



Ford senior executive Mark Fields with the 2011 North American Truck of the Year trophy at the Detroit auto show last week. The Explorer made it three straight truck titles for the automaker.

Ford Earns 'Truck of the Year' Award As Explorer Bests Two Chrysler Entries

by Gerald Scott
Editor
U.S. Auto Scene

Oh, to have the concession for providing trophy cases to the Ford Motor Co. in Dearborn these days.

Thanks to Ford garnering more than its share of major auto awards for its products, business must be booming for Ford's trophy case vendor these days.

That's because Ford added yet another product salute that rises to the level of "coup" — the all-new Ford Explorer was named the 2011 North American Truck of the Year at the Detroit auto show.

The Explorer bested two exceptionally strong truck rivals including the Jeep Grand Cherokee and the Dodge Durango, both from Chrysler.

"It's a proud moment for Ford, our employees and our customers to have Explorer named North American Truck of the Year," said Mark Fields, Ford president of The Americas.

"Winning this honor for the third consecutive year confirms our One Ford plan is working to deliver vehicles people truly want and value, with industry-leading quality, fuel efficiency, safety and smart technology."

For the second year in a row, it might also be noted, Big Three vehicles swept the Car and Truck of the Year awards with Ford taking both honors last year, while the Ford Explorer took truck honors and the Chevy Volt is Car of the Year this time around.

The North American Truck of the Year award recognizes vehicles based on factors that include innovation, design, safety, handling, driver satisfaction and value for the dollar.

A jury of 49 veteran automotive journalists from the U.S. and Canada vote for the vehicles, which must be "all-new" or "substantially changed" from the previous model year

to qualify for the award.

The win by Explorer actually marks the seventh time now that a Ford product has been named North American Truck of the Year, with Ford generally dominating in the truck category during the 18 years the awards have been given out.

Last year, Ford Transit Connect was the truck category winner. The best-selling Ford F-150 pickup truck won the honor in both 2004 and 2009; the fuel-efficient Ford Escape Hybrid in 2005.

Meanwhile, juror praise for the all-new Explorer was effusive.

Wrote Ken Gross of *Playboy* magazine, "responding to the crossover craze, Ford developed the latest Explorer off its fine Taurus platform, replacing the V8 with a muscular, yet fuel-sipping V6, and slipped in a turbocharged EcoBoost I-4

option that delivers punch plus economy. Dial-able all-wheel-drive setting, beaucoup electronic features and a very pleasing restyle should retain Explorer loyalists and attract new buyers."

And John Gilbert of CarSoup/New Car Picks observed, "The complete redesign for 2011 could boost the Ford Explorer back to its pinnacle of popularity, with new unibody design, and a potent new V6 or the coming EcoBoost 4 to enhance all of Ford's latest technical connectivity, providing performance and useful features sure to be appreciated by occupants in all three rows of seats."

Ford revealed the 2011 Explorer back in July, when it first showcased the SUV's combination of improved

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Ford's Brown Is Executive of the Year

by Gerald Scott
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Sunday, Jan. 9, was quite a night for Ford senior executive Tony Brown.

Brown was named "Executive of the Year" at the 15th Annual Urban Wheel Awards, which are sponsored by Decisive Media.

The Urban Wheel Awards were held at the MotorCity Casino, and on hand to help salute Brown were no less than Ford CEO Alan Mulally and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow.

Rejuvenation and resurgence were the operating themes for the evening. Celebrating 15 years of diversity in the auto industry was the specific theme of the awards.

"As these car companies have come back with a bang, the city of Detroit has been counted out for dead and will not come back," observed De-

troit Mayor Dave Bing.

"I believe we're trailing this industry, but we're going to be something you can be proud of when you come to Detroit."

Meanwhile, Brown's role as group vice president, Global Purchasing, at Ford was the center of attention because of the good works that Brown has done over the past few years mending automaker relations with suppliers.

"When I arrived four years ago, Tony Brown was vice president of Purchasing for Ford. Tony has a fabulous resume, tremendous experience and is really a neat leader," Mulally said.

"So what's really important in the automobile industry is your relationship with all your suppliers and partners."

"So I asked Tony how our relationship was progressing. He said, 'You'll be happy to know that the suppliers rated Ford Motor Co. as the worst



Tony Brown

auto company to work for.

"I said, 'Well, that's off to a great start. Suppliers have nearly 70 percent of the dollar value of every vehicle.'

"So, he invited me to meet all the suppliers in the first week I was here, and I did."

But Brown had a plan to repair, rebuild and forge a new

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Ford Says It's on Track for Adding 7,000 Workers

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. says it will add more than 7,000 workers in the U.S. over the next two years, including 750 engineers with expertise in batteries and other advanced technology, as it begins producing several new vehicles.

The company plans to hire 4,000 manufacturing workers this year. Almost half those workers will be at the Louisville Assembly Plant in Kentucky that will make the new Ford Escape starting late this year. It expects to add at least 2,500 new manufacturing jobs in 2012.

The 750 engineers that Ford plans to hire will work on hybrid and electric vehicles.

The company said it is beginning a recruiting effort this week in Detroit and other cities, including San Jose (California), and Raleigh and Durham (North Carolina).

Ford introduced three future electric and hybrid vehicles last week at the Detroit auto show, including an electric version of the Ford Focus that will go on sale in the U.S. later this year and hybrid and plug-in hybrid versions of the C-Max minivan that will go on sale in 2012.

Ford said the plug-in hybrid C-Max will be able to go 500 miles using a combination of its battery and gas engine, while the hybrid version will get better fuel economy than the hybrid Ford Fusion sedan, which gets 41 miles per gallon. The plug-in hybrid will be able to go longer distances on battery power alone than the regular hybrid, although Ford won't release exact distances yet.

The electric Focus will be Ford's first electric car on the market, although it currently

sells an electric version of its Transit Connect van.

Ford didn't say how much the vehicles will cost, but Chairman Bill Ford said they will be "competitive" with other electrics and hybrids on the market. The Nissan Leaf electric car, which went on sale last month, costs \$32,780, but buyers are eligible for a federal tax credit of \$7,500.

"We're doing everything we can to make these vehicles as affordable as possible," President and CEO Alan Mulally said. Adding hybrid and electric systems to established vehicles — instead of selling

separate ones, like the Leaf — is one way Ford expects to cut costs.

Bill Ford wouldn't say whether Ford can make a profit on electrics and hybrids, which are more expensive to produce, but said the expense will come down as production increases. Ford eventually expects to sell 5,000 to 10,000 Focus electrics annually.

"Ultimately, this has to be a business for us or we wouldn't be in it," Bill Ford said.

The company also said it plans to hire 6,500 U.S. manufacturing workers over the

next two years as it ramps up production of new vehicles. Ford had previously announced some of the new hires, including the 1,800 workers being hired to make the new Ford Escape at Kentucky's Louisville Assembly Plant starting late this year. Some of the workers will be new to Ford, although some will come from other U.S. plants where Ford has laid off workers.

Under a 2007 contract, new hires will make around \$14, or half the wages of veteran workers, which will mean significant savings for the company.

Michelin Design Program Continues to Grow at NAIAS

DETROIT — First introduced at the 2002 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), the Michelin Challenge Design program now celebrates its 10th year.

The program has seen dramatic growth in its first decade and will celebrate this milestone by returning to the auto show with an exhibit displaying various forms of design innovation and examples of the partnerships necessary to make this kind of program a long-term success.

Created to recognize and support design by providing an opportunity for designers from all over the world to present their most interesting works at one of the world's premiere auto shows, the program has seen dramatic growth in its first decade.

Michelin Challenge Design has received nearly 3,000 entries over 10 years. Participants have represented 98 countries.

In the first year (2002 NAIAS), 17 of 125 submissions were selected to be displayed in the exhibit. This year, 34

works were selected out of a record 970 entries.

While Michelin Challenge Design has doubled the works displayed, the number of submissions has increased by more than 700 percent. Pre-registration has started for the 2012 Michelin Challenge

Design, and initial feedback indicates another record year is in store.

Repeat jurors, including Freeman Thomas, Ford Motor Company; David Marek, Honda R&D Americas; Geza Loczi, Volvo Monitoring and Safety Center; Frank Saucedo,

General Motors Advanced Design, say the quality of the work submitted for judging has increased each year as well.

The Michelin Challenge Design jury has included 40

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PHOTO: GERALD SCOTT

Johnson Controls used the Detroit auto show to debut its ie:3 demo vehicle, which stands for Inspired Efficiency.

JCI Debuts Low-Profile Battery Pack in Demo Car

by Gerald Scott
Editor
U.S. Auto Scene

Much has changed regarding the annual Detroit auto show, but one tradition that still pleases the press to no end is that Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI) continues to host the "kick-off" press conference on the first media day of the show.

Such was the case on Jan. 10, the first day of the 2011 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS), when the press gathered instinctively at the JCI pavilion early in the morning to begin the big day.

Never mind that Porsche actually "jumped" JCI's 7 a.m. start time by a half-hour — for all intents and purposes, JCI has become the kickoff presser and this year's show was

effectively the same.

There are only a handful of Tier I suppliers with displays at the OEM-themed Detroit auto show, including Johnson Controls, Denso and ZF.

And on top of all that, JCI did not disappoint in its offerings — it rolled out a "demo vehicle" that it developed to showcase the parts and systems it is putting forward on behalf of its customers here in 2011.

JCI unveiled the "ie:3" demonstrator vehicle — a fully electric vehicle based on the popular small car segment that addresses fuel efficiency and related EV needs and demands. (The ie:3 nomenclature has to do with the new JCI theme of "Inspired Efficiency," by the way.)

Speaking of which, the ie:3 features the debut of Johnson Controls-Saft's next-generation, low-profile lithium-ion battery pack. It is described as a unique, self-contained system that is integrated easily into the vehicle in a small space under the floor. The new prismatic, format cell achieves greater packaging efficiency and uses less space in the vehicle.

"Consumers want all the space they enjoy in today's vehicles, but with the peace of mind that their all-electric vehicle can get them the distance they need to go," said Alex Molinari, president for Johnson Controls Power Solutions. "This next-generation technology allows for both."

The improved spaciousness enabled by the packaging of the battery offers OEM designers and engineers a flat floor that provides additional options to enhance overall flexibility in the vehicle.

For example, JCI says, the ie:3 features "stadium seating," which when deployed in the front row, offers enough space to stow a suitcase. The rear seats easily fold flat to the floor, creating even more storage options. A center console is spacious enough to accommodate a large handbag.



GM's Chris Borroni-Bird, left, the Michelin Man and Vic Koelsch of Michelin together celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Michelin Design Challenge at the Detroit auto show.