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Grace Lieblein

Lieblein Is Named GM Purchasing VP Succeeding Socia

General Motors has named Grace Lieblein vice president, Global Purchasing and Supply Chain, effective immediately.

In her new role, Lieblein will be responsible for GM's purchasing activities and supply chain and logistics operations worldwide.

She succeeds Bob Socia, who was appointed president, GM China, and Chief Country Operations officer, China, India and ASEAN in September.

In her new role, Lieblein will

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Cruze's One-Stage 'Smart Air Bag' Uses Low-Output Inflator

The 2013 Chevrolet Cruze has introduced an industry-first driver-side air bag that uses a flexible venting technology.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently tested the 2013 Cruze with the new air bag technology under its New Car Assessment Program, and the Cruze received NHTSA's maximum 5-Star Overall Vehicle Score, the same rating it received in 2011 and 2012 when the small car used a dual-stage air bag system.

Unlike more complex dual-stage air bags that use one inflator for low-speed crashes and an-

other for high-speed crashes, say Chevy officials, the Cruze's new single-stage "smart air bag" uses one lower output inflator to manage both low-speed and high-speed crash forces.

The more compact, lighter weight system's flexible vent, say Chevy officials, reduces the risk of inflation-induced injury by allowing the driver's forward momentum to effectively push the air out and away.

GM testing shows the single-stage driver air bag provides excellent cushioning for drivers of varied sizes in both low-speed

and high-speed crash events.

"This new air bag technology is a smart way to manage crash forces, and is an integral part of Cruze's continued success in safety testing," said Gay Kent, GM general director of vehicle safety and crashworthiness.

"The latest safety rating reflects the confidence we have in its new and carry-over safety technologies and overall crashworthiness."

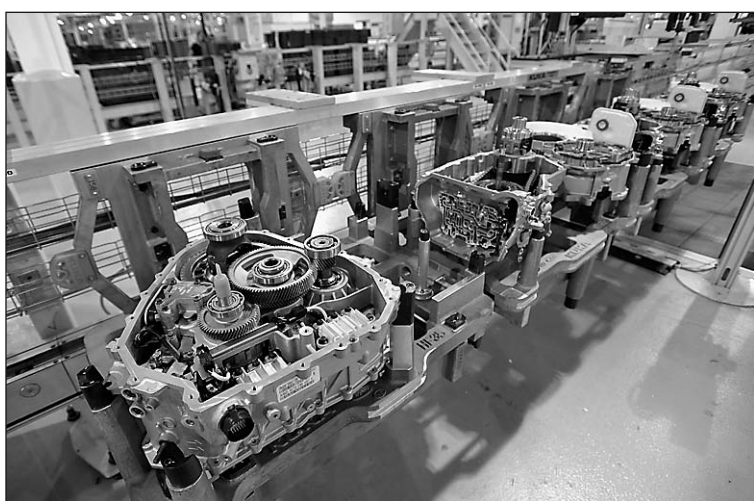
Cruze's flexible venting driver air bag is the second new air bag technology General Motors has announced for 2013.

The new Chevrolet Traverse crossover helped introduce the industry's first front center air bag, an inflatable restraint designed to help protect drivers and front passengers in far-side impact crashes where the affected occupant is on the opposite, non-struck side of the vehicle.

GM and safety restraint supplier Takata co-developed the flexible venting driver-side air bag and the front center air bag.

The 2013 Cruze continues to offer more standard safety fea-

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Ford Van Dyke Transmission is among several plants that will see heavy investment. The others are Michigan Assembly, Dearborn Stamping, Flat Rock Assembly, Sterling Axle and Livonia Transmission.

Ford to Invest \$773 Million In Michigan Plants, Tooling

Ford Motor plans to spend more than \$773 million on new equipment and capacity expansions across six manufacturing facilities in southeast Michigan as it delivers on a commitment to invest \$6.2 billion in U.S. plants by 2015.

The investments in Michigan will create 2,350 new hourly jobs and allow the company to retain an additional 3,240 hourly jobs. The 2,350 new positions are part of the 12,000 hourly jobs that Ford is adding across the U.S. by 2015.

"Even as we wrap up an incredibly busy year of capacity expan-

sions and product launches, we are continuing to look to the future," said Jim Tetreault, Ford vice president of North America Manufacturing. "These investments, many of which are already under way, will ensure our southeast Michigan manufacturing facilities can support our aggressive growth plans."

Expansion work at several plants started earlier this year to increase Ford's capacity to provide transmissions and axles to for fuel efficient vehicles and F-Series pickup trucks.

TRW Unveils New Smaller, Lighter Airbag Inflator at Int'l Symposium

TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. unveiled its latest inflator technology recently at the 11th International Airbag 2012 Symposium in Europe.

The Livonia-based, Tier I global automotive supplier took the opportunity to showcase its new DI10.1G45 inflator, which is a further refinement of the DI10 family and is TRW's lightest and smallest inflator to date.

The device has been specially developed for "micro" airbag modules and is slated to start production in early 2014 at the TRW facility in Aschau, Germany, in support of a major European business award.

In addition to its smaller size, the new inflator is significantly lighter than its predecessors.

"As the industry continues to place increasing focus on the environment, the importance of reducing vehicle weight is paramount," said Dr. Achim Hofmann, senior manager of core engineering, Inflators.

"The DI10.1G45 product offers a weight reduction of approximately 25 percent over previous generation technology, as well as overall smaller dimensions."

"With its smaller size, the inflator is suitable for driver airbags, which need to be packaged into smaller and more compact driver airbag modules within the steering wheel."

TRW's DI10.1G45 airbag inflator output can be adapted according to restraint system requirements.

Although it uses standard-grade materials for the housing and weld joint technology, package size has been further reduced.

"As a leader in the airbag field,



TRW airbag inflator

TRW has been able to help satisfy stringent customer and industry regulatory requirements while halving the weight of its airbag modules in recent years – now among the lightest on the market – in addition to minimizing product size and packaging," Hoffman said.

"The integration of the inflator into the cushion, combined with new inflation technologies, bag and housing concepts and materials, have enabled us to achieve this significant weight reduction over the previous few years."

This latest smaller, lighter airbag inflator is another innovation TRW has come up with over 30 years of developing and manufacturing airbag modules.

The new inflator joins other breakthroughs, say TRW officials, such as its roof airbag system; adaptive frontal airbag technology; first-to-market compact low-mounted knee airbag module; and a head protection system for convertible vehicles.

Hofmann concluded, "With a wealth of experience and success within our Occupant Safety Systems business, TRW is well positioned to further develop and enhance its airbag technologies."

Matching Workers to New Automotive Jobs A Critical Challenge for Michigan Business

by Jim Stickford

With the comeback of the auto industry, there will be more demand in Michigan for the "right" skilled worker than ever and that demand poses a challenge for the state's businesses and educational institutions.

Mike Wall, director of automotive analysis for IHS Automotive out of Grand Rapids, explained the situation as he spoke from Detroit via teleconferencing to select Dykema Gossett officials about the near future of the auto business in North America.

One problem faced by employers, Wall said, is getting the right-skilled people on the job. In some cases, that means getting engineers, and in other cases, it means getting a new kind of skilled worker trained and in place.

Afterward, in an interview, Wall said, "This is something that won't happen overnight. At my teleconference, one of the listeners in his mid-20s pointed out that when he was growing up in the Flint area, automakers were getting rid of people. So why would a smart, young person want to get in this industry?"

Wall had to admit that was a fair point, but said the auto business has made a comeback in the past couple of years and companies like Ford have really gotten into the technology side of things.

"Technology can be a dynamic factor in car development that brings more interest to the industry," Wall said. "As a start, we will have to woo people who left the industry during the downturn of a few years ago."

States like Michigan, Wall said,

actually have a secret weapon when it comes to getting engineers to live here. People in Silicon Valley and the tech corridor outside Boston often don't realize that their salaries can buy a much better quality of life in this state compared with the more expensive areas on both coasts.

But it's not just the OEMs who need engineers, Wall said, adding that the suppliers at all tiers shed a lot of people and will need to hire as production ramps up.

"In the last downturn, there wasn't a lot of job swapping," Wall said. "So when people left a company, they often left the industry. We have to get them back. So it's a matter of energizing people who

left, but it could be difficult because once bitten, twice shy. Plus, they might like where they landed and aren't inclined to come back to the auto industry."

Wall said Michigan's universities are doing a good job of training the next generation of engineers, but getting people into the field isn't easy.

Michigan is linked to the auto industry, for good or for ill, Wall said, but added the auto industry doesn't just need engineers, it needs right-skilled workers.

"The challenge goes beyond four-year degrees," Wall said. "Maybe the new auto worker will need an associate's degree, which is two years."

5 Chrysler Vehicles on 'Best Buy' List

by Jennifer Knightstep

Each year, *Consumer Guide Automotive* editors carefully scrutinize dozens of vehicles from all major models in 19 vehicle categories, looking for those vehicles that represent the perfect balance of key attributes and value in each class.

This year, five Chrysler Group vehicles can boast a spot on the 2013 "Best Buy" list.

The five "Best Buy" vehicles are the Chrysler Town & Country, Ram 1500, Dodge Durango, Dodge Grand Caravan and Dodge Journey.

Consumer Guide Automotive has presented the list every year since 1967. Previously, top vehicles were divided into two categories – The Consumer Guide Automotive Best Buy and Recommended winners – but this year,

for the first time, editors decided to eliminate the Recommended accolade and raise the criteria for earning Best Buy rating.

The result is a shorter and more prestigious list, and more bragging rights for the five Chrysler vehicles selected as "Best Buys."

"We are honored to have five of our vehicles, including three Dodge vehicles, recognized by *Consumer Guide Automotive* as Best Buys for 2013," said Doug Betts, senior vice president of Quality at the Chrysler Group.

Betts' pride is fair. He knows the rigorous testing his vehicles had to endure to win their spots on the list; editors at *Consumer Guide Automotive* analyzed several criteria, including price, features, performance, fuel economy, reliability records, price, and resale value, to assess each vehicle.

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