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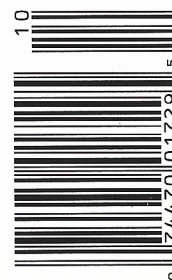


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# "You should recognize an M in the mirror..."

**W**hen Ulrich Bruhnke replaced the retiring Adolf Prommesberger as Head of Management of BMW M GmbH on December 1, 2003, he came to BMW following a 24-year career at Daimler-Benz. An engineering graduate of Stuttgart University, Bruhnke began his Daimler-Benz career as a body structure test engineer, rising through the ranks to eventually become head of Mercedes-AMG GmbH at the beginning of 2001.

Bimmer's Gary Witzenburg recently enjoyed a chat with Bruhnke about BMW M, what differentiates an M car and how his team operates and interacts with the company's mainstream engineering group.



Ulrich  
Bruhnke with  
the new M6.

**Bimmer:** How did it happen that you moved to BMW after 24 years at Daimler-Benz? Did BMW recruit you?

**Bruhnke:** Yes. In the 36 years before I was president, AMG did 80,000 cars. From January 2001 to the end of 2003, we did 62,000 cars, so I think I was successful at AMG. But looking at what has happened with Mercedes, I thought this would be a good chance to join the BMW Group.

**Bimmer:** AMG does a high-performance version of nearly every Mercedes model. Will BMW M follow that example?

**Bruhnke:** No. AMG has the philosophy to build the most powerful Mercedes, always the top-of-the-line of each Mercedes range.

BMW M is the ultimate BMW. The philosophy of an M car is to have a high-revving engine and, at least available, an SMG gearbox, and this doesn't fit with every BMW. For example, the X3 and X5 are very typical BMWs but (would not be) typical Ms. The objective is not to grow at any price but to sharpen the profile of BMW.

**Bimmer:** How might the M organization evolve under your leadership?

**Bruhnke:** I think the BMW Individual business will grow. As of now, we do not offer Individual cars in the States, but we will in the near future. Individual stands for the highest level of exclusivity of any BMW.

For example, we offer in the 7 Series a Rear-Seat Infotainment Online system. You have an integrated PC in the car. You can go online, do your email, prepare your PowerPoint presentation. It is an option in Europe and Asia in every 7 Series, and in the near future in the 5 Series, and we will do that in the States.

**Bimmer:** How does BMW Individual work? The customer goes to a dealer and specifies from a menu what he or she wants?

**Bruhnke:** In the past, we offered (individual customizing)—this lever, this wooden trim part. But doing the whole design is very difficult for the dealer and also for the customer, because the customer is not a designer. So now we are offering three different packages, plus the Rear-Seat Infotainment. You have a brochure with pictures and descriptions of the equipment, and there is no doubt what you are buying. Otherwise, it's too complex.

**Bimmer:** How much time does Individual add to the build and delivery process?

**Bruhnke:** Between one and two months over a normal BMW.

**Bimmer:** Any plan to change or expand BMW Driver Training?

**Bruhnke:** We will do more internationalization. We are offering it now in the States with the 5 Series. The customer will also be able to do Driver Training when he buys an M5, and we are discussing integrating it into the price of the car.

**Bimmer:** How do you and your group interact with the rest of the BMW organization?

**Bruhnke:** I am a member of the development team of Prof. Göschel, who is head of development and purchasing. I am responsible for all M-specific development, while a

colleague is responsible for engine development, another for chassis development and body structure, etc. We start together at point zero in the packaging phase, the initial phase of development of a new BMW, with the description of the M version. We give our input and do the discussions and agreements together. For example, the new standard 5 Series' biggest engine is a V8, but the M5 has a V10. So, at the very beginning, we gave them the packaging data for our new 10-cylinder engine.

Then the standard car starts in development. We wait until the body design and initial crash tests are done, then build our first prototypes; we do not have the capability to do our own durability and crash testing. We do the M development in parallel with the standard car and synchronize at special points. We design the whole M car, beginning with the standard body, and do the modifications and final adjustments to make a very specific M car.

We also have to make sure we can build the M version on the normal assembly line—take the bodies out, do the modifications on a "bypass" and bring them back to the normal line. That is how we handle the complexity.

**Bimmer:** Will there be a Z4 M?

**Bruhnke:** There was a Z3 M in the past. We check every BMW series car to see if it makes sense to design an M version. It has to be a typical M car. If it makes sense, and if we can do a good business case, then we bring that position to the members of the Board, and maybe we get the OK for one or another product.

**Bimmer:** We're guessing that new M versions of any of those cars—like the M5 vs. the standard 5—will be substantial enhancements over the normal versions but with relatively subtle appearance differences.

**Bruhnke:** If we do an M, we do an M. Otherwise it would be just a BMW with more performance.

Look at the new M5. It is a typical M. A normal customer says, "What a powerful BMW." The connoisseur says, "Oh, that's an M." There is something different (about it). We cannot add big spoilers and things like that, but if you see the car coming in the mirror, you say, "Hey, it's an M." If you know what an M is, you should recognize it in the mirror.

**Bimmer:** How would you sum up the mission of BMW M?

**Bruhnke:** Individual style and performance and experience.