

Electric, connected, shared – the future of mobility

As painful as our company's crisis has been, it has galvanized us and sharpened our vision of what the future demands and what our customers want. Our transformation from automaker to provider of sustainable mobility solutions has begun.

Illustration — Mathis Rekowski

In big cities, more and more young people are choosing not to own a car. They neither truly need a car to get from point A to point B, nor do they value it as a status symbol. A smartphone, on the other hand, is something they can't imagine going without. It helps them communicate with friends, optimize their lives, and get where they want to go – by means of bus, train, or carsharing. The smartphone seems to be an essential these days, while the car does not. The avid driver in me finds that hard to take. But as an executive for a large automaker, I have to embrace it as a challenge.

For Volkswagen, this means, first and foremost, that we have to think differently – and try to view the world more the way the coming generations will. This was clear to many people even before the present crisis, but our situation has opened new doors and the willingness to embrace reform has grown. Our “TOGETHER – Strategy 2025” road map has begun to change the paradigm. In the coming years, we will focus on four key priorities. We will transform our tradi-

tional core business; develop a new business area devoted to mobility solutions; strengthen our innovative capacity – primarily but not exclusively in new technologies; and improve efficiency throughout the company so that we can afford the massive investment our future requires.

A global leader in sustainable mobility – that is what the Volkswagen Group wants to become. We want to enable the resource-efficient movement of people and freight all over the world. At the Paris climate summit, the international community made a commitment to limiting global warming to under two degrees, setting the signal for a global energy transformation that can only be achieved jointly. The auto industry is obliged to steadily reduce the CO₂ emissions of its fleets toward zero by 2050.

Volkswagen will exploit the internal combustion engine's potential for improvement and make it as clean as possible – using particulate filters in the gasoline engines and the latest and best SCR catalytic converters in the diesels. Parallel to this, the Group will launch more than 30 new all-electric models by 2025 that boast significantly improved range and shorter charging times. At that point, we anticipate sales of two to three million all-electric vehicles per year – around a quarter of our total turnover. To achieve this, we are starting a multibillion-euro investment program.

Such a breakthrough in electromobility calls for a massive joint effort on the part of industry and govern-



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ment. The state must provide a comprehensive network of rapid charging points, while the auto industry has to do all it can to further reduce the cost and extend the driving range of electric vehicles. We see battery technology as key, and plan to establish it as one of the Group's core competencies.

“Our proposition is mobility.”

With a view to the customers of tomorrow, our proposition is not simply to make efficient, attractive, and reliable cars that are fun to drive. Our proposition is mobility. We want to get people and goods to their destination quickly and safely. Along with the electrification of our fleet, we are therefore also developing mobility services as a new area of business. By acquiring a stake in Gett, a start-up that already serves over 50 million customers, we have taken an important first step. With a tap on the app, your driver appears, opens his door, and takes you to your destination. Billing is automatic and cashless. In years to come, this will form the nucleus around

which we develop further services, such as robo-taxis, carsharing, and transport on demand.

Even if future generations don't necessarily feel the need to own cars, they will still use and appreciate them – if they are electrically powered from renewable sources, if they serve the many and not just the individual, and if they are networked to reduce the strain on our transportation infrastructure. Yet we also recognize the risks of digitalization. Where people's lives are at stake, there must be no doubt whatsoever about the safety of new systems. Far-reaching ethical issues must also be resolved – particularly around data protection and data security. Technical feasibility must not be equated with inevitability; new technological developments should be implemented only if people want them to be. This, too, is part of our vision of sustainable mobility.

Take a closer look and you will see: Volkswagen is more than this crisis. Through electrification, autonomous vehicles, and new services, the Group will undergo fundamental change – in order to remain what it is and always has been: a company that offers mobility for the many. ◀