



LEAN IN

ALL-IN-ONE MEETING GUIDE

# THE SURPRISING HABITS OF ORIGINAL THINKERS

# Overview

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Originals are people who drive creativity and change in the world. They're the people you want to bet on—and they don't look anything like you think. This meeting outlines defining characteristics of originals and gives you the opportunity to both flex your creative muscles and learn how to advocate for your original ideas.

## Meeting Goals

- Understand the traits that enable original thinkers to change the world
- Practice pushing your creative thinking and advocating for your ideas
- Get direct feedback on both the quality of your ideas and the way you present them

## Pre-Meeting Prep

- Watch Adam Grant's TED Talk, "The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers," individually or as a group at [leanin.org/originals](http://leanin.org/originals)
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF
- Remind everyone to bring her One Action Update (if you're doing this)



## Brought to you in partnership with . . .

Adam Grant, professor of management and psychology at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he studies how to unleash creativity and generosity at work and in life. He is the author of *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World* and *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success*.

# Meeting Agenda

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🕒 Approx. 110 minutes for total meeting (based on a group size of ten members)

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**1 Check-In** 🕒 Approx. 20 minutes  
Warm up, catch up, and get going **p.4**

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**2 Educational Activities** 🕒 Approx. 65 minutes  
Learn from experts and one another **p.5**

- **Activity 1: Key Takeaways** 🕒 Approx. 5 minutes  
Take a few minutes to review the core concepts of the video, “The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers.” **p.5**

- **Activity 2: What Is Your Experience with Creativity?** 🕒 Approx. 25 minutes  
Discuss your experiences with and approaches to the creative process **p.6**

- **Activity 3: Flex Your Creative Muscles** 🕒 Approx. 35 minutes  
Conduct a mini creative boot camp with your Circle **p.7**

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**3 One Action** 🕒 Approx. 15 minutes  
The little push you need to go for it **p.10**

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**4 Wrap-Up** 🕒 Approx. 10 minutes  
What’s next and a few final words **p.12**

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**Optional Worksheet**  
One Action Update **p.14**

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# Meeting Guide

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## Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

🕒 Approx. 20 minutes

### Step 1: Icebreaker

👥 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less per member

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with one another and ourselves. One by one, fill in the sentence below and share it with your Circle. Listen carefully as each member takes a turn and say thank you when she's finished. Avoid the urge to slip into conversation.

- When I speak up with an original idea, I most often feel . . . (fear, excitement, enthusiasm, doubt, etc.)

### Step 2: Member Updates

👥 Group activity

🕒 2 minutes or less per member

Once you're warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!)

If you have a One Action Update, share that with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting. The goal is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

**For example, a member update might go like this:** “Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I’m thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I’ve been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we’re going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action update].”

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## Education Activities

Learn from experts and one another

🕒 Approx. 65 minutes for all activities

### Activity 1: Key Takeaways

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

As you kick off today’s meeting, review the key takeaways from the video, “The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers,” individually or as a group:

#### **Originals stand out and speak up . . .**

Originals are nonconformists—people who not only have new ideas but take action to champion them. They’re the people who improve the world around us.

#### **. . . and they are surprisingly ordinary**

Don’t count yourself out for procrastinating, feeling doubt, or having bad ideas—these are all traits you may share with some of the most original thinkers in history.

#### **Be quick to start but slow to finish**

Procrastination isn’t all bad. You can enhance your creativity by being quick to start a project and slow to finish, allowing time for your ideas to incubate.

#### **Idea doubt can help your creative process**

When you doubt yourself, it’s paralyzing. But when you doubt your ideas, it’s energizing. Instead of asking, “Can I do this?” remind yourself, “I can learn to get better at this.” Quiet the self-doubt and harness the idea doubt as motivation to test and refine your original thoughts.

#### **People who achieve the most are also the ones who fail the most**

Originals like Thomas Edison had hundreds of ideas that didn’t work out before they hit it big with a truly game-changing idea. The more volume you generate, the more variety you have and the higher your odds of doing something truly original.

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## Activity 2: What's Your Experience with Creativity?

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

### Step 1: Discuss with the group

👥 Group activity

🕒 Approx. 25 minutes

As a group, discuss your own creative processes using the following questions.

- How did your upbringing and experiences in school influence your originality?
- Have you noticed any differences between women and men in originality?
- We gain access to new ideas by broadening our perspectives—scientists get involved in art, and fashion designers take assignments in foreign countries. If you were going to immerse yourself in something new, what would it be?
- How balanced is your risk portfolio? In what areas of your work or life can you be extra cautious to give yourself the freedom to pursue a riskier original project elsewhere?
- Who are your role models for originality and nonconformity? What can you learn from them?

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## Activity 3: Flex Your Creative Muscles

🕒 Approx. 35 minutes

Practice using doubt and original thinking to your advantage by running through a mini creative boot camp with your Circle.

### Step 1: Brainstorm solutions for fixing an undesirable status quo

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

In the space below, write down a “status quo” situation that you’d like to change (it could be a process at work, a constant traffic jam in your city, or even a social movement, like eliminating the use of plastic bags at the grocery store).

When the group is ready, ask a Circle member to set a timer for 60 seconds (you can probably use one on your phone or computer). When the timer starts, spend 60 seconds writing down as many ideas as you can for changing that status quo. Remember to be prolific in your idea production!

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## Activity 3: Flex Your Creative Muscles (cont.)

### Step 2: Practice your pitch

 Group activity

 Approx. 10 minutes

Review the list of possible solutions you wrote above and pick your favorite idea. Use the prompts below to write a 30-second pitch in favor of your idea that you can present to the Circle.

Write your 30-second elevator pitch in support of your idea.

Why *shouldn't* people support your idea? Acknowledging the potential downsides up front can clear people's negative thoughts out of the way and leave them more open to your solution.

If your idea is unfamiliar, what familiar concepts can you link to it? *The Lion King* got the green light after the pitch was changed to "*Hamlet* with lions."

Conclude with a strong call to action in support of your idea.

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## Activity 3: Flex Your Creative Muscles (cont.)

### Step 2: Prepare your pitch

 Group activity

 2 minutes per member, 20 minutes total

One by one, present your 30-second pitches to the Circle. After each member takes her turn, spend at least one minute sharing direct feedback that may help her advocate for her ideas more effectively in the future.

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## One Action

The little push you need to go for it

🕒 Approx. 15 minutes

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

### Step 1: Identify the action you’re going to take

👤 Individual activity

🕒 5 minutes

Identify a specific action you can take to broaden your perspective by engaging with something new. In the space below, describe the action you would like to take and what you hope to accomplish.

Imagine with whom, when, and where it will happen.

What do you hope to get out of this new experience?

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## One Action (cont.)

### Step 2: Share your One Action with your Circle

 Group activity

 1 minute or less per member

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statement:

- I want to broaden my perspective by . . .
- In doing so, I hope to achieve . . .

Move quickly from member to member, and consider cheering on one another as you go.

**Housekeeping Note:** We recommend you give an update on your One Action during your next meeting. On page 14 of this PDF, you'll find an optional worksheet to help you prepare your update.

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## Wrap-Up

What's next and a few final words

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

### Step 1: Finalize logistics of your next meeting

 Group activity

🕒 Approx. 10 minutes

Before you break, make sure you have the basics covered for your next meeting, including day and time, location, and food and drink responsibilities. Decide what you're going to do when you get together or who is going to send out ideas. You may also want to talk through what worked—and what didn't—in today's meeting so you can brainstorm improvements going forward.

### Step 2: Close on an energetic and inspirational note

 Group activity

🕒 1 minute or less

As you wrap up the meeting, check in with yourself. How did it feel to advocate for your idea on the fly? Go around the Circle and share one word that sums up how you felt while giving your pitch.

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# Congratulations on a great meeting.

See the following pages for a One Action Update Worksheet.

# One Action Update

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Use the following prompts to prepare your One Action Update before your next meeting, to maximize your time with your Circle.

- What did you do to broaden your perspective?

- What was the outcome of the experience?

- Did your experience spark any new ideas?

- In the end, I learned that . . .