"We have increased our donations by five million euros"

27/03/2020 Porsche CEO Oliver Blume appeals to the public to help overcome the coronavirus crisis. He explains in an interview what efforts the company is making.

Porsche is stepping up its corporate social responsibility in response to the coronavirus crisis. The company is donating five million euros to people in need as a result of the virus and is spending 200,000 euros on food donations. The production of medical products is also being considered, says Porsche boss Oliver Blume.

Mr. Blume, are you healthy?

Fortunately, yes.

Are you in the office, or are you running Porsche from your home office now?

I'm in the office. I think it's important that I'm on site as the CEO, and that people know where to find

me when they need me. Of course, most meetings and discussions are now taking place via video conferencing and calls. At the same time, there are mandatory activities that have to be carried out at Porsche – in compliance with all safety measures.

Will you have more meetings on the phone after the crisis?

We are certainly understanding the technical possibilities and using technology to a much greater extent than before the crisis, and sometimes it can be more efficient to talk via Skype than to drive from location to location. But to be honest, I am also looking forward to having face-to-face contact with my colleagues again.

Porsche is having a break in production at the moment. Is it yet clear whether you can restart production after the two-week break?

We are assessing the situation as it presents itself. The most important thing for us is that the supply chains can be rebuilt as soon as possible. We are less dependent on China than we are on our European neighbours. In this respect, I hope that we as a society will manage to contain the coronavirus and that we will then receive a signal at European level as to when we can all restart production.

How hard will Porsche be hit by the crisis? Some economists expect the biggest slump since World War Two?

There are various crisis scenarios from experts. The 'V-scenario' assumes that we have to prepare for a very large slump, but that the sales level after the crisis will be higher than before. My hope is that it will be this V-effect that we have to deal with. It is also important that politicians support the economy throughout the crisis – for example, to increase demand so that we can put this slump behind us as quickly as possible. Our aim is to manage this crisis systematically and responsibly and to see it as an opportunity. It is important to have an optimistic attitude, to look ahead – and to return to full throttle as soon as possible after the crisis.

At the moment we have obviously not yet bottomed out. And in the case of the state government, the need is so great that it has turned to the business community for help with the procurement of medical materials. Can Porsche help?

The state of Baden-Württemberg has set up a crisis task force. I have written to Minister President Winfried Kretschmann, in response to his request for help, to say that we want to support the state in organising the task force. Consultants from Porsche Consulting can help, as can the IT specialists from our subsidiary MHP. For example, we could help to structure and coordinate processes, to look at what is needed where, and which company might be in a position to help. We are offering this free of charge, of course.

Can you also help with procurement of materials?

We are currently clarifying with the state government which components are required. They range from protective goggles to respiratory masks. For highly specialised medical products, you have to comply with the legal requirements and certifications. Here, the lead must lie with the medical technology specialists, who could then delegate orders to the automotive industry. Our 3D printers are available in any case. As a first step, we have already forwarded protective clothing from our stocks to the state government. And together with our parent company, Volkswagen, we are participating in the procurement of further equipment on a large scale, especially from China. We must also ensure that we look beyond the medical sector and recognise where our help is needed.

What do you mean by this?

In these times of crisis, we are painfully aware that many food banks receive hardly any food donations. That is why we are doubling our donations to them so that people can continue to be supplied with food.

What does doubling mean in numbers?

We are supporting the food banks at our locations this year with 200,000 euros. In addition, we have made an offer to certain charitable organisations to provide vehicles with drivers, perhaps where there is a bottleneck in the transport of relief supplies or people. We have also increased donations from Porsche AG by five million Euros. This amount will be used to support local organisations and people who are in need as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Our employees also help personally and voluntarily with the charitable organisations at our locations.

This can only be done voluntarily, right?

Of course. I have received many emails and questions from colleagues who want to get involved. We have now channeled this through our internal media and published lists of organisations at our sites in Baden-Württemberg and Saxony that need help. Our employees can get involved here. For example, we have a number of trained paramedics among our employees. These people are of course urgently needed now, but in some cases it is a question of pure manpower. I would also like to urge readers that all people, according to their talents, can help to overcome this crisis in the best possible way.

The coronavirus crisis also presents Porsche with many challenges. How do you manage to set up such aid programs on the side?

With passion. People come first. That is always the case, but even more so in this crisis. All the rest comes second. Our crisis management team meets virtually every day and, on the one hand, looks after our offers of help and, on the other, discusses Porsche's concerns. There is an opportunity in every crisis and I am currently watching our society holding it together. Everyone is trying to help others. Everyone is reflecting on the essentials, and everyone is reflecting on what is really important in life. We can learn from this experience after the crisis. What we take from this can shape the way we live together and everyone can benefit from that.

Info

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