Ford's Silicon Valley Lab to Improve Telematics

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. – The Ford Silicon Valley Lab (SVL) is now officially open for business, ready to engage the tech community in the quest for the next great idea.

Ford Executive Chairman Bill Ford came to the spiritual home of the computer and consumer electronics industry last week to celebrate the grand opening of the Ford Silicon Valley Lab and to participate in the Computer History Museum's "Revolutionaries" lecture series.

"We have been innovating for more than a century at Ford, but we acknowledge we don't have a monopoly on creativity," said Ford.

"Our new office will complement our existing research efforts by allowing us to tap into the region that has been driving consumer technology forward in recent decades."

While Ford is strongly associated with the industrial heartland of America, the company has global reach with Research and Innovation facilities in Dearborn, Mich.; Aachen, Germany; Nanjing, China; and technology scouts in Tel Aviv, Israel.

"We want Silicon Valley to view Ford as a platform that is open, accessible and ready for their innovative ideas and technologies," said Paul Mascarenas, chief technical officer and vice president of Ford Research and Advanced Engineering.

"We are looking for unexpected solutions for the future, and we believe Silicon Valley is the right place to round out our global research organization.

"We view technology as more than just an impressive list of microprocessors, sensors and software," he added. "It is the enabler of a safe, intuitive and enjoyable time behind the wheel."

Ford's Silicon Valley Lab will serve as a local touch point for the many relationships Ford already has with Bay Area technology companies and startups.

Its core mission, though, Ford says, is to operate as an independent lab focused on three key areas supporting the future of personal mobility:

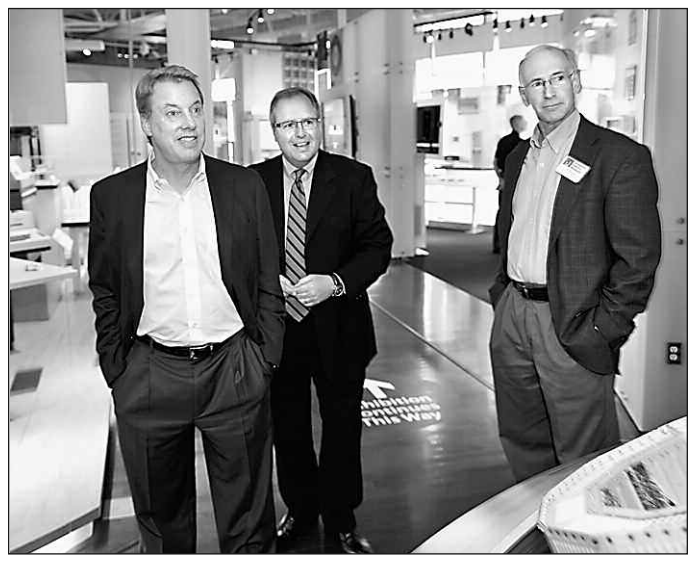
• Big data – Ford is increasingly a data-driven company, fusing both internal and external sources to shape product and marketing offerings and support strategic decision making.

In addition, vehicle data from the growing list of sensing technologies built into the car can be used locally to create a more personalized, convenient and productive driving experience, then aggregated to help address congestion and improve efficiency.

• Open-source innovation – Viewing the car as a platform and providing access to real-time data allows for the rapid development of custom hardware and software applications.

Ford has extensive experience in development of on-board and off-board applications for the SYNC in-car connectivity system. Now, the Silicon Valley Lab is looking at open-source development using the research platform OpenXC developed with Bug Labs.

• User experience – Information and services need to be presented to the driver in ways that don't take away from operating the vehicle.



Bill Ford, Executive Chairman, Ford Motor Company, joins John C. Hollar, President and CEO, Computer History Museum, in celebrating the induction of Ford SYNC, the industry-leading in-car connectivity software platform co-developed with Microsoft, into the Museum's permanent collection in Palo Alto.

Ford is rethinking how drivers and passengers interact with vehicles as well as how vehicles should interact with them. Innovations in design and new technologies can help to optimally organize, filter and deliver content.

"As new ways of processing, curating and filtering information are conceived, the possibilities for enhancing personal mobility are virtually limitless," said Venkatesh Prasad, general manager of the new lab and senior technical leader of open innovation.

The Ford SVL team is now ready to listen, learn and even teach at its location in downtown Palo Alto, Ford Motor Co. now says.

"With many of the finest forward-thinking minds in the world located in the San Francisco Bay region, the Ford Silicon Valley Lab is ideally positioned to interact with and forge connections to local innovators and grow the relationships with our current partners."

Severstal Opens Its New Plant

DEARBORN (AP) – The North American arm of Russian steelmaker Severstal is marking the opening of its newest steelmaking facilities.

Severstal says it has spent $1.4 billion modernizing the plant in Dearborn. The company says the facilities now can produce a new generation of coated, high-strength steels.

The site used to be part of Ford.'s Rouge complex. Severstal bought the facility in 2004.

Gov. Snyder was present for the occasion.

Solar Car Race Will Soon Visit Ann Arbor on National Route

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – Across eight states in eight days, the naiton's winningest sola car team from the University of Michigan will defend its title next month in the American Solar Challenge that includes an overnight stop in its hometown.

The U-M student team is vying for its 7th first-place finish and fourth consecutive championship. The North American contest has been held roughly every other year since 1990, when U-M won the inaugural event with a car called Sunrunner.

This year, the team will race Quantum, its lightest-ever vehicle that finished third in the World Solar Challenge in Australia last fall.

Quantum weighs a full 200 pounds less than its most recen predecessor, and it is 30 percent more aerodynamic. The team of mostly undergraduates designs and builds a new car every two years.

The 1,650-mile American race starts in Rochester, N.Y. on Sunday, July 14 and ends in St. Paul, Minn.

Compared with previous routes, the path cuts through more cities and towns this time and organizers say this should lead to a closer and tighter contest. In 2010, U-M finished two hours before its nearest competitor.

"We will have to deal with more city traffic and complex navigation," said Caitlin Sadler, a master's student in the School of Natural Resources and Environment, as well as the team's public relations lead spokesperson.

Lower speed limits could constrain the cars below their capabilities. Quantum's average (but not top) speed in the World Solar Challenge was a robust 52 mph.

U-M could have an advantage there because it is the only one of the 18 registered teams racing a car that has previously competed in a cross-country solar race such as this one.