

In The Driver's Seat

Driving A Deal Before You Drive Off The Lot

by Bobby Hamilton

(NAPSA)—Buying a car for yourself or as a gift for someone involves a lot more than opening up your checkbook.

You'll need to do some research before you jump in the driver's seat. According to Brad Eggleston,



Hamilton

vice president of AutoVantage, "To help you select the best gift for yourself or that special someone, there are a few things to consider before turning into the dealer lot."

Here are some tips:

First Things First

- Focus on what's important. Price, size, engine type, style, fuel economy and safety are among any buyer's main concerns.

The Internet can be a source of information to help answer those questions. Online resources can offer detailed vehicle descriptions, reviews, road tests and cost comparisons.

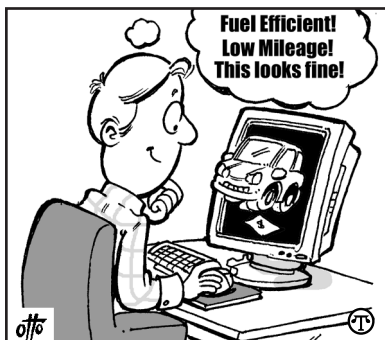
For example, the AutoVantage Web site offers a number of research tools for buyers of both new and used cars, including a calculator that can help a buyer determine a vehicle's value.

- If you still can't decide, calculate the cost of ownership over a five-year period by adding finance charges, fuel, insurance, maintenance and other such costs. The best deal should stand out.

Test Drive

- First, address the interior. Does it offer the space, comfort and features you're looking for?

- Concentrate on how the vehicle handles, steers, accelerates and stops. Drive a route with different road surfaces and condi-



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tions you expect to encounter. No need to rush.

Final Negotiations

- Finance beforehand, if possible, and allow room in your budget for additional fees like tax and title costs. Then figure out your bottom line price and stick to it.

- Keep in mind that the sticker price is a suggested amount. This figure is "usually the highest possible market price," according to the Kelley Blue Book. The invoice price is what the dealer paid for the car. Use this figure as your guide, and be sure to request price quotes from multiple dealerships.

- Leasing your vehicle may mean lower monthly payments and a new car every few years, but mileage limits and wear and tear sometimes leave drivers with additional costs. Buying a car will mean higher payments, but also complete ownership of your car.

Bobby Hamilton, a spokesman for AutoVantage, is the 2004 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Champion. To learn more, visit the Web site at www.autovantage.com or call toll free 1-800-876-7787.