



Mercedes-Benz

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Let's talk Mercedes - Episode 2: Communicating in times of transformation

Abstract: Sarah Elsser meets Sebastian Vesper, Head of Medienfachverlag Oberauer Berlin and Katja Bott, Head of Global Communications at Mercedes-Benz Cars and Vans


COVID-19 continues to give direction to Mercedes-Benz' new podcast, Let's Talk Mercedes: in the latest episode, show host Sarah Elsser meets Sebastian Vesper, formerly the chief editor of the specialist journal PR Report and Head of Medienfachverlag Oberauer's Berlin office as well as Katja Bott, Head of Global Communications at Mercedes-Benz Cars and Vans. The three talk about the lessons learned from digital product presentations, how the pandemic has affected the relationship between journalists and PR professionals, and to what degree corporate publishing activities rival the work of journalists.

The following contains some key take-aways of the talk, which have been edited for readability:

- Katja Bott on the lessons learned from putting together a digital event instead of presenting the new E-Class at the Geneva International Motor Show: "We decided that we were going to transfer this basic idea we had for Geneva, and just livestream it from a Stuttgart studio. (...) And we had a good talk; a good live situation that all worked out. But we are doing product PR. And we had underestimated that there was very little concentration on our new vehicles."
- Katja Bott on the importance of embracing change: "Even before the crisis, there was a lot of discussion on the transformation which is going on. And it's not a discussion that solely refers to the auto industry. It's true for the world. The wheels are always turning faster. And we knew that a kind of new normal before COVID-19, was that you had to adapt quicker to changes."
- Katja Bott on the emphasis of exchange and personal contact between PR professionals and journalists: "We are supporting two-way communication. It's the communication that we do on the one hand, but on the other hand we are collecting feedback. (...) I think it's harder in a time of digitalization to constantly provide that and to be there for specific questions. But this is our task and I'm convinced (...) that this is a big differentiator to a solely owned communication through our channels."

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* The figures are provided in accordance with the German regulation 'PKW-EnVKV' and apply to the German market only. Further information on official fuel consumption figures and the official specific CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the EU guide 'Information on the fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and energy consumption of new cars', which is available free of charge at all sales dealerships, from DAT Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH and at www.dat.de.

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- Sebastian Vesper on how corporate media outlets are threatening traditional journalism: “You know, being a journalist has been a very hard thing for years (...) and companies starting to become publishers is not the only disruption to the industry. But yes, in a certain way, it's a threat and it's bothering us.”
- Sebastian Vesper on the advantages of digital events and on making content accessible: “You can join from where you are; you can pop in or out without anybody noticing. You may have a recording (...), so you can have a proper presentation on your screen. (...) But the important question is: how reliable is the content; how accessible is the person I would like to ask additional questions of. So, it's not just – take the content and then go and eat it. PR wants journalists to deal with the content, to see it critically, to reflect on it. And I think beyond channels or digital, non-digital, whatever, this is something that is essential to the relationship between PR and journalism.”
- Sebastian Vesper on the relationship between journalism and PR: “My hope is that PR continues to accept this kind of lack of control that has been occurring with Covid-19. What the virus shows us, is that there is a point where you just need to rely on your relationship to the journalist, and to have a kind of blind flight mode. And I think this makes PR more interesting to both sides.”

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Further information about Mercedes-Benz is available at www.mercedes-benz.com. Press information and digital services for journalists and multipliers can be found on our Mercedes me media online platform at media.mercedes-benz.com as well as on our Daimler global media site at media.daimler.com. Learn more about current topics and events related to Mercedes-Benz Cars & Vans on our @MB_Press Twitter channel at www.twitter.com/MB_Press.

Mercedes-Benz AG at a glance

Mercedes-Benz AG is responsible for the global business of Mercedes-Benz Cars and Mercedes-Benz Vans with over 173,000 employees worldwide. Ola Källenius is Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz AG. The company focuses on the development, production and sales of passenger cars, vans and services. Furthermore, the company aspires to be leading in the fields of connectivity, automated driving and alternative drives with its forward-looking innovations. The product portfolio comprises the Mercedes-Benz brand with the sub-brands Mercedes-AMG, Mercedes-Maybach and Mercedes me - as well as the smart brand, and the EQ product and technology brand for electric mobility. Mercedes-Benz AG is one of the largest manufacturers of premium passenger cars. In 2019 it sold nearly 2.4 million cars and more than 438,000 vans. In its two business divisions, Mercedes-Benz AG is continually expanding its worldwide production network with over 40 production sites on four continents, while aligning itself to meet the requirements of electric mobility. At the same time, the company is developing its global battery production network on three continents. Sustainable actions play a decisive role in both business divisions. To the company, sustainability means creating value for all stakeholders on a lasting basis: customers, employees, investors, business partners and the society as a whole. The basis for this is the sustainable business strategy of Daimler in which the company takes responsibility for the economic, ecological and social effects of its business activities and looks at the entire value chain.