

VW shakeup means more English spoken, women as managers

December 14 2016, by David Mchugh

Volkswagen says it's going to speak more English and help more women reach for top positions as it shakes up its corporate culture in the wake of a diesel emissions scandal.

Personnel chief Karlheinz Blessing says that diversity and international experience would help build a [culture](#) of "discussion" and "entrepreneurial thinking."

He said in a statement Wednesday that "in the future, English is to be the group language."

The [company](#) says that means English would replace German at [management](#) conferences with dozens of people by 2021—not in informal management conversations or among workers on the assembly line.

Some observers have blamed an insular and top-down management culture at Volkswagen for the scandal in which it rigged engine control software to enable cars to pass government tests on emissions—and then turn the controls off in ordinary driving conditions. Volkswagen has agreed to a \$15 billion settlement with U.S. authorities and car owners. Some 11 million cars worldwide were sold with the software.

CEO Matthias Mueller, who is in charge of cleaning up after the scandal, has said changing [corporate culture](#) will be part of that job. The company has apologized and hired a U.S. law firm to investigate how it

happened.

The company said Thursday it is changing how it develops managers, putting more emphasis on foreign assignments and knowledge gained in different areas and brands. Female managers are to get the experience they need for appointment to upper management positions later in their careers.

Using English would improve access to top management jobs for top international managers and improve cooperation, the company said. "We are strengthening entrepreneurial action, as well as fostering innovation capabilities, agility and Group-wide cooperation," Blessing said.

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