

CAR CORNER

New or Used Car? Why Not Try CPO?

(NAPSA)—Maggie Leibert and her two teenage sons have finally convinced her husband to retire the sad 14-year-old convertible he just couldn't part with. So they've begun looking in earnest for their next car—a pre-owned vehicle to suit the entire family. But like many pre-owned vehicle shoppers, the Leibert's are leery of spending thousands of dollars to purchase a car from someone or someplace they didn't quite trust.

"There are a lot of people like me who don't want to spend the money for a new car, but also don't want to purchase a used car that they're going to regret," said Leibert, a cost control specialist who lives in Hermosa Beach, Calif. "Then we investigated certified pre-owned vehicles, and knew that was the way to go."

In the past, when consumers were in the market for a vehicle, they only had two choices, new or used. And while certified pre-owned (CPO) vehicles have been around for a number of years, lack of knowledge and access to information has left many consumers unsure about this third category.

"Although they're not new, CPO vehicles are as close to new car standards as you can get," said Marv Ingram, national certified pre-owned/fleet manager for luxury automaker Lexus. "Customers are given added peace of mind because manufacturers stand



behind these superior vehicles."

Each manufacturer's specific CPO program might differ, but there are a few simple guidelines that define CPO vehicles, Ingram said:

- Not all vehicles qualify. Generally, only late-model, low-mileage vehicles in exceptional overall condition are considered CPO-worthy.

- There is stringent inspection and reconditioning. All CPO vehicles must pass, meet or be brought up to a manufacturer's high standards.

- CPOs also come with manufacturer-backed warranties, perks and other benefits.

To make a consumer's CPO search easier, Lexus recently teamed with eight top automotive Web sites to call out "Certified Pre-Owned" as a distinct vehicle category on their home pages.

"After months of in-depth research, we found that consumers had limited knowledge

about CPO programs," Ingram said. "So we approached the top auto sites and proposed the idea of elevating CPO to a third, distinct category."

While Lexus has the advertising exclusive for all top-level CPO pages, each site maintains complete editorial control of the content to ensure that the information is objective, credible and, therefore, most valuable to consumers. The result: consumers now can learn more about CPO programs and search their favorite auto sites specifically for CPO vehicles. Participating sites include: Autobytel.com, AutoTrader.com, AutoWeb.com, cars.com, Cars Direct.com, Edmunds.com, Yahoo! Autos and AOL Autos.

In addition to providing better access to CPO vehicle listings, these sites offer a convenient way consumers can learn about CPO programs. Editorial content includes items such as what defines a CPO vehicle, what to look for when buying a CPO vehicle, comparisons of CPO programs and editorial reviews of CPO programs.

"I found the sites were really helpful. I was able to view and compare all the CPO programs for the vehicles I was interested in, and it helped me narrow my choices," Leibert said. "Now I can walk into any dealer and feel like I'm more educated about CPO vehicles."