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-Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

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GM needs better quality, not better marketing

History in the automotive industry does not support marketing associate professor Christie Nordhielm's position that General Motors' 60-day, money-back guarantee is a "bad idea" because it "suggests you need a guarantee," and that having Tony Soprano drive a GM product would be a better idea ("GM to offer money-back guarantee," Money, Friday).

Hyundai-Kia Automotive Group has been quite successful in using its generous 10-year, 100,000-mile warranty to convince consumers that its vehicles are now built far better than they once were. Which they are. Hyundai-Kia has had a steep rate of quality improvement. Moving up in rankings of well-built, well-guaranteed vehicles has been the keystone to Hyundai-Kia's growth over the past 15 years, without celebrity product

placement. Meanwhile, decades of celebrity-endorsed advertising from Detroit hasn't panned out nearly so well. Why would more of the same, more of Tony Soprano cruising Jersey in his Cadillac, be any different?

Building better cars that compete well in the marketplace — and being willing to back them up — that's real improvement, real change. And a much wiser road toward recovery.

Tony Polito, associate professor
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Stand by products

If General Motors really wants to sell some cars and turn its image around, the automaker should simply



GM deal: Buyers of new models can bring them back within 60 days.

offer a 100,000-mile, bumper-to-bumper warranty.

Such a move would say GM is willing to bet the company and its jobs on its cars. This 60-day, money-back offer is too little too late.

Mike Tune
Annandale, Va.

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GM to offer money-back guarantee

Promotion gets mixed reviews from experts

By James R. Healey
USA TODAY

General Motors' plan to offer a 60-day, money-back guarantee to get more buyers to consider its new cars and trucks has stirred plenty of argument among marketing and auto experts.

Some think the offer will backfire. "Bad idea. A money-back guarantee suggests you need a guarantee," says Christie Nordhielm, associate professor of marketing at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. She says the promotion, which begins Monday, might remind shoppers "of quality problems in the past" and make them less likely to consider GM, instead of more likely.

She says GM would do better to get celebrities to drive its cars and to place them prominently in movies and on TV. "Get (a) Tony Soprano to drive around in your cars."

Mike Jackson, former advertising and marketing vice president at GM, says the offer might reassure shoppers already considering GM models but is unlikely to "resonate with people who aren't willing to consider (its) vehicles." The guarantee won't "get them off the couch and down to the dealership," he says.

Stephanie Brinley of consultant AutoPacific disagrees. GM has "excellent product, and this might convince some people to try it who might not otherwise." And Jack Nerad, head market analyst at auto-shopping guide kbb.com, believes shoppers will see it as GM "putting its money where its mouth is."

An ad blitz begins Sunday for the program, which lets buyers of new 2009 or 2010 Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac or GMC vehicles return them for refunds within 60 days. GM marketing boss Bob Lutz pre-

GM's money-back program

Starting Monday, buyers of new General Motors vehicles can bring them back within 60 days for a refund. Some details:

- The money-back program is set to end Nov. 30 but might be extended.
- The vehicle must be a new 2009 or 2010 Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet or GMC.
- It must be returned 31 to 60 days from purchase.
- The vehicle must have been driven no more than 4,000 miles.
- If the purchase was made with a loan, payments on the loan must be current.
- More information will be posted Sunday at gm.com/guarantee.

Source: GM

► GM agrees to sell Opel, 5B

never convince them. American-car loyalists, we don't need to convince them. This is for the equivalent of the political undecideds."

Ads urge shoppers to compare GM vehicles with top imports. The tag line: "May the best car win."

dicts no more than 3% will do so, based on a similar offer by GM's Vauxhall line in the U.K.

"Bob Lutz is personally frustrated GM is putting out very good cars and nobody believes it. It's almost a personal challenge," Nerad says.

GM's Cadillac placed just behind Lexus and Porsche in the latest survey of initial quality by J.D. Power and Associates. Chevrolet was ninth, right behind Toyota and Ford. But Buick and GMC scored below the industry average.

Lutz agrees the offer won't sway everyone. "Diehards who say they're never going to buy an American car, we'll