

Chrysler Matchmaker Event Strengthens Minority and Women Supplier Base

by Jim Stickford

While it's not exactly romantic, Chrysler has spent the last 13 years bringing people together.

In this case, the people are representatives of the various suppliers who do business with Chrysler.

Kevin Bell, senior manager – Chrysler's Global Sourcing and head of Diversity Supplier Development and Training, talked about the automaker's 14th annual Matchmaker event held Sept. 12 at Chrysler headquarters.

"We hope to achieve a couple of things at this Matchmaker event," Bell said. "We like to consider ourselves leaders with our supplier base and Matchmaker gives minorities, women and veterans the chance to meet up with Chrysler folks."

And, Bell said, it gives suppliers a chance to meet with other suppliers. Tier I companies, he said, need to get their materials from somewhere – why not a minority or female-owned firm?

"As the auto industry becomes increasingly global, the OEMs tend to use the bigger global suppliers," Bell said. "So an event like Matchmaker provides minority firms the chance to meet with

the larger global suppliers."

And, Bell said, they like to educate their suppliers on issues that affect them.

"The last couple of Matchmaker events before this one dealt with the question of funding," Bell said. "When the auto industry hit the skids a few years ago, credit really tightened up. So we invited banks, hedge funds and other institutions that provide funding to come and talk to our suppliers about how they could get credit."

That also had the advantage of

introducing financial institutions to potential new clients, Bell said. At this year's Matchmaker, they talked about the Affordable Care Act because it affects so many small businesses.

"We started a program we call Higher Focus three years ago," Bell said. "As we were coming out of the depths of the recession, we found that we were buying a lot less from minority firms. There were a couple of reasons for that.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



John Favorite of The Diez Group at Chrysler's Matchmaker event



2015 Chevrolet Suburban

New Styling on GM's SUVs Equates to a Quieter Ride

The day GM boasted that it controls 74 percent of the full-sized SUV market, the automaker announced several new full-sized SUVs coming in the 2015 model year.

Chevrolet introduced the 2015 Tahoe and Suburban – all-new versions of the its full-size SUVs – on Sept. 12 in New York.

A Chevrolet spokesman said the two new SUVs offer more functionality, greater refinement, new safety features and an increased range of advanced technologies to appeal to two distinct customer groups.

"There are several new fea-

tures and enhancements at the core of the all-new 2015 Suburban and Tahoe that will extend the legacy Chevrolet has built as the segment leader," said Tim Mahoney, Chevrolet global chief marketing officer. "Customers will experience greater refinement, efficiency and safety with the same capability that has made Chevrolet the go-to brand for full-size SUVs."

He said new styling advances the Tahoe and Suburban's design, which contributes to a quieter ride. A more-efficient, direct-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jeep Brings Back Cherokee Name With New 9-Speed Tranny, 2 Advanced Engines

The Cherokee name returns to the Jeep vehicle lineup in volume at dealerships for the 2014 model year in September.

Chrysler announced the move last week, with a spokesman adding that the 2014 Jeep Cherokee "completely redefines the mid-size SUV segment, delivering legendary Jeep 4x4 capability, a segment-first nine-speed automatic transmission, fuel economy improvements of more than 45 percent (versus the outgoing Liberty model), superior on-road ride and handling, a cutting-edge, revolutionary design, world-class craftsmanship, class-exclusive technology and more than 70 advanced safety and security features."

Mike Manley, president and CEO – Jeep Brand, said, "The all-new 2014 Jeep Cherokee will be the benchmark for mid-size SUVs with a new level of on-road driving dynamics and fuel economy, while at the same time improving the 4x4 capability that customers expect from Jeep."

"Jeep Cherokee boasts a new design, a nine-speed automatic transmission and two advanced engines, class-leading capability from three innovative 4x4 systems, more than 70 safety features, and a host of new technology features."

He said the 2014 Jeep Cherokee provides a choice of three innovative 4x4 systems for best-in-class 4x4 capability in all weather conditions. Manley said the Jeep Cherokee is the first mid-size SUV to feature rear-axle disconnect, resulting in reduced energy loss when 4x4 capability isn't needed, improving fuel effi-

ciency. The rear-axle disconnect seamlessly switches between two- and four-wheel drive for full-time torque management and does not require input from the driver.

And, it offers best-in-class V6 towing capability of 4,500 pounds, Manley said.

Chrysler stated in a press release that different Cherokee models come with different features. Available on the Cherokee Sport, Latitude and Limited models, Jeep Active Drive I features a single power transfer unit (PTU), which is fully automatic and delivers seamless operation in and out of four-wheel drive at any speed. The system does not require any driver intervention or feedback, delivers yaw correction during dynamic events and improves both understeer and oversteer conditions.

Available on the Cherokee Sport, Latitude and Limited models, Jeep Active Drive II includes a two-speed PTU with torque management and low range. 4-Low mode locks the front and rear drive shafts for low-speed power or towing. Low range provides a 2.92:1 gear reduction. The gear reduction allows for enhanced climbing ability as well as outstanding crawl ratios for severe off-road conditions.

All 4x4 systems feature the Jeep brand's Selec-Terrain traction control system, which allows the driver to choose the on- and off-road setting for optimum performance. Up to five customized settings are offered.

The 2014 Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk model with the standard off-road package is Trail Rated,

which indicates that the vehicle is designed to perform in a variety of challenging off-road conditions.

Powered by the choice of two new engines mated to a segment-first nine-speed automatic transmission, the Cherokee delivers power and fuel economy, according to the press release, with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



2014 Jeep Cherokee

Vari-Form Expands Operations to Europe

Hands across the water describes Vari-Form's recent joint venture.

To establish a manufacturing presence in Europe, the automotive supplier has signed a joint venture agreement with EMARC SpA of Piemonte, Italy.

In its public announcement, Vari-Form officials said the new agreement increases manufacturing footprints for Vari-Form in Europe and EMARC in North America.

Going forward, both companies will offer locally available advanced technologies – hydroforming, roll forming and aluminum stretch bending – for the benefit of automotive OE manufacturers and suppliers worldwide.

By creating infrastructure for making parts, this increased manufacturing footprint is a timely response to Vari-Form's recent business development successes.

Vari-Form, the North American participant, will focus on growing hydroforming business. EMARC, the Italian participant, will locate

a manufacturing operation in North America, expanding its roll forming and stretch bending business for steel and aluminum components.

The joint venture will also bring new lightweighting technologies to Europe and North America, offering proven solutions for reducing vehicle weight while maintaining superior structural performance, say Vari-Form officials.

According to the joint announcement, both companies manufacture parts with the gauge, form and strength needed to produce vehicles that deliver increased fuel efficiency.

Vari-Form, among other products, builds frame rails for the 2014 Corvette Stingray.

EMARC SpA, headquartered in Vinovo, in the Turin area of Italy, produces steel roll formed structure parts and aluminum and steel stretch-bent components and assemblies for the automotive and commercial vehicle industries.

The company has 13 production facilities located throughout

Europe, Asia and South America.

Vari-Form President Stephen Dow predicted great things ahead for the joint venture:

"The inherent advantages of the Vari-Form hydroforming and EMARC processes can now deliver significant benefits to carmakers."

"Each company will offer technologies within easy reach of automotive OEMs, delivering superior products to customers on these two continents."

Pietro Passone, founder and chairman of EMARC Group, stated, "This agreement represents an essential step forward in the growth plans of both companies. Global vehicle manufacturers can benefit from the technologies we offer."

"Experience has shown that, once our products and processes are integrated into the manufacturing plans of carmakers, everyone realizes a significant financial advantage."

Vari-Form is headquartered in Troy, with production facilities in Strathroy, Ontario; Reynosa, Mexico, and Liberty, Mo.