

What others are saying

Volkswagen asked stakeholders what they think about the scandal. The Group will intensify its stakeholder dialogue in future, both in person and online.

Collected by — Sibel Şen



Wolf-Dietrich Warncke, 53, and his brother Peter run a car dealership in Tarmstedt in Lower Saxony that has been owned by their family for three generations. They have had a dealership contract with VW for over 60 years.

At the beginning, VW completely underestimated the scandal.

The management now knows how serious it is, but the lack of transparency remains a huge issue. The company is just at the start of a long process of coming to terms with the affair. It's not just the car industry that is suffering the consequences, but Germany as a business location overall. The "German engineering" seal of quality has been damaged. The main problem I see in the Group is one of governance – for which the old guard is responsible. VW should replace them, whether they're guilty or not, to win back the trust of investors. Only with new faces at the top can the Group make a fresh start. In addition, the company is being torn apart by different stakeholder interests. The conflict can only be resolved if everyone pulls together. Despite all this, VW is strong. The scandal is a great opportunity for it to take radical action and finally tackle its own weaknesses.

“They need a fresh start.”



Ingo Speich, 39, is a portfolio manager at Union Investment, where he is responsible for sustainable investments and active shareholder engagement. There were no VW shares in Speich's sustainability funds even before the crisis, because the company lagged behind the competition in internal ratings.

“VW needs a new culture.”

When I first heard about the accusations, I thought: that can't be true. We knew VW as a reliable company with a conscience. Today we know that others were also cheating and that it was easy for them all to do it, at least in Germany. The authorities allowed manufacturers to carry out their own testing and approval processes. The ministry has done little so far to shed light on the scandal. For me, one thing is clear: VW broke the law and that shook my trust in them. As a dealer, I have to explain the affair to customers. In our case, these are mainly private customers who are now choosing to wait before buying a new car. The fact that board members are approving bonus payments for themselves in this situation angered us as much as it did our customers. Going forward, I expect VW to take the scandal as an opportunity to rethink what it's doing – and to fully commit itself to a new culture, to researching alternative drive-train technologies and mobility concepts, instead of just waiting until the public storm blows over.



William K. Reilly, 76, led the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) between 1989 and 1993. In 2010 President Barack Obama appointed him co-chair of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling.

Nearly all my customers work for VW and come in for a beer or a coffee after their shift. I have close ties to the company, so I'm affected by the scandal. I can't understand what was driving those responsible. Probably greed. Whether we'll ever really learn who was to blame, I don't know, but of course I'd like to find out. I was worried that my business would suffer. After all, a lot of my customers are unsettled. I see it every day. The young people, in particular, are worried about their future. At first, they were all deeply disappointed – especially in the management. Now most of them have calmed down. Almost no one talks about the emissions scandal in here anymore. Their morale has improved since the company started moving. Maybe it was a lesson to everyone. When I first started here in the 1970s, there was a period of depression. Back then it was new models like the Scirocco and Polo that brought a change in the mood. Now I can feel the momentum building again for good times. Dr. Hahn used to walk through the production halls and shake hands with the people working on the line. VW needs to become VW again. That's what I'd like to see.

“VW needs to become VW again.”



Bruno Corigliano, 64, has been running the Tunnelschänke pub in Wolfsburg, near the “Tor 17” factory entrance, for 20 years. He himself worked for Volkswagen from 1973 to 1983.

“If you do not change, you need to leave”

The most critical thing for VW now is to demonstrate a change in culture – the culture that has led to the crisis in the first place. It has to begin at the top and permeate throughout the organization. Not only have these changes to be implemented, but also to be communicated externally in a credible fashion. Real changes are the crucial element in a crisis of this scope. It will not work without the will to change in every single position or department. The clear message has to be: If you are unwilling to change, you need to leave. As an observer I expect the executives responsible to be dismissed. Companies in post crisis situations often hire prominent consulting firms to lead the initiative of culture change. It never works. The job has to be done within the management, internally integrated with day to day operations by the managers of those operations. Furthermore, VW has to implement the agreed compensations for the environmental damage done. In any case, I recommend to focus on what VW knows to do best – that is, engineering.

Peter Mock, 35, is Europe Managing Director of the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) in Berlin, a non-profit, independent research organization. When he and his team in the US investigated the emissions of German vehicles, they discovered Volkswagen's illegal defeat device.



Everyone in Wolfsburg is connected to VW – whether they work here or not. We were all shocked when we heard about the deception. Right away, I thought: didn't anyone see what this was going to cost us? And how much it would damage the company's image? VW has overcome crises before, but this one is bigger. Lots of my colleagues are still angry, but they identify strongly with the company. They know what they've got here – for example, a say in decision-making and good career prospects. Things have to keep going for all our sakes. The vast majority of the workforce had nothing to do with the rigging. I expect those who were to blame to take responsibility. That's the only way we can win back public trust. To make sure that nothing like this happens again, we need a new corporate and leadership culture. Everyone should be able to think about their work and ask questions – in a climate that's open to constructive criticism.

“We have to regain our credibility.”

“VW can make a big difference now.”

The test results in the US came as a real surprise to us. Today it's no longer just a VW scandal – the emissions and fuel-consumption crisis has spread to the entire industry. The biggest problem is that the industry has lost a great deal of public and government trust over the past few months. Yet the environmental and health problems had been known for a long time and hadn't caused much of a stir. It was only when there was talk of penalties for the automakers that the public became interested. It's still too early to assess what the consequences will be for VW. I see the company's announcement that it intends to significantly expand e-mobility and invest in this area as a positive step. VW can make a big difference in this area. Of course, I expect the company to push ahead in clearing up the scandal as well. VW has great engineers, but they often get involved in questionable lobbying activities in Brussels. It would be better to put their expertise toward new solutions and to actively support the legislative bodies in putting the necessary safeguards in place.



Klaus-Dieter Weiß, 63, has worked for VW since 1985. As a local native, Volkswagen is a part of what makes Wolfsburg home to him. As a union representative for IG Metall, he knows the concerns of many of his colleagues.