

Scale-Up Consultant

MANAGEMENT: Jonathan Goldhill helps mid-size companies expand intelligently.

By **MICHAEL AUSHENKER** Staff Reporter

Management consultant, coach and advisor **Jonathan Goldhill** is a living contradiction — he's the founder and leader of the **Goldhill Group** and yet he is the only person in the group.

He has established himself as a specialist in helping a company scale up, yet he has zero interest in expanding his own firm.

Instead of coming to an office each day in a three-piece suit, he works out of his home office in Oak Park.

Yet his formula works: Across 30 years, Goldhill has grown companies from fledgling to seven figures and has coached more than 1,000 business owners and executive teams.

Growth talk

Goldhill does not deal with startups; he advises closely held private companies, usually family owned firms with \$1 million or more in revenue.

"A lot of them have been in construction," Goldhill said. "Not retail, not franchise, but business services, property management, tech, IT."

Currently he has six client companies, helping them devise long-term strategies to achieve five- to 10-year goals.

"What are the underlying advantages can we put together a brand promise?" he asked, rhetorically. "How do we get people to buy faster?"

Goldhill told the Business Journal that scaling up a company involves ensuring that "they have the right seats, the right people, the right things and they're doing those right things right."

Having the right people, he continued, means those hired share the core values of the company — a set of operating agreements or behaviors — whether that constitutes working competently and professionally or responding to emails within 24 hours.

"We work on the chemistry with the team," he said.

So what happens when long-term employees become too complacent?

"Then we need to move them out of the company," Goldhill said. "We're also setting up key performing indicators or what I call 'metrics.' If they're not meeting their requirements, (then they must go)."

Common mistakes companies make while scaling up is keeping on the wrong employees out of comfort, said Goldhill, who tends to stick with clients even after they've scaled up to self-sufficiency.

"My clients are ongoing," he said. "Everything is month-to-month, but it's ongoing. My typical client is with me for three or four or five years."

Craig Pollack, founder of **FPA Inc.**, an IT company in Woodland Hills, retained Goldhill for 12 years.

"He probably helped me hold my partner a little more accountable," said Pollack, who ultimately bought out his business partner's interest.

Another client is a second-generation family business in Watsonville named **K&D Landscaping Inc.** Chief Executive **Justin White** has listened to Goldhill and grown his revenues from \$1 million to \$8 million in four years. White attributes the expansion to Goldhill's guidance and expertise.

"We develop quarterly rocks and KPIs (key performance indicators) that each person is responsible for to ensure we stay on track with our plans and goals," said White.

He also enjoys Goldhill's consultation style. "He listens first to you and provides feedback," White said. "He isn't going to push you to do something that isn't in the best interest of the company, but he may push you to do things that make you uncomfortable."

White recalled having to take a leave of absence two months ago during the company's



Business Casual: Jonathan Goldhill in Oak Park home office.

PHOTO BY THOMAS WASPER

busiest month after injuring himself in a motorcycle accident.

"Thanks to the help of Jonathan, I knew the team would be fine because we have built a company that can run off processes and systems, not a CEO," White said. "(Having returned to work), the team is doing great and firing on all cylinders. I can guarantee this would not have been the case five years ago."

Storied Valley past

Twenty years ago, Goldhill lived in the San Fernando Valley and ran the Valley Economic Development Center, which recently declared bankruptcy.

He spent 10 years at VEDC and was chastened by the news it had run into trouble.

"I was not surprised, but I was a bit disappointed to hear they filed Chapter 11," Goldhill said. "VEDC, under (former chief executive) **Roberto (Barragan)**'s leadership, seemed to

be strong while expanding to other states. Since his sudden departure in October 2016, I understand there have been four people assigned to the president's role. Any sudden departure, followed by lots of turnover of the most key position, is very damaging to an organization."

Ironically, Goldhill has no interest in applying his advice about how to grow a company to his own enterprise.

"I'm not looking to scale up my business," he said. "If I add one or two new clients a quarter, I have a very nice income (and) a little bit more freedom to travel. I picked up clients in Bend, Oregon; San Diego; Tampa; Las Vegas; Phoenix — places where I want to go."

And, while he consults with clients about key hires, he doesn't want to personally manage employees.

"I outsource my accounting, my social media, some marketing," he said. "Everything is managed by myself. I keep it simple."

A Bride's Buying Style

RETAIL: Borderline shooting survivor's shop is inspired by 'Say Yes to the Dress.'

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

Taylor Young understands the power of "I do." The 23-year-old last month opened **Ever After Bridal** on Walnut Street, a quiet offshoot of Moorpark's main thoroughfare High Street.

Young wants to separate herself from competitors by selling more than white dresses — she wants to provide an "experience package" for customers.

"No other bridal shop offers that," said Young.

She explained that chain bridal brands, and even some boutiques, often hurry dress-shoppers out the door if they don't seem intent on purchasing right away. In contrast, she admires the nurturing, experience-based business model employed by **Kleinfeld Bridal** in Manhattan, which draws patrons from all over the world on the TLC series "Say Yes to the Dress."

"My intention is to get it to the point where people want to (travel) to Ever After Bridal, not for the sales, but for the experience that we offer," Young said.

Package deals

Experiences start with the Rose Package, which gets shoppers two refreshments, a set of handcrafted champagne flutes and a remembrance photo taken inside the shop's Cinderella carriage for \$30 per guest. Next is the Ruby Package, which tacks on an extra beverage and a spread of pastries for a total of \$40 per guest. And at the top of the line is the Dia-



PHOTO BY ANDREW FOERCH

Charmed: Cinderella carriage at Ever After Bridal in Moorpark; inset, Taylor Young.

mond Package, which touts four beverages per person, champagne flutes, pastries, photos and a two-hour private experience with the shop entirely to yourself — feel free to try on every dress in the store — for \$85 or \$65 per guest, depending on the size of the party.

"If I was getting married, that's the one I'd choose," Young said with a laugh.

Ever After Bridal currently offers dresses from designers including Maggie Sottero,

Rebecca Ingram, Atelier Pronovias and Willowby, covering all styles from ultra-couture to bohemian-casual. Average dress prices range between \$1,300 and \$2,500, though some — like one gown dripping with Swarovski crystals — are as expensive as \$9,000.

Entrepreneurial awakening

Young said she always wanted to start her own business but wasn't sure what route to take.

She worked at jobs in catering, venue services and event planning before landing gigs at David's Bridal and smaller boutique bridal shops.

"I realized I'm really good at complimenting women with a dress," Young said. "I told my mom I wanted to open my own wedding shop. I was sick of making other people money when I could do it myself."

In November, she went to the Borderline Bar & Grill in Thousand Oaks on the night that a gunman entered and killed 13 people.

"Surviving that gave me the drive to not let it fail no matter what," she told the Business Journal. "I kind of went home thinking, 'the clock is ticking, I need to do this.' And to cope with everything, I dived into this all the time."

Young cited support and assistance from the Borderline community as key to Ever After Bridal's smooth opening.

She also credits her mother for backing her startup and passing along her business savvy, learned through years owning and operating nurseries in Ventura County.

Eventually, Young sees Ever After Bridal opening locations in Tennessee and North Carolina, and is determined to create an in-house design brand called Ever After Designs, though not immediately.

"In this world, you kind of have to establish a name for yourself before people are going to put any trust in you or put any money into you as a designer," she said. "But I will design my own gowns."