



PHOTO: JIM STICKFORD

Ford and Microsoft served as the primary corporate co-sponsors of the 2010 SAE Convergence conference and trade show at Cobo Center last week, where the telematics industry gathered.

Ford Works on Minority Purchasing

Ford Motor Company, maintaining a strong commitment to supplier diversity, is on track this year to exceed its annual goal to source 10 percent of U.S. purchases with minority and women-owned businesses.

In 2009, Ford purchased \$2.7 billion worth of goods and services from its Tier I minority and women-owned businesses in the U.S., down from \$3.3 billion in 2008.

The decline is attributable to lower industry volumes. Despite the decrease in dollar amounts, the level of Ford's U.S. diversity sourcing in 2009 remains at approximately 10 percent, Ford's Tier I suppliers purchased \$1.02 billion from minority and women-owned businesses in 2009, compared to \$1.2 billion in 2008.

"These are difficult times for all auto suppliers, but minority and women-owned businesses face their own set of unique challenges," said Tony Brown, group vice-president of Global Purchasing.

"Because of this, Ford took proactive action to offer our

diverse suppliers significant business opportunities, while at the same time providing support to others to improve their chances for long-term viability."

Ford's supplier and purchasing actions in 2009 include:

- Facilitated the sale of a portion of Meridian Automotive Systems business to Flex-N-Gate Corp. The sale expanded Flex-N-Gate's product line by adding exterior vehicle lighting systems. Flex-N-Gate, based in Urbana, Ill., is an Asian-American supplier;

- Supported Grupo Antolin Wayne by making a strategic decision to transfer a significant piece of interior headliner business from a mainstream supplier. Grupo Antolin Wayne, located in Canton, Mich., is an African-American supplier;

- Sourced a global parts distribution contract to AEL-SPAN/UTi, an African-American supplier located in Belleville, Mich.;

- Upgraded HUSCO International, a Hispanic supplier, to tier one status from tier two.

As part of the upgrade, Ford sourced new powertrain manufacturing business to Husco, based in Waukesha, Wis.;

These opportunities provided minority- and women-owned suppliers with new business valued at more than \$150 million during a period when purchasing budgets and the supply base were being downsized.

Ford's minority- and women-owned suppliers are also playing an important role in the company's revitalized product line.

Prominent examples of this trend include:

- Dakkota Integrated Systems is providing fascias and headliners for the 2011 Ford Explorer, an all-new version of the vehicle that defined the SUV segment. Based in Holt, Mich., Dakkota is a woman- and Native American-owned supplier;

- Piston Automotive, one of Ford's largest minority-owned suppliers, is producing cooling modules and other powertrain parts for the Explorer. Piston, based in Detroit, is an African-American supplier.

Microsoft Targets OEMs with Release

By Jim Stickford
Staff Reporter

Software giant Microsoft unveiled its new Windows Embedded Automotive 7 software on Oct. 19 at the SAE Convergence show held at Cobo Center in Detroit.

Steve Bridgeland, senior product manager – Windows Embedded Automotive, and Walter Sullivan, senior product planner – Windows Embedded Automotive, spoke about the virtues of the new system.

"We spent a lot of time on how OEMs build 'head' units," Bridgeland said. "A head unit is also known as the infotainment computer in a car. We were fascinated in how Human Machine Interactions (HMI) are created."

Bridgeland said part of what Windows does is help reduce the development time for HMI tech. OEMs can use Windows systems such as Silverlight to design "virtual" HMI systems such as radio displays. These virtual systems are faster to build and faster to make adjustments to, thus reducing the time it takes to design and redesign a system.

But the main goal is to make things easier for the consumer, Bridgeland said.

"We need to provide people with a way to interact with their lives while they are in their cars," Bridgeland said. "But they must be able to do so without being distracted."

One way they are able to do this is by using Microsoft's "TellMe" speech engine software as a part of their Windows Embed 7 package.

"This speech platform has great functionality," Bridgeland said. "The new software has speaker adaptability, which means it recognizes different types of voices more easily."

In the past, speech recognition software was good at recognizing a generic voice, Bridgeland said. But if someone had a really deep voice, or a high-pitched voice there could be trouble using such software. People with distinct accents also had their difficul-

ties. The embedded software will also feature the new Fuzzy SMS software, Bridgeland said. SMS stands for Simple Messaging System. Now users will be able to receive text messages without taking their hands off the wheel or their eyes off the road. Messages will be "read" verbally to the drivers.

The system will also be able to respond to text messages, Bridgeland said. The driver can say things and the system will compare what was said to pre-programmed outgoing messages and ask if the driver wants to send a particular one.

Sullivan said now companies like Ford will be able to

release new updates to systems like SYNC every year using the Windows Embedded Auto Platform. This is important because the public expects the latest technology and OEMs are using technology as a way of differentiating themselves from their competition.

The SYNC system is a joint venture between Ford and Microsoft, Sullivan said. That technology is an example of how an OEM can use technology to create greater consumer awareness of product and add greater value to the driving experience.

Bridgeland said the Windows Embedded Automotive 7 system will be available to any interested OEMs.



PHOTO: JIM STICKFORD

Jim Buczkowski, director, electrical and electronic systems at Ford, demonstrates new technologies the automaker had on display in a car buck at the SAE Convergence trade show in Detroit.

Ford Upgrades Systems For More Operating Ease

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phones. The right buttons control the electronic devices to the right of the driver. These include the radio, maps and such. The left buttons control the devices left of the displays controlled by the right button, such as the dashboard instrument displays behind the steering wheel.

The new system allows for greater control of driver preferences in how information such as speed, fuel level and engine condition are displayed, Buczkowski said.

For example, he said, the driver can set how long the headlights stay on once the car is turned off. Some people like the lights to go off right away after they're turned off. Some people want them to stay on for 10 seconds because a garage can get very dark. Others prefer 30 seconds because they park in a lot and they need the light to see their way to the door.

The dashboard can now show miles-until-empty, for example, as just one way to measure fuel economy.

"We have made it possible for the driver to personalize his settings," Buczkowski said. "We believe it's important to folks to be able to do this. You can't please everyone if you just have your displays set one way. But, by making them adjustable and easy to adjust, you can give the buyer what he wants and how he wants it."

The MKX Lincoln "Touch" system is standard with the vehicle, Buczkowski said. The Touch comes with a navigation option for an additional \$758.

Or, drivers can opt for the simpler turn-by-turn SYNC system that comes free for the first three years and \$65 a year after that.

Buczkowski said Ford will launch the "My Ford Touch" system in the Explorer later this year and in the Focus beginning early next year. It has just become available in the Focus.

Part of what makes these systems great for drivers is how they connect with other consumer electronics, Buczkowski said, in addition to ease of use. It will be possible for drivers to download the phonebooks from their smart phones into SYNC. They then can make calls using voice commands, so they don't have to take hands of the wheel or eyes off the road. "This is car-of-the-future stuff today," Buczkowski said. "Every OEM has its own take on technology. For Ford, voice control is very important."

Ford set up working models of their Touch systems set in mockups of the MKX and Focus for those attending the SAE Convergence conference. They got to see the system in action.

Buczkowski that was only appropriate because Ford has long been a supporter of the SAE show.

"We've been involved since the beginning," Buczkowski said. "It gives us the chance to talk with others in the industry about trends and issues we all face. We can network with colleagues, suppliers and potential partners on how electronics and software will influence future products."

Cifunsa Supplies Ford

SALTILLO, Mexico – Cifunsa Diesel, S.A. de C.V., will supply gray iron block casting to Ford Motor Co. for its 4.6L, 5.4L and 6.8L gasoline-powered V8 engines.

The components will be used mainly for 2011 E Series vans, Expedition / Navigator, and some passenger car applications.

Production is underway at Cifunsa's manufacturing facility in Saltillo, Mexico and Cifunsa will achieve 100-percent capacity for the program by early 2011.

Components are being supplied to Ford engine facilities in Romeo, Mich. and Windsor, Ont., Canada.

"We are very pleased to be working with Ford on this challenging program, and the Cifunsa team has exceeded expectations," said Alberto Pinones, chief executive officer of Cifunsa.

"Cifunsa was able to develop and manufacture these near net shape cylinder block castings at world class timing and quality levels for our Engine Manufacturing Operations," said Terry Aldea, Casting and Fogging Global Executive Engineering Manager, Ford Motor Co.

This agreement, combined with a previous award from Ford for cylinder blocks for its 6.2L V8 engine program in 2009, secures Cifunsa's position as a leading supplier in the production and sale of gray iron cylinder blocks and heads in the NAFTA market.

Cifunsa Diesel is a member of the Grupo Industrial Saltillo, one of the largest industrial groups in Mexico and founded in 1928. With an installed capacity of 400,000 tons per year, Cifunsa is now one of the largest independent foundries in the world.

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