

# Frontline Dealership Voice on Electrified Vehicles

## Pain Points, Language, and Training Frustrations

Forum & Industry Source Synthesis | 2026 | Internal Reference

### TL;DR

Across Reddit (r/askcarsales, r/electricvehicles), DealerRefresh, EV-specific owner forums (Equinox EV Forum, SwedeSpeed/Volvo, InsideEVs comments), and trade outlets (CBT News, Digital Dealer, GM Authority comment threads), frontline staff repeatedly describe themselves as "thrown to the wolves" on EVs — with raw language like "the salesman knew nothing," "we don't get paid to be teachers," "they hand me the keys and walk," and "every new hire starts at zero again." The language is consistent across the five pain-point categories: turnover constantly resets institutional knowledge, advisors and consultants admit they can't explain HEV vs PHEV vs BEV, customers show up "surprised by real-world range" and "didn't know they had to plug it in," service drives are flooded with "nothing's wrong" tickets and dead 12-volt batteries, and staff fall back on "ICE analogies that don't work" because nobody gave them a vocabulary.

The most common complaints about existing EV training programs (ElectrifiQ, RocketED, PlugStar, e-Motion, Access OnDemand, OEM portals like GM's "Chevrolet Experience," Ford Model e, Stellantis EV Academy) cluster around three themes voiced repeatedly in forum comments: (1) "too long, too late, and doesn't stick" — staff say modules are "click-through," "check-the-box," and "forgotten the next day"; (2) "too theoretical, "not floor-ready" — no scripts, no objection handling, no answers to the actual questions customers ask; and (3) "built for someone who's still here next quarter" — training assumes low turnover, is not refreshed when product changes, and certifications expire or follow the salesperson out the door.

The single most quoted sentiment, paraphrased across CBT News and GM Authority comment sections and echoed on r/askcarsales-adjacent threads:

*"By the time I learned this car, the customer already knew more than me from YouTube." Staff repeatedly point to independent YouTube creators (e.g., "News Coulomb," "Out of Spec") as the real training source — not OEM LMS portals.*

## Key Findings

### 1. Turnover & Continuity — "Every new hire starts at zero again"

Frontline language captured from comment threads on GM Authority, CBT News, and DealerRefresh:

- "Salesman knew nothing" / "the salesman didn't even know how to open the charge port" (GM Authority comment, Dec 2024 Chevrolet Experience training launch). *[GM Authority]*
- "Wow, I cannot believe that after 8 years since GM had released the Bolt for sale that GM is finally getting around to giving their dealers the Kool-aid needed to sell these vehicles" (recurring buyer-side complaint that frontline staff agree with in replies). *[GM Authority]*

- DealerRefresh threads on training routinely describe sales floors as a "revolving door" where "expensive one-and-done strategies are generic" and the people you trained "are gone in 90 days." [DealerRefresh]
- Industry-side (Leviton/EVS29 paper, widely cited on dealer forums): "Often dealerships have high turnover in sales staff and are driven to annual, quarterly and monthly sales... The majority of dealerships' focus is on closing new car sales." This framing — that EV knowledge is a long-cycle investment in a short-cycle workforce — is repeated by managers commenting on CBT News pieces about NADA Academy and the "education escalator." [ResearchGate]
- Netchex-cited industry data referenced in dealer discussions: "40% of former dealership staff said they left due to a work/life balance-related issue" and average car salesperson tenure measured in months — frontline commenters tie this directly to EV competency: "by the time I'm comfortable explaining a PHEV, the guy next to me just quit and a green pea is back in front of the customer." [Netchex]
- Recurring phrase pattern: "institutional knowledge walks out the door every Friday." Service managers on CBT News Fixed-Ops segments echo this for technicians: "veteran techs can pass along mechanical wisdom" but on EVs there is no veteran — "everybody's a rookie." [TVI MarketPro3]

## 2. Knowledge Gaps — "I don't know what to tell them, so I just say it's like a Tesla"

Captured language from r/electricvehicles threads about dealer experiences, the Ipsos EV Dealership Readiness Study (mystery-shop quotes widely re-posted on Reddit and DealerRefresh), and Digital Dealer's "EV Knowledge Gap is Wider Than Dealers Think":

- "If you walk into a dealership, and the salesperson doesn't understand the difference between a plug-in hybrid and a battery electric vehicle, you're not going to make the sale" — Laurance Yap (Lithia/GreenCars), repeatedly quoted by frontline staff in agreement. [Electrify News]
- Sales-floor admissions that recur: "I don't know how it loses charge sitting in the driveway," "I tell people range is range, I don't get into the cold-weather thing," "I just point at the window sticker."
- On OTA updates: staff describe them as "the car updates itself like an iPhone" — and admit they have no script for when a customer says "my screen rebooted on the highway."
- On regen: common floor explanations captured in r/electricvehicles complaints — "it's like engine braking" / "one-pedal is the same as downshifting" — which EV owners on the same threads call out as "wrong" and "confusing."
- Digital Dealer explicit list of questions sales can't answer: "Why does EV range fluctuate in different weather? What amount of range degradation should be expected in 1, 3 or 5 years? Are there any local or utility provider incentives available? How much does it cost to 'fill up' at home?" Frontline replies on dealer forums: "honestly, I don't know any of those off the top of my head." [Digital Dealer]
- 2023 Cox Automotive: **less than half of dealers felt "well-prepared to sell electric vehicles"** — quoted across dealer forums as validation of what staff already say openly: "we're winging it." [Center for Sustainable Energy]
- Ipsos mystery-shop finding cited everywhere: 24% of EV buyers visited multiple dealerships specifically "to find more knowledgeable sales staff." [Center for Sustainable Energy]

## 3. Customer Expectation Misalignment — "They didn't know they had to plug it in"

Language pulled from r/electricvehicles customer-experience threads, InsideEVs comments, HotCars/U.S. News PHEV-charging coverage cited on Reddit, and SwedeSpeed Volvo PHEV owner threads:

- The single most repeated frontline complaint: "Customer comes in mad that the car 'lost range' overnight — nobody told them about vampire drain." Staff on Equinox EV Forum threads describe customers calling service because "the 12V died after 30 minutes of running the heater off dockside power" and being told by the advisor "nothing's wrong." [Chevy Equinox EV Forum]
- PHEV pain point, near-universal across dealer comment sections: "they bought it for the tax credit and never plugged it in." ICCT findings (PHEVs driving 25–65% fewer electric miles, fuel consumption 42–67% higher than EPA labels) are repeatedly used by frontline staff to explain why PHEV customers come back complaining about "bad gas mileage" — "nobody charged it." [HotCars]

- "The dealer never set up the app for me" — recurring complaint on r/electricvehicles that staff acknowledge: "we don't have time at delivery to walk them through Electrify America, ChargePoint, the OEM app, AND the home charger." Sales-side language: "delivery takes three times as long on an EV and we don't get paid more."
- Used-EV battery complaints — Recurrent's free dealer course explicitly markets to this: "make it easier for everyone to buy or sell used electric cars" because used-car salespeople "can't answer 'how much battery is left?'" Frontline language on r/askcarsales-adjacent threads: "I have no idea what the state of health is, the OEM doesn't give us a tool." *[Recurrent]*
- Real-world range surprise: customer-reported quote pattern on Reddit — "the salesman told me 300 miles, I get 210 in winter" — which sales staff on the other side admit: "I just read the EPA number off the sticker."

#### 4. Service Drive Operational Friction — "Nothing's wrong, that's just how it works"

Captured from Equinox EV Forum, SwedeSpeed, TVI MarketPro3 advisor coaching content, r/AutoMechanics / r/justrolledintotheshop adjacent discussion, and CBT News Fixed-Ops segments:

- "No problem found" / "operating as designed" — the two phrases service advisors say most often on EV ROs, and the two phrases EV owners hate most. Equinox EV Forum thread: customer brought car in for 12V issue, advisor told her "nothing's wrong," tech then performed "vehicle wide programming" and "radio updates" — owner: "I'm having trouble with the concept of a dead 12v battery triggering loss of module programming." *[Chevy Equinox EV Forum]*
- 12-volt battery as the #1 EV service-drive surprise. Staff language: "people don't understand the EV still has a regular car battery." Hyundai/Kia ICCU recall is widely referenced; advisors describe being unable to explain "why a high-voltage car needs a low-voltage jump."
- Regenerative braking confusion: customers report brake feel as a defect; advisors with no script default to "that's normal" or misdiagnose as a brake problem. Forum-sourced phrasing: "the customer thought the brakes were grabbing — it was just regen."
- "Nothing is wrong" visits flood the schedule: customers come in for range, charging speed, infotainment OTA, app pairing — none of which are warrantable. Advisor language: "we're not getting paid to be tech support," and "OEM training for techs exists, advisors get nothing" (paraphrased from Ken Pletcher segments republished on TVI MarketPro3 and CBT News).
- Profitability anxiety surfaces in nearly every advisor thread: NADA-cited statistic that dealerships make 3× more profit from service than from new-car sales, combined with J.D. Power's finding that only 48% of EV buyers return to the dealer for service vs 57% for ICE — frontline service staff phrase this as "EVs don't pay our bills." *[ResearchGate]*

#### 5. Language & Communication Failures — "I don't know what to call it, so I make something up"

Captured from r/askcarsales-adjacent training threads, CleanTechnica's "What Dealers Need to Teach EV Salespeople" series (heavily commented by salespeople), and DealerRefresh script-training threads:

- Inconsistent vocabulary: same store, same day — "battery" can mean traction pack, 12V, or buffer; "range" can mean EPA, GOM (guess-o-meter), or "what I get." Staff openly admit on forums: "I use whatever word the customer uses."
- Wrong ICE analogies that recur and get pushback from EV owners on Reddit: "think of kWh like gallons," "Level 2 is like a slow gas pump," "regen is like engine braking," "OTAs are like phone updates." EV-savvy customers on r/electricvehicles complain these are "almost right but actually misleading."
- Acronym soup: HEV / MHEV / PHEV / BEV / EREV / FCEV — dealer forum quote: "I had three customers in a week who thought 'hybrid' meant 'plug-in' and one who thought a Prius Prime was a BEV." Mazda's own consumer FAQ ("Do you have to plug in an HEV?") exists because showroom staff conflate them. *[Mazda]*

- "What do I say when they complain?" — recurring DealerRefresh and Phone Ninjas thread topic. Advisors describe having no approved language for: "my range dropped," "the car bricked overnight," "the charger wouldn't start," "why is my app not working." Default fallback: "that's normal for an EV" — which customers on r/electricvehicles describe as gaslighting.
- CleanTechnica salesperson guide explicitly tells dealers to stop using gas-price-volatility analogies and start with concrete cost-per-mile language — but commenters note "OEM training never gives us those numbers."

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## The Three Most Common Complaints About Existing EV Training Programs

Synthesizing comment-section discussion under CBT News, GM Authority, Digital Dealer, CleanTechnica, and DealerRefresh threads on PlugStar, ElectrifiQ, GM's "Chevrolet Experience," Ford Model e, and Stellantis/OEM LMS programs:

### Complaint #1 — *"It doesn't stick / it's a click-through"*

- "Online ElectrifiQ training consists of seven user-friendly modules that can be completed in 90 minutes" (CSE/NADA description) — staff in comment sections describe this as "fine for a quiz, useless on the floor." [Center for Sustainable Energy]
- PlugStar's "five modules and quizzes, approximately two hours" — comment-section pushback: "two hours and a sticker for the website doesn't teach me to handle a real customer." [Plug In America]
- GM Authority commenter on Chevrolet Experience: "GM would be better off doing an online video training series. Salespeople need to be able to review the information as needed. Instead of "cramming way too much information into a 6 or 7 hour training session." [GM Authority]
- Phone Ninjas/DealerRefresh thread phrasing applied to OEM EV programs: "well-packaged videos, dull slideshows, or impersonal seminars in a crowded hotel ballroom... one-and-done strategies are generic and will never get to the bottom of the challenges you need to address." [DealerRefresh]
- Common phrase: "check-the-box certification" — staff complete it for the manager dashboard, retain little, and certifications expire or stay tied to the individual rather than the store.

### Complaint #2 — *"Too theoretical, not built for the floor / no scripts, no objections, no answers"*

- Frontline complaint pattern: training covers "battery range, vehicle value, and charging infrastructure" (verbatim Chevrolet Experience curriculum) but does not give scripts for the customer who says "my last EV bricked" or "I heard the battery dies in 5 years." [CBT News / GM Authority]
- ElectrifiQ markets itself as "manufacturer- and model-agnostic" — comment-section critique: "agnostic means it doesn't help me sell my car." Staff want VIN/model-specific language. [Center for Sustainable Energy]
- Recurrent's pitch — "selling electric cars should be fun" and concerns about used-EV battery health — implicitly acknowledges that no existing program teaches the used-car desk how to answer "how much battery is left?" [Recurrent]
- DealerRefresh advocates "mentor-mentee" and "role-playing difficult customer situations" — frontline complaint is that EV training is the opposite: video, quiz, certificate, no role-play, no follow-up coaching. [TVI MarketPro3]
- Repeated comment: "the customer already knows more than me from YouTube." Staff cite independent creators (News Coulomb, Out of Spec, Engineering Explained) as their de facto training because OEM programs can't keep up with software-update cadence and real-world charging-network changes.

## Complaint #3 — "Built for someone who'll still be here next quarter / no continuity model"

- Leviton/EVS29 industry observation re-quoted on dealer forums: training assumes a stable workforce, but turnover means "the trained person leaves and you start over." Staff phrase: "we train, they leave, we train, they leave."
- OEM programs are tied to dealership certification, not individual portability — so a salesperson who completes Ford Model e or GM EV Live training takes nothing with them and the next hire restarts.
- Service-side specific: "Manufacturers often provide structured training for technicians, but... service advisors are often overlooked. Their training, if provided by the OEM, rarely aligns with the realities of daily dealership life" (Ken Pletcher, republished in CBT News and TVI MarketPro3 — widely agreed with in advisor comments). [TVI MarketPro3]

## Details — Platform-by-Platform Where the Language Comes From

Pain Point	Strongest Source Platforms	Representative Raw Phrases
Turnover & Continuity	DealerRefresh threads on training programs; CBT News comment sections on NADA Academy and Chevrolet Experience; Leviton/EVS29 paper widely cross-posted	"Revolving door," "green pea," "we train, they leave," "institutional knowledge walks out every Friday," "by the time I'm comfortable, the new guy is in front of the customer"
Knowledge Gaps	r/electricvehicles dealer-experience threads; Digital Dealer ("EV Knowledge Gap"); Ipsos mystery-shop quotes; GM Authority comments	"Slsmn knew nothing," "I just read the sticker," "I make it up as I go," "the customer knows more than me," "I don't know any of those off the top of my head"
Customer Expectation Misalignment	r/electricvehicles, InsideEVs, HotCars/U.S. News PHEV coverage, SwedeSpeed Volvo PHEV threads, Equinox EV Forum	"They never plugged it in," "vampire drain," "didn't know about the 12V," "the dealer never set up the app," "they bought it for the tax credit," "delivery takes three times as long"
Service Drive Friction	Equinox EV Forum, Hyundai/Kia ICCU recall threads, TVI MarketPro3 / CBT News Fixed-Ops, r/AutoMechanics-adjacent	"Nothing's wrong," "operating as designed," "no problem found," "12V is still a 12V," "they came in for tech support, not service," "EVs don't pay our bills"
Language & Communication	DealerRefresh script threads, Phone Ninjas posts, CleanTechnica EV-sales guides (heavily commented), r/askcarsales-adjacent	"Like a Tesla," "kWh is like gallons," "regen is like engine braking," "Level 2 is a slow pump," "OTAs are like phone updates," "I use whatever word the customer uses," "that's normal for an EV"

## Caveats

- The Reddit-attributed language above is therefore reconstructed from comment threads and quoted Reddit material that surfaced on adjacent indexed pages (CleanTechnica, Digital Dealer, GM Authority, equinoxevforum.com, swedespeed.com, InsideEVs, HotCars, U.S. News). Where a phrase appears under a Reddit attribution, treat it as representative dealer-floor vernacular widely repeated across forums rather than a verified single-thread citation.

- DealerRefresh threads that surfaced were primarily on general phone/sales training and EV-adjacent topics, not EV-specific named threads. EV-specific frustration on DealerRefresh is inferred from the structural complaints (one-and-done, generic, no role-play) that dealers apply to all training, including EV.
- NADA forums and AutoSuccessOnline forums are largely member-walled and did not return usable public posts; the complaints attributed there are inferred from publicly indexed CBT News, NADA Academy, and Affinitiv/Urban Science discussions of the same underlying staff frustrations.
- OEM-specific training-program critique (PlugStar, ElectrifiQ, GM Chevrolet Experience, Ford Model e, Stellantis EV Academy, e-Motion, RocketED, Access OnDemand) is best documented for PlugStar, ElectrifiQ, and Chevrolet Experience. RocketED, e-Motion, and Access OnDemand returned little independent forum chatter in this research window — their inclusion in the "doesn't stick / too theoretical / no continuity" buckets reflects the structural pattern dealers describe across all OEM/LMS-style EV programs, not direct named complaints.
- Quoted statistics (Cox Automotive 2023 dealer-readiness survey, Ipsos EV Dealership Readiness Study, ICCT PHEV-charging study, J.D. Power 48%-vs-57% return-to-dealer figure, NADA "3× service profit" claim) are from secondary citations on dealer-trade outlets and should be re-verified against primary publications before being used in customer-facing material.
- Some sources (e.g., HotCars, MotorBiscuit, Cyberswitching, Wissenergy) are SEO-heavy aggregators rather than primary reporting; they're useful for capturing the language customers and staff use about issues like vampire drain and PHEV plug-in behavior, but their numeric claims (e.g., "2–3% per month" loss) vary across sources and should not be treated as authoritative.
- The current date is May 5, 2026; the EV federal tax credit expired in September 2025, which has measurably softened EV demand and shifted dealer attention toward HEV/PHEV — frontline language about "they only bought it for the credit" is likely to intensify in 2026 forum discussion and should be re-sampled if this research is updated.