

Truckinginfo

the web site of Heavy Duty Trucking magazine

No More Criticism of Competitors, Navistar's Hebe Says; MaxxForce 15 to be Dropped

September 25, 2012

SALT LAKE CITY - "Transparency" and "clarity" describe the new way that Navistar International's marketing efforts are operating, declared Jim Hebe, senior vice president for the company's North American sales operations.

He added that "you will never hear us say anything critical about a competitor."

Dealer sales people are being taught to recognize and acknowledge strong points in competitors' products and to sell against them, Hebe said.

"This is why they do what they do, and this is why we do what we do," is the approach sales people will take, he said.

Hebe spoke to trade press reporters at a Vocational Boot Camp being held this month for dealer principals and sales people at a motorsports park west of Salt Lake City, Utah.

One thing dealers won't be selling is the MaxxForce 15 engine, which Navistar is dropping in favor of the Cummins ISX 15 after recently signing a deal with Cummins to use its engines and aftertreatment products to meet federal emissions standards.



'On the Right Track'

More than 700 dealer personnel will have traveled to the site when the program ends on Friday, Navistar staff said. Sales people are getting presentations on Navistar and competitor vehicles, engines and other components, and are driving International and competitor trucks on specially prepared off-road courses.

Hebe was once one of the firm's most outspoken critics of competitors' selective catalytic reduction method of controlling exhaust emissions and a determined defender of Navistar's go-it-alone approach with its non-SCR strategy. But he said his company is "now on the right track for emissions strategy" with the SCR equipment it will buy from Cummins Inc.

"We're going to be open about where we're going," he said. "You're going to see a lot of clarity from us."

Dealers love this approach because they see a clear path for their and the company's success. And, Hebe said, "dealers wanted the noise to go away."

The SCR strategy follows a major management shakeup in July that was prompted by investors unhappy with their shares' shrinking value and the firm's financial losses in the last several quarters.

New executives were named to head the company, and its CEO, Daniel Ustian, announced his retirement. Ustian had doggedly pursued meeting EPA 2010 regulations with Navistar's In-Cylinder Technology, which wasn't meeting absolute federal limits, at least not in time to avoid payment of serious penalties to the EPA.

Navistar and Cummins

At the boot camp, Navistar is showing off its complete range of vocational trucks, from Class 5 through Class 8, and pointing out that Navistar and its predecessor, International Harvester, have been building vocational trucks for 95 years.

Navistar and suppliers' components are being featured, as are Cummins engines, including the ISX15 diesel and natural gas-powered Cummins Westport ISL-G and ISX12-G.

Navistar will begin offering the ISX15 in several International heavy truck models early next year, and begin applying equipment from Cummins Emissions Solutions.

Cummins' ISX15 will take over the heavier end of the segment in Internationals and Navistar's own MaxxForce 15 will be discontinued, Hebe said in response to a question from HDT.

"It's a shame," Hebe said. "It's a great engine. But we can't support it. Volumes are too small, and we have to develop SCR on all our other engines." The MaxxForce 15 will go out of production by the end of next year's first quarter.

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