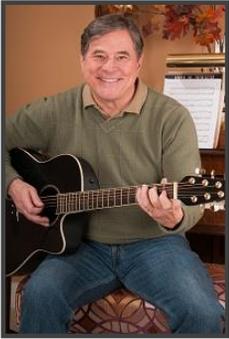


Focus Consulting Group

Jim Ware, CFA, Founder



At Williams College I majored in Philosophy. I thought this would give me an edge in dating because women would think it was cool. I never really got to test this theory because Williams was an all-male (nearly) school in the early 70's. I hadn't done my research. But actually the Philosophy training has served me well: questioning and challenging is the essence of philosophy. Getting to what is true. I like to do that with clients: peel away the layers to get down to why they invest the way they do, or what is their real passion, or what do they want to leave as a legacy. In short, I like to talk to people about what's important to them. And why.

I have a fairly traditional background for an investor: U. of Chicago MBA in finance, CFA designation, research analyst working for Gary Brinson, then Portfolio Manager at Allstate. In 1998, after 20 years in the industry as a practitioner, I founded Focus Consulting Group (FCG) with the intention of helping investment leaders leverage their talent. In hindsight, it looks like a perfect “blue ocean” strategy because there were no competitors, at least none with investment backgrounds, which gave us “street cred.” In reality, I was simply following my bliss. I like ideas. I like connecting theories and models to practical applications. For example, the Enneagram is an interesting model for understanding personality types. At FCG we have honed it to helping investment professionals with leadership and decision making. I am always reading and looking for new tools to use with our investment clients. I write a weekly journal with my insights.

I like competition—I was a nationally ranked tennis player as a kid (but I peaked at age 12)—so I enjoy the investment challenge: finding strategies to outperform the other players. But I am also committed to the “double win”: excellent fund performance AND excellent workplace. FCG has shown in our work that both are attainable: you can provide great results and a great place to work. In fact, the two support each other. If a firm wants to “win at all costs” then we are not the partner for them. I love my FCG colleagues. We work—and succeed—at being a high performing team. We practice what we preach.

Truthfully, my first passion was music. I wanted to be a singer/songwriter like James Taylor, Gordon Lightfoot, or Neil Young. I played drums and guitar and in the 80's I moonlighted and produced two albums and two top 100 singles. (You can still view our video on YouTube: Children of America) More recently I had some fun playing drums in a progressive church band. (Helping the mostly white congregation find the beat.)

I live in Long Grove (outside Chicago) when I'm not in an airport or hotel. I married up—by a mile—to Jane, who is lovely, kind and smart. The trifecta. And a great mother to our two girls: Alex (13) and Nikki (11). We have four dogs, which is illegal in Long Grove.