

Is there a 'Silver Lining' for the Military Vehicles Industry during Sequestration?



In an new era of shrinking budgets (brought on swiftly by sequestration), making more out of less requires new strategies to be efficient and effective in developing products that supply the warfighters with the tools they need to achieve their mission. IDGA asked Jayson Pankin, President & CEO at AutoHarvest Foundation, his thoughts on the current state of this industry...

Explore the 'silver lining' of the sequestration – how has this challenged the status quo for OEMs, corporations, laboratories, etc....

Taking a cue from the Great Recession which changed America's automotive industry and supply chain, and in many ways created efficiency, sequestration is an equivalent economic tightening of the belt and potentially will motivate Federal Organizations to embrace new methods to "do more with less". Social media providers have the potential to make new friends and establish new customers in the federal government assuming their value proposition translates to actionable relationships that drive innovation.

The proliferation of research and development dollars on the planet has created pockets of innovation that are disbursed across the planet. Tomorrow products will be developed by companies that are more agile in discovering synergistic technologies and collaborating in creative ways. Examine how this applies to the military vehicles industry....

DoD programs such as forge.mil are in the military's own words "transforming the way DOD innovates IT". Crowdsourcing, Open Innovation network such as AutoHarvest are ways to create an always on, everywhere clearinghouse of information, ideas, and talent that can form ad hoc collaborations to solve problems. The reality is that tomorrow's products are increasingly developed with intellectual property sourced from thousands of diverse and dispersed organizations, public and private, large and small.

Whether you are trying to move the benchmark on vehicle's performance as safe, green, connected or ability to project and support force, the myriad of enabling systems are numerous and will incorporate products and technology developed by many unlikely companies and innovators. One only has to look at the widespread use of the tablet made popular by Apple to understand how enormous the potential is to team up with unlikely partners. Casting a wide net, having tailored communication tools to enable "speed dating" and offering a direct private line of site to opportunities is the heart of the AutoHarvest system. This allows product development teams to proactively and reactively touch more organizations, instantly regardless of location. It helps breakdown the initial barriers to that critical first conversation, which by today's competitive nature must be direct, quick and private.

How can the military armored vehicles industry benefit from the utilization of social media – how has Autoharvest thrived in this space?

Military organizations are charged with accelerating the adoption of innovation to advance the capabilities of the warfighter and provide to the economy access to dual use commercialization of

federally developed technologies. In addition, military organizations through programs such as the SBIR/STTR research award program support and work with thousands of American small businesses that are technology innovators. AutoHarvest has been able to establish itself as a new and potentially powerful tool that allows the military organization to acquire solutions to their myriad needs, identify partners to pursue dual use commercialization of approved military technologies and support the small businesses under the SBIR program. Today a range of opportunities are being made available to the global ecosystem to contribute to these technology pursuits.

Tell us about the aims of Autoharvest in moving the automotive industry into the future – how do you aim to become the ‘amazon of innovation’?

AutoHarvest observed and learned during its design and beta stages how innovation works today and what is needed to become a 21st Century Innovation tool that delivers results. The concept of being an Amazon or the earlier rendition of Sears, is to be the one-stop shop for innovators and commercializers seeking principally two assets: 1) Powerful knowledge based tools and 2) IP Opportunities to buy/sell/collaborate.

Regarding the knowledge based tools, we have reacted by creating a curated Innovation Hub. We realized that a number of groups, large like the United States Patent Office and small like KTMine have developed and provide access to important databases. Other groups provide software, content and services. Combining these resource providers in a virtual space, provides another marketing channel for these resources while offering our members access to vetted providers having relevance to advanced manufacturing. The heart of our system is the IP Opportunities Marketplace which enables individual groups, large and small, to have the same visibility in our marketplace to attract potential partners to IP opportunities in an always on marketplace. We empower innovators and commercializers to represent who they are and what they have to offer. It is up to those groups to find each other and determine if there is a fit. The impact of allowing thousands of groups to "smart-connect" will help drive the adoption of technology in the automotive and other sectors of advanced manufacturing. We expect the impact to be significant and result in faster and more diverse adoption of technology providing consumers, public and private with better products and services.

Embracing social media tools is a strategy being pursued by federal agencies to enhance outreach and develop new commercial relationships. Often, an agency will use the conventional means of Biz Ops and press releases and then create a Facebook page or enhance their website. Today a number of Federal agencies, including the DOE, EPA, DOD, DHS and USPTO have established a presence on the AutoHarvest member website to bring to the attention of our inclusive, global ecosystem of advanced manufacturing professionals, opportunities to acquire or sell Intellectual Property and related products to the Federal Agency. In addition, Federal Agencies have started to post information regarding highly sophisticated Federally managed laboratories that under certain conditions could be made available to entrepreneurs, SMEs and large corporations. We expect this trend to grow exponentially as the payoff accrues to those that participate in an Open Innovation marketplace, such as AutoHarvest. The laboratories and Federal Agencies include those outside the United States, such as Canada, France and Germany.