

# A Human-Centered Path for a Year Like No Other

December 22, 2020

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At Lexus, 2020 opened as years normally do for the brand, with clarity of vision. That vision took in style and design, engineering and innovation, all delivered in the spirit of “omotenashi,” the hospitality of anticipating a guest’s needs. Little could anyone know that the same thoughtful care would soon adapt to serve needs that

could never have been imagined, let alone have anticipated.

By early spring, the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to impact the country. Through the lens of human-centered design, Lexus considered the needs of its guests, employees and dealers, adapting to conditions that were constantly in motion. Unpredictable and unprecedented as 2020 has been, Lexus was ready. The way through the unfolding crisis, and the year, turned out to be the same path forged by Lexus since its inception: People First.

### **Human Centered by Design**

But, in January of 2020, all of that was yet to come. The year sprang fast out of the blocks when, in just 3 minutes, the first 2021 Lexus LC 500 convertible to roll off the line was [auctioned](#) off by Barrett-Jackson auctioneers before an ecstatic crowd in Phoenix. Benefitting two charities, the \$2 million gavel price went toward The Bob Woodruff Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs of America. By the time the model arrived in [dealerships](#) in July, exhilaration behind the wheel, alone or with a member of your quarantine pod, took on new significance. After months of being cooped up at home, summer was a time to [celebrate the need to get out](#), reconnect with the world safely, and, with the top down, enjoy a feeling of freedom.

The centerpiece of the year hit at its midpoint with the launch of the [2021 Lexus IS sedan](#), a sports sedan with a two-decades long bond between driver and machine. By June, with the remaining slate of U.S. auto shows postponed or canceled due to the pandemic, Lexus was proving the adage that the greatest constraints bring the greatest creativity. Unable to reveal the car in a traditional event setting, [Lexus AR Play](#) was conceived to unveil the IS in an immersive augmented reality app. Taking the Lexus core value of “genchi genbutsu” or “go and see” to the virtual realm invited Lexus guests to see the IS 350 in 3-D, long before it arrived in showrooms.



Anticipating the thrill brought by variety, the [2021 Lexus Black Line](#) special editions arrived in dealerships beginning in summer, bringing with them a sense of renewal. Exclusive exterior colors and interior stitching, singular accents, and distinctive details offered new sights and inspired new thoughts. Accompanying each Black Line special edition is an exclusive collection of travel cases crafted in collaboration with travel enthusiasts' brand [Zero Halliburton](#)<sup>®</sup>. Reminding us that road is where we found connection this year, the Black Line Edition lineup [offered something for every type of driver](#): The [RX F SPORT](#) lent itself to a split personality with a limited-run in both the hybrid and gas models; the [UX F SPORT](#) brought its A-game; the [RC](#) rekindled feelings of performance-driven dynamism; the [ES family](#) showed its fun side; and the [NX Hybrid F Sport](#) gave luxury

crossover drivers a new way to style their ride.

The year brought other testaments to the power of performance. The ES dynasty expanded by adding Dynamic Torque Control AWD to the all-new [ES 250 AWD](#), for both better traction and a more fuel-efficient gas model. The expressive [2021 RC and RC F Fuji Speedway Edition](#) debuted in September. In October, the [J201 Concept](#) not only offered a bold new take on the Lexus LX 570 flagship, it foresaw the rise of overlanding, the ultimate in socially distanced exploration for Experiential Adventurers.

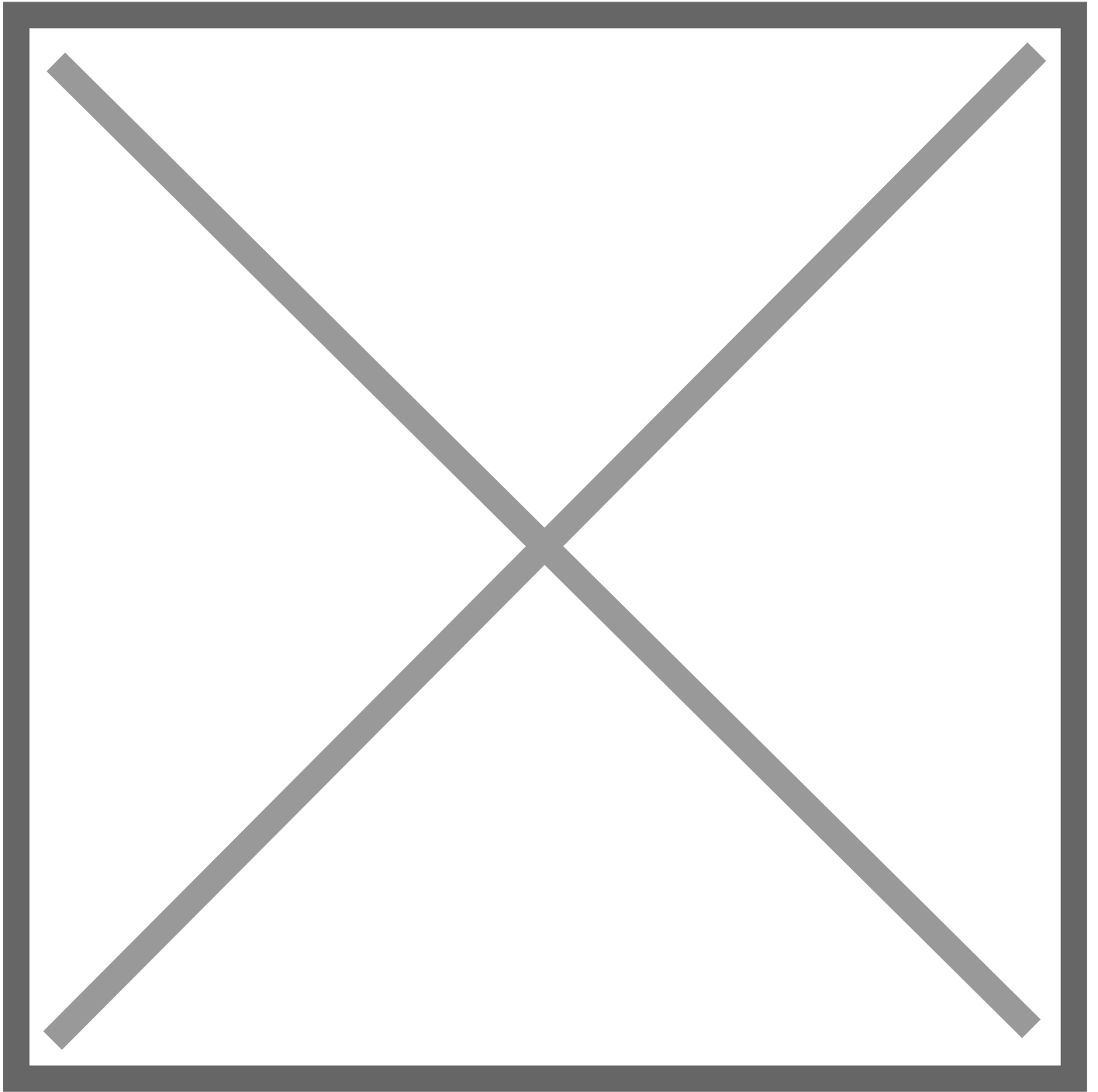
And before the year came to a close, Lexus announced the next step in its electrification strategy, 'Lexus Electrified,' with the arrival of [DIRECT4](#), a new electric drive system designed for its future generation of battery electric and hybrid electric vehicles.

## **Community Values**

On a parallel track, as the impact of the pandemic began to be felt, Lexus swung into action to help the communities it has long considered family. Fast out of the blocks again was the [response to the crisis by Lexus dealers](#) who sped to lend a helping hand, from feeding those on the front lines to offering complimentary services. "People First" was the [guiding principle](#) in the collective effort to offer solutions and make a difference.

At the same time, a historic crisis was unfolding across the network of restaurants and chefs woven into the Lexus family, Lexus Culinary Masters used [donations from Lexus](#) to serve meals to medical workers, make meal kits for their own staff, and support restaurant employees.

And in May, the Toyota/Lexus Minority Owners Dealership Association (TLMODA) partnered with The Salvation Army to sponsor a [National COVID-19 Day of Service](#) to distribute 4,800 grocery boxes across 17 states. As needs evolved, so did the response, with compassion at the forefront.



As threads in the fabric of each community, Lexus culinary partners continue to stay connected to local needs. To offer those who could use a break from home, with or without their “pod,” [Lexus Culinary Cinema](#) joined the revitalized drive-in movie scene. With [Culinary Perspectives](#) Lexus launched its first-ever global digital cookbook. And, in its efforts to help bring back a taste of normal life, Lexus announced the addition of [Chef Nickolas Martinez](#) to the award-winning Culinary Master roster. Plus, the re-opening of INTERSECT BY LEXUS in New York came in the fall with the help of [restaurant-in-residence](#), The Grey, from Savannah, Ga., helmed by Executive Chef and Partner, Mashama Bailey.

## **Anticipate, Innovate, Captivate**

Human innovation and invention were everywhere to be found in 2020. This year showed us that the future is closer than we think as Lexus kicked off the new decade by releasing its [“Future of Luxury” report](#). Foretelling new thinking that puts humans at the center speaks to our emotions and delights the senses, the results show that luxury is about experiences first and foremost. Near the top of respondents’ wish list: a digital detox.

In the same spirit of anticipation for the social consequences of rapid change, Lexus partnered with the TED Fellows program to develop [new designs for automated vehicles](#) that prioritize people over technology.

With each month, 2020 brought new shifts in the way we see, underscoring the human capacity to seek and use inspiration. In the spring, writer and champion of curiosity, Malcolm Gladwell, brought the fine detail of the *genchi genbutsu* mindset to the [exclusive podcast series](#), “Go and See.” Gladwell “went and saw,” traveling to Japan to immerse himself in Lexus cultures and values, [bringing back his discoveries](#) to an appreciative at-home audience.



In March, human-centered design became personal in a one-of-a-kind accessible ride-on vehicle for a child with cerebral palsy, produced in a partnership between [Lexus and the Cerebral Palsy Foundation](#). The commitment to bring joy and freedom of movement to all is a driving force at Lexus, where vehicles are created around the art and science of human needs.

London-based tattoo artist Claudia De Sabe also carried wonder to the armchair traveler through her feat of the [world's first tattooed car](#). This singular Lexus UX emblazoned with koi, snakes and plants pays tribute to the tradition of Takumi master craftsmen who bring their precision to the car-making process at Lexus.

Further bearing witness to the power of human ingenuity, the [Lexus Design Awards judging panel](#) recognized Kenyan design group, Bell Tower, for its entry [“Open Source Communities,”](#) which offers smart open-source solutions for affordable communities with sustainable clean water resources.

## **The Road Ahead**

As 2020 winds down, the home continues to be the focal point, leading to one final creative approach to the fundamental need for beauty. Lexus [Driveway Moments](#) and [Art of the Driveway](#) arrive just in time to showcase the enduring spirit of human connection. Even when it seemed we were the furthest apart, celebrations on driveways brought people together to mark milestones. This year, driveways were transformed into canvases for impressive and inspiring chalk art masterpieces. Artists elevated the familiar and some [Lexus dealerships used their driveways](#) to help raise money for Toys for Tots in the holiday spirit of giving.





2020 has shown time and again that the path forward is a shared journey. It is through care and thought for each other that the journey will be successful. Little of this year was expected. We all learned that we are more alike than we are different, and we can lean on shared human experiences to help guide us through these times. To echo the Lexus Covenant and its anchoring call to believe in what's possible, "We can, we will."