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Exclusive club serves group of globe-hopping biz travelers

BY GREG AVERY
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There are hundreds of Denver-area executives who travel the world for their companies — enough to support a club where they can rub shoulders with others whose business is international.

Boulder resident Katrin Windsor formed the International Business Circle Colorado Inc. (IBCC) four years ago. The club organizes gatherings and peer-to-peer learning for executives, investors and other high-level business travelers.

It has gathered 160 active members from companies up and down the Front Range, and 500 people are on its mailing list. The concept has proven successful enough that it started a Phoenix-area chapter in September and is drawing membership there, too.

Windsor, a Swiss national who came to Colorado when her husband's work relocated them, saw that frequent international travel can prevent people from meeting similarly experienced and trusted peers whom they can turn to for advice, she said.

"The world is getting flatter than ever, and the rate of change is exponential," she said.

The IBCC aims to let members share their knowledge of international business and travel in a relaxed environment.

Topics among members can range from whether it's better to outsource contract manufacturing to China, Vietnam or Turkey, to how one can find a good business lawyer in Mexico City or a tailor in Taiwan.

Exclusive club is by invitation only

And because membership is meant for business leaders, the IBCC tries to make itself exclusive; membership is by invitation only.

The ground rules for members at gather-



KATHLEEN LAVINE | BUSINESS JOURNAL

Katrin Windsor, a Swiss national, formed IBCC four years ago in Denver.

ings are fairly simple: no PowerPoint, no sales pitches.

Events frequently are held at members' homes

or businesses and feature catered food and live music. The point, Windsor said, is to give members a casual environment where they can socialize with others who understand being on the front lines of globalized business.

"Members tend to like to be among people who get it," said Maggie Fouquet, who's a club board member.

Richard Foy, co-founder of Boulder-based international design firm Commu-

nication Arts Inc., spoke this fall to an IBCC gathering in an art gallery, describing his company's work creating visual brand identities for malls, buildings, public spaces and products around the world.

Foy hadn't heard of the IBCC but came away impressed by the food, the intelligence of the conversation and the multinational group of about 100 people who attended. He was invited to join a couple weeks later and did so.

It was nice to be among people who had the specialized skills necessary to do business internationally, Foy said. Conversations with other members have led him to business possibilities in Mexico and Europe.

"From a real-life, practical sense, the club's a way to build resources locally that can team up when necessary and go after international business," Foy said. "It's an interesting thing to have stumbled into."

To help members, the IBCC puts together podcasts of business advice and lists of member-recommended resources around the globe.

Large corporations tend to hire consultants and in-country "fixers" to smooth their business' path overseas, Windsor said. IBCC members tend to be executives at small- to medium-sized companies who have to sort out such issues themselves, which is why its network is so valuable, Windsor said.

"How else are you going to stay current on these topics?" she said.

Members do business largely in Western Europe and Asia, though Latin America and Eastern Europe are becoming more common destinations for IBCC members, Windsor said. The IBCC offers to pair members interested in a particular overseas market with others in business there.

It also has a book club, which members like because they spend so much time on planes, Windsor said.

Its next event, on Jan. 10, will feature as its speaker Matthew Bishop, the American editor and chief writer for the international business magazine *The Economist*, which is one of the club's 11 corporate sponsors. It'll be the second year he's talked to the group.

AT A GLANCE

International Business Circle Colorado

Founded: 2003
Membership: 160 business executive, representing 23 nationalities

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