

WE SEE A SAFER WORLD

Our omtanke philosophy helps us rethink the driving experience.

CASE STUDY



INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Change is the only constant in the automotive industry. With the advent of alternative fuels, hybrid technology, all-electric cars, and even self-driving cars, the global automotive industry is in a state of disruption and evolution. Even with these technological advances, however, the global automotive industry is expected to face multiple challenges in 2019, with many of the world's biggest original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) set to be particularly affected. In early signs of trouble to come, China in 2019 saw a decline in vehicle sales for the first time in over 20 years, while the US market grew only marginally. This downtrend has been exacerbated by the first real indications that Brexit will finally happen after years of gridlock, as well as the US-China tariff war. The economic and political fallout from these events are expected to be felt until at least 2020, with global markets expected to rebound by 2023.

THE CLIENT

Volvo Cars is a Swedish luxury car manufacturer and subsidiary of Chinese automotive group Geely, headquartered in Gothenburg, Sweden. With a storied history spanning 92 years, the Volvo brand is known all over the world, in particular for its reputation as a maker of safe, reliable, and well-made luxury cars, encompassing sport utility vehicles (SUVs), station wagons, sedans and compact executive sedans.

The first Volvo car rolled off the production line in 1927, and the brand has proven itself to be a reliable and trustworthy manufacturer ever since. Characterised by intuitive, human-focused, functional Scandinavian design and unmatched craftsmanship, Volvo is a household name in the global automotive industry.

As a world-renowned carmaker, Volvo has a well-established brand message and strategy. Built upon the slogan "Designed Around You", Volvo employs a "people first" approach. Priding itself on corporate social responsibility, Volvo is more than just a car manufacturer – the company aims to contribute to a more sustainable society. To ensure that they are in harmony with



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customers and society, Volvo has committed to the development of sustainable transport and is an industry leader in exploring non-fossil-fuel solutions for vehicles – from plug-in hybrids such as the recently announced Polestar 1 and 2 to all-electric concept cars.

Clearly, Volvo has mastered the art of brand communication, and therefore presented a different challenge to IDEA: one of corporate communications, as Volvo was seeking to raise employee engagement in its Asia-Pacific theatre of operations.

OUR SOLUTION

IDEA's solution was borne out of countless brainstorming sessions, finally settling on a more personal approach to corporate communications. Deploying the emotive power of discourse, we arranged for one of Volvo Cars' top executives in Asia – President of Volvo Cars APAC, Yuan Xiaolin – to give a speech during the Lunar New Year, an

occasion of immense significance to Volvo's Chinese employees and customers. In his speech, written by IDEA's multilingual team of writers, Mr Yuan, a former Chinese ambassador to the UK and a former executive at BP, spoke about his humble origins in rural China, and delivered a moving story on the theme of heritage and succession. The carefully drafted speech included a personal anecdote on one of Mr Yuan's Swedish colleagues at Volvo, mentioning his colleague's deeply rooted family history of working for the company, an allegory to Mr Yuan's own stories from his childhood. This evocative narrative was crucial in linking two very disparate cultures and identities, allowing Volvo's Chinese staff to be able to relate to their Swedish counterparts, and vice versa. This approach was integral to creating common ground and unity, boosting employee morale and engagement, and perhaps most importantly, forging a consistent and coherent corporate identity – one that is not divided by national loyalties.

TESTIMONIALS

"Helena was a valued asset on Volvo's event management in China, including the Volvo China Open, said Michel Zhaoqin, Vice President of Communications at Volvo Cars APAC. "She delivered good results under tight timelines and high pressure, and played an integral part in building up Volvo's event portfolio profile in China through forging strong relationships with government stakeholders."

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