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Brokerage takes international tack

BY PAULA GARDNER

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One Ann Arbor-based brokerage firm is looking across international borders for a new business niche.

Bill Milliken of Milliken Realty Co. has spent the last year working toward earning an international brokerage designation.

Milliken said the coursework and other criteria would give him global contacts and context for brokering deals in Ann Arbor.

"We have 75 foreign-owned companies operating in Washtenaw County," Milliken said. "We are a magnet for a lot of international business."

Large firms with a national presence will draw the brokerage business of the larger international firms, Milliken said.

Yet the medium and small firms don't rely on sophisticated systems for targeting their dealmakers, he said. Those deals typically come about through Web searches and referrals, Milliken said. "I want to be the guy they meet."

Milliken describes his company


Milliken

as a "boutique brokerage that relies heavily on relationships."

He serves on a variety of industry and economic boards, including the state's Commercial Board of Realtors and the Washtenaw Development Council.

And as he seeks both growth and further specialization for his company, he's added two agents this year.

John L. Shipman is targeting investment real estate, while Tony Infante – who received his real estate license this spring – brings his golfing background to the firm.

"The golfing industry is over-built," Milliken said. "We looking in Michigan to see if underperforming courses can be picked up and re-managed profitably."

■ *Paula Gardner covers real estate and development for Business Review.*