

# Speak Softly...

What's Happened to American Humility?

by Ira Williams, III



## Our Premise

Humility is an old-fashioned word.

It brings to mind images of hunched shoulders, bowed heads, whispered voices. It makes us think of weakness.

It makes us think of individuals afraid to speak up for themselves. Humility is almost a condescending term given to people who have forsaken their own needs and desires in order to serve others. “He’s such a sweet, humble man...” or “She is so humble and unassuming....”

What goes unspoken, though, is that we would never trade places with that sweet, humble man or that humble, unassuming woman.

It’s human nature to want one’s own interests served. Altruism is a learned trait. From the time we are children, we are taught and conditioned to know this: to get along with other kids in the sandbox, we have to share. We can’t snatch things from others.

### **And absolutely no biting.**

Thus, as we get older and leave the playground behind, we reach a place where we are not nearly as selfish as we were as children. However, we still tend to be self-oriented.

We often look inward to ask ourselves, **“What would make *me* happy? What do I need? How can *my* life be improved?”**

As Americans, we have a deeply rooted sense of individualism that is at the heart of our unprecedented rise to power in less than 250 years of existence. The unalienable rights described in the Declaration of Independence have empowered Americans to approach our

lives with unfettered optimism and the belief that there is little that can stand in the way of our “pursuit of happiness”.

As a result, our view of the outside world, for better or worse, tends to be informed by the world’s impact on us.

- “How do the policies of our government affect my day to day life?”
- “How does the performance of my company affect my pay check?”
- “How well is my school district preparing my kids for college?”
- “Why does it cost so much to put gas in my car?”

This is not to say that we, as a nation, are completely self-absorbed and blind to the needs of others. We have a long history of generosity that continues to this day. We sends billions of dollars in aid around the world to help relieve the suffering of others.

**The generosity of Americans is not in question. The humility of Americans is.**

Remember, for most of us, humility is equated with weakness. Americans are repelled by weakness of any sort. We crave strength because strength facilitates success and success is believed to be key to our pursuit of happiness.

I submit, however, that it requires tremendous strength and character to place others’ interests before your own.

I believe that by moving our self-orientation to the background, and truly focusing upon enhancing the lives of those around us, we can attain a more balanced perspective of the world while simultaneously finding greater personal fulfillment for ourselves.

Because here’s the secret: In order to be humble, you have to be strong. And you have to be so comfortable with that strength that you don’t have to flaunt it.

Moreover, the truly humble know that they have an obligation to reach out and serve those that are weaker than they are.

**The best historical example of this juxtaposition of humility and strength is Jesus Christ.**

As the Son of God, he clearly had all the power anyone could want. Yet throughout his earthly life, he served others. He ministered to the downtrodden.

**He even washed his followers' feet!**

Now, I know I lost some of you there, but I hope you don't miss the message:

**With true power comes an obligation to wield that power with humility and a lack of arrogance.**

It would be an understatement to say that we, as Americans, have lost sight of the merits of humility.

In describing his vision of the ideal American foreign policy, then-Gov. George W. Bush put it this way:

**“If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us. If we're a humble nation, but strong, they'll welcome us. And our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power, and that's why we've got to be humble, and yet project strength in a way that promotes freedom.”**

**— Gov. George W. Bush, October 2000**

Admirable as that vision was, we cannot avoid the fact that, fair or not, our reputation with friends and foes around the world is anything but humble.

That said, in this manifesto, I want to focus on the role of humility in our day-to-day lives, and hopefully point out how we have gotten away from a core American value.

My hope is that we can not only understand that humility is woven into the fabric of America, but that our society would be well served to bring a more humble attitude to all of our interactions.

This essay is intended to spur a new type of self-examination for those who are open to the premise that our strength as a nation is rooted in the humility of the giants of our past.

### **Washington. Jefferson. Adams. Lincoln. Roosevelt.**

All were dominant figures in our history, and all demonstrated the balance between strength and humility.

Plus, once we appreciate that we are relatively insignificant players in the machinations of this world, it removes the burden for us to drive to our own happiness, pleasure and fulfilment.

Instead, we will begin to acknowledge the personal fulfilment to be gained by re-directing energies previously spent trying to convince others of our importance and striving for unachievable levels of self-serving success.

I intend to focus on the role of humility in the lives of everyday Americans.

**Because it is my firm belief that by adopting a more humble perspective as a nation, we will find that our relationships with others will improve and we will find that our reputation as a nation will be enhanced as well.**

Over the next few pages we will:

- Review the American tradition of humility.
- Identify where, in the last 50 years, we lost our way.
- Explore four steps we can all take to regain an attitude of humility.

The title of this essay is taken from a West African proverb made famous by President Theodore Roosevelt.

The entire proverb reads:

**Speak softly and carry a big stick. You will go far.**

The “big stick” line is the one that often gets the focus. Everyone likes the idea of being able to get the results we desire, even (or especially) if that means we have to get tough to do so.

I re-read the proverb, though, and considered how widely known and embraced it is by Americans. It became clear that this is a microcosmic statement summing up the attitude America has to adopt in the 21st century.

Most importantly, if we look at the proverb in its entirety, we understand that it is a statement advising balance. It won't be enough to simply carry the big stick. That smacks of arrogance and that tone will be resisted everywhere.

We must re-learn ways to speak softly, and truly project humility to our neighbors, comfortable that it will not be forgotten that we are wielders of unprecedented strength.

And only with that balance will we “go far” as individuals and as a nation.

# Defining Humility

Let's start off with a definition of the word *humility*.

Most dictionaries use some variation of the following:

**The quality or condition of being humble.**

OK, so what does it mean to be humble?

One definition of humble is:

**Marked by meekness or modesty in behavior, attitude, or spirit;  
not arrogant or prideful.**

Modesty. Not arrogant or prideful. Both of those make sense.

But what about this idea of “meekness”? That sounds like weakness.

Well, meek is defined as “showing patience; gentle.”

So being humble is being modest. Patient. Gentle. Not arrogant or prideful.

While all of this is true, please allow me to add some additional color and context to these dictionary definitions.

For our purposes, humility will further be defined as:

**The willingness to place the needs and desires of others before your own.**

Humility is having the confidence and comfort to know that it is infinitely more satisfying to focus on enhancing the lives of others than it is trying to achieve our own peace of mind.

At least if we set a goal to make someone else's existence a bit more pleasant, we have a good chance at success.

Is humility a permanent trait? No, for most mortals like us, it is, at best, a periodic personality attribute.

In classic terms, to be humble is to be

- deferential
- respectful
- contrite
- acquiescent
- self-effacing

In today's vernacular, being humble is knowing that it's not always about you.

What you'll notice is that, while each definition shades the term: "humble" in a slightly different fashion, what it never connotes is weakness. Reserved? Yes, perhaps even subservient.

But what we must realize is that simply by considering our own interests to be secondary to those of others, we are not weakened.

Our own worth is not diminished by celebrating and elevating that of our neighbor.

” Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself at all.”

— **William Temple, Sr.**

That’s the real gift of humility: it frees us to think about others and how to touch their lives in a positive way.

Let’s now explore how humility has been woven into the fabric of American society from the very beginning.

# Humility And The Founders

Humility has historically been a prominent element of the American Ethos.

A quick review of some of the writings of the Founding Fathers makes it clear that many of them believed that the ultimate success of this new nation would depend in part on the willingness of its citizens and leaders to consider the needs of the nation above their own desires.

For many, like George Washington and John Adams, the embracing of humility was rooted in their Christian faith. In a letter to the governors of the 13 states at the time of his retirement from command of the Continental Army, Washington prays that God will protect the governors and their states.

He also asks that God would:

**incline the hearts of the Citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field...**

Using terms like “subordination” and “obedience to Government” may cause us some degree of discomfort today, but I believe Washington and his contemporaries understood clearly that their experimental system of government depended completely on the willingness of the people to forgo some of their individual freedoms in order to enjoy the unalienable rights as defined in the Declaration of Independence.

Plus, given the dozens of Biblical references to the virtues of humility (with which he was surely familiar), it's hard to imagine that Washington wouldn't expect the country to adopt a spirit of humility. In fact, he concludes his prayer for the governors with the following petition:

**“... and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice ... and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristicks (sic) of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation.”**

If we have a problem with “subordination” then being asked to “demean ourselves” would be a deal breaker.

If we again put aside the semantic nuances and appreciate his intent, then Washington's message is far more palatable: **we need to temper our own personal drives and desires with charity and humility** (that is, to become others-oriented).

Otherwise, Washington warned us, our nation would never achieve its ambition of being a city upon a hill

# Lincoln's Humility

In the 80+ years following the founding of our nation, America had experienced nearly unfettered growth and prosperity. Yet, the longstanding issue of slavery continued to fester until the Civil War broke out in July of 1861.

The following month, President Lincoln issued a famous “Proclamation of a National Fast Day”.

In this proclamation, Lincoln instructed his countrymen that it is appropriate for “all people, at all times, to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God; to bow in humble submission to His chastisements ...”

Lincoln reminded Americans that even in this country where freedom and liberty had been such a source of national pride, there still needed to be an attitude of submission to God's will.

This notion of humility in the face of great blessings was a recurring theme in Lincoln's public pronouncements. In 1863, in a proclamation for another National Fast Day, he drives home points that would be convicting today, let alone 140 years ago.

**“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God...**

**Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.**

**It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness”**

What's intriguing, though, is that while Lincoln might have sensed this trend in the mid 19th century, we will see that in the subsequent four score and seven year period, the combination of world wars, economic cataclysm and social upheaval actually conspired to increase American humility in the first half of the 20th century.

## American Humility In The 20th Century

Even as America grew in global relevance in WWII, it was unclear whether this country would emerge from the war as a superpower.

In fact, the reluctant entry into the hostilities in Europe and the fact that it required a humiliating surprise attack at Pearl Harbor to spur us into engagement in the Pacific were signs that America was not looking to throw its weight around.

To the contrary, there was a more “workman-like” interpretation of our role in the world at that time. The average American had an attitude that if and when we were called to do a job, we would do it and do it well, without any undue fanfare.

To this day, the men and women of what we've come to refer to as “The Greatest Generation” are generally unwilling to assume that mantle. Their comments about their call to duty are almost universally humble, with a consistent refrain of “just serving my country”.

That said, we were a people with an insatiable commitment to certain core values (i.e. The American Way), and we would be willing to make whatever sacrifice to protect those beliefs.

But even as victors after WWII, we were gracious and reached out to lift up those we had just defeated. There was almost no gloating, no oppression, and no retribution.

The Marshall Plan was the most dramatic and influential example of that post-war humility. Even today, it's tough to appreciate the unprecedented scope of generosity demonstrated by the United States between 1948 and 1952. As the only participant in the European theatre that had not had its national infrastructure devastated, the US had an upper hand in almost any measure when compared to the rest of the West.

For all intents and purposes, the United States had delivered a knockout blow to its enemies in the war. Rather than lord this over those countries, **the US extended 16 European countries over \$13B in financial aid (all but \$1.5B as grants, not loans).**

Instead of kicking them while they were down, we picked them up, brushed them off, and made them stronger and more self-sufficient than ever before.

Certainly there was strategic self-interest at work as well. But there's no denying that America passed on the opportunity to humiliate our former foes. **Instead we extended a helping hand out of generosity and selflessness.**

## Humble Heroes

Even as the entertainment and media industries grew in prominence through the 1950's, the widely accepted archetype of the American Hero was a brave, honorable and humble guy.

Jimmy Stewart made a career playing earnest, honest men with an unerring sense of right and wrong. But you never saw him blowing his own horn, demanding attention to himself, either onscreen or off. It just wasn't done that way.

The cowboy heroes of the silver screen were equally unwilling to seek recognition for their derring do. In fact, I believe uttering the line "Aww shucks, ma'am" accompanied by a down-

ward gaze and a boot kicking dirt must have been on page 1 of the “Silver Screen Cowboy Manual”.

Even sports heroes were talented but modest men whose demeanor was intentionally low key. In striking contrast to today’s athletes, these men thought it unprofessional to celebrate their personal successes on the field.

Look at old film of Jackie Robinson or Joe DiMaggio rounding the bases after a homerun. Head down, moving along as diligently as he could.

**No hopping, skipping, leaping and gazing at the ball as it cleared the fence. That would be deeply frowned upon.**

In fact, there was an unwritten code of conduct in baseball that warned against “showing up” a competitor. The repercussions could be directed at the offender or his teammate, and it would typically be in the form of a “message pitch” delivered at the soft tissue on his person.

**They were acting like professionals. Like they had been there before.**

Needless to say, this sense of understatement and humility by those in the public eye is a thing of the past. There is clearly a “Celebrate Me” attitude that prevails in our country today, and it is only magnified in the entertainment industries.

How did we get on this “Me, Myself and I” path? I believe it actually began in the most unassuming, and best-intentioned way.

## Where Did We Get Off Track?

I have a theory about when and how we began to lose our national sense of humility. What's amazing is that it was a subtle 25–30 year transition that began with the best of intentions.

By the early 1960's, America had entered a period of self-examination, calling into question a number of elements of the political and social status quo.

**“Are all people created equal?”**

**“If so, why are Black people being beaten in the streets of Selma?”**

**“How can we make sure that Communism doesn't spread throughout the world?”**

**“Should abortion be legalized?”**

**“Is it OK for a woman to want a career?”**

All of these were legitimate and morally relevant questions to be asked, especially given the historic value placed upon equality and liberty in the United States. We wanted to make sure we were walking the talk.

From there, however, things took an unexpected turn. In the 1970's the healthy self-examination turned into a more embittered self-criticism.

**“Why are we still in Vietnam?”**

**“Why aren't our leaders being more forthcoming about Cambodia/Watergate/Agent Orange?”**

**“Why can't we seem to eradicate poverty in the richest country in the world?”**

While these, too, were relevant questions to be asked, I believe they led us toward self-flagellation and a sense of helplessness. We had some pretty significant social challenges facing us as a nation and as individuals. It was becoming clear that there were no easy solutions to be had.

In response to this era of soul searching, the movement encouraging self-help and self-actualization came into prominence. The rise in popularity of self-proclaimed guru/authors, the increased curiosity in eastern religions, the often fanatical pursuit of EST and other kinds of personal improvement frameworks were all driven by a belief that we as individuals have the ability, if not the obligation, to seek opportunities to perfect ourselves.

Though the 70's have been called the "Me Decade", the focus on self-improvement accelerated through the 80's and continues unabated even today.

### **Self-examination. Self-criticism. Self-help. Self-improvement. What's the common denominator?**

A focus on SELF, which, you'll recall, directly opposes the definition of humility we started with.

The truly humble acknowledge that the road to personal perfection is extremely steep, narrow and impossible for we mere mortals to negotiate. Though none of us can ever get there, we expend tremendous time, energy and resources in our efforts to "get the most out of our lives".

As a Christian, I find it a tremendous source of peace to know that **I am completely unable to fix or even improve myself**. I'm flawed and limited in my abilities, but I love a God who cares for me and wants only the best for me. He is where I turn for true fulfillment.

The irony is that once we are released from the unwinnable race to personal perfection, not only do we enjoy peace of mind, but we can also be lifted to greater levels of personal development and satisfaction. How?

**By focusing on meeting the needs and desires of others!**

In the most literal sense, few opportunities are more personally satisfying than participating in a community service project of some kind. Building homes with Habitat For Humanity, volunteering at a soup kitchen, and even conducting a canned food drive during the holidays are all ways that many of us give back to those less fortunate.

The interesting thing, though, is that for most of us, it's a once or twice a year effort. **It's as if we're checking the cosmic Do-something-good-for-others box**, and for the rest of the year, we're understandably focused on our jobs, our bills, our kids, our marriages, our favorite football team, etc.

I maintain that we are at our best as individuals and as a society when we spend at least as much time, if not the majority of our time, considering the ways in which we can improve the lot of those around us.

This doesn't have to mean jumping on a plane to feed the starving kids in the Sudan. **This move toward selflessness can begin at home.**

The bottom line is that we have allowed ourselves to be so focused on our own desires for self-made happiness, self-made wealth and celebrating a self-oriented worldview that we rarely consider the even greater satisfaction that comes from focusing outward.

The reality that I want to expose is that **humility and personal satisfaction can go hand-in-hand. As do humility and personal success.** In fact, humility can be the source of strength and effectiveness as a leader at home, at school and in the marketplace.

# How Do We Bring Back Humility?

While I'm reluctant to offer a prescription for humility, I do believe there are at least nine steps any of us can take to begin to reverse the tide of self-orientation that has been accelerating in this country over the last fifty years.

As you review the four outlined below and consider the merits of the recommendations, try to think of them in the context of your everyday life. None of these require wholesale changes to your beliefs or social customs.

It is my belief that these efforts will, indeed, help us turn our mental and spiritual focus outward, allowing us to recall the merits of humility and the fruits borne from a selfless attitude.

## 1. Learn from “Level 5” leaders

In his outstanding study of corporate leadership, *Good To Great*, Jim Collins conducts an exhaustive analysis of several companies that outperformed peer companies in their respective industries over an extended period.

Among the more unexpected success factors to which Collins points is that all of the great companies were led by **“Level 5” leaders, who are described as being “a study in duality: modest and willful, humble and fearless.”**<sup>A</sup>

The thing we can all learn from these Level 5 leaders is that competence and effective leadership do not have to come at the expense of humility. Rather, one could argue that the healthy focus on the needs of others — employees, customers, voters, parishioners — and the staunch reluctance to believe one's own press are actually integral to a strong leader's portfolio.

**At the same time, Collins points out that these humble leaders are by no means weak.** The best known example of this kind of humble strength, in fact, was President Lincoln. Though he had a modest, self-deprecating personal affect, he was resolute in his convictions, and was willing to endure significant sacrifice — including his own life — to ensure that the Union remained intact.<sup>B</sup>

None of the Level 5 leaders of Collins' great companies were the “Celebrity CEOs” that we have come to celebrate in the last 20 years. Instead, theirs were relatively low key personalities that masked a firm sense of purpose and resolve to do what was necessary to drive their companies to succeed.

The good news is that, while they may not be leading Fortune 500 companies, there are several examples of Level 5 leaders all around us. **They may be school principals, factory supervisors, nurses in intensive care units, rabbis, or construction foremen.**

These individuals have come to realize (either from trial and error, strong mentorship or good home training) that with humility comes a teachability that, in turn, makes a leader incredibly effective at understanding the needs and challenges confronting his team.

We would be wise to strive for this openness and receptivity in an effort to strike Collins' balance of modesty, humility and fearlessness.

## 2. Serve your way out of difficult times

The uncertainty of life ensures that we will endure our share of personal challenges. Whether they are physical or financial hardships, family or professional crises, we have a number of ways that we can cope with them.

Often, the most effective and comforting means of recovery involve seeking the support of loved ones, allowing for the passage of time, or, simply grinning and bearing it.

**Unfortunately, many of us tend to spend a fair bit of time stewing in our misery.** We wallow in it, wondering what we've done to deserve this spell of misfortune. If we're blessed to have friends and family around, we may lean on them for support and encouragement. But even our family can come to feel burdened by an extended season of someone else's troubles.

Please understand: I know first-hand that we must mourn our losses. I firmly disagree with the concept of hiding our feelings, pretending that the pain isn't present, or believing that we just need to "tough it out". Healing takes time and it is an active process that should not be minimized.

**My proposal, however, is that we can accelerate our healing by turning our attentions away from our own troubles, and helping to relieve the burdens of others.**

While this isn't always the case, there is a strong likelihood that there are others in your sphere of influence that are experiencing even more pain and challenges than you are. You may not be in a position to do anything other than offer moral support and comfort for those individuals.

We can create a mutually beneficial arrangement by reaching out to those in need while we are in need. Most people are familiar with the Biblical story of how Jesus fed 5,000 followers with two fish and five loaves of bread.

What's all the more amazing about that story (see the Book Of Matthew 14:18–21) is that, shortly before this miracle of compassion and service, Jesus had been informed that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been murdered. While mourning his loss, Jesus found solace by serving.

So, while we may not be able to perform supernatural miracles, we absolutely can perform everyday acts of service. When we are in the throes of life's challenges, we can help speed our own recovery by pouring into the lives of other people in the midst of their hardships.

Humbling ourselves by serving others leaves everyone involved in a better place.

### 3. Be anonymously generous

Generosity is an admirable trait. It's hard to ever find fault with someone who shares her good fortune with others, especially if the giving requires some degree of sacrifice.

Unfortunately, our self-orientation sometimes creeps into our impulses to be generous. We occasionally think about how good it will make **us** feel to do something generous for someone else. Or we consider, for example, the tax deductibility of a financial donation to a charity.

Let's be clear: this doesn't in any way lessen the positive impact of the gift. This attitude does, however, edify the donor and his contribution more than it should if we are seeking humility.

Instead, I believe that we should actively seek out opportunities to bless others with unexpected and uncredited generosity.

**I don't advocate the clichéd “random acts of kindness” though.** I would prefer to see more of us target our acts of kindness and make them extremely relevant and valuable for the recipient. The difference is that the “donors” should work to protect their own identity.

As a result, the gift is somehow pristine, more innocent, and unsullied by mixed motives.

More importantly, the giver can be more certain that his intentions were truly selfless in origin.

Why go to all this trouble? **Because a fundamental tenet for those with a humble world view is that we should want to do something for others and elevate them, regardless of the impact on our own station.**

Plus, it would put so much more goodwill into circulation if we simply made a habit of giving with nothing to gain. Even if humility doesn't result, social kindness would certainly enjoy a renaissance.

## 4. Submit to real authority

The highly regarded “12 Step” programs that have helped millions learn to manage their addictions feature an intriguing statement about the role of humility in their recovery.

Six of the 12 steps include either an overt reference to God or to a “Power greater than ourselves [that] could restore us to sanity.”

In fact, step seven requires that recovering addicts have “humbly asked God to remove [their] shortcomings”.

This is instructive for all of us, even if we do not suffer from the pain and destruction of addictions. The truth is that all of us would do well to acknowledge that, left to our own devices, there is only so much we can do for ourselves in this world.

In my opinion, this is a very healthy admission which inherently takes our focus off of ourselves. **Once we cede control of our lives and our happiness to our God, then we are free from the burden of self-actualization, self-improvement and self-orientation.**

We are, instead, willing to subvert our own needs, wants and desires in order to serve others. We don’t need to worry about the zero-sum equation (i.e. we win when others lose) because we’ve gotten out of that game and are measuring personal fulfillment with a new scorecard.

We’ve already established that seeking purpose by turning inward is rarely a recipe for success. What’s so important about the references to God in the 12 Steps is that it hammers home the point that we are simply not capable of properly directing our lives.

**You do not have to be an addict to appreciate this.**

Here's the unavoidable logic: if we believe that God exists, and we believe Him to be all powerful, the Creator of the universe, why would we want to seize authority over our lives from Him?

Why do we have trouble obeying His directions, even if we don't always understand His intentions?

For most of us, the answer to these fundamental questions is that we are reluctant to submit to authority. In fact, if we think "humility" is a tough concept for modern Americans to get our heads around, try telling someone to "submit" to someone else.

**"You lost me at hello..."**

As it happens, though, humility and submission go hand-in-hand. Because most of us have frankly gotten out of the practice of showing any deference to one another, one good way to relearn the process is by submitting to real, all-powerful Divine authority.

**Once we admit to our earthly shortcomings, then pride, ego and attitude get balanced by a greater sense of perspective.**

When we begin to acknowledge our relative impotence, we are able to engage with one another from a place of humility.

Are you ready to Speak Softly?

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#### ENDNOTES

**A** Collins, Jim. Good to Great. Harper Business, 2001. Pg 22.

**B** Collins. Pg 22.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With over fifteen years' experience in sales, marketing, project management and business development, Ira Williams is an entrepreneur who relishes his involvement in the early stages of a company's life.

A graduate of the Harvard Business School, he also has extensive experience working with Fortune 100 firms, where he has led brand management and business development efforts and pursued strategic partnerships and acquisitions.

Ira completed his undergraduate studies at Stanford University, where he graduated with an AB in International Relations, with a focus in Latin American Economic Development Strategies.

Ira is an avid reader, an amateur history buff, and has great passion (if not aptitude) for golf.

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