

BUGATTI WORKING FROM HOME — KOSTAS PSARRIS AND THE MEA REGION



How the regional Bugatti representative in MEA keeps operations running from home

Bugatti just re-started the production in its Atelier yesterday after the temporary suspension caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although some of the most exclusive hyper sports cars are being assembled again, many Bugatti employees continue working from home as part of the company's health and safety measures. Home office has become a new working reality at all Bugatti sites around the world. Kostas Psarris for example, the brand's representative for all operations in the Middle East and Asia, and his team in the region are still running daily operations remotely from home.

Since April 2019 Kostas Psarris has been at the head of the regional Bugatti representation. In his role he leads and oversees the operations of the Bugatti partners in the Middle East and

Southeast Asia, and works on the long-term strategy, always exploring new opportunities for Bugatti. The global lockdown due to COVID-19 came in waves for Psarris and his team. "With East Asia being in the center of this health crisis in the early stages, our Asian dealerships had to react very quickly. Here in Dubai, however, we only had to go into confinement three weeks ago, so we had enough time to prepare for it", explains the 38-year-old Greek. When the local government implied social distancing in March, Psarris and his team had to find an alternative for the long planned Middle East premiere of the Chiron Pur Sport. The actual world premiere of the latest member of the Chiron family also did not take place as planned, following the cancellation of the Geneva Motor Show due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, and was held in private one-to-one viewings with individual customers. "Since many of our customers were very keen on seeing the hyper sports car in the flesh, though, we managed to organise individual presentations of the car in our showroom in Dubai — with great success."

The current situation is unlike anything Kostas Psarris has experienced in his twelve years within the automotive industry, leading him from Athens to Manchester and for the last six years to Dubai. The lack of a physical presence in the office isn't what's new for Psarris and his team, being used to travelling through a region that extends from Japan all the way to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, and even to Bugatti's headquarters in France. "9,514 kilometers and 5 time zones equal long working hours for us, and more often than not we have to work remotely. And not from the comfort of our own home, but in the offices of Bugatti partners on our travels, or airport lounges and hotel rooms." What Psarris is missing in home office, is the personal contact with his business partners and especially with the customers: "We consider ourselves lucky to have some of the most loyal Bugatti customers, real car enthusiasts, in our region. We enjoy meeting them, listening to their needs and ideas, showing them what we've been working on. Nothing replaces this face-to-face interaction, but of course we try our best to work around it with digital solutions." This way, his team managed to close some sales despite the unusual circumstances. Among them, the last available 'Edition Noire', a 20-unit special edition of the Chiron Sport that is now sold out.

Psarris is aware that the COVID-19-related challenges won't end now with the re-start of production in France, or with de-confinement in the markets of the MEA region. The year's planning has to be completely changed as major events are being cancelled, postponed to the last quarter of 2020 or even to 2021, like the Olympic Games in Tokyo, or the Expo in Dubai. Also the summer trips to Europe for many of the Bugatti customers often used for a visit to Molsheim and Bugatti test drives will not happen this year. "We have to re-shuffle all of our original plans, come up with new ideas and solutions. Just as we accepted the challenge to change our working habits to an entirely digital environment, we are now preparing online activities like expert talks for our customers, so that they can discuss with our engineers and designers." Psarris is convinced that this crisis will lead to innovation, with the ones adapting best coming out stronger than before.

The highlight of 2020 for the customers and journalists in the region won't be digital, though, according to Psarris: "We are planning several test drive events with the Chiron Pur Sport towards the end of the year. Anyone who is passionate about cars, like me, will be blown away by the performance of the Pur Sport." The latest Chiron derivative is devoted entirely to agility and driving dynamics. With its entirely new chassis setup, shorter gear ratios, important weight savings, and a design supporting a changed aerodynamic layout, the Chiron Pur Sport improves the already outstanding acceleration and elasticity figures of the Chiron. "I'm looking forward to the smiles on all the faces of the drivers stepping out of the car after their test drives."

Kostas Psarris concludes his thoughts on confinement with some words on Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer, reflection and community for Muslims worldwide. This year, Ramadan started on April 23rd and will go on for exactly one month. "Unlike one might think, Ramadan here in the Middle East is usually a very productive time for business, especially for personal relationships with the customers", Psarris explains. "It's a time for reflection, with less mental stress than our daily lives usually put on us. I hold the many get-togethers after 'iftar', the nightly feast that breaks the fast, in very dear memory, not only on a professional, but even more on a personal level. I wish everyone a blessed Ramadan, despite these unusual circumstances."