Going from unknown in the chicken game, to unmistakable in the chicken game.

By 2022, the Chicken wars had come and gone, and everyone had a favorite chicken sandwich. So, how could Krystal – a regional burger slider franchise – convince the South to try its brand-new chicken sandwich?

The strategy was simple. Instead of shying away from how late we were to the chicken wars — which were all about being everyone’s favorite sandwich — we decided to own it. With help from Brittany Renner, we asked America to cheat on their favorite chicken sandwiches, and tripled sales of the chicken sandwich, ended the brand's 40 week streak of negative comp sales, and increased total comp store sales 4% nationwide. Proving that maybe the best way to be the new favorite isn’t begging to be their number one – just ask them to try a lil’ something on the side.
For 90 years, Krystal has owned a niche in the fast-food landscape of the south with their signature bite-sized food, anchored by their steamed hamburger sliders.
Customers have fond memories of Krystal.

They're especially nostalgic about eating the chain's beloved sliders.
But lately, the business was suffering.

Sales had been down for years and the brand was irrelevant to the younger, more multicultural audience that's most influential in culture and in dining choices.
The new target

This target was younger, edgier, and more diverse than Krystal’s legacy customer. They’re more culturally connected and more plugged into social.

They weren’t going to Krystal, not because they don’t know it, but because they felt the brand wasn’t for them.

Source: Consumer survey, 2022
Despite the nostalgic love for their slider, Krystal needed to pivot to be known for more than small, steamed meat in order to capture this new target & future-proof their business.
The pivot? Chicken.

Krispy isn't the restaurant you think of or go to when you're craving a chicken sandwich. Their original chicken sandwich — “The Chik” — was cost-engineered into an inferior product and consequently was one of their least popular menu items.
A new Chik.

Krystal reformulated their chicken sandwich to be bigger, crunchier, and tastier than ever. They tested it with consumers and learned it was preferred over the old Chik unanimously — which means that people wouldn’t be disappointed once they tried it.
Our ask was two-fold:

- Get the **new target** to give us a chance
- Get our **legacy customer** to give the Chik another chance
The chicken sandwich wars had come and gone, and everyone already had their favorite chicken sandwich.
We’re late to an already crowded game.

Since the infamous launch of the Popeye’s Chicken Sandwich in 2019, at least 20 different fast food places released new or reformulated chicken sandwiches. It’s noisy and crowded and available literally EVERYWHERE. And no one thinks of Krystal for chicken, so we had to get them to think of us for chicken AND be willing to give our new Chik a try.

**FOOD**

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHICKEN SANDWICH WARS**

For more than a year, rival chains have been duking it out for chicken sandwich dominance, with new players continuing to enter the fray. Our timeline tracks the battles.

*By Patricia Cobe on Jan. 07, 2021*
Americans love a good chicken sandwich so much, they’ll try most any new sandwich released.

The vast majority of Americans order fried chicken sandwiches regularly. Now Krystal has a contender that can hang with the best of them — it’s just coming out 2 years later than everyone else.

Sources: NYT, 2021; QSR Magazine, 2021
Instead of shying away from how late Krystal is to the chicken sandwich game, let’s own it.

If the chicken wars were all about becoming everyone’s favorite... how could we stand out?
Instead of fighting to be their new favorite chicken sandwich, we just asked America to let us be their Side Chik.

We know, we get it. There’s been a lot of new chicken sandwiches coming out lately - and most people probably already have a favorite. But that doesn’t mean they have to stay loyal. Because sometimes something new comes along that you find yourself attracted to beyond your control.
THE CREATIVE IDEA

We asked America to cheat on their favorite chicken sandwiches with help from Brittany Renner, a proud side chick & outspoken influencer who’s known for controversial opinions on loyalty.

YOUR MAIN CHICK COULD NEVER

THE NEW SIDE CHIK

Krystal®
We played up the double entendre everywhere we could. We even named the new sandwiches “Side Chiks”.

Instead of arguing on quality or hard-selling our sandwich, we just offered something different from their go-to chicken with the key line: “Keep your main chick if you want. We just wanna be your Side Chik.”
The campaign ran for 8 weeks in TV, OLV, OOH, PR, and social. With a smaller media buy than our competition, we leaned into PR opportunities around Brittany Renner embracing the “side chick” narrative around her and prepared for real-time response opportunities around the brand’s bold stance, too.

In social, we sent influencers “Side Chik Cover-up Sprays,” which were real perfumes that smelled like our competitor’s chicken sandwiches (to hide the scent of your Krystal Side Chik).

And after spotting organic moments of fan’s telling their favorite chicken sandwiches they’d been cheating with us, we started collecting and reposting them as #SideChikConfessions.
Culturally, it was a huge win.

Even though Krystal is a regional QSR, we punched up to a national level with earned coverage in publications our new growth target cares about including Complex, BET, Vibe, Shade Room, and the Breakfast Club.
We went from unknown in the chicken game to unmistakable.

People organically recorded and posted the spots on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok where the conversation took on a life of its own.

And in an unspeakable act of non-best practices, we posted the launch ad as an organic post on Instagram and Twitter where it remains the brand's top post of all-time on both platforms.

THE RESULTS

739,573,016 impressions

4,317,216 engagements

78% positive net sentiment

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Ultimately, we drove business results.

**THE RESULTS**

**Ultimate results**

- **Tripled sales** of the Side Chik during the campaign (which launched after the sandwich was already in-store)
- **As soon as the campaign launched, we ended a 40 week streak** of negative comp sales
- **Total comp store sales increased 4%** during the campaign (and 12% in key DMAs)