



## Rule No. 6 — Your first idea is rarely your best.

Why? Because most leadership mistakes don't come from bad intent —they come from locking in too early.

### Rule Summary:

Great ideas emerge after rethinking and refining initial concepts, proving that persistence and revision often lead to better solutions.

The most original thinkers don't settle for their first solution—they generate many. Great ideas often emerge later in the creative process, after initial concepts have been tested, challenged, or discarded.

Quantity breeds quality when you're willing to rethink, revise, and persist beyond what's obvious.

Rule No. 6 is the moment where discipline matters: slowing down just enough to challenge the first answer before it hardens into strategy. Get this wrong, and every rule that follows is built on a weak foundation.

### This Rule will help you:

- Improve decision quality through iteration
- Avoid premature commitment to untested ideas
- Encourage creative thinking within teams
- Build a culture of thoughtful innovation
- Increase the likelihood of breakthrough solutions



### Recommended Reading

Originals, by Adam Grant

"The greatest originals are the ones who fail the most, because they're the ones who try the most." — Adam Grant

### Key Executive Takeaway:

Originals shows that innovation isn't about having a single lightning-bolt idea—it's about generating many, challenging your own thinking, and refining until the best solution emerges. The most successful leaders aren't the ones who act first, but the ones who think differently and persist long enough to get it right.

### Ask Yourself —

Where in your organization are decisions being made too quickly—built on the first idea that hits the table?

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### Action Step

Come up with three new variations on a current project before finalizing your plan.

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Which recent idea or initiative did you move forward with too quickly—without exploring better alternatives?

As a decision-maker, how do you balance the urgency to act with the discipline to challenge your first idea—especially when others are ready to follow your lead? What systems or habits help you avoid locking in too early?

How does your team create space for second, third, or even tenth ideas—rather than just rallying around the first one that sounds good? Do you reward speed or thoughtful exploration?



# Actionable Strategies

## Require a “Three-Option” Standard for Major Decisions

Never approve a proposal—strategic, financial, or operational—unless the team presents at least three viable alternatives. This forces deeper thinking and prevents defaulting to the first idea that sounds good.

## Pilot Before You Commit

Run small tests, prototypes, or limited trials before going all-in. A quick pilot exposes weaknesses early and often reveals a stronger version of the idea.

## Separate Idea Generation from Evaluation

Hold brainstorming sessions where ideas cannot be judged or debated until later. When people know they won't be shut down immediately, they offer more—and better—alternatives.

## Use “Assumption Audits” Before Moving Forward

List the assumptions behind the first idea and challenge each one. If the idea relies on too many untested beliefs, it's a sign you haven't pushed far enough.

## Reward Iteration, Not Just Execution

Publicly recognize leaders who revisit and improve ideas—not just those who move fast. When refinement is celebrated, people stop clinging to their first concepts and start improving them.

### IDEA:

#### option 1:

#### option 2:

#### option 3:

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