

Roush Adds Rob Stevens To Direct Strategy Policy

With nearly four decades of Ford Motor Company initiatives on his resume, Rob Stevens has accepted a position with Roush CleanTech.

As the new vice president of Strategy, Stevens will spearhead future product and customer strategy, said Roush CleanTech spokesperson Tracy Ruff.

Stevens brings expertise in engineering, product and business development, alternative fuel vehicles, and fleet operations to the company, Ruff said. He is also a long-time and aggressive advocate for clean transportation.

"I've spent years collaborating with customers to find the right vehicle for the right application," Stevens said. "In the alternative fuels space, Roush CleanTech offers an ideal scenario of product, customer and brand integrity.

"I plan to use my 37 years of engineering and fleet customer knowledge to bring about a greater change in clean vehicle usage."

Ruff said that as Ford's chief engineer, Stevens directed strategic planning and product development for Ford commercial vehicles, including the new Transit Connect (2010 North American Truck of the Year), E-Series vans, medium-duty and Super-Duty trucks, and commercial stripped chassis.

Ruff said that Stevens proved his leadership and commitment to alternative fuels as president and chief operating officer of Ford's TH!NK Mobility LLC.

In addition, said Ruff, Stevens influenced government leaders to modify zero-emissions vehicle requirements to obtainable levels, and launched three alternative fuel vehicle product lines.

Later, Ruff said, he initiated the reintroduction of alternative

fuels in Ford commercial trucks, developing Ford's qualified vehicle modifier (QVM) program for gaseous prep engines. Roush CleanTech is Ford's only QVM for propane autogas fuel systems.

"Roush CleanTech has experienced exceptional growth since its inception in 2010," said Joe Thompson, president of Roush CleanTech.

"Our investment strategy will continue to accelerate our market share by adding the vision that comes from the type of engineering and customer experience that Rob has. Adding a guy like Rob Stevens further complements the integrity of our growth plans."

Stevens will continue his role as a board member for NTEA's Green Truck Association, and will moderate an alternative fuels session at the National Truck Equipment Association (NTEA) Green Truck Summit on March 4 in Indianapolis.

Stevens holds a Bachelor of Arts in mechanical engineering



Rob Stevens

from Purdue University and an M.B.A. from the University of Detroit Mercy.

In addition to his knowledge under the hood, Stevens has experience behind the wheel, driving race cars professionally for 13 years, Ruff said.

Roush CleanTech is a division of Roush Enterprises based in Livonia. Its employees design, engineer, manufacture and install propane autogas fuel system technology for light- and medium-duty Ford commercial vehicles, and Blue Bird school buses.

SRT Viper: 'Collectible Car of Future'

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lb.-ft. of torque – the most torque of any naturally aspirated sports-car engine in the world, combines with reduction in curb weight to produce the best power-to-weight ratio of any Viper ever. Standard safety features include electronic multistage stability control, traction control and anti-lock brake system (ABS).

Two models of the iconic supercar, said Dodge spokesperson Dan Reid, are hand-built at the Conner Avenue Assembly Plant in Detroit – the Viper's home since 1995. Both SRT Viper and SRT Viper GTS models offer

interior and exterior designs incorporating premium materials and new exterior surfaces with aerodynamically functional details that are integrated into the high-tech carbon fiber and aluminum skin. On the inside, designers and engineers strived to rethink all its touch points and upgrade all its material appointments and technologies.

Paige Plant, who works for the NAHC, said previous award winners include in 2012 the Tesla. In 2011 it was the Chevy Volt. In 2010, it was the Chevy Camaro. But not all predictions are spot-on. The 1996 winner was the Sebring convertible.

Dealers Inundate Chrysler With Ram 1500 Orders

On the heels of EPA's certification of 28 mpg, Ram Truck opened the initial order allocation for the 2014 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel to receive a flood of orders from dealers across the nation.

More than 8,000 trucks equipped with an engine that packs 420 lb.-ft. of torque have been placed – a little more than 50 percent of the total mix of orders from dealers Ram received.

Even more surprising is the amount of orders already paid for by customers – twice the corporate average of sold customer orders on a truck that customers have yet to test drive.

"The Ram 1500 is the only half-ton truck available with a diesel, so we see this as incremental business by having the only truck that can offer best-in-class fuel economy of 28 mpg combined with 9,200 lbs. of towing capacity," said Reid Bigland, Chrysler's president and CEO of the Ram Truck Brand.

"It's every truck manufacturer's dream to have this kind of initial order demand for a product. Fuel economy is the number one request of half-ton buyers and the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel delivers without compromising capability."

When asked if Ram officials were surprised at the number of pre-orders of the EcoDiesel, Chrysler spokesman Nick Cappa had this to say.

"Are we surprised that people would commit to buying a vehicle sight-unseen without even taking one on a test drive?" Cappa said.

"I have to say yes. Our research has shown that the biggest unmet need of half-ton truck buyers is better fuel econo-

my. Ram has been able to get better fuel economy through improved powertrains and through the use of technology.

"That gives us the top two spots in fuel economy in the half-ton truck category.

"I think the EcoDiesel will be very popular with the public and I hope that the other truck manufacturers continue to have negative feelings about diesel half-ton pickups so that we have this market segment to ourselves."

The EcoDiesel-powered 2014 Ram 1500 has earned a 28 mpg rating from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the best highway-cycle test result ever achieved by a full-size, half-ton pickup, said Cappa. It also exceeds the EPA highway rating for the top-ranked small pickup, he said.

The breakthrough results mean Ram keeps the half-ton fuel economy record set last year by the 2013 Ram 1500, Cappa said. Equipped with a 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 gasoline engine, the truck earned 25 mpg highway, a rating that stands for model-year 2014. The Ram 1500 now owns the half-ton pickup segment's top two spots in the EPA's 2014 highway fuel-economy rankings, said Cappa.

Production of the 2014 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel began in February with a group of specialized trucks in popular configurations, Cappa said.

Normal processes place the initial build under quality review to assure every truck meets or exceeds targets.

Shipping to the dealerships is expected in March, keeping the planned delivery within the first quarter of 2014.

Fusion Hybrid Picks Up High Marks

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gines with big power and bigger fuel economy figures.

"All 2014 Fusion models offer stunning styling, a host of sophisticated electronic audio and communication options, and a sporty demeanor more commonly associated with Audi or VW than the big blue oval – all of which inspired us to name it one of the 10 Best Sedans Under \$25,000 for 2014."

KBB isn't the only major publication that likes the Fusion hybrid. U.S. News and World Report also named the Fusion hybrid as the best value in the "hybrid car" category of its "Best Cars for the Money 2014" awards.

The magazine editors wrote, "the 2014 Ford Fusion Hybrid ranks (number) one out of 22 'Affordable Midsize Cars.' This ranking is based on our analysis of published reviews and test drives of the Ford Fusion Hybrid, as well as reliability and safety data.

The magazine article continues, "Critics say the Ford Fusion Hybrid is a great mid-size hybrid, with exceptional fuel economy, a quiet powertrain and a spacious cabin. Because it has the best combination of positive reviews, price and long-term ownership costs in its class, we named the 2014 Ford Fusion Hybrid the 'Best Hybrid Car for the Money.'"

But Ford's honors didn't end with the Fusion hybrid. KBB also had great things to say about the Ford C-Max, which placed seventh on its list of top 10 hybrids under \$30,000.

inside and more stylish in many eyes.

"City/hwy/combined: 45/40/43 mpg (2013).

"When it comes to bragging rights, the Toyota Prius has long dominated the fuel-efficiency argument. However, the 2014 Ford C-Max is looking to change the debate by offering a hybrid with features that go beyond good mpg, namely style, comfort and a fun-to-drive attitude.

"Like the Prius, the C-Max is a 5-door hatchback that can comfortably fit four people, or with its seats folded haul loads of cargo. Because it's based on the Ford Focus, the C-Max is more driver-friendly than the Prius, offering a better ride, a quieter cabin and a more polished interior.

"While the Prius may have been first to the party, the 2014 Ford C-Max looks to be the kind of gate-crasher that isn't going to leave without a fight.

"If you're impressed by the good fuel economy a hybrid can deliver, but you don't want to sacrifice the comfy features yielded by so many non-hybrid cars, the 2014 Ford C-Max masterfully blends both desires into a single vehicle."

"This is great," said Amanda Zusman, Hybrid, Plug-in, Hybrid & Battery spokesperson for Ford. "I've been working on these vehicles for the last 18 months, and it's awesome to see them get credit from operations like KBB and U.S. News and World Report.

"We're proud of our hybrids and the fact that they offer our customers great fuel efficiency at great cost."

Zusman said that over the past 18 months, Ford has launched an entire line of hybrid and electric vehicles, which was quite a challenge for the company.

Seeing their hard work acknowledged by independent entities is "rewarding," she said.



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