

Smart Inventions: Right and Wrong Timing

Tell me about an invention you saw that was the right innovation but at the wrong time. I attended the very first XFL pro football game on February 3, 2001, between the Las Vegas Outlaws and the New York/New Jersey Hitmen.

Please note that the teams had bizarre mascot names. Others included the San Francisco Demons, Memphis Maniax, and Los Angeles Xtreme.

I saw **FOUR innovations** - two that would revolutionize pro football and two that went nowhere.

Aerial skycams: I saw a camera suspended by wires that hovered over the field and behind the offensive team. The view from that skycam was awesome on the video board. Both the NFL and college football have adopted this brilliant innovation.

On-player microphones: This has been modified from the XFL because while the quarterback could talk to the coach in the XFL, the NFL quarterback has a monitor that allows him to hear the coach but not communicate back to the coach. The NFL also allows one defensive player (the middle linebacker) to hear signals from the coach.

Announcers in the stands: My friend Bill Wolters and I bought 40-yard-line seats and we were about three rows behind the game announcers, who were set up in the stands, surrounded by fans. I remember that one of the announcers was former WWF wrestler Jesse Ventura, who was at the time Governor of Minnesota. It was intriguing having the announcers so close and accessible, but that idea has never caught on with the pro or college ranks.

Cheerleaders in the grandstands: The teams constructed platforms that allowed the cheerleaders to move from section to section and be within just a few feet of the fans. It was interesting to be that close, but I would imagine that by the fourth quarter, heavy-drinking fans could have made their lives miserable.

So, there you have it: Two of the four innovations from the XFL caught on with the NFL and elevated the experience of watching a game.

What are some non-football inventions that were too far ahead of their time?

Artist and inventor **Leonardo da Vinci** invented an early parachute and an early helicopter. He also designed a modern tank that was inspired by a turtle shell.

The Autoped was an early version of today's scooters. Developed in 1915, the rider stood instead of sitting and the top speed was 20 mph.

The Picturephone was developed by AT&T in the early 1960s and allowed people to make video calls from dedicated booths. Three-minute calls cost between \$16 and \$27, so the concept never took off.

Television Eyeglasses were developed by inventor Hugo Gernsback in 1936 but the advancements were not ready until 1963. With a separate screen for each eye, the eyeglasses were much like today's Virtual Reality headsets.

What are some before-their-time inventions you've seen - or even developed yourself?



John Fletcher: Super Bowl commercials entertain once again, some even made us think

By John Fletcher, FWBP Contributor February 13, 2023



Jack Harlow pitches Doritos. (Frito-Lay via AP)

FOOD NEWS!

Smart Technology: Subway Phases out Pre-Sliced Meats

In an effort to increase efficiencies and reduce costs, Subway is phasing out pre-sliced deli meats and will install a meat slicer inside every location.

A Subway executive announced that with five decades of testing the art of sandwich-making, "This is the natural next step of the evolution of the U.S. business and operations."

Subway is making the change during the first six months of this year, so all machines are installed and operating by the start of summer in all 22,000 locations.

Currently, Subway slices meat at a central facility and ships it to restaurants, but a company exec said the new technique will save on costs and lower the price of food because it's easier to source and ship the unsliced meats.

Restaurant News reported that Subway could open its supply chain to have more localized meat vendors rather than a single source - great news if you're one of the new vendors; not so great news if Subway is currently a huge percentage of your business.

Certainly, the company has calculated the risk of what could possibly go wrong with an absent-minded employee working with a meat cutter!

And check this out: Subway promotes that it reduced its marketing budget so it could put more meat on its Meat Stack Sandwich. They'll apparently use more social media and less TV.

It was either **more meat**
or **more marketing.**



Meat Stack 6-inch Sub | 16oz Drink: P190

MEAT STACK

THE NEW, FRESH SUB WORTH EVERY P P P



T&Cs apply. Visuals are for illustration purposes only.

Smart Decision: KFC Trimming Menu

Restaurants are constantly trying to keep up with emerging trends so they can attract the most lucrative customers. The goal is to be constantly relevant to the heaviest users of your niche.

When I represented Wendy's franchisees many years ago, our "heavy user" – the ideal customer – was a male 18–34 years old. This segment frequented fast food (excuse me, "quick-service restaurants") on a more consistent basis.

I recall there was one product that Wendy's wanted to target to women – a panini. There was, however, a brand conflict.

The goal was for the drive-through line to advance by one car every 45 seconds, and 35 seconds was considered an outstanding time. The challenge: The panini required **THREE MINUTES** to prepare and only one could be made at a time.

If the woman ordered three panini sandwiches, the wait for the next car was – you guessed it – **NINE MINUTES!**

The panini was a sandwich that was never intended to be made at a quick-service restaurant because it created a bottleneck.

But I digress. Back to KFC:

This chicken-driven brand needed to improve its efficiency, so it has removed the items that either require too much time or their sales volume does not justify the effort and the position on the menu.

Gone will be fried chicken wings, popcorn chicken combo, Nashville Hot Sauce, Strawberry Lemonade, and Chocolate Chip Cookies.

WHAT??? **Chocolate Chip Cookies???** Where else can I go? Well, everywhere. Wendy's has 'em, McDonald's has 'em, and pretty much everybody has chocolate chip cookies!

You will also notice more of the **LTO** (Limited Time Offers) come and go on the KFC menu, but those opportunities were only possibly to removing the slower-selling items.



What menu items is KFC dropping?

- Kentucky Fried Chicken Wings
- Popcorn Chicken Combo
- Nashville Hot Sauce
- Strawberry Lemonade
- Chocolate Chip Cookies

Tiebreaker: Super Bowl Commercial Scorecard

This year's Super Bowl had some dramatic hits and misses for commercials.

[Click here](#) to check out my favorites.

OK, here's a hint. **Two of my faves involved babies!**

Please check it out and let me know how your list compares with mine!

