Convene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SERIES

THE NUTSHELL OF

HIDDEN POTENTIAL

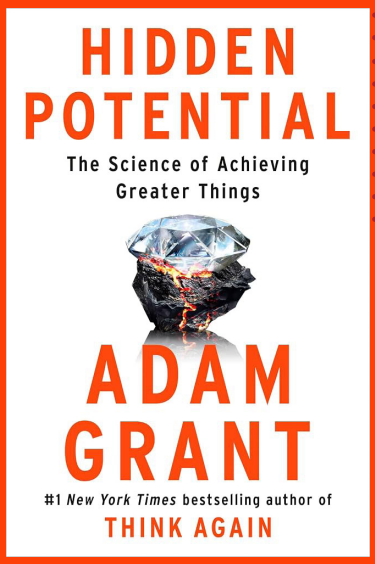
By Adam Grant
Viking 2023

Prologue: Growing Roses from Concrete

Everyone has hidden potential. This book is about how we unlock it. There's a widely held belief that greatness is mostly born—not made. That leads us to celebrate gifted students in school, natural athletes in sports, and child prodigies in music. My goal is to illuminate how we can all rise to achieve greater things.

Section I • Skills of Character: Getting Better at Getting Better

Character is often confused with personality, but they're not the same. Personality is your predisposition—your basic instincts for how to think, feel, and act. Character is your capacity to prioritize your values over your instincts. Personality is not your destiny—it's your tendency. It's not about the traits you have—it's what you decide to do with them.



ABOUT THE
AUTHOR

Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist at The Wharton School, the author of multiple books, and host of the podcast, Re:Thinking.

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1. Creatures of Discomfort: Embracing the Unbearable Awkwardness of Learning

Today, "learning styles" are a foundational element of teacher training and student experience. Around the world, 89 percent of teachers believe in matching their instruction to student's learning styles. There's just one small problem with learning styles. They're a myth. What we know now is that your preference isn't fixed, and playing only to your strengths deprives you of the opportunity to improve on your weaknesses.

2. Human Sponges: Building the Capacity to Absorb and Adapt

Being a sponge is more than a metaphor. It's a character skill—a form of proactivity that's vital to realizing hidden potential. Improving depends not on the quantity of information you seek out, but the quality of the information you take in. Growth is less about how hard you work than how well you learn.

3. The Imperfectionists: Finding the Sweet Spot

Extensive evidence shows that it's having high personal standards, not pursuing perfection, that fuels growth. Ultimately, excellence is more than meeting other people's expectations. It's about living up to your own standards. It's better to disappoint others than to disappoint yourself.

Section II. Structures for Motivation: Scaffolding to Overcome Obstacles

Scaffolding unleashes hidden potential by helping us forge paths we couldn't otherwise see. It enables us to find motivation in the daily grind, gain momentum in the face of stagnation, and turn difficulties and doubts into sources of strength.

4. Transforming to Daily Grind: Infusing Passion into Practice

If you want to become an expert in any field, it's not enough to be a freak of nature. Research reveals that the actual number of hours required for excellence varies dramatically by person and activity. Deliberate practice is particularly valuable for improving skills in predictable tasks with consistent moves—swinging a golf club, solving a Rubik's Cube, or playing a violin.

5. Getting Unstuck: The Roundabout Path to Forward Progress

Skills don't grow at a steady pace. Improving them is like driving up a mountain. As we climb higher and higher, the road gets steeper and steeper, and our gains get smaller and smaller. When we run out of momentum, we start to stall. When you get stuck on your way up a mountain, it's better to shift into reverse than to stand still. As you take U-turns and detours, you'll feel as if you're going in circles, but loops lead to the highest peaks.

6. Defying Gravity: The Art of Flying by Our Bootstraps

Making progress isn't always about moving forward. Sometimes it's about bouncing back. Progress is not only reflected in the peaks you reach—it's also visible in the valleys you cross. When we're facing a daunting task, we need both competence and confidence. Extensive evidence shows that when we view hurdles as threats, we tend to back down and give up. When we treat barriers as challenges to conquer, we rise to the occasion.

Section III. Systems of Opportunity: Opening Doors and Windows

Character skills and scaffolding can help us unlock hidden potential in ourselves and those around us. Creating opportunities on a larger scale requires us to build better systems in our schools, teams, and organizations. Instead of only looking for geniuses where we expect to find them, we can reach humanity's greatest potential by cultivating the genius in everyone.

7. Every Child Gets Ahead: Designing Schools to Bring Out the Best

Instead of singling out the best and the brightest, Finnish schools are designed to give every student the opportunity to grow. Their culture is rooted in a belief in the potential of all students. A popular mantra is "We can't afford to waste a brain." They know that the key to nurturing hidden potential is not to invest in students who show early signs of high ability. It's to invest in every student regardless of apparent ability.

8. Mining for Gold: Unearthing Collective Intelligence in Teams

Maximizing group intelligence is about more than enlisting individual experts—and it involves more than merely bringing people together to solve a problem. Unlocking the hidden potential in groups requires leadership practices, team processes, and systems that harness the capabilities of all their members. The best teams aren't the ones with the best thinkers. They're the teams that unearth and use the best thinking from everyone.

9. Diamonds in the Rough: Discovering Uncut Gems

It's a mistake to judge people solely by the heights they've reached. When we confuse past performance with future potential, we miss out on people whose achievements involved overcoming major obstacles. If natural talent determines where people start, learned character affects how far they go.

11. The Alchemy of Enduring High Performance

Create a sustainable framework for success before you go wide with your ideas—and make sure the right people, your key agents of change, are fully on board and understand the goals and their role in achieving transformational change.

Epilogue: Going the Distance

People with bigger dreams go on to achieve greater things. Young people with grander dreams go further in school and climb higher at work. Success is more than reaching our goals—it's living out our values. There's no higher value than aspiring to be better tomorrow than we are today. There's no greater accomplishment than unleashing our hidden potential.