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World-class Precision, Execution and Quality Provide the All-new 2011 Dodge Charger with Long-term Performance and Refinement

- Dodge Charger was designed to compete with best-in-class sport sedans that cost thousands more
- Engineers benchmarked more than 320 characteristics of best-in-class sport sedans
- Dodge collected over 4,100 customer wants using Design for Six Sigma principles

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As the Dodge brand's all-new flagship four-door coupe, the 2011 Charger exemplifies how Chrysler Group is applying strict targets for world-class performance, quality, technology and refinement.

"Making a high quality vehicle is more than just assembling a bunch of components so they don't break," said Doug Betts, Senior Vice President - Quality, Chrysler Group LLC. "As we created the all-new Dodge Charger, we set high standards for six types of quality: reliability, perceived, regulatory, dissatisfaction, service and performance."

"Each type of quality plays an important role in improving customer satisfaction," Betts said. "Chrysler Group's adoption of strict performance quality targets is a new initiative that began with the company's all-new 2011 products, including Dodge Charger."

BENCHMARKING PERFORMANCE QUALITY STANDARDS

As Chrysler Group defines it, performance quality measures how well a vehicle both performs compared with its competition and addresses customer priorities. Dodge Charger engineers evaluated more than 320 physical characteristics of best-in-class sport sedans from Europe, Asia and North America, and then established criteria for the four-door fastback to compete as a world-class performance sedan. Criteria such as acceleration, braking, handling, seat comfort, quietness, storage space and fuel economy were benchmarked in the team's research.

The Charger was designed and validated to meet or exceed the performance standards of premium brands such as BMW and Lexus with respect to ride quality, precision steering and performance handling. The Dodge Charger's world-class structural stiffness provides the foundation for its world-class handling and dynamic driving performance.

The Dodge Charger R/T also enters the market with 370 best-in-class available horsepower and efficiency with its legendary 5.7-liter HEMI® V-8 engine with four-cylinder mode Fuel Saver Technology.

Significantly refined compared to its predecessor, the 2011 Dodge Charger was designed to match the noise, vibration and harshness (NVH) performance of the benchmark vehicle in its class - the BMW 5-series - a vehicle that costs many thousands of dollars more. Evaluations in Chrysler Group's state-of-the-art aerodynamic and acoustic test facilities showed that Dodge engineers not only met their goal, but achieved quieter levels than other E-segment competitors.

"There were times we needed to go back to the drawing board, and we did, if the initial design didn't meet the performance quality targets," said Chris Barman, Vehicle Line Executive - E-Segment, Chrysler Group LLC. "For example, we had to come up with a completely new seat structure to achieve the comfort and support desired by our customers."

Engineers also studied and set performance quality targets for more obscure vehicle attributes such as tire wear, door sound, windshield-wiper performance, trunk lighting and outward visibility - among hundreds of other things.

"Some car shoppers might not know the amount of effort we made to increase outward visibility by 15 percent, and that's okay," Barman said. "But if we overlook that kind of detail, a customer will be annoyed every time he or she stops at a traffic signal and has to uncomfortably 'rubber neck' to see the light change."

LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS

"The 2011 Dodge Charger is the result of a comprehensive, customer-focused vehicle development process," Barman explained. "We interviewed Charger owners and consumers who purchased competitive makes, such as BMW, Lexus, Hyundai and Ford. The Dodge team even rode shotgun with commuting drivers to study how they used their vehicle in everyday situations."

Using Design for Six Sigma (DFSS) principles, a cross-functional product development team collected more than 4,100 customer wants, which were integrated in the vehicle design and performance quality targets. Consumer products designed using DFSS generally are expected to better match customer desires and offer higher quality.

PUTTING THE CHARGER TO THE TEST

Beginning with the all-new vehicles developed for the 2011 model year, Chrysler Group has increased the number of reliability testing miles by 50 percent. Dodge engineers tested the Charger for more than 7 million miles during its reliability and durability evaluation in the company's scientific labs, at the proving grounds and on public roads in various climates.

At each step of the design, development and manufacturing process, the Charger development team was guided by the voice of the customer and strict performance quality targets to create an all-new sport sedan that will compete with the best.

"Customers may not know the research and validation we've done," Betts said, "but they will know they love the overall experience of driving the Charger - and that's our real goal."

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