

Thanksgiving 2014: Overcooking the Bird

Nothing says great customer service like long lines, sales prices that don't ring up properly and overly tired workers.

A modest proposal for retailers this Thanksgiving: Let workers eat dinner — with their families.

Let them eat turkey, let them eat yams, let them eat pumpkin pie.

Let them be.

Ever since the Great Recession, many retailers have been playing a game of one-upsmanship with opening stores on Thanksgiving. Every year it seems to be getting earlier. JCPenney, for instance, just announced it will open its stores at 5 p.m. on Turkey Day this year, possibly to get a jump-start on department stores like Macy's that plan to open at 6. That not good enough for you? Kmart opens at 6, too — 6 a.m. that is. It'll also be open for 42 straight hours in case you forgot something the first time around.

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With the growing list of stores that will open early on Thanksgiving this year, it's nice to see some companies taking a stand and saying, "We can wait," and not opening on Thanksgiving. They seem to have taken Annie's advice to heart: "I love ya, tomorrow; you're always a day away."

In other words, a "door-buster" on Thursday isn't any better than a "door-buster" on Friday. People will come.

And don't give me this "customers want to start shopping at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. on Thanksgiving" nonsense. Customers have the Internet to buy stuff whenever they like. Consumers also went decades without shopping on Thanksgiving, and they liked it — or at least lived with it. That's why Black Friday became such a big deal for shopping.

Craig Johnson, president of the consulting firm Custom Growth Partners, said it best when he told *Time*: "There is a law of diminishing returns," he said: "Stores that open on Thanksgiving 'risk cannibalizing' sales that they would have made at another time."

Workers deserve the chance to eat with their families just like anyone else. Thanksgiving dinner at 1:30 to get to work by 4 to open by 5? Bah humbug to that.

Here's hoping retailers start realizing Thanksgiving sales aren't about "gravy" as much as they are about overcooking the bird.