

DECEMBER 2024

Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays?

It's an exercise done by businesses, particularly retailers, every year: Do you wish customers "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays"?

Retailers used to promote the "Christmas" season and now many reference the "Holiday" season. From the articles and research studies I've reviewed, "Happy Holidays" is a company's way to play it safe. On the flip side of the coin, it also demonstrates a company's desire to benefit from this festive season without making a true commitment.

If we spend all of our time in the middle, straddling between two options and never take a position, how do others know our values?

I proudly wish others "Merry Christmas", and I encourage you to do the same.

Either way, Rebecca and I join along with Snowball, the kitty, and Doc, the puppy, in wishing you a very Merry Christmas!



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Smart Promotion: Savannah Bananas

The **Savannah Bananas** know how to **promote** and **sell** merchandise. Every item you see in their online store includes sales tax and shipping, so there are no surprises.

Owner Jesse Cole recognizes that the team misses out on millions of dollars by absorbing these costs, but he sees being easy to do business with as part of his brand.

And the simplicity of his concept drives loyalty and increased sales.

Due to the time-consuming demands of shipping and the potential for items arriving late, the offer for free shipping from the **Holiday Catalog** was this past Monday, December 16.

You'll be impressed to learn that the Savannah Bananas perform their own fulfillment. In Jesse's words, "We may be slightly less efficient than professional fulfillment companies, but we can occasionally insert some **bonus** items that a third party would never do."



Smart Insight: Mattress Mack

Here's a brilliant insight from one of America's elite retailers.

A few years ago, **Mattress Mack**, owner of **Gallery Furniture** in Houston, accepted my invitation to speak at the **HEB Chamber of Commerce** luncheon that launched Rebecca's chairman year. Following the luncheon – where he thrilled the audience with his stories and enthusiasm—he asked if I could take him to tour a few furniture stores in our area.

One store, in particular, made a lasting impression. The manager recognized Mack, and he proudly toured us around his store. From a second-floor window, he showed us a view of his warehouse, happily saying, "You will never see a truck with our logo on it. By using third-party delivery, we add 3% to the bottom line!"

Although that may be a smart move in accounting terms for raw dollars and cents, but it made no sense to Mattress Mack for three reasons. In his words:

- **First**, those trucks with my logo are traveling billboards throughout the area – they are my advertising.
- **Second**, a third-party vendor doesn't pay close attention or make suggestions on how to position a piece of furniture. They just want to complete the delivery and leave. Customer service tends to be an afterthought.
- **Third**, my delivery guys are my best salesman. When they deliver a bed and notice a TV with a cracked screen in the bedroom, they will say something like, "I noticed your TV has a cracked screen. We have a sale on Sony TVs like this one and can deliver it here within just a few hours." Time and again, they make the sale!

As you close out 2024, what are some decisions that made financial sense but were not customer-friendly?

If you'd like to consider a Customer Experiential Audit that analyzes how you impress and also how you alienate your customers, please call me at 817-205-2334.



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Smart Decision: Give it to God

I was in the middle of a terrible crisis last Friday. Rebecca's mother had passed away, and we scheduled the funeral for yesterday.

It was critical that we submit the obituary to the Star-Telegram so it would be published for that Saturday-Sunday weekend edition.

In a frustrating turn of events, the funeral home missed the deadline because the newspaper had recently changed the time. The funeral home was working with a 2:00 p.m. deadline but the new deadline was now 11:15 a.m.

The funeral home representative submitted the obituary by 11:27 a.m., which was more than two hours ahead of the deadline - **the old deadline**.

The attempt was 12 minutes after the **new deadline**. But it might as well have been 12 hours.

I was frustrated beyond belief because this was the one day of the week - Sunday - that we **needed** the obituary to run.

I called every contact I had at the Star-Telegram, from my friend Bud Kennedy to the editor, and even at the digital company managing the program, all to no avail. They were polite but said we were past the deadline.

I started dialing more and more Star-Telegram numbers. My heart was in my throat. I was letting Rebecca and her family down.

In a moment of darkness, I was looking for light.

Suddenly, I realized that all of MY resources were helpless. With a moment of peaceful clarity, I decided to put into action what I promote in the morning devotional I send every day: **Trust God**. I stopped the panic and prayed for God to provide the solution.

Immediately, I felt a sense of peace.

God was in control, not me.



Three minutes later, I received an email: The obituary would publish on Sunday.

I don't know **how** the decision was made or **who** made that decision. All I know is that once I turned the challenge over to God and trusted Him, the solution appeared.

It's called a **Godwink!**

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Tiebreaker: How Were You MEMORABLE in 2024?

How well did you stand out this year?

- If someone replaced your name and photo in your ad or social media post with that of your competition, would the ad have made just as much sense? If so, that was an ineffective message.
- How did you establish and solidify relationships with your customers?
- How did you make your team more loyal to you and be proud of where they work?
- What one thing would you want a mulligan for? Perhaps it was a **missed opportunity** or a **wrong message**.

Rebecca, Doc, Snowball, and I wish you a Merry Christmas and an even more prosperous 2025!



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Wisdom from the Savannah Bananas

How willing are you to really stand out? Jesse Cole, owner of the Savannah Bananas, wears a yellow tux, yellow shirt, and yellow top hat everywhere he goes.

But he almost didn't.

When the Savannah Bananas unveiled their logo and team look, Jesse left his yellow attire behind. He [admitted](#) later that he was embarrassed, and didn't know if he wanted to stand out [that](#) much.

He realized that he had missed a great opportunity to brand the team, and his total commitment to the brand has led to greater success than he ever imagined.

What do you need to do to stand out? Sometimes it's uncomfortable (remember, I went to a Coca-Cola meeting dressed as a Coke route salesman and ended up with my radio station's logo on top of 12 million Coke cans!).

Let 2025 be the year you choose to be **bold** and take a stand!

