



Kenworth and T680 Help Bosnian Brothers Achieve The American Dream

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Brothers Damir and Jasmin Vidinlic are living the American dream. As owners of Sweet Express LLC, a successful cargo and freight company headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, they have grown the company from one truck to more than 330 – with Kenworth T680s equipped with 76-inch sleepers making up the bulk of the fleet.



Damir Vidinlic of Sweet Express

But this isn't just any buy a truck and go to work story. In fact, it wasn't long before starting the business that Damir, admittedly, didn't know a truck from a trailer.

Damir and Jasmin emigrated with their parents from their home country, then called Yugoslavia, to escape the Bosnian War in 1996. The parents worked hard to put Damir through Grand Valley State University, where he earned a mechanical engineering degree. Jasmin found work as a truck driver and before long decided to go into business for himself — and brought his brother along for the ride.

"My brother is extremely street smart and I'm book smart – I always trust my brother's instincts," Damir said.



The brothers founded Sweet Express (named for the chocolate bar one of them was snacking on at the time) in 2003 with Jasmin driving a used truck and Damir working round the clock to learn everything he could about the trucking industry. With money tight, Sweet Express expanded their service by teaming with area owner-operators – many of whom were also transplants from Eastern Europe.

In 2009, this hard-running, scrappy group at Sweet Express made the bold move to acquire Michigan-based Omni Transport, which added company-trucks and a solid book of business. As Sweet Express picked up more and more customers, upgrading to new equipment became a necessity to ensure dependability and driver satisfaction.



The Sweet Express fleet now totals 334 Kenworths, including 264 T680 models, purchased through Michigan Kenworth – Grand Rapids. There was a bit more to picking that make and model than just throwing a dart at pictures of different trucks.

"When we surveyed our drivers and mechanics about their preference, the Kenworth T680 won by a huge margin," Damir says.

"To be honest, the T680 is a good looking truck with great aerodynamics – it speaks for itself," added Shop Manager Sanel Cinac.

"Our new T680s get better fuel mileage and driver satisfaction is way up there. There's also the high level of customer support for which Kenworth is known," Damir said. "It was the perfect decision to go with the T680 as our fleet truck."

Sweet Express has made its name in general commodity service and expedited trucking. They serve a wide spectrum of industries including automotive, industrial and consumer goods, and also transport specialized payload, like industrial robots. The majority of their lanes are within Michigan, Pennsylvania and Texas, with terminals in Flint and Greenville, but they'll travel wherever the job requires. "We tried to go to Hawaii. But they wouldn't let us go," Damir said with a laugh.

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Sweet Express specs its trucks for driver comfort. The fleet is split down the middle between manual and automated transmissions. The common denominator among the Kenworth T680 76-inch sleepers are the liftable lower bunk and stowable upper bunk. Damir points out that, even if drivers are going solo, the double bunk is indispensable as one level can be used for convenient storage. Higher end Kenworth GT702 highback driver and passenger seats with air-ride suspension, plus amenities like televisions and refrigerators, help maintain a comfortable environment for drivers.



Resale value was another important factor in choosing Kenworth. When it comes time to rotate trucks out of the lineup, Sweet Express offers them first to their own drivers. "If they become an owner-operator, we want to make sure they have the best chance to be successful. We've done that 35-40 times, and the drivers are happy and still driving those trucks," Damir said.

According to Damir, having an all-Kenworth fleet is also a valuable sales tool for the company.

"Especially in Western Michigan, when somebody sees a white Kenworth, they automatically know it's Sweet Express. When I meet with new customers, many times they will ask me why we went with Kenworth. I tell them, 'because we want to have the most dependable equipment,'" Damir said. "The key to keeping customers happy is decreasing downtime. We have a 95 percent on time record, and we can provide that because of owning and operating Kenworth trucks." Trucks that in Damir's opinion are, "One hundred percent American."



Adding the stars and stripes to the Sweet Express logo was a show of respect and pride for the country Damir and Jasmin now call home. "This country has given us so much and we do everything we can to give back," Damir said.

"Our goal from the beginning was to combine two different cultures — Americana and Bosnian, so that we can benefit from the best attributes of those peoples," Damir added. "Everybody anywhere wants to come to the U.S. because it's the only country you can go to where if you work hard and give everything you have, you can be successful.

"It's been a very challenging journey and we can never forget that Kenworth has helped us to be where we are today," he concluded.



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