

Hirschfeld Jr. focusing on international trade efforts

Barry Hirschfeld Jr. enjoys spreading the word about Colorado's economic potential to international markets — and he's doing his part as one of 70 "ambassadors" under the Governor's Trade and Tourism Ambassadors Program (TTAP), which Gov. John Hickenlooper established as soon as he got into office.

"As an international business person, I look at our state and the economic opportunities, and I think the domestic market is a zero-sum game," says Hirschfeld, son of Barry Hirschfeld, who now is a real estate entrepreneur after many years of running what was once one of Denver's top printers. "The real opportunities are global opportunities. The states that gel around that and focus their efforts on that are the ones that will thrive in the 21st century."

There are about 70 such ambassadors in Japan, Canada and Mexico — Colorado expatriates seeking to build stronger business ties with their home state. Hirschfeld, who is president and CEO of Asia Investment Partners in Tokyo, which focuses on senior housing, heads up the Japan group, which helped develop the DIA-Tokyo flights announced earlier this year.

He's pushing the "3Plus1" strategy, whose moving parts include focusing on industries where Colorado has an edge — such as clean energy — and growing the number of international higher-education students who attend school here.

"We love Colorado and want to help the state develop an international business strategy," says Hirschfeld, 41.

IT'S A CINCH: Andrew Bourke lived in Wheat Ridge for years, and though he now lives in Brentwood, Tenn., he's gratified that more than one-third of his Twitter fans are from the Wheat Ridge and Golden areas.

He just got the good news that Walmart stores will start selling his Super

The Super Rope Cinch retails for \$3.99, and boaters are among the biggest buyers. "They can wrap the rope around the dock, twist the cinch, and that will hold it," Bourke says.

The product is made in Irving, Texas; Bourke insisted on going with a U.S. manufacturer, though it doubles his costs. He was born in Detroit and says, "Detroit became a city because of the auto industry. When you grow up in an area with a strong foothold in American products, that just meant something to us. I'm glad we did it."

I DID WHAT?: We once received a sorta glowing performance review. But under the area of "Needs Improvement," our boss made up some minor infraction. When we asked why he had done so, he exclaimed, "Well, I had to put SOMETHING negative in there!"

That's the problem with performance reviews: Managers rarely are taught the proper way to conduct them. We've heard numerous stories from disgruntled employees throughout the business world who hated their performance reviews.

One of the biggest mistakes managers make is to not prepare to do a performance review, according to **Katie Essman**, branch manager for the Denver Tech Center office of **Accountemps**.

"Rather than critiquing the employees' performance, they would critique the person in general rather than sticking to factual details of their performance," Essman says. "... managers who go in less than prepared go either too far, too hard — they're not using the review as a coaching opportunity, and berate or criticize the employee — or they sugarcoat the results. So you end up with an employee or a team that don't know exactly where they sit."

How can managers do better? Essman suggests:

- Enrolling them in workshops that teach how best to do performance reviews. "There are several organizations that coach in how to conduct a performance review, or how to have difficult conversations," she says.

- Get to know your employees better. "Using the performance review as a two-way conversation rather than one way will help managers improve their PR skills," Essman says. "It also will help employees feel they're not being spoken AT, that they are part of the review."

- Have employees write up their own review and conduct it alongside the manager's, she suggests. "Often, employees are harder on themselves than a manager is. We see that pretty frequently," Essman says. "Usually, you are going to identify your own weaknesses in a more accurate way than anybody else could."

Companies pay a price for badly done reviews, Essman says. She cites one example of a company that failed to stick to a review schedule and produced inaccurate reviews.

"That cost them good employees, sadly," she says. "That's one of the most common mistakes, that you don't conduct them in the right form, and employees don't know where they sit. So they just go to another job."

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Street Talk



Bruce Goldberg



Barry Hirschfeld Jr.

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Rope Cinch knot-tying device in its 3,700 stores nationwide. He has sold about 60,000 units since sales began in June 2011, and earlier found acceptance with Orgill and Do it Best, which are hardware distribution companies that serve about 12,800 stores nationwide.

"It changes our business, literally overnight," Bourke says. "You need that kind of volume to become profitable."