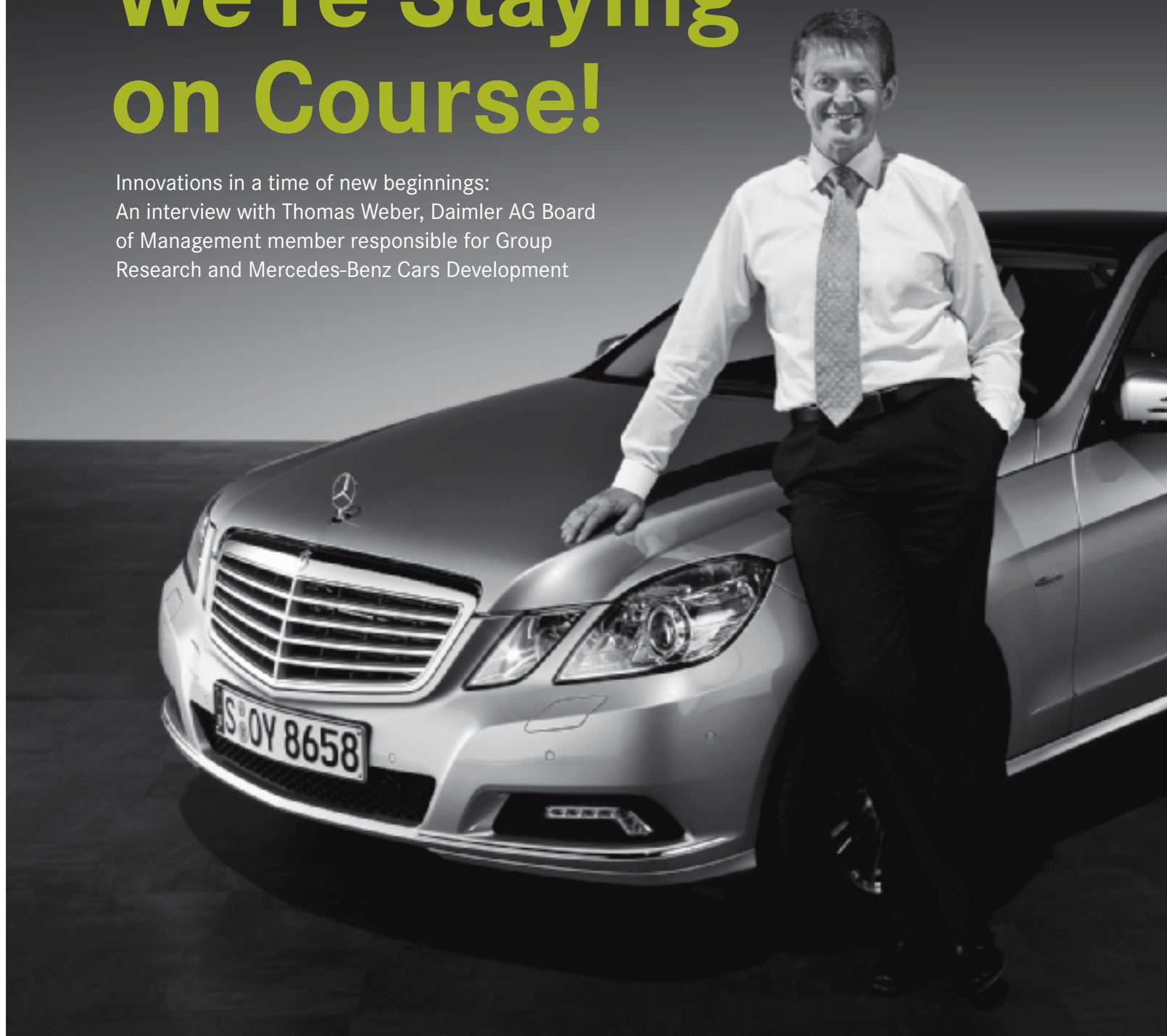


INTERVIEW

We're Staying on Course!

Innovations in a time of new beginnings:
An interview with Thomas Weber, Daimler AG Board
of Management member responsible for Group
Research and Mercedes-Benz Cars Development



The name “Daimler” is synonymous with innovative vehicle design. In the current economic situation, everyone is having to cut costs – and this applies especially to the automotive industry. Does this mean that Daimler will be less innovative in the future?

Thomas Weber: Certainly not. The name “Daimler” has always been synonymous with innovation, safety, and comfort. This will continue to be the case in the future. As the inventor of the automobile, we have always set the milestones for safety and assistance systems, and we will continue to do so. We are leading the way when it comes to researching and developing alternative drive systems – not only with regard to passenger cars but also commercial vehicles. For example, every day our hybrid buses ferry thousands of people safely to their destinations worldwide in an environmentally friendly manner. We are also striking out in new directions to realize mobility concepts for the future – for example, with our car2go projects in Ulm, Germany, and Austin, Texas. We will continue to be innovative, but in the current situation we will have to use the available means more efficiently and in a more targeted manner.

In view of the necessary economizing measures, is it possible to reach the ambitious goals that have been set for research and development?

Thomas Weber: I’d like to emphasize that we’re staying on course! Especially in times like these, we have to continue implementing the strategies that are crucial to our company’s future success. For those of us at Group Research and Mercedes-Benz Cars Development, this primarily means further promoting green technologies, implementing our vision of accident-free driving, and developing fascinating and innovative vehicles of outstanding quality. We don’t plan to cut corners when it comes to honing our ability to face tomorrow’s challenges. On the contrary, we’re keeping our foot on the gas.

But in order to reach such ambitious goals you’ll need some financial leeway, won’t you?

Thomas Weber: That’s right. One way to reach our goals will be to cut costs by further boosting our efficiency. For example, we’ve just combined all of our research and development activities related to electric mobility in a new research department called “E-Drive & Future Mobility.” This will enable us to develop modules in a uniform manner according to the one-source principle. That way we’ll put our innovative electric mobility technologies on the road not only faster but also more cost-efficiently. And that’s good news for all of Daimler’s divisions. Alongside passenger cars, vans, trucks and buses will also benefit.

You’ve mentioned e-drive and the sustainable mobility of the future. Can you briefly describe how we’re going to get there?

Thomas Weber: The automotive industry is on the threshold of a paradigm shift. One stage of the road to

sustainable mobility is the consistent enhancement of our highly efficient combustion engines. Take for example our new four-cylinder diesel engine, the OM651, which powers the new E-Class and reduces fuel consumption to around just five liters per 100 kilometers. Thanks to smart modular hybridization, such high-tech engines can be made even more efficient. That is a further step that we will be taking. The Mercedes-Benz S 400 HYBRID is a fascinating vehicle that combines environmental friendliness, safety, and comfort. Our long-term goal remains zero-emission driving with battery-powered electric or fuel cell drives. But let me emphasize that battery-powered and fuel cell-powered drive systems do not represent alternative development processes. The two technologies complement each other not only in terms of their respective ranges. That’s because they both involve propulsion on the basis of electricity, which is why we have adopted a modular system approach toward electric transportation. This is impressively demonstrated by our Concept BlueZERO.

You have already integrated the lithium-ion battery into a vehicle, but do you have sufficient corporate know-how to go further with this key technology?

Thomas Weber: We can go much further with it. Together with Evonik we have established Deutsche Accumotive GmbH in Nabern, Germany, which makes us the only automaker worldwide that can develop, produce,

“Electric mobility won’t be available for everyone in the short term”

Thomas Weber

and sell its own lithium-ion batteries. And through our recent strategic acquisition of a share in Tesla Motors we have taken a further key step toward accelerating the worldwide commercialization of electric drive systems.

So there aren’t any further obstacles to zero-emission driving with electric vehicles?

Thomas Weber: I must strongly warn against false expectations. Electric mobility won’t be available for everyone in the short term, but we’re working hard to make it possible. We’re still talking only about small batches of fully electric vehicles. The vision of large-scale zero-emission driving at affordable prices won’t become a reality overnight. That’s because the challenges associated with range, infrastructure, recharging time, and uniform service station standards must be overcome before electric mobility becomes a practical everyday option. These are issues Daimler is addressing. We are systematically forming the partnerships that will be needed here – for example, with energy suppliers like RWE, Vattenfall, and Enel, as well as with oil companies such as Shell and Total.

