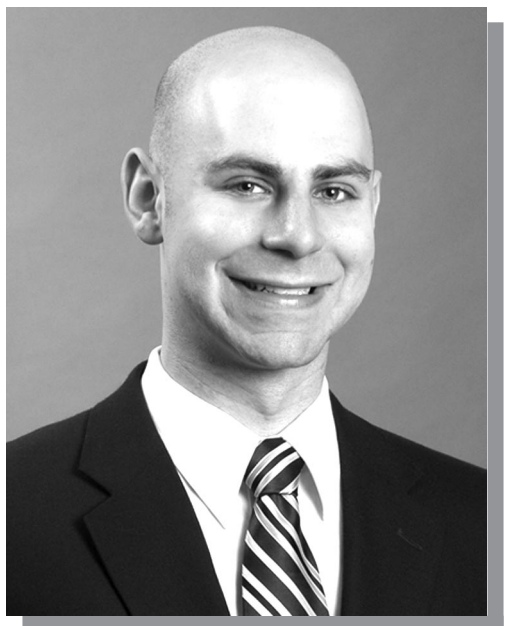




Adam M. Grant

**Award for Distinguished Scientific Early Career
Contributions to Psychology**

Citation

“For extensive, elegant, and programmatic research on the power of relational job design in enhancing employee motivation, productivity, and satisfaction; for creative and rigorous studies documenting the profound and surprising effects of connecting employees to their impact on others; for highlighting prosocial motivation, not only extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, as a key force behind employee behavior; and for demonstrating by example the feasibility and benefits of conducting field experiments, yielding studies rich in internal validity, external validity, and practical impact. In addition to his accomplishments, Adam M. Grant is known for his generosity as a scholar, teacher, and colleague.”

Biography

At age 12, Adam M. Grant began his first career: performing as a professional magician. Two years later, fear of heights notwithstanding, he set his sights on becoming a springboard diver. After his first practice, his coach Eric Best shared a mixed review: “Diving requires power, flexibility, and grace. You can’t jump or touch your toes, and you walk like Frankenstein.” Smiling, he revealed the upside: “Diving is a nerd sport: It attracts people who are too weak for football, too short for basketball, and too slow for track. With hard work, you can become a state finalist.” Three years later, after training 4–8 hours a day and receiving exceptional coaching from Best, Grant was a state finalist, All-American, and two-time Junior Olympic Na-

tional qualifier. It was a powerful lesson in Thomas Jefferson’s wisdom: “I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.”

Grant attended college at Harvard University. After a year of varsity diving, upon discovering that he loved helping others achieve their own goals more than pursuing his own, he retired, transitioning into a coaching role. Academically, he was drawn to psychology and physics, torn between understanding the social and physical worlds. He chose psychology after finding his early courses, especially social psychology, enthralling. Ellen Langer invited him to join her research lab, and he found the intellectual discussions and research fascinating. At the same time, Grant was concerned that most studies collected dust in journals. He believed psychology contained valuable insights for improving the quality of human life, and—in line with George Miller’s call—he felt a responsibility to apply these insights to make a difference in the world.

As a Harvard freshman, Grant accepted an advertising sales position at Let’s Go Publications. After a rocky start in which several clients demanded refunds from the previous year, Grant set numerous company records for advertising sales, including total revenue (\$608,000 in four months). At age 19, he was promoted to director of advertising sales, which required him to hire and lead a staff and manage a budget of over \$1 million. He led the agency to profits exceeding \$550,000, earning the Manager of the Year Award. This experience sparked his interest in psychology at work, and after taking organizational psychology courses with Richard Hackman, Tal Ben-Shahar, and Philip Stone, he knew he had found his calling. He was determined to address an important social problem: Although people spend the majority of their waking lives at work, many fail to find their jobs motivating and satisfying.

However, Grant was still uncertain about career paths. His indecision evaporated when he met Brian Little, who masterfully combined passion, encyclopedic knowledge, intellectual curiosity, deep caring for students, and humor. Little advised Grant’s honors thesis, gave him the confidence to overcome a fear of public speaking, and illuminated how life as a professor synthesized what he loved most about psychology, research, magic, and coaching diving: educating, inspiring, and benefiting others.

Grant graduated from Harvard in 2003 magna cum laude with highest honors in psychology and Phi Beta Kappa honors. Aspiring to pay Little’s teaching and mentoring forward, Grant went directly to graduate school at the University of Michigan, where he finished his PhD in organizational psychology in under three years. He was honored to win a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and an APA Early Graduate Student Researcher Award. He was lucky to have Jane Dutton as his mentor and dissertation chair; she challenged him to deepen and broaden his questions, diversify his conceptual

and methodological arsenal, and conduct more creative, high-impact research. Susan Ashford and Richard Price also played key roles in his scholarly development.

During graduate school, Grant fell in love with his future wife, Allison, who was finishing her nurse practitioner degree in psychiatry at Michigan. After they finished their degrees, Grant served as a visiting scholar in England and joined the faculty at the University of North Carolina's (UNC's) Kenan-Flagler Business School, where he won the school-wide Weatherspoon Award and the university-wide Tanner Award, both for excellence in undergraduate teaching. He also designed an experiential learning activity modeled after Donald Trump's popular NBC show *The Apprentice*. He divided a dozen MBA students between three teams, charging them with leading undergraduates to fundraise for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The students raised over \$33,500 in under 48 hours, granting wishes for six children with life-threatening medical conditions to visit Disney World.

After two years at UNC, Grant joined the faculty at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he currently serves as an associate professor of management with tenure. At Wharton, he has earned the Excellence in Teaching Award for every class that he has taught, at both the MBA and undergraduate levels. He recently designed a Make-A-Wish challenge for his MBA negotiation class, and the students raised over \$22,000 by negotiating sponsorships from local companies.

Grant's research on job design, work motivation, and proactive behavior addresses fundamental questions about the forces that drive employees to invest high levels of time and energy in their work, achieve effective performance, and take the initiative to change how work is done. First, his research on job design has introduced a novel approach to motivating employees by changing the architectures of their relationships, rather than their tasks. As the service sector continues to grow, many employees are responsible for products and services that have a meaningful impact on the lives of end users—clients and customers outside the boundaries of the organization. However, employees often lack the opportunity to see or meet these end users. Grant's research demonstrates how contact with end users can enable employees to perceive the impact of their jobs, motivating substantial increases in effort, persistence, and performance. For example, in a series of field experiments, he found that when call center employees met a single beneficiary of their efforts, they more than doubled the number of calls they made per hour and achieved over 500% increases in weekly revenue raised.

Second, Grant's research has changed our understanding of work motivation by demonstrating the surprising prevalence and potency of prosocial motivation: the desire to protect and promote the well-being of others. His field studies of engineers, firefighters, salespeople, doctors and nurses, police officers, and government employees show

how prosocial motivation operates in concert with more self-interested motivations, illuminating how many effective work behaviors are guided by mixed motivations to advance others' interests as well as one's own. Furthermore, his research shows how the experience of giving, not only receiving, can strengthen employees' organizational attachment and protect against burnout.

Third, his research breaks new ground in examining how employees proactively shape their work contexts. Proactivity involves forward-looking actions to create change in organizations, such as voicing new ideas, developing improved work processes, and adopting broader responsibilities. Grant's research has offered new insights into the conditions that encourage employees to shift from being reactive to proactive contributors and has advanced knowledge of why the performance consequences of these proactive behaviors are often more complicated than anticipated. For example, in field and laboratory studies with Francesca Gino and David Hofmann, proactive groups achieved higher performance when led by introverts but lower performance when led by extraverts.

Grant's guiding purpose is to practice what he preaches: Do research that makes a difference for scholars, students, employees, and managers. He strives to plant his research firmly in what Donald Stokes called Pasteur's Quadrant, contributing to both basic and applied knowledge. He is particularly passionate about field and quasi-experiments, which make it possible to combine internal validity in demonstrating causal effects with external validity in producing results that are directly applicable to work organizations. He has worked with organizations such as Google, CitiGroup, Medco, Yahoo!, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and the U.S. Air Force.

Grant has published more than 40 journal articles and book chapters, with more than 20 in leading psychology and management journals. He received the Academy of Management's 2011 Cummings Scholarly Achievement Award, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's 2011 Distinguished Early Career Contributions Award—Science, and the 2010 Owens Scholarly Achievement Award for the Best Publication in I/O Psychology. He is an associate editor of the *Academy of Management Journal*, has served on seven editorial boards, and has earned five outstanding reviewer awards. His research lab, the Impact Lab, has already sent a dozen students to doctoral programs.

Grant thanks his parents Susan and Mark and his sister Traci for their support. He is the proud father of two daughters, whom he tried—and failed to convince their mother Allison—to name after Superman characters.

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