Although overall U.S. lubricant consumption has declined since 2006, the demand for synthetic lubricants continues growing, even throughout a worldwide recession. For example, while synthetic motor oil represented 5 percent of the motor oil market in 2005, it now accounts for 7.9 percent. Leading industry research company The Freedonia Group Inc. projects 7.3 percent annual growth for sales of synthetic motor oil through 2013 (Fig. 1) and 6.3 percent growth for synthetic hydraulic and transmission fluids (Fig. 2). A new study by Kline & Co., meanwhile, indicates synthetics’ share of the global lubricants market will hit 12.5 percent by 2019.

Numerous Factors Behind Growth
The factors driving this growth can be traced to multiple sources, most notably the decision by original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to install synthetic motor oil as the factory fill in mass-marketed vehicles in addition to high-performance models. Industry organizations and automakers continue introducing tougher motor oil standards best suited for synthetics, while aggressive advertising has convinced more motorists to begin using synthetics for their service fills. Due in part to the hard work of AMSOIL and its legion of Dealers over the past 40 years, synthetic lubricants have become the primary choice of an increasing number of OEMs and motorists.

OEMs Opting for Synthetics
Straight from the Factory
Not long ago, only high-performance cars subjected to increased power and operating temperatures like Corvettes and Ferraris left the factory filled with synthetic motor oil. Their owner’s manuals also recommended use of synthetics for service fills. Today, however, compact cars, family sedans, and other common vehicles are experiencing driving conditions nearly as harsh. To increase fuel economy, OEMs continue equipping many vehicles with the sophisticated fuel injection technologies and turbochargers once reserved for high-end cars. Vehicles are also receiving more aerodynamic designs, often requiring smaller engine compartments and smaller oil sumps. This reduces the amount of oil available to neutralize an increased level of contaminants. Coupled with higher operating temperatures, conventional oils in these environments quickly break down, leaving engines and turbos susceptible to wear and decreased life. In addition, most recent-model trucks and SUVs come with synthetic gear lube installed.
Drain Intervals Growing Longer
With an eye toward maximum customer convenience and reduced environmental impact, many vehicle manufacturers are increasing recommended oil drain intervals on newer vehicles. This allows for far fewer oil changes, saving time and money for drivers. The trend toward longer drain intervals is best suited to synthetic motor oils, which are highly valued for their performance in synthetic blends. This helps reduce labor costs for auto shops and is a major benefit for vehicle owners.

Increased Marketing Efforts
Major oil companies are recognizing the importance of synthetic oils, especially in the US market. As a result, many are increasing their marketing efforts. This includes spending on advertising and promotions to reach potential customers. The demand for synthetic motor oil continues to grow as consumers seek products that meet their specific needs.

More Stringent Industry Specifications
The industry is increasingly responsive to new engine technologies. In recognition of these advances, many organizations have tightened up their specifications. This means that motor oils must meet stringent standards to ensure compatibility and performance. It's important for consumers to choose products that meet these high standards to avoid any issues with their vehicles.

Manufacturer Specs Even Tougher
Some manufacturers are implementing more stringent specifications for oils. For example, Volkswagen requires oils that meet their own specifications, which are more stringent than ILSAC specifications. This requires producers to develop oils that can meet these higher standards, which can increase costs. However, it also ensures that engines receive proper lubrication and protection.

Strong Future
Market forces will continue to favor synthetic lubricants going forward. The number of applications that significantly benefit from their increased performance and reduced maintenance are being placed on industrial gearboxes, hydraulic systems, compressors, and more. Meaning, synths will continue their pattern of strong growth in the years ahead.