

Chicken Is Chicken

I recently wrote a column for our *Christian Retailing* magazine about the dangers of commoditized thinking. What can Christian booksellers do to differentiate themselves? Are all stores alike?

Amazon stole a significant share of customers from retailers because stores didn't offer much more than shelves of books in somewhat limited quantities.

Bookstores became viewed as a commodity.

We know from consumer research that consumers write "chicken" on their shopping lists. No brand name is attached because it's just chicken. Did bookstores become generic?

What about Heinz ketchup?

Dove soap?

Starbucks coffee?

Marketers work hard to move the consumer from brand awareness to brand loyalty to brand insistence.

The secret ingredient to building a brand (or a store) is to bake in love.

When consumers fall in love with "their" brand of ketchup, soap or coffee, something special happens—brand insistence is created.

When we love a brand, we will accept no substitutes. The lower-priced ketchup with a black and white label on the bottle doesn't turn my head. Commodities are not loved.

Effective leaders do not treat people like a commodity. Chicken is chicken, but workers are created and gifted by God to work as unto Him.

When love leads, workers feel unique, valued and special. Leaders allow the worker to think and do as an individual while making contributions to the team.

Managers focus on output. Leaders focus on the individual.

Love leaders know that a commoditized worker performs mechanically. They go through the motions. They check boxes.

Love leaders create an atmosphere of passion to perform. Work teams *desire* to do well and do more than minimal box-checking.

Their anointing comes from the Lord and their efficacy comes from their heart.

Commodity labor is uninspired. Little is created. Is it 5 o'clock yet?

In a commodity workplace, as with bookstores, the monster is real and feeds on chicken.

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