

Editor's notes:

December gets its name from "decem," Latin for 10, because it was once the tenth month in the Roman calendar. The son of Marcus Antonius, Emperor Commodus, tried to rename the month Amazonius in honour of his mistress (whose portrait he had painted as an Amazon), but the attempt failed.

You may not think that munching pretzels is a religious experience, but these three-holed snacks were invented by monks who wanted people to be reminded of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The first pretzels were made from dough left over from their bread baking at monasteries. The earliest pretzels were so large that people could wear them around their necks.

Advent, First Sunday, December 2 -- Advent -- the four weeks before Christmas -- marks the official holy season for many Christian churches. Some congregations light four candles -- one for each Sunday -- and one on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to signify Christ's birth.

Hanukkah, December 5 - 12 -- Jews all over the world celebrate the festival of lights beginning on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev. In addition to lighting the Hanukkah candles, traditional activities include singing songs, playing games, and giving small gifts. Many also read the Hallel -- Psalms 113 through 118 -- from the Old Testament, which gives thanks to God.

Poinsettia Day, December 12 -- These flowers are the best-selling flowering potted plants in North America (though the showy red and white parts are not actually flowers, but leaves). There are 100 different kinds of poinsettias, including red, pink white, and marbled varieties.

First Day of Winter, December 22 -- The ancient Celts believed that on the winter solstice, the sun stood still for 12 days. To banish evil spirits and to lure the sun to return, they lit a yule log on the first day of winter and burned it for 12 hours. The winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, marks the astronomical start of winter.



There is nothing
sadder in this world
than to awake
Christmas morning
and not be a child.

-- Erma Bombeck

75th Anniversary of Christmas Shows at Radio City Hall

Since 1933, Radio City Music Hall, the largest indoor theatre in the world, has put on its annual show, the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. The 75th Anniversary Show begins with a 3-D movie of Santa Claus flying into New York City from the North Pole and features the famous Rockettes, precision high-kicking dancers, performing the Parade of the Wooden Soldiers. The extravaganza also includes ice skaters, an indoor snowfall, and fireworks. The show concludes with a Live Nativity, which includes five sheep, three camels, two donkeys, and one horse.

New Year's Eve: The Midnight Kiss

According to some cultural historians, the tradition of kissing at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve dates back to old English and German folklore that held that the first person you encounter in the new year is indicative of the luck that awaits you in the year ahead. Over time, this evolved to people ensuring that their loved ones were nearby, and the shared kiss came to symbolize the hope that love will last throughout the year. Others contend that the kiss came about at masked balls held on New Year's Eve. The masks represented evil spirits of the old year. At midnight, the masks were removed, and revellers kissed as a way to purify the new year.

Holiday Gift Quiz

While you're racking your brain to get that special toy that will bring years of happiness, see if you can remember some of the other special toys that came and went.

Can you match the toy to the year when it was a top holiday seller?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1) Nerf Ball | A. 1983 |
| 2) Cabbage Patch doll | B. 1996 |
| 3) Slinky | C. 1945 |
| 4) Tickle Me Elmo | D. 2006 |
| 5) Heelys (shoes with wheels) | E. 1972 |

Answers: 1E; 2A; 3C; 4B; 5D

Question of the Month

How many years does it take for most Christmas trees to grow to an average retail sales of six feet?

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| 1) 2-5 | 2) 6 -9 | 3) 10 - 13 |
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Answer: 2

Santa's Business Model

Motivational speaker Jim Carroll says those looking for insight from a true master of leadership, creativity, and innovation should look no further than Santa Claus. Here's what we can learn from Old Saint Nick:

- 1) He's aware. He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. For goodness sake!
- 2) He's organized. He's got a list. He checks it twice.
- 3) He knows exactly what the customer wants. He receives and reads your letter. He excels at keeping up with constantly changing customer demands.
- 4) He's not afraid of hiring those who are different: Rudolph. Red Nosed. Reindeer. Enough said.
- 5) He inspires his staff with a singular mission. They fulfill their duty with passion and a smile. They wear cool hats to remind them they're on a team. They're often known for singing while they work.
- 6) He has integrity as a core virtue. His leadership core is based on knowing who's naughty and who's nice.
- 7) He's reliable. He shows up. He's coming to town. We know that. There's even a song about his reliability.
- 8) He has mastered organizational logistics. His delivery system puts FedEx to shame.
- 9) He is mindful of work/life balance. Some people take a few weeks off for a holiday. Some might take off a month. Santa takes off entire seasons to recoup from his big night.
- 10) He has maintained the essence of the brand name over a span of several hundred years despite massive change. He regularly transitions his brand to the next generation. As each generation becomes aware that Santa now plays a different role in their lives, they ensure that the next generations have deep loyalty. No other leader can pull off this feat!

The Helix Business Model

I admit it. We really like Santa's business model, as outlined above. I hasten to point out that Santa actually uses Helix to help with his delivery load, not that other company Jim Carroll mentions, but otherwise he has the details pretty much correct. And Santa's way of doing things closely parallels our own, except for that taking off entire seasons from work. What's with that, anyway? We at Helix couldn't bear to be out of touch with our customers that long! We have always known that we are nothing without our customers. And we have always known that relationships of any kind are based on mutual advantage and mutual respect and staying in touch.

This is the time of year that we can see how truly blessed we are. We have great relationships with hundreds of customers and suppliers and even if things were never to change for us we would count ourselves to be among the luckiest people on earth.

But things do change. Everything changes. That is the nature of our universe. That is the nature of the human race, of technology, of everything around us. And because things never stop changing, we have to be prepared. We can never become complacent. We can never coast. Whatever happens, we need to be ready. Whatever happens, we need to be able to take care of our customers. Whatever happens, we can never lose sight of our ethics, our commitment to open and honest communications with every customer and every supplier.

As we near the end of 2007 and as we approach the special Christmas season, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who touches our lives at Helix Courier Limited. We would like to invite you to tell us what you like (or dislike) about us and our service. We want to keep on improving. We want to do our very best for you, always.

We would like to wish you all a Very Merry Christmas, and happy times with friends and family. We have told Santa about how wonderful you all are, and have asked him to be especially generous to everyone this year. You deserve it! Best wishes from me personally, and from everyone else at Helix Courier Limited.

-- *Sieg Pedde, President*

M e r r y C h r i s t m a s !