

COMMERCE

Rolls-Royce North America president stepping down at year's end

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Rolls-Royce Spirit of Ecstasy

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

British automaker Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is preparing for a change in leadership, but it is still business as usual for the brand.

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Eric Shepherd, president of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars North America, will conclude his stint with the company at the New Year and will be replaced by Pedro Mota, vice president area west of Porsche Cars North America effective Oct. 1. The change in leadership showcases the entrepreneurial drive that the brand fosters and also may indicate limits to the Volkswagen emissions scandal as seen from within the industry.

“The changes, while we are sad to see Eric go, I think are indicative of the amicable evolution and entrepreneurial spirit of Rolls-Royce,” said Gerry Spahn, head of communications for [Rolls-Royce Motor Cars NA](#), Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. “We are always talking about how our leaders are entrepreneurs, this is one of the mixed blessings of having an entrepreneur.

“Pedro has a young, entrepreneurial, vibrant business ethos that we’re looking forward to adding to the company.”

Leadership change

Rolls-Royce could not comment on Mr. Shepherd's new venture, but the press release refers to his entrepreneurism and alludes to a new role within Rolls-Royce, making it unclear the capacity in which he will work or partner with the brand.



Rolls-Royce Dawn

“Eric’s move is a big loss to our successful business at Rolls-Royce North America, but we are highly supportive of talented managers like Eric pursuing personal business opportunities, particularly when it means they stay within the Rolls-Royce community,” Torsten Mueller-Oetvoes, CEO of Rolls-Royce, said in a statement.

Per Rolls-Royce, Mr. Shepherd will alert media to his new venture in the near future.

The parting is much more amicable than the more dramatic leadership changes to Volkswagen recently, in which chairman Ferdinand Piëch resigned due to disagreements with then-CEO Martin Winterkorn, who stepped down last week when it was revealed the company had been cheating on emissions test.



ROLLS-ROYCE MOTOR CARS PRESENTS ART DECO INSPIRED PHANTOM

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Rolls-Royce art deco Phantom interior

The scandal broke a mere five months after disagreements between Mr. Piëch and Mr. Winterkorn led the former to leave the company. Drop in stock value and fines will cost the company, the parent of Porsche, as well as luxury auto brands Audi, Lamborghini, Bugatti, and Bentley, tens of billions of dollars ([see story](#))

Although Porsche is a subsidiary of Volkswagen, none of its vehicles have been recalled for emitting illegal quantities of poisonous gases. The brand operates with a large degree of independence from its parent company and neither Mr. Mota nor any Porsche employee has been implicated or suspected in the scandal.



Rolls-Royce Wraith

“We’re excited by Pedro's whole background and we’ve been speaking with him for [a while],” Mr. Spahn said. “Whenever we do make personnel changes they are always very well-thought and very well-researched. This has not been a quick move.”

Rolling right along

It has been a busy month for Rolls-Royce on the vehicular front as well.

Earlier this month, the brand rolled into the next generation with its all-new Dawn convertible model.

For the first time, the BMW-owned brand unveiled a new model online, eschewing the traditional car show and other regular festivities. Unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show but streamed online, the Dawn Rolls-Royce convertible targets a younger, active audience ([see story](#)).

But the Dawn was not the only new product for Rolls-Royce.

Last week, the brand celebrated the similar independent spirits that founded its company and rugby through a bespoke Wraith created specially for the sport.

The “Wraith – History of Rugby” is a unique vehicle created by the brand’s Bespoke Design Studio in Goodwood, England, that incorporates elements that speak to the heritage of rugby. With the Rugby World Cup in full swing, this debut enables Rolls-Royce to unite with

consumers who share a love of the game, as well as highlight its similar British heritage ([see story](#)).

Despite a change in leadership and turmoil elsewhere in the industry, recent new models show that business will continue as usual for Rolls-Royce.

“Pedro has proven he has the personality and approach to work with very specific and very exclusive owners,” Mr. Spahn said. “Rolls-Royce gives him a chance to apply that in a new environment. We’re really looking forward to him fitting into the Rolls-Royce family.”

Final Take

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