



STIFEL *Bits*

March 19, 2025

The Appetizer

“We’re taking a little bit of air out of the balloon, but we don’t see a recession at this point”

– Stifel Chairman and CEO **Ron Kruszewski** on a recent **CNBC** interview.

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

- 4:39 p.m.: The time that **the average American workday concludes**, 42 minutes earlier than in 2022, albeit with a 2% increase in overall productivity.
- \$87,840: The total auction cost of a **Cheeto shaped like the Pokémon Charizard**.
- \$244 million: The amount that **TV advertisers spent on women’s sports** in 2024, up 139% from 2023. TV viewership also surged in 2024, up 131%!
- 52%: The percentage of U.S. couples in 2024 who said their **engagement ring featured a lab-grown stone**.

Dig In

March Madness

While I’d love to say March is almost behind us ... we’ve still got one more Stifel Bits coming your way before we can officially turn the page.

Let’s talk about the stock market. It’s been a bit of a rollercoaster, and if you’ve felt a little queasy, you’re not alone. But here’s the thing, market pullbacks happen every year, and more often than not, stocks bounce back and end the year in positive territory. Need proof? Check it out [here](#).

Volatility has picked up this year – just look at the Chicago Board Options Exchange Market Volatility Index, which has climbed about **10 points higher** in the last month. But instead of getting caught up in the headlines, we focus on the fundamentals. In our recent [newsletter](#), we broke economic data down into “soft” data (how consumers and businesses feel) and “hard” data (actual facts and numbers).

So, do you want the bad news or good news first? Let’s sandwich it – The good: The labor market is strong, consumers are still spending, and business activity remains positive. The not-so-great: Consumer and business sentiment surveys are softening. The silver lining: Economic forecasts and stock market expectations are still pointing up! How’s that?

The bottom line: The headlines might be loud, but the **fundamentals are still holding up**. March may not be over, but neither is the year!

Weekly Specials

We're big fans of **precision farming**, and it seems vineyard owners are getting in **on the action**, from using self-driving tractors to targeting specific crops with bug problems. Honestly, if it means better wine in my glass, cheers to innovation!

Metallica's gone digital! Their concert film just dropped for the Apple Vision Pro headset, with cameras right in the mosh pit (aka "snake pit") capturing the action. An extended preview hit Apple Stores last Friday. Can't wait to see a new era of living room headbanging – hope the furniture survives.

An 82-year-old woman who lost her home in the LA wildfires got the surprise of a lifetime when she was **reunited with her beloved cat, Aggie**. The cat survived two months near the ruins until the West Los Angeles Animal Shelter found her. A purr-fect reunion.

St. Paddy's Day! The day of luck ... and maybe a little sipping. Did you know the real Saint Patrick was born in Britain and brought to Ireland at 16? Or that those mischievous green leprechauns likely came from Celtic fairies called lobaircin (aka "small-bodied fellows")? Oh, and the shamrock? It's a sacred plant.

Corporate Lunch

Southwest Airlines said goodbye to the "**bags fly free**" policy, sparking major backlash from loyal fliers. And to add salt to the wound, they posted on Instagram, "It's not like we traded Luka."

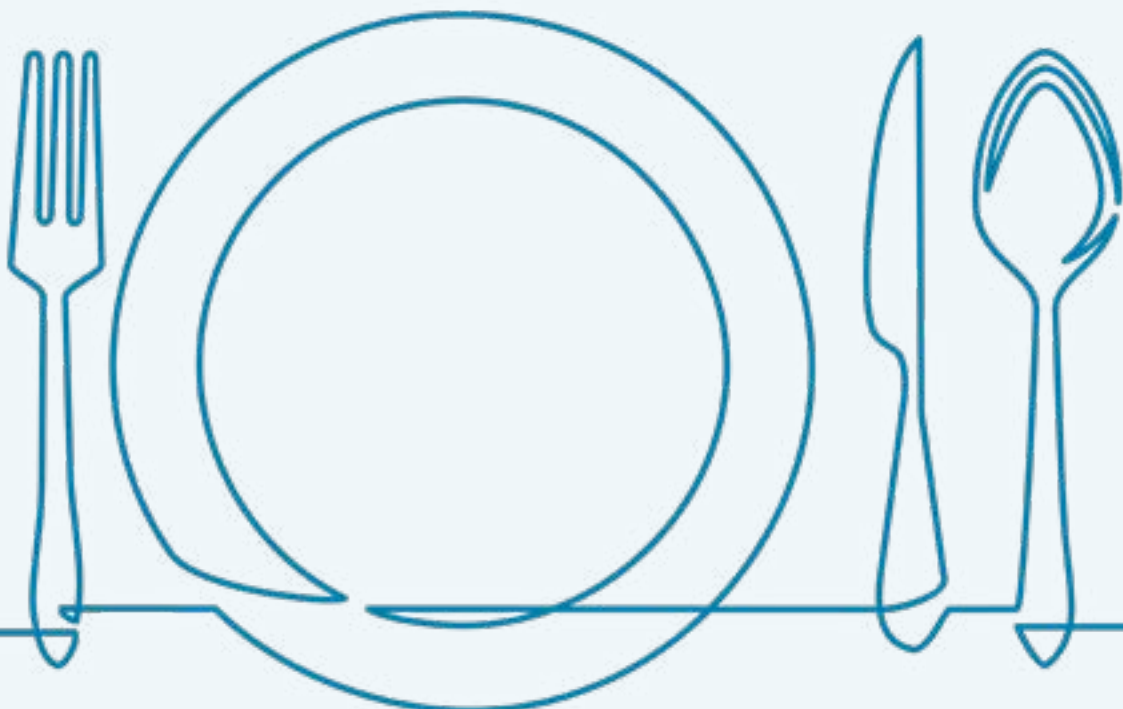
Target's aiming for a bullseye with billions in investments to boost its online marketplace – because hitting \$15 billion in sales growth by 2030 is no **small target!**

Alibaba's new **AI model** claims it can outsmart OpenAI and DeepSeek, but with a name like QwQ-32B, it sounds more like a WiFi password than a world-changing innovation.

The next S&P 500 shuffle this Friday is bringing in DoorDash, TKO, Williams-Sonoma, and Expand Energy – because even the **stock market** knows it's time to DoorDash some new names from time to time.

SpaceX's Dragon capsule **docked with the ISS**, bringing a new crew that would allow the previous crew of astronauts to finally return home after nine long months.

MGM Resorts is doubling down on **cost-cutting** – swapping front desk staff for self-serve kiosks, rolling in robot vacuums, and even recycled sofas. The real jackpot? An extra \$200 million in profit.



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The Chicago Board Options Exchange Market Volatility Index, a popular measure of the implied volatility of S&P 500 index options.

The S&P 500 Index is a capitalization-weighted index that is generally considered representative of the U.S. large capitalization market.

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