

Application Guide

UNLOCKING HIDDEN POTENTIAL: THE SCIENCE OF ACHIEVING GREATER THINGS WITH ADAM GRANT



BOTTOM LINE:

Achieving greater things is not about the genius we possess—it's about the character we develop. By developing character skills, seeking advice, and aiming for excellence over perfection, we can unlock our hidden potential and achieve greater things.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. **Hidden potential** is a capacity for growth that's not yet visible.

A. Often, evaluating potential solely based on current abilities can lead to discouragement and premature quitting. Instead, focus on long-term growth and progress rather than immediate outcomes.

B. Remember, where you start doesn't determine where you can ultimately go.

II. The **Role Character Development Plays** in the Process of Unlocking Potential:

A. Character is the capacity to prioritize your values over your instincts.

1. Personality is how you respond on a typical day.

2. Character is how you show up on a hard day.

3. Unlock hidden potential by becoming a creature of discomfort, which at times goes against your personality.

4. Summoning the nerve to face discomfort is a character skill.

B. Character decisions:

1. Turn your critics into coaches; ask what you could do better next time.

2. Make an uncomfortable task less uncomfortable.

3. When you step into a role that you know is over your head, embrace your inadequacy rather than pretend to fit the role.

III. Importance of Asking for **Advice vs Feedback**:

A. Research shows it's more helpful to ask for advice than feedback because advice is forward-looking and constructive.

1. Advice tells us what we can change, not just what we screwed up.

2. Advice gives us specific, actionable, concrete tips for improvement.

B. When people ask for feedback, they usually only have cheerleaders and critics.

1. The cheerleaders are the people who just applaud their best self.

2. The critics are the people who attack their worst self

3. Neither are helpful.

IV. **Role of Coaches and Mentors**: These people often see potential in us that we might not recognize ourselves. A coach sees our hidden potential and can help us unlock it and guide us to continued improvement, closing the gap between our current performance level and our realized potential.

A. **Beware of Tacit Knowledge**:

1. People who are experts in an area are generally so talented they don't know how they do what they do.

2. They can do things intuitively on autopilot, but they don't know how to explain it.

B. For the most effective mentoring, seek guidance from those just a step or two ahead of you, rather than those far advanced. They can offer practical insights to help you move forward from your current position, because they know exactly how to get past the point you're at.

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V. Balancing **Excellence and Perfection:**

- A. There is tension between excellence and perfectionism.
 - 1. We want something to be excellent, but perfectionism can be an obstacle to unlocking our hidden potential.
 - 2. When you expect to be flawless, you stop trying anything where you might fail or struggle.
 - a) You don't take risks.
 - b) You stop having creative ideas that you're willing to test.
- B. Aim for excellence, a "9," rather than perfection, a "10."
 - 1. A 10 is probably not realistic in most things you do.
 - 2. Aiming for a 10 in anything comes at a major cost to other things you care about.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

- 1. Have you experienced moments when your personality has gotten in the way of who you want to be or what you want to do? What did you do to overcome it?
- 2. Do you typically ask for feedback or advice? What is the response you've received? How could it be better?
- 3. Who in your life is in a position to help you close the gap between your current skills and your potential? Do they know they are in this position?
- 4. What is one way you can aim for excellence without falling into perfectionism this month?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

[Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things](#) by Adam Grant

NEXT EPISODE

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