

Mobile Money Moves

Western Union banks on cell-phone transactions

Moving Money. Over 30 percent of U.S. Western Union's online transactions were initiated through mobile devices. Transfers between U.S. and Mexico remain strong as Mexico revenue grew 8 percent, and transactions increased 12 percent. Domestic money transfer revenue increased 1 percent on transaction growth of 5 percent in the quarter. U.S. domestic money transfer represents approximately 8 percent of total company revenues.

Virtual Cars. The average consumer now physically visits 1.9 automotive dealerships before purchasing a vehicle, down from the historical average of 3.2 visits, finds Autobytel. A dealer's website or virtual showroom is now more important than ever since these websites now serve as a way to deliver buyers directly to the dealer versus simply providing a lead.



Larissa Faw
The Business Roundup

New Phones Cell phone owners replace their phones every 12 months or 18 months, says AT&T.

Home Maintenance. Cold weather is expensive, says apartment property manager Home Properties. One of the company's most unanticipated expenses this weather was in the insurance for claims put in for pipes freezing. Its five-year average for this is about \$25,000 a year. This

winter, however, with extended frigid temperatures, the company saw claims reach \$800,000.

Say Cheese. LinkedIn profiles with photos generate 14 times more views than those without, reports the company. LinkedIn continues to develop its professional publishing platform by enabling any member to publish long form content. So far, the social network has seen more than four times the number of page views per post and more than twice the number of posts per author, than LinkedIn had initially projected. Meanwhile, the average article written by an Influencer - a pre-selected group of noteworthy individuals - receives more than 30,000 views.

Call Traffic. Briggs & Stratton executives say a good way to monitor trends is through call center activity and call centre volume. The outdoor equipment manufacturer tracks sales traffic

through its call centers over a three-year period to determine success and future growth categories.

Quick Service. BJ Restaurant introduces an app to enable guests to add their names to its call ahead list without calling the restaurant. The restaurant chain sees a 20- to 25-minute reduction in dining times when these tools are used by guests. Meanwhile, BJ's new menu items that debuted in February represent 10 percent of its total food sales today.

Number One Oil. Chevron will soon be the largest premium oil producer in the world. The conglomerate achieved mechanical completions of its new base oil facility at its Pascagoula, Mississippi refinery. Once fully ramped up, this increases its capacity and premium base oil by over 70 percent.

Rent-To-Own. During the quarter, move-outs to buy hous-

es declined by a significant 16 percent from prior year and constituted 18 percent of total turnover at Mid-America Apartment Communities, say company executives. Indeed, residents continue to rent. During April, rents for new move-in residents increased by an average of 3.1 percent on a year-over-year basis and lease renewals for renewing residents increased 7.1 percent.

Good Nuts. While drought conditions have impacted the availability of limes and other fruits, almonds are still growing nicely, reports Natural Grocers. Blue Diamond Almond predicts its crop is going to come near their prediction at 1.95 million pounds this year compared to 2 million last year.

Larissa Faw covers business trends for Forbes, The Motley Fool and other outlets. Contact her at larissafaw@gmail.com.

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