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## Car dealer boosts sales online

*By Howard McEwen*  
*Enquirer contributor*

**FLORENCE** - As car dealerships cope with a struggling market, some are finding that business shows more promise in cyberspace than on the lot or showroom.

Jake Sweeney Kia in Florence is a dealership using the Internet to garner car sales in tough economic times.

Internet sales have made up about a third of the total sales for the past year. The key, according to Internet sales manger Scott Sargent, is responsiveness and providing information.

"The Internet buying experience is a great way to purchase a car," Sargent said. "You have access to a number of different Web sites that write reviews. You can almost find anything you want to know about every manufacturer.

"The new age does not want to be bothered by your typical pushy sales person and on the Internet you can receive any information that you would like from a Web page or a dealership without setting foot in the showroom."

Cincinnati State Technical and Community College professor Dave Killen bought two vehicles, a Kia Soul and Sedona, via the Internet from the dealership in April.

"We're really busy folks, my wife is in advertising, we have three kids aged 6 to 16," said Killen. "With all of their schedules, it takes a pretty significant toll on our available time so we knew if we were shopping for two cars we'd need to do our homework up front."

Killen said the response time was key.

"We didn't speak on the phone until about four or five e-mail exchanges but they were very prompt," he said. "They are using Internet sales as part of their main sales push unlike other places that didn't respond for three days."

Sargent became the Internet sales manager in March 2008 and said that responsiveness is a requirement to internet sales.

"It is a never-ending job, especially with the Internet," he said. "I put away at least an hour on my off days to answer any e-mails. The days I am here...constantly."

Sargent said he is contacted through several different Web sites including sweeneykia.com, Kia.com, cars.com and autotrader.com. He also set up a Facebook page for the dealership where he posts pictures and features cars he thinks are particularly good deals.

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