

## EP276\_Kristi Herold

**Lisa Nichols** 00:03

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6,000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

My name is Lisa Nichols, and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of Technology Partners and as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side. As she impacts everyone she meets.

Through these two important roles as CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world. While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are.

Join me as I explore this something extra and leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities, and in themselves.

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I'm thrilled to have Kristi Herold on the show today. Kristi is a speaker, best-selling author, and the founder and CEO of JAM.

So, Kristi Herold, I am so delighted girl, that you are making the time to be on this something extra podcast today. Thank you so much.

**Kristi Herold** 01:53

Thanks for having me, Lisa. I'm super excited to be here.

**Lisa Nichols** 01:56

Now, I have to say I am just a little bit jealous. Because I'm sitting in St. Louis, where it's like negative eight or something. And you're sitting in Costa Rica today. I love that, you know, JAM, you and we'll talk about this, but you were in Toronto, but you've, you're now wintering in Costa Rica, which is awesome.

**Kristi Herold** 02:18

Yeah. You know what? I spent a lot of winters, I grew up in a small city north of Toronto, about four hours north, so you can imagine it was really cold up there. And I actually love the snow. I grew up as an elite ski racer, I traveled the world as an alpine ski racer, so I actually love the snow. But as I've gotten a little older and become an empty nester, and I have the opportunity to work remotely, I'm kind of really loving spending my winters in Costa Rica, and it's just allowing me to continue playing in a whole different way. I play tennis outside and pickleball. I was playing pickleball last night at five in the evening. You know, it's pretty great to be able to keep playing the sports I love outside in the winters now. So, I'm very fortunate and grateful for the opportunity.

**Lisa Nichols** 03:01

Yeah, I'm just thinking now, did you trade your skis for a surfboard? Have you tried surfing?

**Kristi Herold** 03:07

I've tried to surfing, and I don't think it's not. I'm not sure if I'm going to actually embrace it like I'm not I haven't given up on it entirely yet, but the water, saltwater really hurts my eyes. So, I don't know, I'm sticking, I'm finding myself really drawn to yoga, tennis, pickleball, lots of walks on the beach and mountain biking. You know, I'm still, still being very active. I'm just not sure surfing, surfing is going to be my thing, but I haven't completely thrown in the towel on it yet.

**Lisa Nichols** 03:36

Right? Well, you've got lots of choices. That's the nice thing about it. But you know, Kristi, I just want to go back. I always love to tell our listeners how we get connected. And I actually had two friends that connected us, and when you have two people saying, hey, you need to meet this person it's like okay, I really need to meet this person. So, both Ryan Mortland and Steve Gatena, my really good friend at that foundingpray.com, was like you got to meet, you got to meet Kristi so.

**Kristi Herold** 04:07

That's amazing guys. Yeah, I was really happy they introduced us.

**Lisa Nichols** 04:11

Me too. Me too. But you're the CEO and the founder of the company, JAM. We're going to talk a lot about this. But JAM is one of the world's largest adult recreational sports leagues provides as well as you're helping corporate culture. And we'll talk about that as well thrive through the power of play. You're also a keynote speaker. And I know, you know, we just talked about that. And you are going back to Toronto next week, I think, for a speaking engagement. And you're the author of *It Pays to Play: How Play Improves Business Culture*, and I cannot wait to dig into all of this. But take me back to the beginning and growing up because I think your love for even what you're doing today started at an early age. And then certainly that entrepreneurial spirit, I believe started as well, I think your dad was a huge inspiration for you. So, take me back.

**Kristi Herold** 05:07

You are correct. I definitely was inspired. My dad was an entrepreneur, he ran his own business. And he was always home for breakfasts and dinners. He was always at all of our extracurricular events. He was always at all my sports events cheering me on, as was my mom, by the way, incredibly fortunate to have such supportive parents who were always there for us. And I sort of watching my dad growing up, I was like, huh, like, we have this really nice lifestyle. He works hard at his business, but he has full control over his time. And I thought, I want that. I want to be able to have a life where, if I want to go on a field trip with my child or go cheer them on at a volleyball game or a soccer game, I can do that. And so that was sort of early days definitely my inspiration.

And, you know, around the family dinner table, we had to work for anything we wanted in our lives. Like we, we grew up pretty well to do in this town I grew up in, we were very fortunate, however, nothing was handed to us. We had to work for what we wanted. And so, you know, I remember very clearly one time my brother saying to me, my parents that he needed a new pair of running shoes. And my dad said, "Well, that's interesting, because I haven't really seen you running lately. How about you go for 10 runs over the next month? And when I see that you actually are doing that, then we can talk about buying you a new pair of running shoes." You know, we sort of had to put our money where our mouth was a little bit. And or, you know, work, save money, you know, often we'd ask for things and we'd be told that, sure, they will be happy to pay for half of that. And how are we going to come up with the other half. And so, we're always sort of inspired to work for what we wanted. And I'm really grateful for those lessons early on.

**Lisa Nichols** 06:54

Yeah, great parenting lessons there Kristi, really, because sometimes, you know, it's easy just to give right but your dad was teaching you an even more important lesson, which I really love. But you did grow up, I think you played just about every sport known to man.

**Kristi Herold** 07:12

I did. I played a lot. Started off, I was the only girl in an all-boys soccer league for two years because there were no girls' soccer leagues or even mixed gender soccer leagues when I was a little kid. And so, my mom signed me up, and she, you know, she signed up Chris. I had short hair. And no one knew I was a boy until the end of season banquet. I show up at the banquet, she made me wear a dress to the banquet. And I was horrified that she made me wear this dress and I show up at the banquet, and all the boys on my team are like, "Wait, Chris, why are you wearing a dress?" And I was like, "Well, because I'm a girl." And so, I ended up playing a couple seasons. And that began my love of sports. And I played, you know, team sports all through high school, and I was a ski racer. And then, I went to university, and I was on the ski team and the rowing team in university. And, and then when I moved to Toronto, you know, I just I didn't know a lot of people in the big city and, and I was like, "Well, how am I going to make friends?" and I looked into, you know, are there recreational sports leagues maybe that I could be playing, to meet people. And I'd heard about such a thing in Chicago and San Francisco. But nothing like that existed in Toronto, the only leagues in Toronto were really competitive, like competitive women's soccer leagues, but I wasn't, I was an average soccer player.

**Kristi Herold** 08:22

So that's what and back in 1996, I decided I would start my own league as a way to sort of help with my own problem. And also help with this idea that I knew I wanted to run my own business. So that's how it all began in 1996. And played a lot of different sports over the years ultimate frisbee and tennis, and now pickleball. And so, you know, lots of flag football. I just love all sorts of different sports. And it's really fun to be able to 28 years now, I've been running these adult rec sports leagues, helping people connect through play, they're making their best friends, they're meeting significant other. Then, you know, hundreds of marriages, thousands of babies have been born because of the work we do. It's something I never really thought about when I set out but the connections and relationships that form when people play together, it's really powerful. The mental health benefit. I mean, I've had people, four different people got our logo tattooed on their body because of the life-changing experience our leagues have been to them. I had an email received from a woman a number of years ago who she said "I want to thank you for the work you're doing your leagues saved my life." And she explained that she had been very depressed and lonely in the big city. And, you know, when she joined our leagues, it was like this change where she made all these friends.

And so, it's a really been, it's been a really positive, powerful it's not been without its challenges, as you can imagine, and the pandemic was, was really challenging and forced to pivot for us. But, you know, it's been very positive and rewarding. So, I'm very grateful for having, you know, the work we do and then having an incredible team to work with that's helped. We've, you know, impacted millions of lives over the last 28 years, so it feels pretty great.

**Lisa Nichols 10:07**

That's so wonderful. You know, there's so much packed in there. There's so much packed into everything you just said Kristi, but I do know that you grew up with a couple of brothers.

**Kristi Herold 10:17**

I did. Yeah.

**Lisa Nichols 10:18**

And then Cameron, and your yeah, two older brothers. Do you think that's where your love for sports? I mean, did you, did you play with them? Did your parents play sports? I mean, where do you think that originated from?

**Kristi Herold 10:32**

Yeah, my parents were both pretty sporty. My mom played tennis. She was a cheerleader in high school. My dad was played hockey. He was a quarterback on the football team and in his high school years, and he played football at university. So, they were both sporty. They also, they loved golf, which was never my passion. I did a lot of caddying, spent a lot of time at the golf course growing up, but not really a sport I was passionate about. Although, I'm reserving the right to change my mind as I get older, I might learn to love golf.

**Lisa Nichols 11:03**

Yes.

**Kristi Herold 11:03**

And so yeah, both my brothers were really involved in sports. We also, we just all loved playing sports, for sure. Definitely loved playing probably more than watching. I think there's definitely some watching of sports that happened in my, in my household, but I was never one to sit around and watch. I was definitely always trying to keep up with my big brothers. You know, I wanted to be just like them. And so, I spent a lot of time chasing them around and their friends and asking to be included. And sometimes they would and sometimes they wouldn't. But definitely, definitely probably made me. I'm not sure if that's my where my love of sports came from. Who knows? Maybe, but I think it definitely made me probably a little tougher, you know, because I was always having to fend for myself with two big brothers that sometimes they would be nice to me. And sometimes they'd be wanting to, you know, shoo me away. You know, I had to I had to fend for myself and prove myself out there if I was going to be able just to stay on the on the street hockey game or be part of the football game, I had to be able to perform. So had to be tough.

**Lisa Nichols 12:02**

Yes, yes. Yes. Yes. Well, I there's, there's probably there's so much psychology there. And we don't have time to get into that now. But as children, we do love this play. And then at some juncture and I think that's what you're trying to solve that, Kristi, with what you're doing is yeah, we move that somewhere along the way. It's like, oh, there's no time for play. And we're going to talk a lot about that, even with employers. But I want to talk about this because I think this is really funny. You went on in you pursued a Bachelor of Commerce from Queen's University. And then you also have a master's degree in entrepreneurship from MIT. And I'm wonder if that may be where you met, maybe Ryan or Steve, I'm not sure if you met them there. But I think this is so funny. You tell the story about your first day at Introduction to

Business. And I had to chuckle at this because the professor asked the students, how many of them had a design to run your own business? And you were the only one out of 200 that raise your hand?

**Kristi Herold** 12:03

Yeah, I was like, "What is everyone else doing here? Isn't this where you go to school to learn how to be an entrepreneur or run your business?" And apparently not. They were all there to learn how to, you know, learn finance and investment banking. And, you know, they wanted to have jobs in marketing. And I was like, "Oh, wow, am I in the wrong place?". And, and you know, I stuck it out for four years. But at the at the end of my first year, my marks were really bad. And the dean of commerce called me into his office. And he said, "So you're on the ski team and the rowing team. And your marks and commerce are not very good. I think you better pick one team next year, because clearly you can't handle both." And I sort of said "yes, okay, sir. I'll just do this ski team next year", and I walked out of his office and I was giggling to myself, because what he didn't realize was, I actually was running two businesses at the time. I was running a business selling custom clothing to students on campus, baseball caps, and sweatshirts and t-shirts for clubs and teams. And then I had another business, a student painting franchise, college pro painters that I was running. And so, I was spending a lot of time hiring painters and in doing marketing and doing estimate selling, selling paint jobs. So, I was so busy with my real-life businesses that I didn't really have time for schoolwork. And it didn't really interest me to the same extent. So, my marks never ever improved. I mean, I made like, I quit, I quit the rowing team, but my marks didn't improve because I kept running my businesses. I did really well with my businesses, though, and I had a lot of fun, you know, at school at the same time, so it all worked out.

**Lisa Nichols** 14:47

Kristi, I'm just thinking everybody else is studying theory, and you're actually doing it you know, and, but you know, I also read somewhere where you had your own business before you could even drive.

**Kristi Herold** 15:05

I did. You did research.

**Lisa Nichols** 15:06

So, this is so ingrained in you, you know this entrepreneurial spirit, I think you had a grass mowing business or something.

**Kristi Herold** 15:14

Yeah, I did a lawn cutting business. I that, I knew I could only have clients that were close enough that I could walk and push my lawn mower to. So, when I did my marketing, I went door to door anywhere that was close enough for me to walk to and I handed out flyers, and I had drawn a picture of my hand. And I wrote on the flyer "Is your grass getting out of hand?" And I had these grass strips coming out of the hand, it was ridiculous. And I had my dad photocopied these pieces of these little flyers for me, and I delivered them to houses and knocked on doors. And I had about 10 clients all within walking distance of my house. And I spent the summer as a 15-year-old cutting grass. And at the end of that summer, I remember another example of my dad being such a great mentor. I sat down, and I said, "Dad, look at how much money I've made." I showed him I kept track of every job I've done. And how long did it take me and I had figured out how much I had earned by the hour. And he said, "Well, that is pretty great". And he said, imagine how much more you'd make if you had, if you hired students to work for you. And I was like, "What do you mean? Like, then I'm just paying them? How does that work?" And he said, "No, because you're going to charge \$8 An hour and you're going to pay your students \$5 an hour. So, you're gonna make eight for yourself and three off of all the students you have." And I was like, "Oh my gosh, like it was this mind blowing"

**Lisa Nichols** 16:30

Blew your mind.

**Kristi Herold** 16:31

Yeah. And I was like, "Whoa, that's how that works." You know. So, it was just, it was. I was so fortunate to have a great entrepreneur as a mentor because he taught me a lot over the years, a lot of a lot of ups and downs that he showed me the way around and pretty grateful to have had both my mom and dad in my life the way they were amazing. I've lost them now. But they were they were pretty wonderful.

**Lisa Nichols** 16:51

Well, we could talk about that. I've lost both of mine too. But my dad was also an entrepreneur, had his own business. And I watched that, you know, as a little girl, and yeah, lots of hard work.

**Kristi Herold 17:06**  
Not always easy.

**Lisa Nichols 17:08**

Lots of hard work. Yes, yes. So, but, so let's fast forward. Cuz you've already talked about this, but you founded JAM, you moved to Toronto. Three years after moving, you know, in 1996. You're, you were looking, you saw a gap. Because you were looking for community, right? And you were looking to meet people. And that's when the idea was born. So how many teams, participants do you think you guys have had? I think the first year I think you had 55 teams signup or something?

**Kristi Herold 17:44**

Yeah, close. The very first season, we had 52 teams that first summer season. So, in that first year, we had 250 teams of people. This year, or pre pandemic, we were about 11,000 teams every year by 2019. We got stopped completely for about 18 months. But we're back now we're actually bigger than we've ever been now. So, we probably right now. We're probably in the 150,000 to 200,000 people playing every year with us. And over the course of the last 20 years, I mean, it's been easily, it's probably, probably approaching 3 million people whose lives have been touched playing in our leagues. And my goal, the vision is to get a million people playing every year. To know that we can be touching a million lives every year would be amazing because I believe the ripple effect from people that play in our league is so powerful or, or play in our corporate events.

**Kristi Herold 18:41**

When people take a little time to play and have some laughs, it makes them happier as a human. And when you're a happier individual, you're going to be a better employee, you're going to be a better, happier husband or happier wife, happier significant other, happier grandchild happier, you know, sister, brother, roommate, whatever, you're just going to be a happier, better person. And so, you think of when you get a million people playing every year, the ripple effect of that happiness is really powerful. I just so that it just feels like a fun, fun goal to chase the million people.

And that by the way, the idea for that, for that million-person vision actually came from the entrepreneur master's program that I did with Steve and Ryan. Our leader, Brian Brohm, is an incredible leader and he talked a lot to us over the years about legacy, What's the legacy you want to leave? And I was like, what, what brings me the most joy? Well, seeing people playing is where I feel happiest and what makes me so, brings me joy. So, if we are getting you know, at the time, I think we were it was a 50,000 people playing every year, if I could get a million people playing every year, that would be an incredible legacy. You know, so that's, that's where that all came from.

**Lisa Nichols 19:56**

Agreed. I love it. Well, Kristi, we've got so much more to talk about because I really want to dig in. There's, there's studies, there's data that backs this up, right? Even how it can affect corporate culture. So, we've got a lot more to talk about. But we do need to take a quick break. And we'll be right back with Kristi Herold on this something extra podcast.

**AD 20:15**

In business, the tendency is to seek out partners who are bigger, faster, stronger. When it comes to IT, you should be looking for smarter, faster, better. That's just a you'll find with the talented technologists at Technology Partners. Our experts develop custom solutions to tackle your most complex challenges, all to simplify your processes in the smartest, most efficient way possible. The time to be swift and nimble starts now. Go to [technologypartners.net/solutions](https://technologypartners.net/solutions) and see what's possible.

**Lisa Nichols 20:45**

So welcome back, everyone, to the something extra podcast with Kristi Herold. So, Kristi, let's talk about JAM and how you grew. I think, like the first decade, I think you were growing more organically. There's all kinds of ways to grow. But then you started doing some acquisition. So, tell me about that journey. And how was that?

**Kristi Herold 21:04**

Yeah, from, from '96 till probably 2016, almost two decades, probably 20 years, really was just organic growth. And that was with the intention, it was intentional to only be organic because I wanted a lifestyle business. I wanted to be around for my kids. But then, as my kids were older, you know, I was like, hey, I need some new challenges. I was a bit bored. I decided in order to really go after this million people playing idea which became the vision in 2016. I would need to do that with faster growth. And so, how was I going to do that? I decided that mergers and acquisitions was going to be the best way. But I didn't know anything about that. Because, as you'll recall, I've practically failed out of my finance classes in university. So, I just spend a lot of time having coffees, breakfasts and dinners with people way



smarter than me to sort of understands what does it mean to do a roll-up of an industry. And so, I started to understand that and so we started to do acquisitions. So, in the last since 2016, we've now done 10 acquisitions, I'm in the middle of our 11th we should be closing next month and another deal in the U.S. actually, which is exciting. And so, we've done yeah, like 10 acquisitions that have helped us really grow our leagues into a number of different cities and helped us get much bigger, much more quickly. And, and then we've also started the other side of the business, the B2B side of the business, because of the pandemic. And that's where, you know, a whole different twist.

**Lisa Nichols 22:27**

Yes, yeah. And I want to talk about that. So 2020, the world stopped. And I've got dear friends that were in the event space of not like you, but putting on events, productions. Yeah. And it just turned their business upside down Kristi, very, very hard. But I think Cameron suggested to you, "Well, why don't you try virtual events?" And you're like, "What, how would that happen?" You know, tell me about pivoting there. And then it kind of launched you into what you know what you're doing today with B2B?

**Kristi Herold 23:05**

Yeah, yeah. So, the pandemic, we, the mandates in Canada, were incredibly harsh, right? Like we, some of my counterparts in the sports league industry in the US last a couple months in Florida. In Canada, we last 18 months, we were shut down for 18 months. So crazy, crazy time. And a couple months into it, I remember, you know, I was crying, feeling sorry for myself. And my big brother Cameron, you know, doesn't, doesn't suffer fools gladly. And he sorts of gave me a bit of a kick in the butt and he says "Kristi, all the health clubs are going virtual, you gotta go virtual". And I'm like, "Cam, you can't play soccer online. Like I can't, you can't play beach volleyball over your phone. You know, how to, how are we going to go virtual?" And he was like, "I don't know, but you're gonna have to figure that out." And so, I looked around in our industry, some of some of the clubs in our industry in the US were starting to do virtual bingo and trivia and I thought, hey, you know, asked, "How are you guys doing this and learn some great lessons from a lot of people in our industry." And so, we started offering these virtual events and decided. Hey, maybe we could be doing this for companies. We're now working remotely, everyone's working remotely, people are missing out on the laughs like we had a great culture at our organization. And so started trying to sell corporate events, virtual events, to companies, and it took off we did over a million in revenue. In our first year. We did over 1500 events, we've now done over 4000 events for companies all around the world. And these are things like escape rooms, scavenger hunts, game shows, trivia, bingo all sorts of different fun virtual events.

**Kristi Herold 24:41**

And as the pandemic sort of lifted a little bit, we realized, hey, we can be doing in person events too. So, I sort of jokingly tell people I feel like I have this 27-year-old that just got off two years of life support. That's the adult rec sports league B2C business. And then I have this two and a half, three-year-old toddler that keeps changing its mind about what it wants to be. It started off as virtual events. And now it's virtual and hybrid and in person events. And now with the launch of the book as well. We're doing culture consulting, we're coaching organizations on showing them it's not just about stopping what you're doing to play, it's actually about playing and integrating play and fun into your day to day. Because the studies, there are studies that show when we have fun with the work we're doing, the return on investment is incredibly powerful. So, you know, it's been, it's become this really interesting opportunity to sort of branch into the B2B world as well now.

**Lisa Nichols 25:33**

Yeah, so cool. So cool. Well, here's what you say, this is something you wrote "Great company culture is powered by human relationships, teams of people working together to bring key pillars to life." You know, so what I mean, what have you seen? It's not just, you know, I mean, I don't want to put words in your mouth, Kristi. But what, what have you seen as you're working with these companies, how have you seen what you guys bring to the table in the idea of play and work playing together, not just working? You know, what I was thinking and I think I was thinking this before I read this, but I did read where you had this somewhere. But the, the thought that came in my mind is that old Shining movie a long time ago, to see where it says, Yeah, you know, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Yeah, and what have you seen, like, benefit wise?

**Kristi Herold 26:36**

Yeah, Well, so great question. So, the, the idea of, of having core pillars around culture, I mean, people talk a lot about having mission, vision, purpose and values, right? And those I would agree with are absolutely critical. I mean, my brother Cameron wrote the book *Vivid Vision*. And it's so important to have a vision, so your team knows where you want to go and have values, so you can hire and fire around your values. And you can make decisions based on your values and a mission and purpose. And so, people can really get behind. However, having all of those things written down on your website, on the wall at your office, those are fantastic. But if you don't have a connected, cohesive team of people, bringing those pillars to life, who cares if you have them written on your wall, if your people

are quitting, if your people don't trust each other, and they can't collaborate with each other, if your people aren't engaged with the work they're doing? Does it really matter that you have all that written on the wall? No, you need a connected cohesive team of people bringing them to life, and what better way to connect your team and get them collaborating, you need people to understand each other as humans and to like each other, right? And so, the best way to do that have a little fun together, have some laughs together, play together.

**Kristi Herold 27:51**

So that's where, you know, the studies have shown that when companies where over 60% of employees report having close friends at work are proven to be 12% more profitable. Because those employees, when they say they have a close friend at work, they're far less likely to be looking for another job, they're far more likely to be recommending your organization as a great place to work. They're far more engaged with the work they're doing. Because you think about if you have a friend at work, and you can see that your friend is maybe struggling, and you're like, "Hey, I've done my work right now, you look overloaded. Can I help you with that? Can I take that off?". That's teamwork, right? Whereas you don't really care about the people you work with, you're gonna be like, "I'm gonna get my work done. And I'm checking out", like, you're not engaged with helping out your team. And so, you're the organization's less productive. I mean, I could go on for days with the studies and the proof that that's out there that show when we have a fun workplace culture, a playful workplace culture, your teams are more trusting, they're more collaborative, they're more helping, they're more engaged.

**Kristi Herold 28:59**

And retention is another one, like I talked about in my book. I've had in the book, I talk about two examples of employees who left after the pandemic during the pandemic, and have since come back. It's Sandeep and Taylor and guess what? It's actually three people. Yeah, and it was originally Sandeep and Taylor. Tony just came back about three months ago. We've had three employees just since 2020, leave and come back because they left for sort of career opportunity, more money. They came back for culture, for friends at work. They love the team of people we work with, they love the work we're doing so they're more engaged. And it's just a fun place to work, right? And so, any organization can work at making whatever work you're doing, it can be made fun. The culture can be fun, and you can incorporate you can encourage the fostering of friendships within your organizations. There's some really easy ways to do that and the payoff is powerful.

**Lisa Nichols 29:59**

Yeah, I'm so glad I'm so glad that you mentioned Sandeep because I, I had read about him and I love, love that he came back. But, but I'm looking here, Kristi, on page 50, you know, and we talk about, you know, workforce engagement, you know, really, this may or may not be shocking to people, but, you know, this, this pie chart that you have here is 51% of people are disengaged. Only 36% are, you know, really engaged, but then 13% are actively disengaged, which basically means they're trying to, they're trying, they're gonna revolt, they're gonna hurt the business at that point, right?

**Kristi Herold 30:52**

I share this statistic in my keynote. And I basically tell people imagine your organization as, as a boat with like, everyone's rowing the boat. And if you've got 100 people in your boat, rowing the boat, 36 of them are at the front of the boat, rowing towards your goals and your vision, 64 are in the back of the boat, 51 are sort of sitting along for the ride, they've got they're disengaged, they got their hands behind their head, they're just along for the for the cruise. But you've got 13 people in the back of your boat, actively pushing the opposite direction fighting against those 36 at the front. So, it's so demoralizing, and it's so lacking in productivity. If your culture, if you don't have your full team really engaged with the work they're doing and such an easy way to help get that engagement is fostering friendships and relationships and community within your organizational culture.

**Lisa Nichols 31:48**

Yeah, well, I mean, Kristi, it's working, and I don't, I don't want to embarrass you because I know you would not just say all of this, but listen, congratulations, I'm so proud of you. You've won so many awards, so other people are recognizing it too. Canada's Most Admired Corporate Culture, Merging Award in 2022, Canada's Most Powerful Woman Top 100 in 2020, RBC's Woman of Influence, that was 2020, sports, social industry. So, I mean, the award just go, Great Places to Work Canada, Canadian award in 2019, and then Governor's General Diamond Jubilee Award. I mean, you, you've won so many awards, so other people are recognizing the work that you're doing. And so, I just want to say congratulations.

**Kristi Herold 32:36**

By the way, all of those are totally a team effort. Those are not just have right like I could never have gotten those without an amazing team helping. My team makes me look good. Let's be honest.

**Lisa Nichols 32:50**

I say the same thing. None of us do anything alone, right? But it's all of us doing our part. And knowing that our strengths are and your strengths are different than my strengths and you know we're doing our part and that's why all works. That's why the gears all work together there. But your book I would love for our listeners to go get your book again, *It Pays to PLAY: How Play Improves Business Culture*. You've had got great praise for this book. And I was looking, it's funny, Kristi because Kara Golden is one of your, your testimonials and she was a Something Extra guest. I'll never forget hearing her speak and I really was not familiar with Hint. Oh, look. Take a picture of that.

**Kristi Herold 33:40**

I love Hint Water. Yeah.

**Lisa Nichols 33:43**

Raspberry water. I love raspberries. I love the peach. I love the blackberry. But anyway,

**Kristi Herold 33:47**

Will you hold the hold that up so I can get you and the book? I want to take a picture of you and the book said that. I'll send that to Kara. She's the best. Yeah, that's perfect. Okay, hold on. I gotta go. I'm gonna capture that. That's awesome.

**Lisa Nichols 34:04**

Yeah, so, but I would never. I really never tried it before and I heard Kara speak and I'm like, you right there when I ordered it. And now our whole family is big, you know, Hint Water people. But you know, you've had great praise for the book. I love this. And I would love for you tell our listeners a little bit about this. Your very first line in your introduction, Kristi, is very, it's powerful. And here's what you say. "Play is powerful. It has stopped wars in its tracks." You know and you've got a couple of different examples there, one being the Olympic Truce and then the Christmas truce, so tell just real quickly our listeners about how play stopped wars.

**Kristi Herold 34:54**

Yeah, so World War I, German soldiers fighting against the Allies, and on Christmas Eve, they started singing to each other across the battlefield. And at the early morning dawn, the German soldiers got up out of the trenches, and they crossed the battlefield and at first, the Allies thought it was a trick. And then they realized they were unarmed. And they brought, so they also came up out of the trenches. And the Germans had brought gifts of food and cigarettes, they started singing songs. But the best part for me is that all of a sudden, a game of soccer breaks out on the battlefield. So here are these soldiers. And there's, there's photographic evidence of this happening. Here are the soldiers who had literally been shooting at each other trying to kill each other, they've put down their guns, and they played a game of soccer. Having this social connection with each other, this playful social connection. And unfortunately, as we all know, it didn't last and they had to, you know, they went back to killing each other. But for a few beautiful hours, you know, that the war was stopped. And, and they were playing.

**Kristi Herold 36:04**

And it's, it's a really beautiful example. I think of just how powerfully we can stop the any if you've got infighting within your organization, you've got a lack of trust, a lack of collaboration, of poor connections happening amongst your team. You can foster strengthening relationships by actually having some playful elements within your organization. And my book is filled with tactics and ideas for actually how to integrate play into your day-to-day because it's not just about stopping to play a game of soccer. It's about, you know, how you run your meetings? Do you have some playful connections at the beginning of the meeting every day? Or do you have some playful recognition happening day in and day out? You know, we have a shout-out channel at JAM where every day you're seeing great things happening. People shouting out and it's playful and done in a fun little way. And so, there's so many ways of integrating play, and the book has loads of ideas that will helpfully help your listeners find ways to do so.

**Lisa Nichols 37:03**

Yeah, go, go buy the book listeners in the appendix, I think it's Appendix A here or the Appendix, I mean, tons of tons of ideas, running groups, health challenges, training for an event together, doing an improv class, book clubs, group yoga. I mean.

**Kristi Herold 37:30**

They play music together. Yeah, tons of sports have a sports team. Like every city in North America has adult rec sports leagues to sign up the organization have a few different sports teams, a kickball team, a volleyball team, like you just no shortage of ways to play.



**Lisa Nichols** 37:46

Right, right. It's so important. A couple of things here, you know, in we don't have time to go into a lot of this. But the average cost of replacing an employee is 50 to 150% of their annual salary.

**Kristi Herold** 38:02

Yeah, it's expensive.

**Lisa Nichols** 38:04

It's very expensive, right? You also talk about the three main reasons that people quit, that they don't feel appreciated. They can't really handle the workload. The stress of the workload is too much. Personal issues or strife with coworker's/clients. But you know, really making fun a part of your culture really does lead to happier, more engaged employees. And I just, I love that. So really want our listeners to go and get your book. So, I have, this is funny, you guys, you're the Brady Bunch family too.

**Kristi Herold** 38:44

Yes, we're literally a Brady Bunch. My husband and I have six kids between us, three each. And his last name is Brady. So, we truly are a Brady Bunch.

**Lisa Nichols** 38:54

The Brady Bunch. I just love it. Yeah, but you know, how, how is play affected your family life? Because I'm sure you guys and of course your kids are all out of that house now. But you know, how, you know, how did you guys incorporate play even in your family?

**Kristi Herold** 39:10

I mean, we still play. We play all the time. We play games all the time, where there's always games of Euchre going up. Euchre's a card game that, not a lot of people I guess it's kind of Canadian, and do you know Euchre because it's a bit Midwest.

**Lisa Nichols** 39:23

I don't know how to play Euchre but I'm gonna find out now.

**Kristi Herold** 39:28

I taught my kids how to play young, you know, Euchre and Cribbage and Backgammon and there's always game board games going on. But we also you know, my, my kids were just here in Costa Rica with me and we played a ton of pickleball together and there's just always fun, fun ways to play. We actually took a bunch of frisbees down and helped some children who had never seen a frisbee before. We taught a bunch of local kids how to play the game of ultimate and gave out frisbees at Christmas to all these kids and super fun. So, there's just always ways to find you know, find ways to play and have some fun and, and so yeah, it's a big part of our family life for sure. My kids also tease me but they always tease me because my tagline is to keep playing right? But you know, I'm a big believer in you never, we're never too old to keep playing and, and so they always they always joke with me hashtag keep playing mom, you know, so whatever, whenever I'm playing, they're always teasing me about that. But we have we have a lot of fun together.

**Lisa Nichols** 40:20

Well, that's, that's awesome. Kristi, you know, that's the legacy that you're leaving in them too. And hopefully they'll go on to incorporate that with their own families. So let me add, let me tell say this, I'm so excited because I want you to tell our listeners, you, you are so sweet. You're like Lisa, I want to give a little something extra to your listeners. Just tell our listeners about that. And then I'm going to ask you what you believe that something extra is that every leader needs that I think I know what that is.

**Kristi Herold** 40:50

Yeah, so for your listeners, I wanted to give them a little something extra. So, if they go to, to my website, which is [kristiherold.com](http://kristiherold.com), **K R I S T I H E R O L D**, [kristiherold.com/somethingextra25](http://kristiherold.com/somethingextra25), what they'll find there is a copy of my playbook PDF. So, it's a 10, page 10 ways to integrate play into your workplace culture, and so filled with ideas. And also, inside that is a 25% savings. If they'd like to try a JAM team-building event with their company, they will get themselves 25% savings, or if they'd like to, if they're in one of the cities where we run our adult sports leagues, or if they'd like us to put together a private sports league for them, they can use that 25% code towards that. So that's our little something extra for your amazing listeners.

**Lisa Nichols** 41:43

Thank you so much. That is so sweet. That is definitely something extra. So, Kristi, this is called something extra. What do you believe this is something extra every leader needs. And I think I know what you're gonna say.

**Kristi Herold** 41:57

I think a little something extra every leader needs is to, obviously to have some play and to have a sense of humor. I always encourage leaders. I think it's really important to take our businesses seriously, but not ourselves. Let's have some fun. Life's too short not to be playing and having fun. So that's in my, in my mind that there's something extra every leader needs is that sense of humor, sense of playfulness, because life's too short.

**Lisa Nichols** 42:25

Beautiful. I love it. Well, Kristi, thank you again. This has been so much fun for me this has been so playful for me to have you on the show today. So, I really appreciate you making the time and wish you just continued success. I hope our listeners reach out and hope they download your play book and, and book, book an event with you.

**Kristi Herold** 42:48

Thank you so much, Lisa. This has been amazing. You I'm just so blown away by the research you and your team have done to prepare for this super fun, and really, really appreciate it. Thanks.

**Announcer** 42:56

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