

## THE KNOWLEDGE

# Seth Goldman

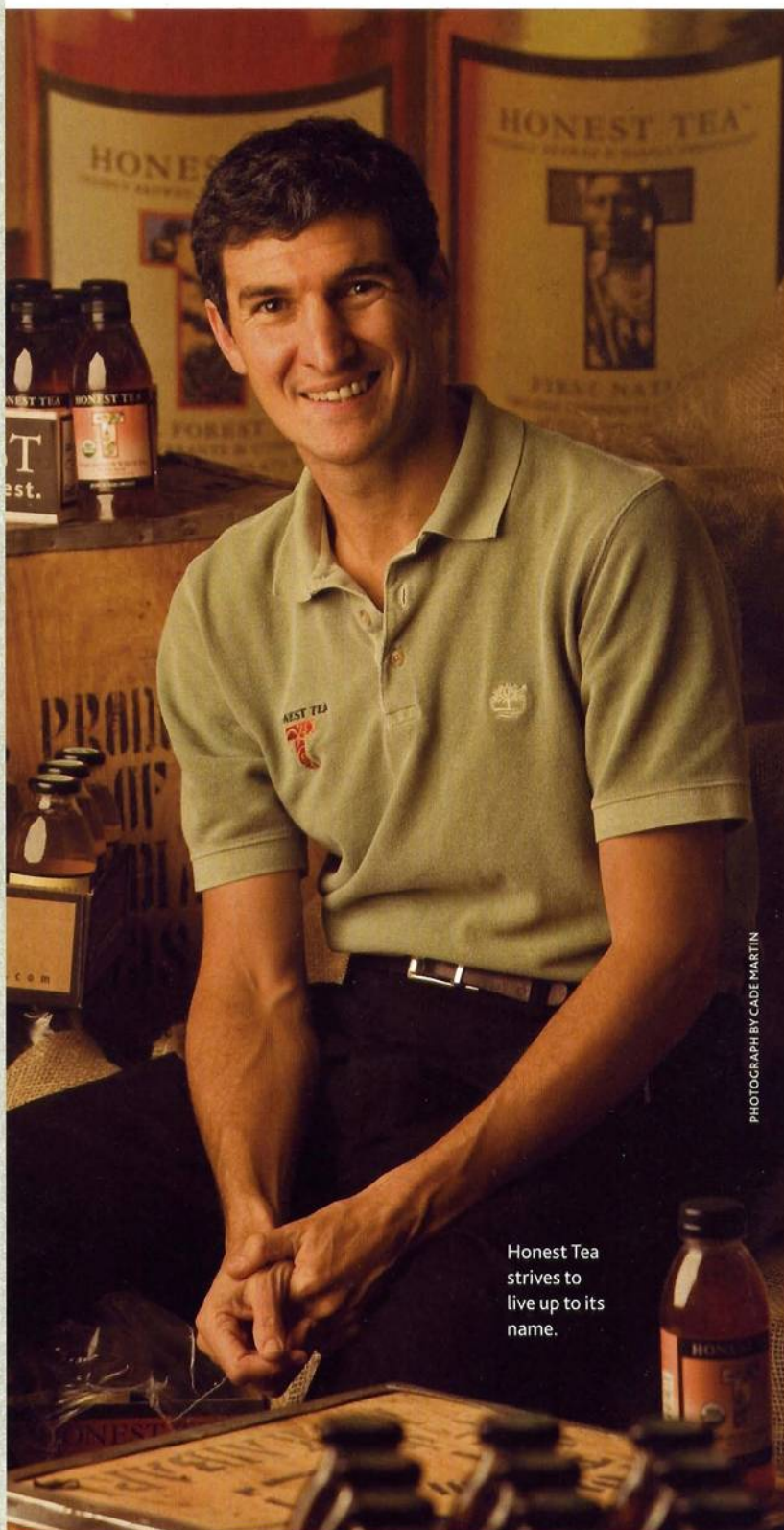
The CEO of Honest Tea says business can be a force for change.

When I ran an AmeriCorps program in the early 1990s in Baltimore, I thought that the only way I could have a positive impact on the world was to work in the nonprofit field. In fact, I later enrolled in business school to sharpen my management skills. I began to realize that not only can a lot of very important objectives be reached through business, but sometimes business is the *only* way to reach them.

The year after we launched Honest Tea in 1999, we introduced our first organic brew—First Nation Peppermint—and established an important partnership with an economically disadvantaged Native American community. I had become aware of the challenges facing native peoples through a colleague and wanted to get involved somehow. So many times, Native-American culture is over-commercialized and the people have no say in how their products are marketed and presented. We didn't want to be part of that trend. So we teamed up with I'tchik Herb, a small company that is run by a husband-and-wife team on the Crow reservation in Montana, where the unemployment rate was 67 percent.

Naming the product proved to be more of a challenge. The Honest Tea staff had initially considered calling it "Sundance Tea," after a peppermint herbal blend used in a sun dance ritual. We had no idea this was a solemn religious ceremony and that it would be sacrilegious to use that name on the bottle, but our Crow friends quickly set us straight. We finally settled on "First Nation."

And the financial payoff? Honest Tea just celebrated its eighth year of strong, double-digit growth. We're attracting major investment from some of the largest companies in the world. It is clear validation that what we're doing is of value. Never underestimate the power of doing something you believe in.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CADE MARTIN

Honest Tea strives to live up to its name.