

Volkswagen Crisis

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In the days following the scandal, Volkswagen made many efforts to apologize and assure customers that they are working diligently on gaining their trust and support. In large, bold letters, the headline “We are working to make things right” appeared in ads just days after the allegation. Under the headline, the article stated that "over the past several weeks, we've apologized to you, our loyal customers, about the 2.0L VW emissions issue. As we work tirelessly to develop a remedy, we ask for your continued patience." Volkswagen urged buyers to stand by them as they came up with solutions to fix the emissions within the vehicles. The company compensated affected customers by reimbursing them with their “goodwill package”, which included \$500 gift cards towards a new Volkswagen and three years of roadside assistance at no cost. Volkswagen also released a statement that read “We sincerely hope you see this as the first step toward restoring your invaluable trust.” Volkswagen’s chief executive, Martin Winterkorn, resigned in result of the scandal. Matthias Muller, Winterkorn’s replacement, claimed that “this misconduct goes against everything that Volkswagen stands for.” Muller took a positive route and claimed that the company's lawsuit proved to be a beneficial impact by requiring the company to speed up changes that were long overdue and strengthen the company’s values and priorities.

Volkswagen’s advertising activity grew after the scandal broke in 2015. The company went from 100,000 airplays before the crisis to about 300,000 airplays. The majority of the advertisements released after the scandal focused more on the technology, safety and performance of their vehicles rather than acknowledging the diesel crises. According to Automotive News, this strategy of avoiding the problem has delivered mixed results since the company has yet to return to pre-crisis levels of sales.

In some of the statements released, the company even tried to place the blame on a few of their employees, rather than the company as a whole. As Martin Winterkorn, one of the company's chief executives, stated, Volkswagen began to embody the idea that "it would be wrong to cast suspicion on the honest hard work of so many because of the mistakes of only a few" (Garcia). Winterkorn also went on to say that the company "don't deserve that," which almost made it seem like he was blaming consumers for their negative reactions to the scandal (Garcia). Many of the statements and advertisements following the scandal followed a similar attitude, which could be why their approach to recovery has not been as effective as it probably should have been.

From our research, we believe that this form of communication in their advertising was not effective. After the CEO made the announcement, they released "an apology" statement and from there continued to talk about how they were updating their cars with more safety features. Even today, the company has not given updates to the public about where the current situation is and where it is going. They are still showing ads that show how they are updating their cars.

## References

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