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Wolfsburg plant is investing heavily in digital solutions

- Industry 4.0 is important lever for efficient production and future viability
- Stefan Loth, Plant Manager Wolfsburg: "In 2020 alone, we invest a euro sum in the middle double-digit millions range for digitalisation."
- Team is developing digital lighthouse project with global reach

Wolfsburg – The Volkswagen Passenger Cars brand is further bolstering the future viability and competitiveness of its main plant in Wolfsburg in the current business year. "We already accomplished a great deal in 2019. To become even more efficient, we want to invest in the digitalisation of our processes and Industry 4.0 measures with a euro sum in the middle double-digit millions range in 2020 alone," said Stefan Loth, Manager of the Wolfsburg Plant at this year's production site symposium.

In just 2019, employees participated in 400 workshops on efficiency measures at the plant. The nearly 1,000 individual measures that resulted have mostly been implemented, and they have contributed toward accelerating processes and lowering costs. "When it comes to efficiency, we have made further progress despite some challenges in the past year," said Andreas Tostmann, Member of the Board of Management of the Volkswagen brand for Production and Logistics. "This is an accomplishment by the entire team which did excellent work here. I am very grateful to them." Tostmann emphasised, however, that now is not the time to "slacken our efforts."

Bernd Osterloh, Chairman of the Works Committee: "The workforce at the main plant in Wolfsburg showed flexibility and top-notch performance in a difficult year. At the same time, they continually offered new ideas and proposals for improving production systems which boosted productivity. Volkswagen is also making huge investments in the Wolfsburg plant. These innovations by the workforce and investments open the door for new products. The team at the main plant is prepared for them."

One focal point of the measures was digital solutions. The highlight is a production method that is unique in the global automotive industry: From now on, welds on car bodies at the plant will no longer be made manually with ultrasound, rather they will be automatically inspected by ultrasound, and the data will be transferred to an IT system in real time. Loth: "This represents a huge step for plant efficiency, and it is an excellent idea from the team." After the project has been implemented, annual cost savings will be around three million euros. The company plans to transfer the solution to other production sites progressively.

Another example of increased efficiency is in the area of human-robot collaboration. In Wolfsburg, robots have been checking and adjusting the alignment of vehicle headlamps since the end of 2019. Workers only need to turn on the lamps and no longer need to exit the vehicle to align the lamps themselves. Another measure that will save millions of euros is installation of doors and boot lids in vehicles by robots which is being implemented over the course of the year. Data such as gap dimensions, will automatically be processed further by an IT solution.

Media contact

Volkswagen Communications
Jörn Roggenbuck
Spokesperson Production
Tel.: +49 173 7360 755
joern.roggenbuck@volkswagen.de

Volkswagen Communications
Torsten Cramm
Spokesperson Wolfsburg Plant
Tel.: +49-175-9321078
Torsten.cramm@volkswagen.de



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Loth: "We will continue to consistently follow the path to the digital factory with our entire team in 2020."

The Wolfsburg plant also took an impressive step in 2019 with its STARK demographic project which involves utilising people with activity restrictions in production. In this project, up to 300 employees work hand-in-hand to fill 70 jobs. These employees with activity restrictions, who create value and are highly valued, produce 1,200 cockpits at specially laid out workstations in ongoing cycled production operations.

About the Volkswagen brand:

The Volkswagen Passenger Cars brand is present in more than 150 markets throughout the world and produces vehicles at over 50 locations in 14 countries. In 2019, Volkswagen delivered 6,28 million vehicles including bestselling models such as the Golf, Tiguan, Jetta or Passat. Currently, 195,878 people work for Volkswagen across the globe. The brand also has over 10,000 dealerships with 86,000 employees. Volkswagen is forging ahead consistently with the further development of automobile production. E-mobility, smart mobility and the digital transformation of the brand are the key strategic topics for the future.
