

# FOSSIL LAUNCH™



**The VW ID. Buzz:** How 20 Years of Development Produced a Product One Generation Behind

**20+ Years**  
in development

**€90B+**  
VW Group EV platform commitment

**1 Model Year**  
before US market exit

## WHAT IS A FOSSIL LAUNCH™?

**A Fossil Launch™ is what happens when a company spends years, sometimes an entire decade or more, and significant capital developing a product.** Then it arrives, and on day one, it's already behind.

Think about what a fossil actually is: the preserved remains of something that was once alive, frozen at the exact moment it stopped evolving. It didn't die ugly. It just stopped moving while the world kept going. Then someone excavates it, dusts it off, and presents it to the world as something new.

Not because the team wasn't talented. Not because the vision was wrong. But because the development timeline outran market reality. By the time the product reaches consumers, the world has moved.

The VW ID. Buzz may be the **most public example** of the **Fossil Launch™** phenomenon in recent memory.

## A 20+ YEAR DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

### From Vision to... Wait

VW's love affair with the idea of an electric Bus stretches back over two decades.

Each concept that came and went without a production decision was another layer of sediment, another year in which the market moved forward while the product stayed suspended, preserved in the amber of corporate ambition.

By the time the production version finally arrived, it was carrying the weight of an entire generation's worth of expectations and a platform that VW's own engineers had already moved past.

- 2001** **VW Microbus Concept debuts.** A modern electric-inspired Bus for the 21st century. The dream is born.
- 2011** **VW Bulli Concept** (Geneva Motor Show). Smaller, explicitly electric, unmistakably nostalgic. Consumer reaction: overwhelmingly positive. Production decision: not yet.
- 2015** **Dieselgate.** VW's emissions scandal forces an accelerated pivot to EVs. The MEB platform — which will eventually underpin the ID. Buzz — enters serious development.
- 2016** **VW BUDD-e Concept revealed at CES, Las Vegas.** The first MEB-based concept. The hype machine accelerates.
- 2017** **ID. Buzz Concept revealed at Detroit and Geneva.** CEO Herbert Diess confirms: going into production. Target date: 2022. The internet loses its mind.
- 2022** **Production ID. Buzz officially revealed** (March 9). Built at VW's Hanover plant on the MEB platform — the same 400V architecture as the ID.4. European sales begin Q4.
- 2023** **Full European sales year.** US anticipation builds; EV market is moving fast.
- 2024** **US launch.** Mid-year. \$60,000+ price. No federal tax credit. 1,162 units sold in a partial year.
- 2025** **Sales stall.** Dealers discount \$15,000–\$25,000 off MSRP. Q2 sales: 564 units. Production paused at Hanover. 2026 US model year cancelled for US.
- 2026+** **Expected return as a 2027 model, with minor upgrades.** The EV market will have moved on again.

# THE PART THAT HURTS: IT'S A VW GROUP PROBLEM

**You don't need to compare the ID Buzz to another company.** Just look at what else VW Group was building.

The Audi Q6 e-tron and Porsche Macan EV (both VW Group vehicles) launched on an entirely new platform called PPE, with 800-volt architecture, dramatically better range, and DC charging speeds that Edmunds called the fastest they had ever recorded.

The ID. Buzz arrived preserved in the amber of a platform decision made years earlier. While VW Group's engineers were building the future in one hall, the ID. Buzz was being excavated from another era and finished in another.

METRIC	VW ID. BUZZ (2025)	AUDI Q6 E-TRON (2025)	PORSCHE MACAN EV (2025)
<b>EPA Range</b>	231-234 miles	307-321 miles	315 miles
<b>DC Fast Charge Peak</b>	200 kW	270 kW	285 kW
<b>Electrical Architecture</b>	MEB (400V)	PPE (800V)	PPE (800V)
<b>10-80% Charge Time</b>	~30 min	~25 min	~21 min
<b>US Starting Price</b>	\$60,000+	~\$65,000	~\$80,000
<b>US Fed. Tax Credit (\$7,500)</b>	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<b>VW Group Platform Tier</b>	Previous-gen	Current-gen	Current-gen

VW Group **invested in the future.** Drug their heels. Then launched a **product of the past.**

## THE NUMBERS

In what should have been its stride...

**1,162**

US units sold at launch (mid-2024 partial year)

**564**

US units sold in Q2 2025, in what should have been its stride

**0**

2026 model years built for the US market

A product **two decades** in the making didn't make it **two years in market.**

# THERE'S ANOTHER QUESTION NOBODY ASKED

**Most people in product development are familiar with the adoption curve.** That's the arc from innovators to early adopters to early majority to late majority to laggards. What fewer people pay attention to is the sales curve. And here's the thing: they don't mirror each other.

**Sales can peak well before the majority of adopters have committed, especially in fast-moving technology categories.** By the time the late majority arrives, the competitive ceiling has already come down, price pressure has gone up, and the customers who were willing to pay a premium for the experience have already moved on. What's left is a shrinking pool of buyers with rising price sensitivity and very little tolerance for compromise.

**Fossil Launches don't land at the peak of the curve.** They land in the long tail — the extinction zone, where markets wind down, margins compress, and the only customers left are the ones with very specific needs and very little patience for a product that should have arrived years ago. No one building the product stops to ask: "Where will we actually be on the sales curve when this thing ships?" That question should be mandatory at every major development gate. It almost never is.

For the ID. Buzz, this was **10X worse** than a typical **Fossil Launch**.

It wasn't just entering a maturing EV market with yesterday's specs; it was arriving after 20 years of hype. Two decades of anticipation had already burned through the goodwill that should have cushioned a rough launch. The innovators who would have lined up for a quirky, nostalgic electric VW Bus in 2016 had already bought three other EVs. The mainstream buyers the ID. Buzz needed weren't willing to pay \$60,000+ for a van that charged slower and went less far than its own corporate siblings. The hype wasn't an asset at launch. By then, it was a liability.

## SO HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

**Almost never because of bad intentions.**

**But look at what's really at the root of every Fossil Launch — it's always the same thing:** the customer's voice wasn't in the room when the decisions were made.

Somewhere along the way, the people making the decisions started believing they knew better than the market they were serving. That's corporate ego. And once it sets in, it doesn't travel alone — it brings corporate momentum with it. Programs get big, budgets get committed, reputations get attached. And the question nobody wants to ask out loud, "*Would our customers actually choose this?*," stops getting asked. Meanwhile, the decisions that should have been revisited keep calcifying. Layer by layer, year by year, until the product is as rigid and fixed as the thing it's named after.

**The ID. Buzz is a textbook case.** Three specific decisions sealed the outcome, a pattern The Future Mill has seen repeat across industries.

**The platform decision was locked in years before launch.** By the time the ID. Buzz reached consumers, VW Group's own engineers had already moved to a better architecture. The gap wasn't a surprise internally. It just wasn't a reason to stop.

**The competitive set was never honestly stress-tested.** If you'd put the ID. Buzz's range and charging specs in front of real consumers, alongside two cars from VW Group's own garage, the answer would have been uncomfortable. That conversation needed to happen years earlier, not at launch.

**Heritage was asked to cover a technology gap.** The VW Bus has enormous emotional equity. It's a legitimate asset. But it was doing too much work here. Consumers are nostalgic, but they're not irrational. When the math doesn't work, sentiment doesn't save you.

# WHAT THE FUTURE MILL DOES ABOUT FOSSIL LAUNCHES

**Concept Testing:** pressure-test consumer value before platform decisions are locked

**Competitive Benchmarking:** across the full landscape, including your own portfolio

**Stage-Gate and Agile reviews** with explicit Fossil Launch™ screening criteria

**Voice of the Customer integration** at every major development gate

**Fossil Launches are avoidable.** But only if you're willing to look at the hard questions early.

**That's the work The Future Mill does with clients.** Using tools like the *Make Tomorrow Today™* methodology, The Future Mill helps product teams stress-test consumer value before platform commitments are locked in.

That means bringing in the full competitive landscape, including what's happening in your own portfolio, and building in the development checkpoints that surface this kind of risk when there's still time to act on it.

**No one at VW set out to build a Fossil.** But somewhere along the way, the decisions calcified, layer by layer, year by year, until excavating a different path was no longer an option.

Finding that moment, before the decisions fossilize, is what The Future Mill is **built to do.**

## You already know if this sounds familiar.

**That recognition, that slight discomfort reading through this, is the signal.**

The window to change course **doesn't stay open.** The decisions that define a Fossil Launch rarely feel fatal when they're made. They calcify quietly, until they don't.



The Future Mill helps you find them before they harden. Let's have a conversation while there's still time to act.

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