

A Commitment to Community

An Interview with James E. Taylor,
Chief Executive Officer, HUMMER Division, General Motors Corporation

EDITORS' NOTE James Taylor was appointed Chief Executive Officer, HUMMER, in October 2008. He was previously the General Manager, Cadillac Division. Prior to this, Taylor progressed through various global production and purchasing leadership positions with the company, including Vehicle Line Executive for General Motors' (GM) rear- and all-wheel-drive luxury cars, and management positions at Saturn, Adam Opel, and General Motors Truck. Taylor began his GM career in 1980 with GM of Canada Limited in Oshawa, Ontario, as an industrial engineer. Taylor graduated from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 1980 with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering. He is active in children's charities, including the Band of Angels Foundation, which helps children with Down syndrome.



James E. Taylor

COMPANY BRIEF General Motors Corporation (NYSE: GM), one of the world's largest automakers, was founded in 1908, and today manufactures cars and trucks in 34 countries. With its global headquarters in Detroit, GM employs 252,000 people in every major region of the world, and sells and services vehicles in some 140 countries. In 2008, GM sold 8.35 million cars and trucks globally under the following brands: Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC, GM Daewoo, Holden, Hummer, Opel, Pontiac, Saab, Saturn, Vauxhall, and Wuling.

How much of a focus has corporate social responsibility [CSR] been for GM and its brands, and have you seen a heavy emphasis on that as a key part of the culture of the brand?

We are responsible to the markets that we service and the communities in which we live, work, and play. There's also the greater responsibility to global social interests, and these are targeted through a focus on energy, environment, education, safety, diversity, and health care. In the area of environmental responsibility, our efforts include alternative fuels, plug-in hybrids, internal combustion engine improvements, and hydrogen fuel cells. It also includes reducing the amount of waste and emissions from our plants. We also maintain a commitment to follow a worldwide set of environmental standards,

regardless of where our facilities are located.

In terms of safety, our head of manufacturing, Gary Cowger, took this on with a huge passion several years ago. Safety in our plants and with our employees is taken very seriously, and we have a phenomenal track record to support that.

The health care category probably gets the most personal involvement because each of the senior executives is aligned with certain high-profile causes to channel GM spending to the right organizations. There isn't a weekend that goes by where we, despite being in an industry that's facing huge financial challenges, aren't at a charity fund-raising event personally supporting these worthwhile causes. While we have to be very careful where we spend money due to the tough financial times, it's still phenomenal to witness how active and dedicated our leadership remains.

When you look at those issues, such as education and the environment, is it important that the individual brands follow suit with those categories, or does each brand look within to determine what the employees are interested in?

For those big picture items, we have the GM Foundation dedicated to making sure we appropriately support those major national and global initiatives. When it comes to the brands, however, we have the freedom to engage the charities and organizations that make sense for us. At the community level, for instance, a manufacturing plant that is the largest employer in town might be sponsoring the Boys and Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, or another local cause. In the end, it is up to the brand and site leaders to decide how to focus on something that is important to them. In my case, at Cadillac, we focused on children's charities. I have some close friends who have children in need of special care, so I've tried to align myself with national autism societies and with the Band of Angels Foundation, which is for children with Down syndrome. We've been able to make a very large impact with a small amount of money.

As you lead HUMMER, do you foresee much of that charity work continuing for that brand, or do you see a shift when you look at those efforts?

For HUMMER's brand positioning and



the actual vehicle, it's about unparalleled performance. One of the primary receivers of HUMMER's charitable contributions has been the American Red Cross. HUMMER has committed to donate 72 disaster response vehicles and significant financial support by 2010 to support the Red Cross emergency response capability around the country. It's a good deed, and it gains high exposure for HUMMER, demonstrating how its vehicles are helping out in a lot of circumstances where normal vehicles can't.

We also are committed to environmental stewardship and education. People who buy HUMMERs enjoy the outdoors and go places they can't get to in normal vehicles. Many of these people are serious hunters, fishers, and hikers, so they're environmentally conscious. In fact, many of them feel a high amount of social responsibility to keep the environment undisturbed. In that regard, we established an environmental stewardship program called Recreation Rescue with Tread Lightly!, which is a national nonprofit program that is dedicated to protect recreation access and opportunities in the outdoors through education and stewardship initiatives. The Recreation Rescue initiative specifically targets outdoor rehabilitation projects. It's volunteer based, so local off-road clubs, and HUMMER owners and dealers, go out on weekends and work with the park rangers to maintain trails in national forests and parks. This is aligned directly with HUMMER's positioning and brand.

How critical is it that the emphasis on CSR comes from the top and feeds throughout the company? Do you really need the involvement of senior management?

CSR is elective and involves variable costs and personal time, including a lot of weekend and nighttime work; this is on top of our normal job. So if people are doing it, it's because they believe in it and care, and it's important. It is a priority or else it wouldn't fit in. So when the people at the top are involved, they set a tone and an example for everyone in the company. The employees draw their conclusions of what's important from leadership by how the leaders act, not by what's written on some corporate Web site. ●

General Motors is as committed to the health of even the tiniest HUMMER owners as it is to the rest of society.