

FOCUSONSUCCESS2010

■ ADVERTORIAL PROFILE

100% electric trucks a first in Canada

No emissions, no noise, no fumes

Novex Courier: A cleaner choice for your deliveries

Being in the top five players in the local same-day delivery business would be enough for some companies; but not for Novex. A recognized leader in innovation and environmental awareness, Novex continues to excel where others merely dabble.

"We cater to urgent or pressing needs of businesses," says Ken Johnston, president and founding partner of Novex. "If you need to move something quickly, Novex is there, from Chilliwack to Whistler."

With its full complement of bicycle couriers, small vehicles, vans and trucks—from one-to-five-tons—Novex makes over 2,000 deliveries a day between its 95 vehicles and drivers, supported by 20 inside workers.

And that has a significant impact on the environment, says Johnston, so Novex decided to make a difference.

"The sustainability world is constantly changing. We are all still learning," he says. We went to Kansas City to see the electric trucks, and in June, imported two into Canada—a nationwide first.

"They have zero emissions. They are the first two electric delivery trucks in Canada. Made by Smith Electric, we have two three-ton 100 per cent electric delivery trucks on the road as of June 24th," he says, adding that U.S. President Obama recently toured the Kansas City, Missouri Smith Electric Vehicles plant, commenting that energy investments such as these electric trucks create new employment opportunities.

They operate pretty much like your cell phone. You plug in a truck, charge it (it takes six-to-eight hours for a full charge, typically done overnight) then unplug and start driving.



Community involvement is always important. Here, Mr. Novex leads a Smith Electric truck on the Canada Day parade.

"They get 193 kilometres on a full charge. We have charger stations in Richmond and Burnaby and are working with BC Hydro which will ultimately put charger stations around town, much like new gas stations."

With a top speed of 80 KPH, the trucks are ideal for city driving conditions. Novex partnered with Transport Canada to test these vehicles. Johnston is hopeful that as the trucks' costs come down and battery technology improves, he will see more of them on the road here in Canada. It's a technology that has been in use in England for eighty years.

"They have a really good application in B.C. with its source of hydro power," he says.

The electric trucks are just one aspect of Novex's strategy to continue to be the best local courier company while removing its footprint on the planet.

"We're committed to the environment; to sustainability. We've been a leader in this field since 2003, when we were part of a small sustainability-focused group of companies determined to make a difference," says Johnston. "Sustainability is part of our culture."

Novex invested heavily in its green footprint. In addition to the electric trucks, the company achieved its ISO 14001 certification, an environmental management standard, and has since re-qualified for certification, proving its commitment to Mother Nature.

"We've been carbon neutral the last four years," says Johnston, saying that while Novex has definitely reduced its GHG emissions, it also buys B.C. business-based carbon offsets Through Offsetters so the company can see where its dollars are making a difference here at home.

"We've changed all our practices including purchasing. We have zero waste in our office and we post our sustainable practices on the Web. A lot of transportation companies claim they've gone green but they have

yet to make the financial or emotional commitment to sustainability."

That commitment includes putting the first set of hybrid delivery vehicles on the road in 2003; today Novex has 20 on the road. Novex is the only delivery company to partner with the City of Vancouver with Nissan's new LEAF vehicle which is expected in 2011.

By changing the way Novex does business, says CEO Robert Safrata, the company has a better understanding of the environment and sustainability practices and it becomes a partner in showing care and respect for its customers.

"We have more hybrids than any other same day service. We maximize our use of cyclists, but in our freight division, what are our options? We analyzed

the clean options for freight and couldn't think of anything that comes even close to electric trucks."

There are a few great advantages, he says. The obvious is the incredible reduction in CO2 emissions. Another is noise reduction.

"These things are silent. For early morning and late night deliveries, people don't want to hear the noise," says Safrata.

He says that 38 per cent of pollution (a typical figure quoted globally) comes from tailpipe emissions. If electric trucks are used for deliveries, that emission is eliminated.

"The corner of Howe and Georgia can be as nice as being on the beach, quieter and clean air. The link is direct."

The environment isn't the only area where Novex provides shining leadership. Johnston will tell you that the company's key strength is its ability to communicate with customers. When the company introduced online scheduling and ordering, about 70 per cent of customer orders diverted from the telephone and onto the Web.

"Our call takers shifted jobs from punching in details to being proactive. They call customers if they think there could be a delivery delay, and find workable solutions before a problem is created. Our on-time average is 97 per cent. It's really good, in the top echelon of service

levels," says Johnston.

Competitive pricing, of course, is standard at Novex, but when combined with high service levels, the company is offering an outstanding end-product.

"It's the ability to talk to people directly," he says, about the Novex difference. "You can talk to anyone in the company. Someone will help you and deal with you immediately."

Johnston says that Novex is already well along the path to being a totally green, sustainable business. Zero waste in the office and zero emissions, through reduction of GHG emissions coupled with purchasing carbon offsets, is a huge first step.

"We all have to address our carbon footprints," says Johnston. "Companies using Novex can note this as part of their own sustainability reporting in their financial documents. Every time they engage us, their carbon footprint goes down. Our morale here at the company is fantastic. Everyone participates in our green programs and we have fun with it. And, at the end of the day, business, and therefore sustainability, has to be profitable so we can pay our drivers and staff."

"Sustainability is about people, planet and profit. It's the way we think, the way we make investment and it's what our commitment is. It's the right thing to do," says Johnston. "It's that simple." ◆



International validation: U.S. President Obama at the Smith Electric Vehicles plant in Kansas City



Robert Safrata, CEO, and Ken Johnston, President, in front of the new trucks