

The separation of retail and religion

Did you ever notice that just about the time you pay off the Santa season, the Cupid credit charges come rolling in, quickly followed by the bills for the bunny buying spree? The financial fiasco is enough to drive the average person into monetary meltdown.

Aren't you amazed that although Santa, Cupid, and the Easter Bunny are not related to Christianity in any way, they are celebrated by the masses under the guise of Christian holidays, or "Holy Days?" Santa and the Easter Bunny have nothing to do with the birth or resurrection of Christ and Cupid's origins are from Greek mythology. He existed long before St. Valentine or the Catholic church was conceived. Yet, we celebrate all three annual events with the pomp and circumstance of a coronation, and the intensity of a Wall Street buying frenzy at the peak of a bull market.

Santa, the Easter Bunny, and Cupid should be written into the record books as the three most successful CEOs of ongoing joint ventures since the beginning of business history. The participants in the ventures being all the retailers marketing their merchandise under a common theme. If the cash generated from either the retail side of Christmas, Easter or Valentine's Day were invested in say, any mutual fund, Santa, the rabbit, or Cupid would probably be the controlling stockholder.

Revenues generated in the name of the unholy three are often the deciding factors for Neiman Marcus, Saks, Macy's, and the like, to even



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

make a profit. Without the three major gift-buying events, many retailers would be hard pressed to keep their doors open.

An interesting experiment would be to ignore the retail side of the three major gift-giving holidays and spend the same amount of money on presents a week or two after the events. The recipients would receive much better gifts because everything would be on sale. And, the holidays could be celebrated as they were originally intended without being overshadowed by crass commercialism.

Better yet, ignore the retail side of the holidays completely. Save the money you would have spent and give gifts throughout the year when people least expect them. A gratuitous present is always well received, and appreciated because it is not obligatory. The burden of giving presents at a specified time when prices are high would not be a consideration. The expense of gift giving could be evenly spread over 12 months instead of being compressed into the traditional four-month period that leaves most of us broke for the remainder of the year. Retailers would enjoy business all year instead of depending

on seasonal business to make or break their fiscal year. Along with separation of church and state, it's about time we had separation of retail and religion.

Think about it, the situation is good for everyone. Consumers will be relieved of holiday pressures, retailers will enjoy business year round, and the holidays will be restored to their original intent. Santa, the bunny, and Cupid will go the way of Tony the Tiger, the Jolly Green Giant, and Elsie the Borden cow. No more decorations, dyeing eggs, or wrapping presents . . . What's that? What about the children, you ask? Hmmm . . . oh yeah . . . Who's going to tell the kids that Santa and the rabbit retired? That's a tough one. I guess it is a consideration though.

Perhaps I've been a bit hasty. Maybe we should ease into this. No reason to abandon the gift giving concept all together . . . It is a bit Grinch-like I suppose. How about if we keep the Santa thing happening for the kids? Yeah that's the ticket. Compromise a little. And, I suppose an Easter egg or two with a little candy wouldn't hurt, just to keep the spirit of spring alive. No point in upsetting the little ones, is there?

But that fat little cherub's gotta go. Flyin' around shootin' people in the heart with a lovesick arrow — what's that about? Putting a price tag on love is never a good idea. Affairs of the heart are weird enough without adding commercial pressure to the mix in this system that we probably never will understand.

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