

Customer Success Story: Challenger Group of Companies

Market Served
Vehicle/Transportation



UltraShift® PLUS LSE is up for the challenge

Location:

Cambridge, Ontario, Canada

Segment:

Linehaul

Challenges:

Driver retention and fuel economy

Solution:

Eaton's UltraShift PLUS LSE transmissions

Results:

Improved fuel efficiency and increased driver comfort

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"I was very impressed with the latest generation of UltraShift PLUS. [I] loved it and it really showed me that Eaton has done its homework as far as hitting the sweet spots and creating the right shift points. And the smoothness and transitions are great."

*Dan Einwechter, Owner,
Challenger Group of Companies*

Background

Between socializing, studying and attending classes, most university students have little time for extracurricular activities. But Dan Einwechter did (some 40 years ago) while a sophomore at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.

That's when Einwechter started the Challenger Group of Companies. "I felt it was a good way to make great money," he concluded one morning. That turned out to be a very good decision.

With corporate headquarters in Cambridge, Ontario, the company today operates approximately 1,500 heavy-duty trucks throughout all of North America and employs more than 1,800 people. Additional locations are in Dorval, Quebec, and Aldergrove, British Columbia.

The group includes Challenger Motor Freight for short, medium and long-distance truckload hauling; Elgin Motor Freight for regional hauls; Challenger Climate for temperature controlled shipments; Challenger Bulk for waste haulage; and several other groups for heavy loads, warehousing, logistics and international shipping. And every one of these operations are profitable.

Challenge

Companies that are successful typically have a lengthy list of competitors biting at their heels. Fortunately Einwechter, who had enough drive early on to also earn a bachelor's degree in Business Administration while attending the university, is well schooled in dealing with his rivals.

"A buddy of mine once told me that anyone with a paper route is my competition," says Einwechter. "That wasn't too much of an exaggeration, so now you need to have deep offerings for your customers in order to succeed."

To help ensure his offerings are plenty deep, Einwechter employs a business philosophy that centers on always adhering to what he described as a three-part matrix. "If we take care of our people, who take care of our customers, we will profit," says the owner of one of the largest private fleets in Canada.

The vast majority of those people (about 1,500) are Challenger drivers. "We treat our drivers with respect and dignity and give them work assignments that they are proud to do," adds Einwechter.

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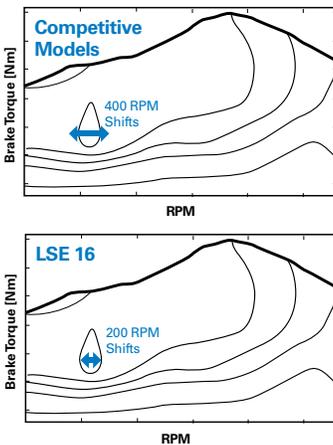
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He also makes sure they are provided with the very best trucks available. He runs a variety of nameplates, including Freightliner, Volvo, Kenworth, Peterbilt and Navistar. A recent delivery of ten new Navistar International tractors are equipped with Eaton's UltraShift *PLUS* LSE (Linehaul Small-Step Efficiency) automated transmissions.

Solution

The new family of UltraShift *PLUS* transmissions, which were introduced in 2013, was designed specifically for Navistar to maximize fuel efficiency in linehaul applications. Jointly developed by the two companies, the new 16-speed direct drive automated mechanical transmissions are designed with a small, 17 percent step between gears to optimize time in a diesel engine's most efficient RPM zone ("sweet spot") and help reduce fuel consumption.



Small percentage steps between gears optimizes time in fuel "sweet spot".

The new UltraShift *PLUS* LSE transmission has 16 forward gears and two reverse gears, and an overall ratio of 14.40. The standard warranty is 5-year/750,000 miles for the transmission and 3-year/350,000 miles for the clutch.

Additional UltraShift *PLUS* features include:

- Fully automated two-pedal design (no clutch pedal);
- Safety features including auto neutral and intelligent Hill Start Aid, which prevents roll-back and roll-forward while launching on grades using foundation wheel brakes;
- Automatic, manual and low modes offering drivers full control, and;
- Creep mode allowing the vehicle to be driven at a constant speed (an optional feature that can be enabled if desired).

All UltraShift *PLUS* transmissions use an Electronic Clutch Actuator to provide faster shifting and smoother engagement. The clutch is fully engaged at idle, giving the driver ultimate control in challenging situations such as parking lots, loading docks and other tight spaces – features that have not been lost on those Challenger drivers lucky enough to be assigned the new vehicles.

Result

"Our drivers very much like the new Eaton transmissions," adds Einwechter. "They are saying things like 'wow I really like those.' That's because they feel less fatigue when driving in traffic, they can keep both hands on the steering wheel, and they can control the vehicle better because they do not have to focus on shifting."



Eaton UltraShift® *PLUS* LSE Transmission

Einwechter, who was driving trucks with a license at the age of sixteen (apparently high school wasn't a career distraction either), is equally impressed with the transmissions after taking a firsthand look during a recent 400-mile test drive.

"I was very impressed with the latest generation of UltraShift *PLUS*," says Einwechter. "Loved it and it really showed me that Eaton has done its homework as far as hitting the sweet spots and creating the right shift points. And the smoothness and transitions are great."

He also believes the automated transmissions make for an overall safer vehicle.

"Largely because of the safety factor, I have been a proponent for a long time," says Einwechter, who has been spec'ing the automated transmissions since they debuted in 2009 and now has close to 500 in his fleet.

He's also been doing some arithmetic to ensure the transmissions are giving him the best possible fuel consumption.

"I would say that for a bad driver, the transmissions definitely show improvements," adds Einwechter. "For the average driver, we are seeing smaller improvements, while the really good drivers are matching the transmissions in term of fuel consumption. So for a fleet of our magnitude, we definitely come out a winner."

Eaton testing has shown fuel economy improvements of two to four percent compared to an UltraShift *PLUS* LAS 10-speed transmission.

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