



Stanford eCorner

Defining and Encouraging 'Originals'

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Wharton School Professor Adam Grant discusses the concept behind his 2016 bestseller "Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World." Describing "originals" as people who are driven to stand up and speak out in the name of innovation, Grant says his goal was to understand how we can better champion original thinkers, and how organizations can embrace non-conformists. "Most originality dies in the idea-selection process," he explains.



Transcript

- I've been studying people that I've come to call originals. And, when I think of originals, they're the people who are not like me, right? ^Who are comfortable standing out and speaking up, ^who are nonconformists, who are willing to drive ^the creativity and change in the world. And they seem to only get degrees from Stanford, by last account. You seem to have a monopoly on this particular tendency, but I really wanted to know how we could all become more original, but more importantly, how we can be more effectively original, right? Because so often we're ahead of our time, or it ends up being really lonely when we have creative ideas, and I wanted to know what do we do about that? And then more broadly, how do you build an organization where originality thrives? And so I wanted to bring to you today a top ten list of the most important things I've learned about what it takes to build cultures of productive originality. But sadly, I can only think of about six. So this is gonna be a top six list. Are you ready? Are you ready? - [All] Yes! - All right, I was gonna do it anyway, but I appreciate your enthusiasm. (laughs) So, I will say that I'm gonna say almost nothing about creativity today, and the reason for that is I kinda wrote Originals as a sequel to creativity. We have tons of books, mostly written by gurus with no data, but also some books with real data behind them, that teach us how to generate good ideas. And I don't think that's the problem in the world.

I think the problem is we don't have enough people who know how to champion original ideas, and I want to talk about how to do that. So what do you do after you have an idea. So you can think of this talk as a little bit like a sequel to creativity. So the first thing that I learned is I think that most originality dies in the idea selection process, that we have tons of great, creative ideas that could change the world, but we don't have enough people who know which ones to bet on.