

AUTOMOTIVE

Tesla's Elon Musk promises to follow through on electric pickup plans

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Tesla also recently made a impact with its Model X. Image credit: Tesla

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

U.S. electric automaker Tesla is looking to shift the pickup truck narrative with what its founder calls a "game-changing" feature.

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Tesla founder Elon Musk is promising that following the production of its all-electric crossover, Model Y, the automaker will get to work on an electric pickup truck. The luxury pickup truck industry is sparse, but including an electric motor and a mystery "game-changing" feature will put the Tesla pickup on a platform of its own.

"There are a growing number of people who are looking to Tesla to fulfill on its existing promises rather than make more ones," said Paul Newton, analyst at IHS Automotive consultancy, London.

Electric pickup trucks

Mr. Musk has announced that he will continue onward with the plans to build a pickup truck after its crossover model goes into production.

After asking Twitter followers what the Tesla company can do better, the entrepreneur responded to a fan's tweet asking for an electric pickup with a promise. He explained that he will follow through with a pickup truck design and that he has the core design in mind.

Mr. Musk's tweet also expressed his excitement to do so, saying he is "dying to build it." He also said he has had the designs and engineering elements in his head for five years.

The tweet supports Tesla's plans revealed in July in which an electric pickup, a commercial truck, a compact SUV and a public transport bus. Originally, Tesla and Mr. Musk claimed the pickup truck would be revealed in one to two years.

According to Reuters and Automotive News, Mr. Musk has said that the electric pickup will be similar in total size to the popular Ford F-150, but possibly slightly bigger due to a possible "game-changing" feature he would like to add. As of press time, Mr. Musk has yet to elaborate on what that feature would be.

While the market for pickup trucks in the U.S. is lucrative, there is little innovation in terms of luxury and electric.

For instance, Germany's Mercedes-Benz was the first to provide a pickup truck from a true luxury brand, hoping to appeal to a wide range of affluent consumers by going beyond the traditional scope of the vehicle category's owners.

The automaker's X-Class is a new pickup truck that appeals to both rural and urban consumers with two different designs, one focused for off-roading and the other on style. Mercedes-Benz is the first automaker in its class to design a luxury pickup truck, which can bring in an entirely new affluent demographic, as well as consumers who may not have been interested in the automotive category in the past ([see more](#)).



Mercedes-Benz Concept X-Class Stylish Explorer. Image credit: Mercedes

However, Mercedes' truck is only available in Europe, with other markets to come in 2018, but not the U.S. The decision to not release in the U.S. has perplexed experts, since the market is the largest for pickup trucks.

In terms of electric-powered pickups, a few companies are looking to innovate in this area but electric trucks on the road are virtually nonexistent.

Companies such as electric vehicle manufacturer Bollinger Motors and electric utility manufacturer Workhorse are also developing their own electric pickup trucks.



Workhorse's electric pickup for fleets. Image credit: Workhorse

However, some experts say that Tesla has a lot of work ahead if it wants its trucks to be able to carry large loads, which pickup trucks are intended.

Twitter and Tesla

Twitter seems to be Mr. Musk's platform of choice for major announcements.

The tweet regarding the future pickup truck comes after what some are calling an outlandish post from the innovator. Mr. Musk is looking to make a dramatic first launch of the Falcon Heavy rocket by expanding the reach of its vehicles into outer space.

Mr. Musk has forayed into many ventures over his career, including founding aerospace manufacturer SpaceX, which is set to launch the Falcon Heavy rocket in January 2018. The entrepreneur is using this as an opportunity to cross promote his brands by sending the Tesla Roadster as cargo, which he announced on Twitter ([see more](#)).

"[Tesla] has a large number of back orders for the Model 3, and only a handful of painstakingly hand-built cars have been delivered," IHS Automotive's Mr. Newton said. "There's bound to be growing scepticism if waiting lists and waiting times grow longer while yet another new model is unveiled."

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