

MOBILE

Lexus places chief engineer on the tweet seat for NX debut

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Lexus NX 300h Hybrid

By JOE MCCARTHY

Lexus International is collapsing the distance between fan and engineer during the unveiling of its new compact SUV April 21 at the Beijing International Auto Show.

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Luxury Daily

The automaker will extend its Twitter talks with the engineer, Takeaki Kato, behind the NX models so that discerning fans can get an insider's look at the cars. Demonstrating to fans that inquiries are taken seriously helps to build a rapport and put a face to the brand.

"The inspiration behind this campaign is to integrate the human aspect at the center of a digital activation," said Antoine Malin, social manager at Saatchi & Saatchi Fallon, Tokyo. "Online campaigns tend to lack emotion, and focus instead on the format or medium.

"The Lexus NX Chief Engineer is a passionate and eloquent spokesman for the Lexus NX and we want to give him an engaging platform to explain his philosophy and how that's expressed throughout the new Lexus NX," he said.

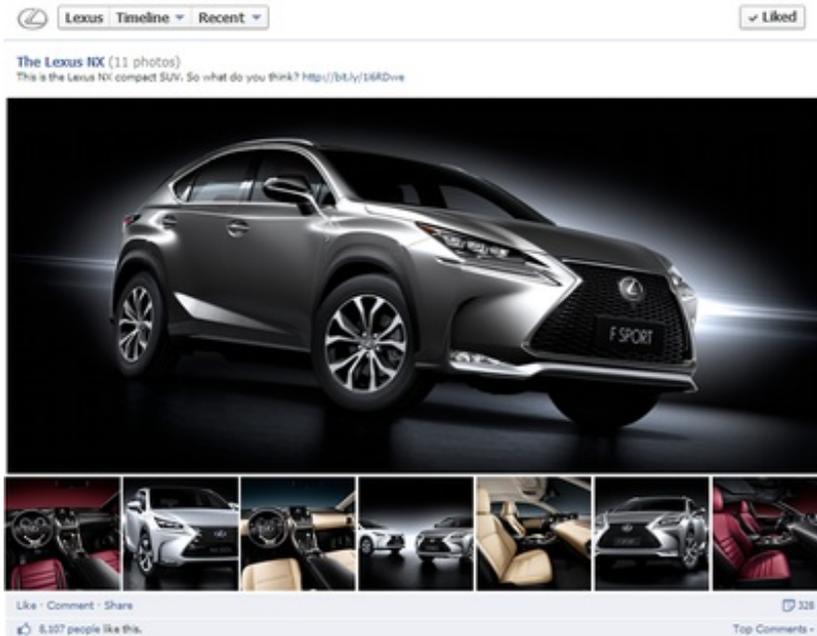
"This is the Lexus introduction to the Compact SUV market, so we would like to draw attention to its dynamic and aggressive styling as well as its focused and confident

engineering beneath that exterior."

Saatch & Saatchi Fallon worked with Lexus International to develop this campaign.

Engineering stories

Supposedly, **vehicle images of the lineup were leaked**, which may have compelled Lexus to come forth with images of their own prior to the Beijing auto show.



Lexus Facebook post

The three cars in the family include the gasoline turbo NX 200t, naturally aspirated NX 200 and a full hybrid NX 300h. Over the years Lexus has built up its position in the eco-friendly scene.



Interior of Lexus SUV

Leading up to the debut, fans are invited to Tweet questions about the NX line with the hashtag #LexusInBeijing.

Mr. Kato will then pick out 10 questions to answer, two per day, throughout the conference in a rich-media format. The videos will then be posted on a dedicated **page**.

Rather than post direct response videos, the brand intends to edit them with additional

footage so that they are more compelling.

Lexus is referring to the Twitter dialogue as "Engineering Stories," indicating that Mr. Kato will discuss his motivations and background, not just technical details.



Lexus' Mr. Kato

In the past, the engineer seemed to be wholly removed from the consumer, making it seem that new cars just spawned mysteriously from the brand. When an engineer with a passion for cars is introduced, it adds a face to the brand, increasing the chance for meaningful connections to be made.

Indeed, creative transparency has become a dominant theme during the social media era. Brands are constantly bringing fans behind-the-scenes to earn the seal of by-heart-and-hand authenticity.

Speaking to the people

Lexus International has used a similar tactic in the past.

The automaker upped its fan interaction credentials by tweeting two Vine videos per hour from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. in response to tweets concerning the Tokyo Motor Show.

Fans requested with the hashtag #LexusInTokyo to see particular details of the RC coupé and LF-NX concept models that were unveiled at the Tokyo Motor Show. The branded vines provided fans snippets of the new models prior to public availability of the motor show, which may have promoted a feeling of exclusivity for brand enthusiasts (see story).

"After the success and engagement levels of the previous #LexusInTokyo campaign we are confident that Twitter is the social platform most likely used by the audiences that respond to Lexus product launches," Mr. Malin said.

"How we choose to deliver [our] response to the audience will be a decision made on the spot," he said.

"Usually, a 'live' feedback session means a Facebook-based text-based Q&A or an unscripted and, quite likely, dull video interview format. In contrast, the #LexusInBeijing campaign will use post-editing process to give the responses a better chance to resonate with the audience."

Final take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/5A9Sz3se0V0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/5A9Sz3se0V0)

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