

BUYING A NEW VEHICLE – PART I



Ralph Seekins

A couple of high school kids recently asked me: “So, Mr. Seekins, what’s the best way to buy a new car?” That question started a long discussion between this old automobile dealer and a couple of teenagers who will probably – someday – buy their first new vehicle. Here’s some of what I told them.

For full disclosure, I’m not a new car or truck buyer. If I bought one, I’d buy it from myself, and having been a Ford-Lincoln dealer for the 35th year, I’d buy either a Ford or Lincoln. However, I’ve helped thousands of people buy new cars and trucks over the last 40 years and as a result, I have some strong suggestions on how one might go about the process.

First, I absolutely suggest anyone considering a new car or truck determine what type of vehicle he or she believes he or she NEEDS before visiting a dealership. And, when I say what type, I include the brand. That’s important for a number of reasons – which we will get into farther in this discussion.

As a seller, I’ve always tried to determine, what the prospective

buyer WANTS and then what he or she actually NEEDS. And, frankly, based on years of experience, a lot of folks are motivated more by what they WANT instead of what they NEED. For example, I recall one particular couple. He really wanted a Mustang GT Convertible. It was his dream car and he wanted it right then. But he and his wife had four children. I could sell them the Mustang – what he wanted – but two weeks later he’d hate the car and hate me for “selling” it to him. I directed this couple to a very attractive seven passenger vehicle that they eventually bought. His wife thanked me profusely and several months later he saw me and told how much he liked their new car. It was just what they “NEEDED”, he said. That family has bought all their cars and trucks from us now for close to 20 years.

When you have determined what requirements your new car or truck needs to meet, you are one step ahead of most folks who start shopping for a new vehicle.

Now that you have a good idea what your needs are, the next step is to figure out WHO to buy from. Bear with me here. I know this isn’t the step most folks take at this point. But this is how I would do it.

The most valuable asset any prospective buyer can have is a truly professional salesperson – someone who will work with them to get the right vehicle at the right price. So, if you were interested in a new Ford pickup, I suggest you ask a couple friends who recently

purchased a new car or truck from our dealership who their salesperson was and how satisfied they were with their purchase experience.

A truly professional salesperson understands that the success of his or her career depends on treating buyers fairly and well. The majority of these professionals’ sales come from repeat and referral buyers and they don’t get those repeats or referrals unless they have well satisfied, fairly treated owners.

A truly professional salesperson will work at a dealership that encourages him or her to work fairly and honestly with every potential buyer. He or she knows that the dealership needs to make a fair profit on the vehicles they sell and that buyers should also get a fair deal on what they purchase. You’ll always find professionals working for the benefit of both the dealership and for the buyer. If they can’t do that, the great ones move to a dealership where they can establish long-term customer relationships. So, WHO to buy from determines WHERE to buy.

So, we’ve covered the WHO and WHERE of buying a new car or truck. Next week, let’s talk about the WHAT to buy and the HOW MUCH to pay parts of the equation.

Ralph Seekins has more than 42 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 35 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.