ZIPCAR: ROBIN CHASE.

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Abstract:

The article discusses Robin Chase and Zipcar, the car-sharing company she co-founded with Antje Danielson.

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LEISURE

**IN 1999, ROBIN CHASE, THEN 40, WAS RAISING THREE KIDS** in Cambridge, Mass., with no car (her husband took the family car to work). She didn't want the cost or bother of owning a second car, but, she says, "you can only borrow the neighbors' cars so much." A friend told Chase about a car-sharing program in Europe. "I thought, Wow! That's what I want!" She also realized that the Internet and wireless technology would enable people to reserve vehicles and then unlock and drive them with special cards.

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By January 2000, Chase, who is a graduate of Wellesley and MIT, had written a business plan with her friend Antje Danielson, who had done transportation-related research at Harvard. They financed their start-up with $75,000; Chase became the CEO, and by June Zipcar had two cars on the street in Cambridge and one in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood. "The idea was tremendously exciting, but that was just 1% of it," she says. "The rest of it was working, slogging, forcing, pushing and fighting to make it happen -- a lot like childbirth." Zipcar now operates in 14 cities and at more than 230 U.S. colleges, with more than 560,000 members who can rent cars by the hour or the day. Its initial public offering in April was a resounding success.

Chase calls herself a transportation innovator, on a mission to share resources. She is more comfortable as an idea person than as an executive. She left Zipcar in 2003, then in 2007 co-founded GoLoco, billed as the first company to combine ride sharing, social networks and easy payment.

Her latest venture, called Buzzcar, focuses on car sharing in your own neighborhood. She is rolling it out in Paris, where car ownership is expensive. Chase jokes that Buzzcar will create "autopreneurs." She is pleased to report that the owner of a Porsche has added his car to the network.