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**TeamBonding**  
Better teamwork. Happier teams.™

## TeamBonding – helping Organizations Improve Company Culture, Community Engagement and Employee Retention



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**Interview conducted by:**  
**Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor**  
**CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Goldstein, what is the overall vision behind TeamBonding, and what are you focusing on right now?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** The overall vision of Team Bonding was to bring people together. We have been doing that for over 20 years, we bring them together in a variety of ways, ideally in a way that meets the desired outcome of the person planning the event. If they want people to get to know each other, if they want to work better together, if they want to have fun together, we have options that meet those needs.

**CEOCFO:** *When someone comes to you do they typically know what they want other than just people to get along better?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** Some people have exact needs. I talked to a gentleman last night who knew exactly what he wanted; he knew where he wanted it. He knew that he wanted it to be collaborative and to be like a survivor game. He wanted to do mental and physical exercises and he wanted a certain amount of time and place. He knew exactly what he wanted. Most people do not have that clear vision.

Most people have an idea of what they are looking to accomplish within the timeframe that they are looking for. They then depend upon us for suggestions that meet their needs and budgets. Between in-person and virtual events, we have probably around 200 different options that can meet different needs. That is usually how they decide. They will let us know and we will suggest programs that they are suggesting they are looking for.

**CEOCFO:** *Playing devil's advocate here, why do bonding events work?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** Do we do things that are just fun? Yes, and especially during the pandemic where we had a lot of things that were just group activities. We also have a lot more and there is a lot of science behind it, a lot of technology and program design behind it. People are working with what they are good at. They are depending upon others to help them whether it be someone escape a room or whether it is a gameshow-style event. They usually have an idea of what their

group would enjoy and if we can make a suggestion of what they enjoy, then they would be able to tell us what they are looking for. For example, we are part of the global network, and we did an event today in Spain. They were building F-1 race cars, so they had to build them together and eventually they raced them together.

What this client did before this is they hired an F-1 racer to actually talk to the group and give them a motivational speech. They then had a competition where they were able to build cardboard F-1 race cars. What we do is more of a conference agenda. A lot of things happen in that way.

**CEOFCO: *What are the effects, let us say from an event like you did today, and how do we know that they translate into something meaningful a week or month from now?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** I think it is about setting expectations. If someone is doing a two-hour event and they are expecting permanent change, we have to let them know early on that that is an unrealistic expectation. Change takes time, that is a regular event whether it be weekly or quarterly or over the course of time.

A lot of our events are designed to bring people together, especially now when people are remote. If they are in-person, they do not know who to talk to, so they will be able to do some exercise or game or challenge where they will get to depend on people in a non-consequential way to help their team. They know and realize when they need something, in the office Jim or Jenny were able to help them in that game and they wonder if they could help them with this as well.

A lot of it is an opportunity to work together with limited risk, and when there is risk ideally, they learn from some of these opportunities, games and exercises and challenges. They learn who they can trust.

**"We have the whole charitable component where we build bikes, cancer-care kits and teddy bears, and things that give back to the community and all that disappeared over two years. Now it is back and people feel like they want to give again and we help others in the community and I think that is the best thing to do." David Goldstein**

**CEOFCO: *Would you tell us about the TeamBonding global reach?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** Around 2018 we joined a global network; it is called Catalyst Global. Catalyst is a network of fifty companies like ours that covers ninety companies. There are people in Australia, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Israel, and Chile. We just helped a client called Rescue.org, they are doing a team-building conference for four days in the country of Georgia. We happen to have a partner in Georgia, and we worked with them to come up with a proposal. They are going to be doing a four-day retreat in the country of Georgia by talking to us in the US. We have a network of people that can do what we do in the same way that we do it.

**CEOFCO: *Does that help you through the cultural differences you may need to take into consideration?* Mr.**

**Goldstein:** It was interesting especially in the Georgia situation where they are much more based on Russian culture. We added a facilitation team, so it was a little bit more balanced in culture. They get a little bit more than what they are used to although they are getting the same things, the same program that we offer in the US.

**CEOFCO: *What has changed in the events over time; what might you do today that you would not have done years ago and what have you taken off the table?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** There have been times where different things have been popular. Twenty-five years ago, we did scavenger hunts with Polaroid Cameras, and then GPS devices and digital cameras, iPads and now we are doing Polaroid cameras again, Nostalgia. Technology is a big change. We have been doing a lot of things, especially in the last couple of years.

During the pandemic we had to go completely virtual, so for a lot of companies it was not a good thing but for us it was a really good thing. We had our best two-and-a-half years we ever had because people needed to get together and they needed more than just cocktails and game shows. They needed real ways to connect to get to know each other and to onboard to learn company culture, and technology has really helped with that.

**CEOCFO:** *Would you give us an example of what you might have developed, enhanced or changed during COVID that you are still doing today?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** I think for a lot of companies they did not know what to expect with virtual team building. I think they were pleasantly surprised that there was no ZOOM fatigue with our events, there was laughter, education, and ways to bring people together through improv, comedy, learning a new skill, and working together online. The technology was in the right place at the right time for us. We happened to have the right products to switch into the technology. I think it was much better than people thought. For example, on an average month pre-pandemic we did about 110 events around the country and during COVID we had months that exceeded 700 events. People really needed this. They enjoyed it and did it much more often because it was a way to bring people together when they could not get together in-person. Now we are back to in-person events as well as some virtual. It built loyalty amongst our clientele.

**CEOCFO:** *Your site shows the Eleven Things We Believe section. "We believe in helping wherever and whenever possible." What does that mean day-to-day for TeamBonding?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** In our office we have a shipping issue tomorrow for one of our events, so everyone is helping. For two years the warehouse was collecting dust and now we have account managers and salespeople. Everybody is helping everybody else whether they are in the office or in the home. The thing that changed for the events is during the pandemic we did not do as many charitable events that we used to do and as we are doing now.

We have the whole charitable component where we build bikes, cancer-care kits and teddy bears, and things that give back to the community and all that disappeared over two years. Now it is back and people feel like they want to give again and we help others in the community and I think that is the best thing to do.

**CEOCFO:** *What about, "We believe diversity is a super-power." Why is that meaningful for you?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** Diversity, equity and inclusion is an issue for companies that they must deal with day-to-day. We had to figure out how best internally to address that and make sure we were practicing what we preach, and we needed to come up with a program called Black Power, White Privilege, which was a way to help people have an uncomfortable conversation. It was through a duo that does these types of programs, and they were able to do it virtually and allow people to have conversations that they could not have and that they were uncomfortable having so that they could see something and ask questions and be in a safe place.

We are working on a program now where there are blind facilitators which walk the non-blind attendees through a program through exercises to give a feeling of what it is like to be blind and not be accessible, and to allow empathy for people.

**CEOCFO:** *TeamBonding was recognized in the INC 5000, so clearly you are doing well. How do you continue the trajectory?*

**Mr. Goldstein:** It was the seventh time we were chosen as one of the fastest-growing INC 5000 companies in the US.

What that is based on is a three-year period. The idea that we have done it seven times in our history is one of the things I am most proud of. The other thing is that during the pandemic, we went through a lot of our programs. Probably 75% of our programs people did online, so we had to be able to look at what we were doing and see what people wanted. What it is that they have done and enjoyed and what they valued and what they see for the future. With our R&D we have a twice-weekly meeting about new programs to try to figure out what people will really enjoy.

One of the things we have come up with is the little libraries that you see in neighborhoods that are on someone's property, take one-leave one, which is one of the programs we have added to our programs. They can build a team library and write a book and learn to story-tell and then donate the library to what would be a resource for that kind of thing. We have expanded some of our offerings, like we do build-a-wheel-chair. The Wheel Chair Build has been designed to build wheelchairs for people that do not have the money, budget, or venues.

We have expanded that and now we are going to build wheelchairs for pets and children. We are looking at our program to see what is needed and wanted now and I think that always gets us one step ahead because we are always leading the way in what we offer.

**CEO CFO: *Do many people take advantage of what is in your store?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** Surprisingly yes. It was kind of an afterthought and one of the ideas that I had and we were losing a lot of people that do not have the budget to facilitate a team-building event, we had to offer something where they could do something on their own. We had various things over various times. We had a meeting and for a dollar or two dollars I can download an exercise to do right away.

We are trying to fine-tune what people really want. I think it is surprisingly beneficial and I think it would be better.

**CEO CFO: *How do you know when a facilitator is right for TeamBonding?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** My business previous to Team Bonding was a corporate entertainment company. We used a lot of actors. A lot of the actors were facilitators but the actors were really good at presenting programs, events and entertainment. The facilitators can bring the energy up and can drive the program and reach all the milestones in the middle.

**CEO CFO: *Did you recognize in the beginning how enthusiastic you would be and how exciting it would be for you as at TeamBonding?***

**Mr. Goldstein:** It is a roller-coaster. You have your great days; you have your days that you are not as enthusiastic. What we do is make people happier at work. I think there is no more important thing nowadays than doing what we do. The idea that many of our programs give back to the community, that is so easy to be enthusiastic about. We have an entire division that does volunteer programs for one particular company and they are doing hundreds and hundreds of these programs for thousands and thousands of people. Each of those people give back. That is an easy thing to get enthused and excited about.

Not only are we having fun building teams, we are giving back to the community and companies. When I first started, company culture and community engagement and employee retention were not important. Right now, that is the most important.

