

This Week's Issue

## Respecting young shopper is vital to Sonic sales pitch

**Chevrolet dealers get video training**

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Chevrolet says dealers have to learn that selling the Sonic -- an LTZ sedan is shown -- to a 30-year-old isn't like selling an Impala to a customer who's 30 years older.

SAN FRANCISCO -- Chevrolet is training dealers how to sell the new Sonic subcompact to the car's targeted buyers -- consumers who are 18 to 29 years old.

Dealers are being told that if they want to turn young shoppers on to the Sonic they need to know what showroom practices have turned off those shoppers in the past.

The training features a video of recent car purchasers in that age category. Each customer in the video describes a range of negative experiences he or she had while shopping for a car.

"We are asking our salespeople to understand this customer group and basically listen to them and follow the advice that the customers are giving them," Margaret Brookes, Chevrolet's product marketing director, said last week at a press event here.

Among the complaints described in the video are salespeople who:

-- Didn't know the product.

-- Demanded that a parent be involved in the transaction.

-- Ignored customers standing in a showroom because they wore jeans and a T-shirt.

The training for dealers starts this week and will be held at 35 regional events. It is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

"We are taking dealers through the most comprehensive consumer profiles that we have ever done," said John McFarland, manager of global market strategy for General Motors.

McFarland said that many Sonic shoppers are college graduates and usually have done extensive research.

Buyers in that age group on average spend about 16 hours studying their car purchase on the Internet, he said.

Brookes said the people shown in the training videos "want to be respected. They wanted to send the message that they will do their homework, and so the salespeople need to also do their homework."

The Sonic went on sale in August. Prices start at \$14,495, including freight.