

MAKING STONE SOUP

by Jeff DeGraff

Prologue to *Making Stone Soup*

Stirring the Pot

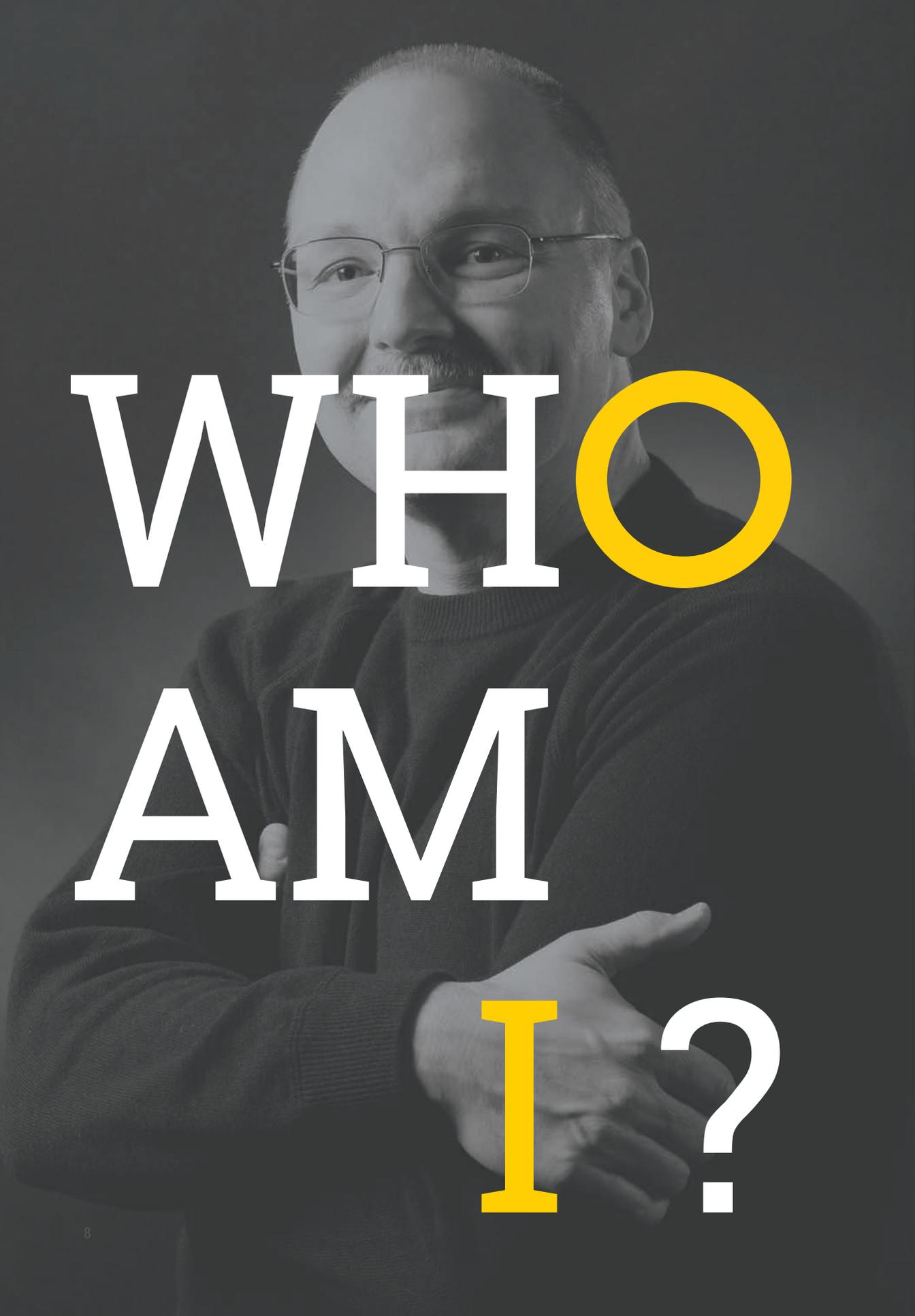
One of the first stories I called Stone Soup. It clever soldiers with who come to a poor large iron cauldron town square. As the the soldiers fill the ceremoniously place a



ever learned to read was was a tale about three no food or money village and set a by the well in the townfolk look on, vessel with water and large stone in the pot.

Intrigued, the villagers come out to examine and critique the colorless concoction. Some suggest that the broth would be improved with carrots or potatoes and the like to which the tricksters agree. The meal gains momentum as the folks each willingly add some small ingredient. Soon the cauldron is bubbling with a sumptuous brew and all feast and dance in celebration. The story ends with the soldiers moving down the road to repeat the whole charade on the next unsuspecting burg.

I have never forgotten this parable about the generative power of communities engaged in small and diverse acts of creativity. At its most basic level, collaborative innovation is mostly about making stone soup. That is, getting everyone, everywhere, every day to make small unique contributions that when combined create something truly unique to be shared by all.



WHO

AM

I?

I have traveled around the globe speaking about innovation, met and consulted with the world's most powerful leaders and executives, but the biggest challenges I've faced and the greatest lessons I've learned have come from within myself. I speak from decades of experience: all of the approaches that you will find in this short eBook, *Making Stone Soup*, are all things that have worked for me. This comes from many, many years of learning from my early failures—from trying many different things and seeing what worked and what didn't work. The result is a set of real-life steps to achieving innovation in your organization and your life.

The stories I tell in this book are all very personal. I want to share with you both the highlights and lowlights, the thrilling successes and the instructive failures I've been through and reflected on as a consultant with dozens of top-shelf firms from Apple to Zappos. I've helped develop some of the biggest game-changing innovations of the past 20 years—including the largest clean energy initiative ever undertaken, the only best-selling soft drink introduced in the last decade, and the first on-demand video-streaming website to take viewers away from network television—and I've learned a lot along the way.

As both a professor at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan and a seasoned consultant to multi-national Fortune 500 companies, I bring to innovation both theory and practice. It's a combination of a carefully studied framework with practical, easy-to-follow action steps that will bring you and your organization to meaningful, long-term sustainable change.

Making Stone Soup is an interactive experience. It's about assembling a diverse group of thinkers and leaders and figuring out how to benefit from the respective strengths of each individual. Innovation is collaborative. It happens when people come together. In this spirit, I speak not as an expert but as a fellow learner. That's the other thing about innovation: it's never fully realized. There is no "there." If you've developed the miracle drug, there's always another miracle drug to make. If you've developed the great restaurant, there's always a second restaurant. We've never fully arrived—whenever we get where we think we wanted to get, there's a new place to reach.

I'm excited to see where
we'll all go **next.**



A hand is shown at the top center, pouring a stream of fine yellow powder downwards. The powder falls into a large white circle that is centered on the page. The background is a solid, bright yellow color. The text 'CHAPTER 1' and 'The Basic Ingredients' is centered within the white circle.

CHAPTER 1

**The Basic
Ingredients**

MAKE



STONE SOUP

IMAGINE THIS:

inside yourself is a brilliant source of untapped talent, incredible potential. Innovation is a capability that you already have. To innovate is not to learn something new but to learn how to apply the power that you've always had in new ways and in new contexts. In the spirit of making the old new, let's start with an old but compelling metaphor: the making of stone soup.

It's a delicious concoction brewed from the unlikeliest of ingredients: bits of food that you wouldn't expect to mix together well.

It's a combination of ingredients that create a constructive conflict, or a positive tension, when you mix them. In this way, the ingredients are different, but they're not that different—they work well together. The idea is this: when people add disparate things together in small amounts, you get something new—something *special*.



Crucial to
the making of
stone soup is
collaboration.

This is precisely why this old metaphor is newly relevant in the world we live in. We have entered an age of all-encompassing social media: collaboration at every level of our lives. Bringing communities together isn't just a skill—it's an imperative. It is our way of life. Whether you are a small business trying to grow with other small businesses, or a non-profit museum, or an educational institution—or even a grandmother who wants to help her grandchildren find meaningful employment—the key to jumpstarting change is knowing how and where to connect with other people.

