



## Ola Källenius: Daimler's new Swedish CEO has eyes set on digital future for Stuttgart giant



Mention Ola Källenius, the soon-to-be boss of Daimler, and industry watchers note that he is the first non-German to take the role. That is significant but there is more to the Swede who will now guide the auto giant into the first stage of its digital future.

He will come directly from two years as head of Daimler's Mercedes Benz R&D division, an experience that allowed him to get to grips with new propulsion technologies and connectivity solutions. The new Mercedes A-Class may not be best-in-class in some areas, but it has broken new ground with its in-car display technology and voice activated systems at its price point. This must in part be driven by Källenius's time in R&D

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Critics have said he lacks engineering skills. But isn't that the point? It may be a positive for a company that seeks to transform itself to sell applications, services and mobility solutions, as well as



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cars in the digital age.

He has also got to know the business thoroughly with previous roles in procurement, engine emissions and as MD of AMG, the sports division of MB.

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Källenius is an auto industry leader very much at home in the digital sphere. In a recent blog, he lauds his native country's adoption of electric vehicle and the burgeoning tech start up community developing around the Swedish capital Stockholm.

"For many people Sweden is the land of moose. However, when traveling in my homeland I seldom encounter our national animal trudging through the forests. What inspires me much more are our smart unicorns: start-ups like Spotify or SoundCloud valued at a billion. Young, innovative-minded spirits find themselves in an open-minded society that heartily embraces new ideas that enrich their everyday lives." he writes of his home country.

[embed]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9YBDZkFNcl>[/embed]

Electrifying: Mercedes new EQC, part of an expanding EV line from Daimler

That blog, is well worth reading. Written just weeks before his appointment it takes on greater significance for the future of Daimler. It's not just PR. Källenius has a record of bigging up endless possibilities the digital future will bring to the auto and other industries.

In interviews and media spots he talks constantly of innovation, mobility and digital change; he uses the cute phrase that the car was once a "mechanical island". He does not talk much about dynamics or performance; instead he has a brand marketers eye for digital opportunities.

[embed]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CU0SYHpjyQ>[/embed]

Mr Digital: Källenius on the future of mobility (Credit: ESMT Berlin)

"Eventually, our goal is to have full autonomous drive as an option that you can select when you buy



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a car. We've always been a matter of heart and mind. We sell dreams, it's the combination of emotion and intelligence that forms the magic behind a Mercedes-Benz." he told an interviewer at Digital Trends.

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Daimler CV

Board Member, Mercedes-Benz Cars Sales, 2015

EVP, Mercedes-Benz Cars Sales, Daimler AG, 2013

Vice President, CEO of Mercedes-AMG GmbH, Affalterbach, 2010

Vice President, President & CEO, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc., Tuscaloosa (USA), 2009

Managing Director, Mercedes-Benz HighPerformanceEngines Ltd., Brixworth (Great Britain), 2005

Executive Director, Operations, McLaren Automotive Ltd., Woking (Great Britain), 2003

Director, Project Alliance, Materials Purchasing Mercedes-Benz Passenger Cars, DaimlerChrysler AG, Stuttgart, 2001

Senior Manager, Engine and Exhaust Gas Management and Electronic Engine Components, DaimlerChrysler AG, Stuttgart, 2000

Senior Manager, Corporate Controlling, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc., Tuscaloosa (USA), 1998

Manager, Corporate Controlling, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc., Tuscaloosa (USA), 1995