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Magazine Names Ford One of Top Innovative Companies

The business magazine, *Fast Company*, has released its annual Most Innovative Companies issue that honors leading businesses, and Ford was named as one of the 50 most innovative companies.

Other honorees included Apple, Amazon, Google and Target, along with such rising newcomers as Square, Fab and Tumblr.

Ford was the only full-line automaker named to the 2013 list. Nike ranks No. 1 following the release of two major innovations, FuelBand and Flyknit technology.

Fast Company editors highlighted an array of recent efforts by Ford, including the opening of a Silicon Valley Lab in Palo Alto, Calif.

in June 2012 where Ford engineers can collaborate with some of the best and brightest technology minds.

On its Web page, *Fast Company* editors wrote, "Last June, Ford took a big step beyond Detroit: It opened an R&D lab in Palo Alto and asked developers to think of Ford cars the same way they think of the iPhone-iPad ecosystem.

"With software updates, we keep vehicles fresh and relevant, which is compelling for consumers spending tens of thousands on a car they expect to keep for years," said Ford Chief Technical Officer Paul Mascarenas.

"Customers seem to be responding. Third-quarter pretax earnings in 2012 were a record \$2.2 billion, and over half of Ford owners cite the connectivity system as a big reason for their purchase.

So it makes sense that when Ford sends out USB drives with software updates, 80 percent of customers use them."

Fast Company specifically cited Ford features such as proximity, which identifies deals at nearby restaurants and retailers based on the driver's preferences.

The magazine also praised the Sync, which enables voice commands while using GPS maps, audiobooks, Pandora, and various apps.

Ford's lane-keeping aid technology was also praised for alerting the driver if it senses a lane change without a signal, and even nudges the car back in its lane.

The magazine also gave Ford points for automatic updates, which was described as scheduled software upgrades via the vehicle's Wi-Fi receiver.

In the Ford press release announcing its naming to the *Fast Company* list, Ford officials noted the "2013 Ford Fusion offers one of the industry's most complete suites of advanced driver assist systems, including adaptive cruise control and the Lane Keeping System all in an affordable midsize family sedan.

"Ford researchers are also hard at work on future systems including a driver workload estimator to help drivers manage stressful situations on the road."

The Most Innovative Companies is *Fast Company's* most significant, high-profile editorial effort of the year.

Ford reported that the magazine's editorial team spends months gathering and sifting data to identify those enterprises that exemplify the best in business from across the economy and around the world.

The end result is a package that dares to be different, emphasizing not just revenue growth and profit margins but also progressive business models and an ethos of creativity.

Engineering/Design Staffing Agency Creates Career Training Program For Returning Military Veterans

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"So, to compete, the first thing we had to do was to start training entry-level designers again, which nobody was doing," he said.

Nichols understands firsthand what veterans are facing. He earned a bachelor's degree in the U.S. Air Force, but when he left in 1988, he went from having responsibility for a \$30 million dollar airplane and its pilot, to hardly being able to get a job, and his son went through similar struggles when he left the military in 2011 and sought civilian employment.

Chrysler has been an enthusiastic supporter of the apprenticeship program. The company agreed to hire participating veterans as interns while they pursue their college degrees. As interns, each participant works a minimum of 35 hours a week, while working closely with lead engineering teams, learning the work from the inside out.

Participants must also take classes toward earning a degree using tuition reimbursement offered through the G.I. Bill.

He noted that companies they approach, such as Chrysler, all have sustainability problems due to lack of trained people.

"This is where the value comes in . . . Before they didn't talk to anybody without 10 years' experience, but now they're doing better with these veterans straight out of school . . . We've had one of our partners say, 'This is the most important thing I've ever been involved in.'"

"We don't hire looks or gender, we hire attitude and . . . these people are blowing the doors out."

Nichols said the veterans placed at Chrysler have blasted through the normal six-week training period in four weeks.

"The training program started in October, and one of the veterans actually designed parts that showed up in the auto show," he noted.

For its part, Chrysler is more than pleased at how the program is working.

"Chrysler is excited to be a part of the program and provide our returning veterans with internships that allow them to have a corporate experience while they pursue their degrees," said Georgette Borrego Dulworth, director of Chrysler's Talent Acquisition & Diversity.

Vari-Form Receives GM Quality Award

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"With our pressure sequence method of manufacturing, we are able to form parts out of aluminum and high-advanced strength and ultra-strength steel. That's not easy."

Nardone said the production facilities are in Canada because of the company's history. It originally made tubes for auto companies. That was several owners ago. Vari-Form is now owned by a private equity firm and has its headquarters in Troy.

The manufacturing process is unusual, Nardone said. Actual production begins at Vari-Form's Strathroy facility. A tube blank, typically three to ten feet long, and one to six inches in diameter, is placed in the forming die.

The tube is then filled and pressurized with water. As the dies close, the pressure is gradu-

Fusion, Hybrid Earns NHTSA's Top Vehicle Safety Award

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On larger passengers, the shoulder engages the vent and keeps it from venting so the gas stays inside the airbag.

On smaller passengers, the effect is just the opposite: Because the occupant's shoulder is below the vent, the gas vents out of the airbag.

The driver's airbag uses a re-configured curve-shaped tether system that pulls in the lower section to create a pocket that help to lessen the impact of the airbag on the driver's chest and

ribs in frontal crashes.

Deploying at the same time is a driver's knee airbag.

The Fusion and Fusion Hybrid boast leading fuel economy and additional numerous technologies that are designed to help enhance the driving experience for the passenger, as well as reducing stress and assist the driver, Ford officials said.

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