative settings. Debate and criticism improve the quality of ideas, too. Research suggests that in the most successful microbiology labs, when scientists present new evidence, their skeptical colleagues don't applaud; they challenge the interpretations and propose alternatives. The same is true in hospitals: the teams with the most dissent make the best decisions, as long as members feel that their colleagues are looking out for one another's best interests.
- Two hundred principles written by the founder. (Matt's note: get copy)
- As Jack Handey advised in one of his "Deep Thoughts" on Saturday Night Live, before you criticize people, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

- While it can be appealing to assign a devil’s advocate, it’s much more powerful to unearth one. When people are designated to dissent, they’re just playing a role.
- Hofmann found that 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.
- To ensure that authentic dissenters voiced their viewpoints earlier, Bock’s team created the “Canaries”—a group of trusted engineers across the company who represent diverse viewpoints, and have a reputation both for being sensitive to adverse conditions and for speaking their minds. They took their name from the nineteenth-century practice of using canaries to detect deadly gases in coal mines. Before Google’s people operations team introduces a major change in policy, they often run it by the Canaries for critical feedback. They’re part advisory board, part focus group, and they’ve become an invaluable safeguard to make sure Googlers’ voices are heard. By reaching out to them in advance, one member of Bock’s team explains, “Our biggest complainers become our strongest advocates.”
- I pointed out to Dalio that when organizations fail to prioritize principles, their performance suffers. In a study of over one hundred professional theaters by researchers Zannie Voss, Dan Cable, and Glenn Voss, leaders rated the importance of five values: artistic expression to the community (providing access, outreach, and education). Achievement (being recognized for excellence), and financial performance (fiscal viability). The more strongly leaders disagreed about the importance of these values, the lower their ticket revenues and net income. It didn’t matter what their principles were, as long as leaders established consensus about their significance.

8: Rocking the Boat and Keeping It Steady

- **That one word—calm** versus excited—was sufficient to significantly alter the quality of their speeches. When students labeled their emotions as excitement, their speeches were rated as 17 percent more persuasive and 15 percent more confident than those of students who branded themselves calm. Reframing fear as excitement also motivated the speakers, boosting the average length of their speeches by 29 percent; they had the courage to spend an extra thirty-seven seconds on stage. In another experiment, when students were nervous before taking a tough math test, they scored 22 percent better if they were told “Try to get excited” instead of “Try to remain calm.”
- But is reframing fear as excitement the best way to cope with nerves? To find out whether it’s better to just acknowledge anxiety, Brooks gave students another frightening task: She asked them to sing eighties rock music in public. Standing in front of a group of peers, students belted out the Journey song “Don’t Stop Believin’” into a microphone. A voice recognition program on the Nintendo Wii automatically scored their performance on an accuracy scale from 0 to 100 percent, assessing volume, pitch. And note duration. They would earn a bonus for high scores. Before they started singing, she randomly assigned the students to say “I am anxious” or “I am excited.” A control group who said nothing prior to performing averaged an accuracy score of 69 percent. Labeling the emotion as anxiety reduced accuracy to 53 percent. Instead of helping them

accept fear, it reinforced that they were afraid. Calling it excitement was enough to spike accuracy to 80 percent.

- When originals come up with a vision for transforming anxiety into excitement, they usually take it upon themselves to communicate it. But just because it's your idea doesn't mean you're the best person to activate the go system. In a series of experiments, Dave Hofmann and I found that the most inspiring way to convey a vision is to outsource it to the people who are actually affected by it.
- This doesn't mean, though, that leaders need to step out of the picture altogether. In later studies, I found that people are inspired to achieve the highest performance when leaders describe a vision and then invite a customer to bring it to life with a personal story. The leader's message provides an overarching vision to start the car, and the user's story offers an emotional appeal that steps on the accelerator.
- If you want people to go out on a limb, you need to show them that they're not alone.
- In his inspiring book *Blueprint for Revolution*
- When we're dealing with anxiety, excitement and amusement aren't the only positive emotions that can activate the go system. When Elvis Presley had his personnel file created by the U.S. military, government clerks completed the forms using manual typewriters. By the 1980s, the IBM Selectric had replaced the antiquated manual typewriters, but little else had changed. When it came time to automate the process with desktop computers, the government employees responsible for completing these forms were already anxious that computers would eventually replace their jobs. Instead of trying to calm them down or reassure them, leaders activated the go system by evoking curiosity. They plunked the computers down on their desks right next to their trusted typewriters and simply announced that a test program would take place later; they didn't even plug them in. After about a week they installed a few simple games and encouraged the clerks to try them out in their free time. The clerks were so intrigued that a few months later, when they started their official training, they had already taught themselves some of the key operations. As Brian Goshen, one of the leaders involved at the time, recalls: "By the time we were ready to start, they weren't afraid of it anymore; they were comfortable with the newer technology."
- In a study of hundreds of managers and employees who championed environmental issues at their companies the successful campaigns didn't differ from the failures in the amount of emotion they expressed, their use of metaphors or logical arguments, their efforts to consult key stakeholders, or their framing of a green movement as an opportunity or that. The distinguishing factor was a sense of urgency.
- When Harvard professor John Kotter studied more than one hundred companies trying to institute major changes, he found that the first error they made was failing to establish a sense of urgency. Over 50 percent of leaders fell short of convincing their employees that change needed to happen, and it needed to happen now.
- To further illuminate the effectiveness of an act like sending every one home on New Year's Eve, let's take a look at a piece of research that transformed one field, spawned another, and ultimately won a Nobel Prize. Imagine that you're an executive at a car manufacturer, and due to economic challenges, you need to close three plants and lay off six thousand employees. You can choose between two different plans: Plan A will save one of the three plants and two thousand jobs. Plan

B has a one-third chance of saving all three plants and all six thousand jobs, but a two-thirds chance of saving no plants and no jobs.

- Most people prefer Plan A. In the original study, 80 percent chose to play it safe rather than take a chance. But suppose we gave you a different set of options:
 - Plan A will lose two of the three plants and four thousand jobs.
 - Plan B has a two-thirds chance of losing all three plants and all six thousand jobs, but a one-third chance of losing no plants and no job
- Logically, these are the same options as the first set of choices. But psychologically, they don't feel the same. In the latter option, 82 percent of people prefer Plan B. Their preferences reverse. In the first case, the options are framed as gains. We prefer Plan A because we tend to be risk averse in the domain of benefits. When we have a certain gain, we like to hold on to it and protect it. We play it safe to guarantee saving two thousand jobs instead of taking a risk that might leave us saving no jobs. After all, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- But in the second case, we're presented with a guaranteed loss. Now, we're willing to do whatever it takes to avoid that loss, even if it means risking an even bigger one. We're going to lose thousands of jobs anyway, so we throw caution to the wind and make the big gamble, hoping that we'll lose nothing.
- This line of research was conducted by psychologists Amos Tyersky and Daniel Kahneman; it helped give rise to the field of behavioral economics and win Kahneman a Nobel Prize. It revealed that we can dramatically shift risk preferences just by changing a few words to emphasize losses rather than gains. This knowledge has major implications for understanding how to motivate people to take risks.
- If you want people to modify their behavior, is it better to highlight the benefits of changing or the costs of not changing? According to Peter Salovey, one of the originators of the concept of emotional Intelligence and now the president of Yale, it depends on whether they perceive the new behavior as safe or risky. If they think the behavior is safe, we should emphasize all the good things that will happen if they do it—they'll want to act immediately to obtain those certain gains. But when people believe a behavior is risky, that approach doesn't work. They're already comfortable with the status quo, so the benefits of change aren't attractive, and the stop system kicks in. Instead, we need to destabilize the status quo and accentuate the bad things that will happen if they don't change. Taking a risk is more appealing when they're faced with a guaranteed loss if they don't. The prospect of a certain loss brings the go system online.
- To counter apathy, most change agents focus on presenting an inspiring vision of the future. This is an important message to convey, but it's not the type of communication that should come first. If you want people to take risks, you need first to show what's wrong with the present. To drive people out of their comfort zones, you have to cultivate dissatisfaction, frustration, or anger at the current state of affairs, making it a guaranteed loss. "The greatest communicators of all time, says communication expert Nancy Duarte—who has spent her career studying the shape of superb presentations—start by establishing "what is: here's the status quo." Then, they "compare that to what could be," making "that gap as big as possible."
- To channel anger productively, instead of venting about the harm that a perpetrator has done, we need to reflect on the victims who have suffered from it.
- "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world," E. B. White once wrote. "This makes it difficult to plan the day."

Actions for Impact

- If you're seeking to unleash originality, here are some practical actions that you can take. The first steps are for individuals to generate, recognize, voice, and champion new ideas. The next set is for leaders to stimulate novel ideas and build cultures that welcome dissent. The final recommendations are for parents and teachers to help children become comfortable taking a creative or moral stand against the status QUO. To gauge your originality with a free assessment, visit www.adamgrant.net.

Individual Actions:

- 1. Question the default
- 2. Triple the number of ideas you generate.
- 3. Immerse yourself in a new domain.
- 4. Procrastinate strategically.
- 5. Seek more feedback from peers.
- 6. Balance your risk portfolio,
- 7. Highlight the reasons not to support your idea.
- 8. Make your ideas more familiar. ^
- 9. Speak to a different audience.
- 10. Be a tempered radical
- 11. Motivate yourself differently when you're committed vs. uncertain
- 12. Don't try to calm down
 - . If you're nervous, it's hard to relax. It's easier to turn anxiety into intense positive emotions like interest and enthusiasm. Think about the reasons you're eager to challenge the status quo, and the positive outcomes that might result.
- 13. Focus on the victim, not the perpetrator.
- 14. Realize you're not alone
- 15. Remember that if you don't take initiative, the status quo will persist.

Leader Actions:

- 1. Run an innovation tournament.
- 2. Picture yourself as the enemy.
- 3. Invite employees from different functions and levels to pitch ideas
- 4. Hold an opposite day
- 5. Ban the words like, love, and hate
- 6. Hire not on cultural fit, but on cultural contribution
- 7. Shift from exit interviews to entry interviews.
- 8. Ask for problems, not solutions.
- 9. Stop assigning devil's advocates and start unearthing them.
- 10. Welcome criticism.

Parent and Teacher Actions:

- 1. Ask children what their role models would do.
- 2. Link mod behaviors to moral character.
- 3. Explain how bad behaviors have consequences for others.
- 4. Emphasize values over rules.
- 5. Create novel niches for children to pursue.