

# Schuler's Industrial Revolution

Despite product, location, and market challenges, Schuler AG redefines not only the transfer-press industry but also the business-to-business product launch, hosting a factory-based event that marries authenticity with high-tech theatrics to generate 200 percent more product-info requests than anticipated. *By Linda Armstrong*

When it comes to product-launch events, some marketers have it made. After all, given the chance, who wouldn't want to test drive the new Aston Martin Virage? And what gamer wouldn't die a thousand virtual deaths just to get his or her controllers on "Grand Theft Auto V"? Then there's the holy grail of products that launch themselves: anything starting with a lowercase "I." Given Apple Inc.'s army of brand loyalists and history of exceptional design and innovation, it need merely announce an upcoming product, and the preorders start rolling in.

But what if you're selling to businesses as opposed to consumers, and you don't have a legion of brand loyalists salivating for your newest release? What if instead of being alluring and agile, your product is as big as a bus and about as sexy as Steve Buscemi? And what if that product has a seven-figure price tag and a marathon-long buying cycle, and requires far more than a Genius Bar visit to comprehend?

These what-if scenarios, and then some, were the harsh reality for

## PRODUCT LAUNCH

**Company:** Schuler AG

**Event:** TwinServo Technology Product Launch

**Objectives:** Debut an innovative transfer press, expand Schuler's customer base, generate post-event interest, and promote the company as a cutting-edge innovator.

**Strategy:** Devise a one-day product launch in Schuler's Erfurt, Germany, factory, to capture attendees' interest and help them appreciate its game-changing innovations.

**Tactics:** Pair the authentic factory environment with high-tech event technologies to create a unique experience for the audience. Incorporate delightful elements and a hands-on demonstration to craft an emotional event that mirrors the product's level of innovation.

**Results:** Garnered an unexpected 25 print and online media articles and local TV coverage. Exceeded post-event meeting and information requests by 200 percent, prompting Schuler to host three educational workshops to handle the onslaught.

**Creative Agency:** The Companies GmbH, [www.thecompanies.de](http://www.thecompanies.de)

**Production Agencies:** Atelier Weber Meiler GbR, [www.atelier-wm.de](http://www.atelier-wm.de); Georg Veit Lichtdesign, [www.georgveit.com](http://www.georgveit.com); The Companies GmbH, [www.thecompanies.de](http://www.thecompanies.de); Visuarte, [www.visuarte.com](http://www.visuarte.com)

**Budget:** \$339,350

Schuler AG, a maker of metal-forming machinery based in Goppingen, Germany. In September 2012, Schuler debuted its TwinServo Technology, which is built into its newly redesigned transfer press. Mostly used to mass manufacture metal components for the automotive industry, the 20-foot-long press stands 21 feet high and weighs several tons. Plus, Schuler's new complex machinery requires considerable education to operate, and at the time of its launch, the only press available for viewing was installed in Schuler's production facility in former East Germany.

As if Schuler's obstacles weren't daunting enough, the majority of its target market for the launch event comprised decision makers from the German automotive industry — i.e., uber-serious engineering types. And while this particular audience was usually attracted to new machinery like paparazzi to a "Bieber-behaving-badly" sighting, they weren't likely to pitch a tent in front of the factory just to be the first of their friends to own a new transfer press. Thus, before this audience would ante up for a piece