Mackevision's solution – real matchmaking for customers and process integration for the manufacturer

Volkswagen of America presents 'dating site' for car buyers

DETROIT, STUTTGART – Volkswagen of America has launched an innovative configuration solution at vw.com. which revolutionizes purchasing new cars on the U.S. market. The new website is based on Mackevision technology from the F_Box family. It gives both the manufacturer and its dealers an unprecedented level of integration for the production and sales processes while, for the first time ever, U.S. car buyers can find exactly the car they want via a matchmaking function.

To date, customers in the U.S. have been able to configure their favorite Volkswagen online, but their final choice depends on which models their dealer has in stock. This is what's known as the 'best-match principle'. The new configuration engine on the other hand lets customers make an online selection from stock that's actually on the dealer's lot. If the desired vehicle is not obtainable locally, the search is extended to other dealers. As a result, the new website offers full configuration capabilities. VW customers in the U.S. can see online exactly the car they've chosen before visiting the dealer.

""The 'build to order' process for cars customary in Germany isn't standard practice in the U.S. market. That is why Volkswagen of America's new configurator is an important innovation for the U.S. car market," explains Heiko Wenczel, head of the Mackevision branch in Detroit.

"Volkswagen of America's platform looks a bit like a dating site," comments Wenczel. "Car buyers can describe their requirements simply but precisely, so that they can find just what they're looking for." Mackevision developed and implemented the concept used to create images for the dating site in cooperation with Deutsch Inc., Volkswagen of America's advertising agency.

A non-linear approach made this innovative process possible. Instead of outlining each of a car's features in the configurator, customers first select vehicle types – for example sedans, convertibles or SUVs – and price ranges too – in order to narrow the search. Each vehicle has 88 configurable images. They can be combined with 18 backgrounds to suit preferences and many interior and exterior views. A total of more than ten million picture combinations is possible.

"With our new site, customers don't need to know our product lineup to find a car that's right for them," says Vinay Shahani, VP of brand marketing at Volkswagen America. "For example, they can search for all red cars, with a sunroof and navigation for under $250 a month…Or search all cars under $20,000. It's hard to believe, but until now you couldn't do that on a car manufacturer's site."

The new solution entails huge efficiencies for Volkswagen of America and its local dealers. The specifications for all the vehicles dealers have in stock can be detailed and then shown

on the configurator website. A link to the inventory management system also makes sure that new vehicles are always added to the website immediately.

From the very beginning, the solution has been integrated with the sales and marketing process. Volkswagen of America collaborates with Mackevision and its lead agency Deutsch on the project. The whole process covers the definition of new models and model generations and includes marketing plans, describing the range in configuration data and quality assurance measures by Deutsch, Volkswagen and Mackevision. The final step is placing vehicles in a virtual showroom.

Mackevision's F_Box product family forms the foundation for this technology. A configuration tool – F_BOX configuration backbone – first establishes which types of vehicle can be built at all. It then determines which virtual models will have to be generated. The tool then stores this information in rendering scripts, which serve as the logical basis for the visualization system (F_BOX media server). In turn, it generates a variety of detailed, layered images of the virtual vehicles. The F_BOX picture shooter subsequently acts as a web-based, virtual studio. This tool produces 3D images from virtual product models and adds backgrounds for sales and marketing purposes without requiring any experience in computer-generated imagery and without having to install special-purpose software.

Mackevision Medien Design GmbH

Mackevision Medien Design GmbH is one of the global leaders in computer generated imagery (CGI) which covers 3D visualization, animation and visual effects. The company designs and produces image and film material, as well as interactive applications in high-end quality. It develops technological solutions for generating images and looks after the entire CGI process from data preparation to creative design.

The international team looks after major corporations, medium-sized companies and their agencies.

Mackevision was founded in 1994. Today 300 people work at the headquarters in Stuttgart, as well as in its branches in Hamburg, Munich, London, Detroit, Los Angeles and Shanghai. For more details visit www.mackevision.com.

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