

Press Release

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Babies a happy by-product of Volvo YCC development

Sidebar

Within the automobile industry, being assigned to a team developing an eye-popping concept car for the international auto show circuit is a two-edged sword for designers, engineers and technical experts. On one hand, there is the high-profile, career-enhancing limelight when a spectacular new concept makes its debut on the world stage. On the other, there is the stress, anxiety and personal toll of impossible deadlines, colliding egos, extraordinary technical challenges, and long days and nights on the job.

While many a career has been kick-started by a successful concept car, there are also many tales of divorce and personal sacrifice in the name of the project.

And then there is the team behind the Volvo Your Concept Car. They responded to the challenge of the YCC project by having babies.

YCC was designed and developed by a team of nine women designers, engineers and project managers from within the Volvo Car Corporation. That core group also reached out to others resources in the company to help bring the project together. In total, 130 people were involved in the project, more than half of them female.

By the conclusion of the hectic 14 month project, two babies were born to members of the core team and 17 to members of the overall project.

“We called it the ‘anti-divorce car’,” quips one insider.

Technical project manager Elna Holmberg had a child barely two months before the car was unveiled in a glittering debut at the Geneva auto show. And the project manager, Camilla Palmertz, announced she was pregnant on the way to the show.

Almost all of the core team had children, ranging from 2 to 10 years of age. The team members were critically aware that they all had heavy family responsibilities outside of their professional lives, and made extra effort to accommodate each other’s schedule.

“I remember one meeting of the five management team members,” recalls Tatiana Butovitsch Temm. “Maria needed to get to her mother-in-law’s to pick up a child; Elna was on the phone with a plumber dealing with a water leak at home; Camilla was on the phone arranging the delivery of a piano and I was lying on the floor with a migraine headache. People were on their phones and coming and going but it was a very productive meeting.”

“You can’t stop being a mother just because you’re an engineer,” adds Temm.

“Just because you have to leave at three o’clock to get to daycare doesn’t mean you don’t pull your weight,” Temm says. “We knew what we had to get done and we did it. It is possible to accommodate people’s home lives and still get the job done.”

The team also tried to reduce the project stresses that could carry over to their personal lives.

“There are going to be stresses and conflicts in any project like this,” explains project manager Palmertz, “but conflicts are a way of progressing, of overcoming obstacles. Because we discussed everything so thoroughly in advance, once we were rolling there was much less conflict and what we had was easier to resolve. We all knew what we wanted to achieve.”

“The result was less overtime, fewer tears and tantrums than might have been the case otherwise,” concludes Palmertz.

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