



Brian Goldberg was attracted by the Sweet Leaf Tea founders' enthusiasm to a place where everyone is passionate about the company's product.

NICK SIMONITE | ABJ

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of the year

BRIAN GOLDBERG

Brian Goldberg knows what it means to roll up his sleeves and get the job done.

Austin startup darling Sweet Leaf Tea, where Goldberg has been CFO and COO for almost three years, is in rapid growth mode — doubling its revenue every 12 to 18 months — and is one of the country's fastest-growing ready-to-drink tea makers. Earlier this year, the company raised \$18 million — its largest round of funding to date — from Catterton Partners, a Greenwich, Conn.-based private equity firm specializing in consumer products.

is sold — despite having marketed and distributed nationally for just five years at stores such as Whole Foods, Kroger and Safeway.

"Brian has been instrumental in the growth of the company," says Elizabeth Barber, Sweet Leaf Tea's controller. "He has led the company through a challenging growth phase ... not letting the day-to-day details cloud his strategic vision. He is one of the key strategic planners of Sweet Leaf Tea, the champion of the big picture."

Goldberg championed implementation of SAP software to streamline business processes early on, knowing the

'CHAMPION OF THE BIG PICTURE'

Brian Goldberg is a 'key strategic planner' behind Sweet Leaf Tea's rapid rise

JEAN KWON | STAFF WRITER

Sweet Leaf is a heavy hitter in the \$3 billion domestic ready-to-drink tea market. It's also one of the best known brands in the \$60 million specialized and natural market — where most of Sweet Leaf Tea

company's existing accounting software wouldn't suffice given the company's growth targets. He outsourced several human resources functions and gave his staff increasingly challenging roles so he could focus on budgeting, strategic planning and driving the company's growth.

Besides his responsibilities as CFO, Goldberg oversees the company's operations and coordinates its capital raising with company founder and CEO Clayton Christopher, who started Sweet Leaf Tea in 1998 with \$10,000 using his grandmother's recipe for Southern sweet tea.

Having worked for companies such as Pfizer and Ernst & Young, Goldberg says he was drawn by the founders' enthusiasm.

"You don't really see that a lot in a larger organization. It's more about career advancement or looking out for yourself," Goldberg says. "I saw Sweet Leaf as a place where the founders and everyone on down are really passionate about the product and their vision for the future. I wanted to be a part of helping the company grow."