Vehicle Model Evolution
Will a redesign alienate current customers?

Objective
Vehicle models of all kinds go through evolutions for a variety of reasons. These shifts could be the result of updated technology, customer feedback, or an effort to attract a new customer. However, if you miss the mark, model evolutions run the risk of leaving current customers unhappy while failing to attract new ones. Our client, an international marine manufacturer, wanted to ensure that they didn’t miss on either and their new design would improve market share and brand image. Initially, we conducted focus groups with various audiences of interest, then quantified approval of the conceptual design changes through an online survey, but that wasn’t enough to sell the new models internally to the organization’s leadership team due to concerns that the model change would alienate their current customers.

Approach
We got creative and went back to the customers that owned specific models and invited them - along with any family and friends who ride with them - to see and test the new vehicles. During each session, we let the small groups virtually walk through the new model using VR glasses and reviewed large scale, detailed images of the new model. During both activities, we ran the participants through a series of questions and video recorded everything. For the grand finale, we let the customers each ride the prototype which was equipped with GoPro cameras to capture their reactions and experience and concluded this phase with a short conversation focused on comparing the ride to their current model.

Results
If a picture speaks a thousand words, then video speaks millions. We combined video clips from each activity and shared a handful of short videos with our client’s leadership team. Nobody could deny that the customers’ expressions, excitement, and positive feedback about the evolved design not only satisfied the current customers, but also had their younger, highly influential children excited about the brand. With this authentic voice - and video - of the customer validating the previous work already done, leadership quickly signed off on production of the evolved model.

For more information contact: Mike Bard mbard@ksrinc.com