STIFEL Bits

October 8, 2025

The Appetizer

"We occasionally get them coming out of the desert. But this is the most interesting interaction we have had with one."

– An Arizona police spokesperson after a **bear** walked into a grocery store and strolled through the produce section.

Now, on to the numbers. Drum roll, please …

- **70%:** The percentage of Gen X retirement savers who say they have not been able to **contribute as much to their savings** due to ongoing inflation, according to Allianz.
- **15 years:** The last time both the S&P 500 and Nasdaq had such a stellar **September**. Guess Wall Street finally likes Fall.
- **300,000:** **Robots** installed in Chinese factories last year – more than the rest of the world combined. The U.S.? A modest 34,000. Beep boop, catch up.
- **$342 million:** The **New York Mets'** payroll … for a team that missed the playoffs. Money can't buy wins, apparently.
- **996:** The number combo (9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., six days a week) of the work schedule **Silicon Valley** is embracing as tech competition in artificial intelligence (AI) remains fierce.

Dig In

“Government Gridlock”

Well, it happened. The federal government officially shut down last week after lawmakers couldn’t agree on a short-term spending plan. The result: Federal workers are either furloughed or working without pay, agencies have paused nonessential operations, and a lot of people are refreshing their e-mail for updates that won’t come.

So, what does a shutdown actually mean for the economy? Missing paychecks mean less spending, and delayed reports – like the monthly jobs data – leave economists and the Federal Reserve with less visibility. For businesses that depend on federal approvals or funding, from breweries waiting on new labels to small firms seeking loans, everything is on hold.

If the shutdown stretches on, the effects can stack up. The travel industry could **lose $1 billion a week**. TSA agents and air traffic controllers are still showing up, though their paychecks aren’t – a setup that’s tested morale before.

The good news? History shows most shutdowns are short-lived. The bad news? So are people’s tempers when airport lines get longer. So maybe hold off on testing the **airport theory** until Washington reopens the doors.

Weekly Specials

Travelers say AI is steering them wrong … not just to bad food, but to “oops, stuck on a mountain” detours. From an imaginary canyon in Peru to providing wrong times for attractions, **AI** doesn’t know the difference between directions, routes, or travel tips. It just spits out words and at times is confidently wrong, like that friend who swears they don’t need a map.

“Gooooo Dublin Dragons!” could be a chant that could soon echo across the NFL. With games already staged in Brazil, Ireland, England, Germany, and Spain, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell is testing the potential for an **international NFL** franchise. The opportunity is massive: millions of new fans, global markets, and proof that Sunday football isn’t just for Americans.

Toyoake, a small Japanese city, just passed an ordinance “urging” residents to **cap screen time at two hours a day** (outside of school and work). Don’t worry! Their phones won’t shut off if they exceed the limit, and no cops are storming in to confiscate their Switches. It’s more of a polite, government-issued nudge: Hey, maybe stop doomscrolling.

Used cooking oil, once a kitchen nuisance (and my landlord’s worst nightmare), is now jet fuel. Restaurants can’t dump grease down the drain, but refineries can turn it into **sustainable aviation fuel**. Airlines burned 340 million gallons last year, including one Boeing 777 that crossed the Atlantic on nothing but waste fat and sugar.

Corporate Lunch

- **Waymo's** self-driving car broke the rules with an illegal U-turn. Cops were stumped; no human, no hands, no **citation** section for bots. Laws to close the loophole are expected to go into effect in 2026.
- **Starbucks** is doing another **grande** restructuring, closing locations that are underperforming or can't provide the expected physical environment as the company focuses on re-energizing its growth.
- **Electronic Arts** sold for **$55 billion** in a record **leveraged buyout** deal. Game over? Nope, just a new level unlocked.
- **Boeing's** next plane, the replacement for the **737 MAX**, is in the works. Call it the 737 glow-up.
- **ChatGPT's** new gig: **personal shopping**. Users can now buy goods from Etsy and Shopify sellers without leaving chat. Only single-item buys, thankfully.
- Better-than-expected earnings have **Nike's** CEO declaring, "Our journey back to greatness has only just begun." **Just doing it**, indeed.
- **Walmart** is training workers for the AI era with new **bootcamps** and tech courses. From scanning barcodes to scanning datasets.