

Fried Chicken in a Hardware Store

Or, horror fiction on a libertarian website, if you prefer (see my bio below). Most of us have heard this expression, but for the uninitiated, it means attempting to market a product, service, or idea to the wrong or inappropriate audience or demographic.

Thing is, I recall a hardware store in New Hampshire about 20 years ago that *did* sell fried chicken – and it was delicious. It came courtesy of a small franchise, and was served with thick potato wedges. There were a lot of contractors and building trades people in the area at the time (and probably still are), and at lunchtime, they’d stop in to chow down – along with picking up bags of nails and screws, power tools, and other construction materials. This store’s sales were phenomenal. Not only did they sell boxes and boxes of fried chicken – they had a hard time keeping it in stock.

I have no idea whether the proprietor did this intentionally in order to prove a point, or if it was all just coincidence. I regret never taking the time to find out. I’m sure that would’ve been an interesting conversation. Regardless, it was something that directly disproved the old adage. At least in part: True, maybe not every hardware store can be successful at selling fried chicken – but *that* one most certainly was.

I would be willing to bet that most outstanding entrepreneurship arises from challenging, and subsequently overcoming or discrediting, traditional paradigms. Most say that X, Y, or Z can’t be done. Then someone comes along one day and says, “Oh, yeah? Watch *this*.” Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Mike Lindell (My Pillow), Sam Walton (Wal*Mart), Stephen King, JK Rowling (bestselling authors), and Mick Jagger (rock star) are all examples of this. There are countless thousands of others, of course.

Another, more affirming, adage we hear often is, “Think outside of the box.” This is not often easy – which is why most people don’t do it. Depending upon what you’re trying to accomplish, it can remain hidden and elusive. Old-fashioned blood, sweat, and tears is crucial – and failure, even, is an important part of any learning curve – but it is not enough. You must learn how to stand out, somehow. You have to be unique. That’s how you create demand. And then you keep supplying, keep innovating. You stay competitive. You stay relevant. That’s how markets operate. That’s how prosperity spreads and abounds.

I hope I find that niche, that path, that essential rhythm someday. In the meantime, I still enjoy writing, regardless. Most of the time. In other moments, I just find it necessary for my survival and sanity. Either way, I’m going to keep doing it – whether in or out of the box.

Which brings us back to that fried chicken. It was in the most unlikely place, but it was among the best I’ve ever found, before or since.

Perhaps my fiction will assume that role for an ever increasing number of readers someday? I'll keep looking for a way to make that happen. We'll see.