Skype To Acquire Year-old Group Messaging Service GroupMe

Michael Arrington
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Skype will acquire group messaging service GroupMe, a service that was born at a hackathon at TechCrunch Disrupt in New York in 2010. GroupMe was founded by Jared Hecht and Steve Martocci.

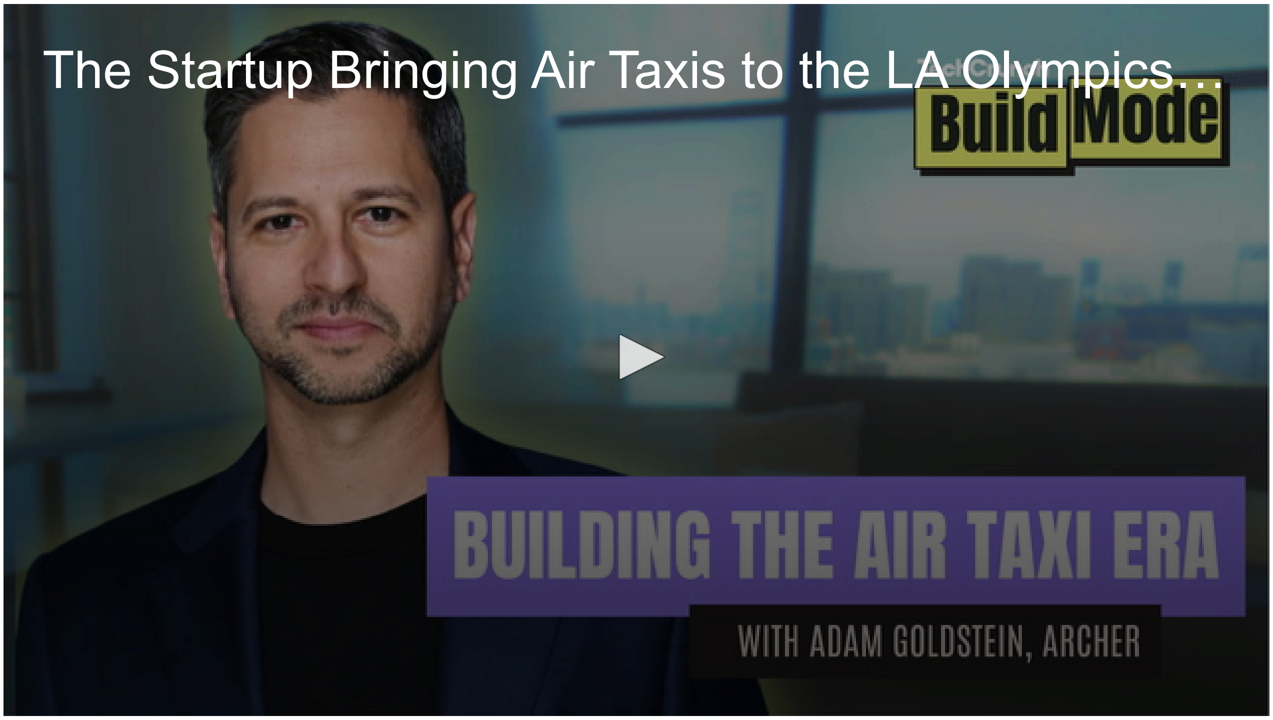
Just a couple of months after TechCrunch Disrupt the company closed a $850,000 round of financing from Betaworks, SV Angel, First Round Capital, Lerer Ventures and a number of prominent angels. Early this year the company raised $10.6 million more from Khosla Ventures, General Catalyst and previous investors.

GroupMe allows you to create on the fly private phone groups with others, and then send text messages throughout the group and set up free conference calls.

Skype CEO Tony Bates says that he's been talking to the company for a few months, at about the same time Skype was in negotiations to be acquired by Microsoft.

The Microsoft transaction is still pending.

They'll keep GroupMe as a standalone brand, Bates says, and look for integration points over time. *"The group messaging space in general is one of the most important markets for Skype,"* he told me via a Skype video call earlier today. He added: *"GroupMe creates a very sticky instant feeling. Like Skype, it is an everyday interactive form of communication. Skype's goal is to get to 1 billion users. Mobile is the place to do that."*



GroupMe, which has twenty employees, will remain in New York.

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Michael Arrington

Partner

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