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Retail Sales Grew 0.2 Percent in February

February retail sales grew 0.2 percent seasonally adjusted over January and 0.8 percent unadjusted year-over-year, according to calculations released today by the National Retail Federation. The numbers exclude automobiles, gasoline stations and restaurants.

"Sales growth held up well, given warmer than normal weather and tax refund delays," NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz said. "While consumers benefit by purchasing more for less, the top-line retail numbers reflect a lack of pricing power and, in many cases, hide underlying consumer demand."

"While consumer spending in the first quarter has been erratic and most often weak, it registers positive improvement as the year continues," Kleinhenz said.

On a three-month moving average year-over-year, retail sales have grown 2.8 percent. When looking at business lines, performance in February was very mixed as electronics and appliance stores saw declines while building materials and garden supplies saw solid growth.

A few specifics from the report include:

Online and other non-store sales increased 1.2 percent over the previous month and increased 8.2 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Sales at clothing and accessories stores decreased 0.5 percent seasonally adjusted from the previous month and decreased 1.1 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Sales at general merchandise stores decreased 0.2 percent seasonally adjusted over the previous month and decreased 1.4 percent year-over-year.

Electronics and appliances stores' sales decreased 2.8 percent seasonally adjusted over the previous month and decreased 9.8 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Furniture and home furnishings stores' sales increased 0.7 percent over the previous month and increased 1.4 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Sales at building materials and supplies stores increased 1.8 percent seasonally adjusted over the previous month and increased 3.7 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Sporting goods stores' sales decreased 0.4 percent seasonally adjusted over the previous month and decreased 6.7 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

Sales at health and personal care stores increased 0.7 percent seasonally adjusted over the previous month and increased 2.7 percent unadjusted year-over-year.

https://nrf.com/news/retail-sales-grew-02-percent-february

Macy's Next CEO Wants to Make These 5 Big Changes at the Store

Your local Macy's store may soon look a lot different.

Roughly one week before President Jeff Gennette takes the reins from longtime CEO Terry Lundgren, the incoming chief executive gave Wall Street a taste of what the company's future might look like.

Speaking at the Bank of America Merrill Lynch Consumer & Retail Technology Conference in New York City Tuesday, Gennette walked investors through five tests Macy's is conducting that could eventually be rolled out across its fleet.

Dedicated clearance racks

To preserve margins on dated merchandise, Macy's is rolling out a specific section in its stores meant for marked down goods. Called Last Act, these areas make deals simple to understand by using a clearly marked price tag and prohibiting the use of coupons.

The sections also benefit Macy's profits. First, by removing old merchandise from its full-price racks, the company can sell more of its in-season goods without a discount. The clearance spaces have also helped the chain charge more on older merchandise.

Macy's tested these areas in 10 of its stores last year and plans to roll them out to another 30 locations in 2017, Gennette said.

Fewer coupons

Macy's will always be a promotional department store — but it can get more creative about how it delivers value to customers, Gennette said.

Take, for instance, its coupons. Though shoppers love the discounts coupons provide, they hate the exclusions required by certain vendors. By shifting its strategy to offer $10 off of $50 and similar offers, the chain can provide bargains without discounting specific brands.

Exploration of this new tactic comes as vendors like Michael Kors and Coach are dialing back the volume of handbags they ship to department stores, which were perpetually discounting their products.

Less reliance on sales associates

Waiting for an employee to grab a pair of black pumps in size 7 can be trying for time-crunched shoppers. So Macy's is piloting a model through which customers serve themselves in the shoe department, grabbing pairs from a selection of boxes on the sales floor.

The company started the experiment in small stores about a year ago and will expand the test to some of its larger locations this year. Meanwhile, Macy's is experimenting with self-service in its beauty departments.

A bigger beauty focus

In addition to letting customers do more hands-on testing in its beauty department, Macy's will roll out dedicated sections for its private label Impulse in additional stores.

It will also expand the footprint of its higher-end Bluemercury brand to drive traffic among millennial shoppers. These young customers are fueling big growth in the beauty category, particularly as it relates to cosmetics.

Macy's isn't alone in targeting the beauty industry for growth. J.C. Penney is opening Sephora shops in more of its stores, as specialty retailers like Ulta growth their square footage.

More branded shop-in-shops

Macy's is rolling out branded LensCrafters shops to more of its stores this year, following up existing partnerships with the likes of Sunglass Hut and Finish Line.

Over time, Gennette says licensed departments could become a bigger part of Macy's businesses, with an emphasis on partners who provide both goods and services.

These types of partnerships have been hit or miss for Macy's. While Gennette said the LensCrafters partnership has helped drive traffic to Macy's stores, the CEO of Tailored Brands recently called its Men's Wearhouse's tuxedo shops in Macy's "disappointing."

http://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/14/macys-next-ceo-wants-to-make-these-5-big-changes-at-the-store.html?__source=yahoo%7Cfinance%7Cheadline%7Cheadline%7Cstory&par=yahoo&doc=104340624

Why Zara is the Most Exciting Retailer Today

International fast-fashion brand Zara just blew away its competition with year-end gains sure to be the envy of retailers everywhere.

Zara is owned by Spain-based Inditex and the brand is one of the most exciting in retail today. It may even be in a class by itself.

Just this morning Zara came up in conversation about how boring stores have become with an industry contact, fellow Forbes contributor Paula Rosenblum of RSR Research. Product has become so commoditized--a sea of sameness regardless of outlet--that it's no wonder Amazon and Walmart are among the only retailers with positive financial performance.

I used to love shopping. Just browsing stores for a couple hours was fun and offered up creative inspiration in the form of fashion or accessories I hadn't seen before. Not anymore. Just last week I found myself in downtown Chicago with a couple hours free to wander. What had once been fun was now a chore, as I trudged through storefronts looking for something to pique my interest.

Until I came to Zara, this has consistently been the only brand to offer up interesting apparel on a consistent basis. My only complaint is I wish the store experience was better. Too often there's a long wait for a fitting room or a long line to pay. It's not unusual to see women stripping in the aisles to try things on, and on more than one occasion I left a pile of items behind, unwilling or unable to wait.

"That's exciting," Rosenblum said, putting on her analyst hat and jolting me out of complaining consumer mode. To create that kind of excitement and demand is exactly what retailers work toward.

So it should come as no surprise that Zara is the largest fashion retailer in the world by sales posting impressive annual results.

Same-store sales for all of Inditex--considered a real measure of growth--jumped 10% and net sales rose 12% for the year. Zara was responsible for 66% of the company's total sales and is the focus of its expansion, a focus that remains squarely on brick-and-mortar stores. Zara has been expanding in major markets, replacing smaller stores with enormous flagships.

The index doesn't specify e-commerce sales but this is a work in progress and one estimate puts online sales at just 6% of the company's total. This number is likely to rise as the platform steps in to capture sales where the larger stores cannot, appealing to shoppers not interested in navigating crowded stores, like myself (I'm tracking a package from Zara right now).

Zara's success is startling in comparison to the status of Gap, Macy's and most teen retailers, a list that is dwindling fast, thanks to bankruptcies. Inditex's prosperity is rooted in a multi-pronged approach that creates a closed-loop. From proprietary design to owned manufacturing facilities, the company is able to quickly get fashions to stores. It also utilizes shipping containers on the return to send back unsold merchandise for recycling. It's just slightly more economically efficient but the move has earned Zara and Inditex kudos from customers, especially millennials, for whom this eco-consciousness matters.

Inditex has a lot of room to grow with plans for more flagships and online expansion. It's a bright spot in retail today, if not the brightest.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/lauraheller/2017/03/15/why-zara-is-the-most-exciting-retailer-today/#3733ff195cd3

A Court's Decision in a Maine Labor Dispute Hinged on the Absence of an Oxford Comma

A Maine court ruling in a case about overtime pay and dairy delivery didn't come down to trucks, milk, or money. Instead, it hinged on one missing comma.

Delivery drivers for local milk and cream company Oakhurst Dairy have been tussling with their employers over whether they qualify for overtime. On March 13, a US court of appeals determined that certain clauses of Maine's overtime laws are grammatically ambiguous. Because of that lack of clarity, the five drivers have won their lawsuit against Oakhurst, and are eligible for unpaid overtime.

The profoundly nerdy ruling is also a win for anyone who dogmatically defends the serial comma.

The serial comma, also known as the Oxford comma for its endorsement by the Oxford University Press style rulebook, is a comma used just before the coordinating conjunction ("and," or "or," for example) when three or more terms are listed. You'll see it in the first sentence of this story—it's the comma after "milk"—but you won't find it in the Maine overtime rule at issue in the Oakhurst Dairy case. According to state law, the following types of activities are among those that don't qualify for overtime pay:

The canning, processing, preserving,freezing, drying, marketing, storing, packing for shipment or distribution of:
(1) Agricultural produce;
(2) Meat and fish products; and
(3) Perishable foods.

There, in the comma-less space between the words "shipment" and "or," the fate of Kevin O'Connor v. Oakhurst Dairy was argued. Is packing (for shipment or distribution) a single activity that is exempt from overtime pay? Or are packing and distributing two different activities, and both exempt?

If lawmakers had used a serial comma, it would have been clear that distribution was an overtime-exempt activity on its own. But without the comma, wrote US appeals judge David J. Barron, the law is ambiguous as to whether distribution is a separate activity, or whether the whole last clause—"packing for shipment or distribution"—is one activity, meaning only the people who pack the dairy products are exempt. The drivers do distribute, but do not pack, the perishable food.

The debate over the serial comma has long raged and remains unresolved. Proponents of its use (like Quartz, which breaks with the AP Stylebook on this vital matter) say that, when listing things in writing, a comma before the last item is paramount. It separates the sentence "He ate dessert, fries, and ham" from "He ate dessert, fries and ham." Opponents say that it's redundant, aesthetically displeasing, and potentially more ambiguous.

Oakhurst, for its part, had argued that "distribution" was separate in the language of the law, meaning its drivers did not qualify for overtime.

In an impressively geeky retort, the drivers responded that all the other exempted activities were listed as gerunds, words ending with "-ing": Canning, processing, preserving, freezing, drying, marketing, storing, packing. The word "distribution," they argued, was therefore not intended to be one of the items in the list.
The first court to hear the case ruled in the company's favor, but the appellate court disagreed. Wrote Barron, since Maine's

overtime laws are meant to have “remedial purpose,” that is, to help the state’s workers, they should be read liberally. He and the appeals court therefore sided with the drivers, ruling that they should receive their unpaid overtime.

Maine has a style guide for legislation, and Oakhurst had argued it expressly instructs law-writers not to use the serial comma:

Do not write:	Write:
Trailers, semitrailers, and pole trailers	Trailers, semitrailers and pole trailers

But, as the appeals court argues—and the style guide shows—clarity is of the utmost importance when a list is ambiguous. From the appellate court ruling:

The manual also contains a proviso—”Be careful if an item in the series is modified”—and then sets out several examples of how lists with modified or otherwise complex terms should be written to avoid the ambiguity that a missing serial comma would otherwise create.

https://qz.com/932004/the-oxford-comma-a-maine-court-settled-the-grammar-debate-over-serial-commas-with-a-ruling-on-overtime-pay-for-dairy-truck-drivers/

Bloomberg: Walgreens Could Sell Additional Assets to Fred’s

There is another development in Walgreens’ quest to acquire Rite Aid.

Walgreens Boots Alliance could be close to an agreement to sell more assets, including additional stores, distribution centers, software and personnel, to Fred’s Pharmacy in an effort to win U.S. Federal Trade Commission of its proposed agreement to acquire Rite Aid, according to Bloomberg, citing sources close to the talks.

“Walgreens could present the beefed-up package to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission within weeks, the [Bloomberg source] said, in hopes of satisfying the agency’s concerns after an initial proposal fell short,” the news outlet reported. It added that in addition to the FTC, at least a dozen states attorneys general had “scrutinized the deal.”

As part of the sweetened deal, Fred’s would also get the rights to the Rite Aid brand name for an extended period beyond the 24-month period outlined in the original deal, Bloomberg added in its report. “Senior Rite Aid executives could also move over to Fred’s, although exactly who and how many is still under discussion, according to the [source].”

Drug Store News reported one week ago that Walgreens was perhaps considering declaring it has “certified compliance” in its Rite Aid merger, forcing the FTC to vote on the proposed transaction in 30 days.

The proposed Walgreens-Rite Aid transaction was first proposed in Oct. 2015. Fred’s was already set to acquire at least 865 divested Rite Aid locations.

Wall Street reacted positively to this news, lifting the stocks of Fred’s and Rite Aid each by more than 2 percent during Tuesday afternoon trading.

http://www.chainstoreage.com/article/bloomberg-walgreens-could-sell-additional-assets-freds

Target is the Top Retail Digital Marketer, so why is it Struggling?

According to Internet Retailer’s newly released The Best Digital Marketers in E-Commerce report, Target is the most effective marketer in online retail.

The report looks at how well retailers perform across multiple marketing channels, including email, paid and natural search, and social, and found that Target "takes advantage of many of the newer online marketing tools available to web merchants, such as dynamic ads and tools that show on-the-go shoppers what inventory is available at their local store."

It has also developed a large repository of first-party data culled from a variety of sources, including its stores, website and apps, and branded credit card. This data is used to target customers across channels and "get greater returns than targeting audiences that rely on aggregated information to find signals of intent," according to Target SVP of Marketing Kristi Argyilan.

Organizationally, Target says that it has broken down the silos between the teams that manage its various digital marketing channels.

So why is the retailer struggling overall?

Shares of the company's stock recently touched two and a half-year lows after Target missed earnings expectations and provided weak guidance for 2017.

While the company saw "very strong digital growth" of 34% in the fourth quarter of 2016, there was "unexpected softness in…stores" which resulted in a higher-than-expected 1.5% decline in same-store sales.

To address what Target CEO Brian Cornell calls a "new era of retailing," the company plans to invest billions of dollars in initiatives such as store remodeling, the opening of small format stores and "aggressive promotional activities" designed to help it better compete with Amazon and Walmart.

Cutting prices might seem like a necessary strategy in today's environment – Cornell says it "will best position Target for continued success over the long term" – but there's plenty of skepticism that it will actually pay off for Target, as evidenced by investors' response to the announcement.

In effect, it would appear that while Target has developed an effective digital marketing engine, growth in online sales hasn't been enough to offset offline declines, competition from Amazon and Walmart has forced the company to cut into margins, and, perhaps most importantly, the digital marketing engine doesn't seem to be helping drive customers to stores effectively enough.

The challenge for Target at this point is that the company can't and won't favor online sales over in-store sales. As GuruFocus' Sangara Narayanan observes:

"The problem is, nobody has perfected [the model] where online and in-store sales perfectly complement each other. Rising online sales can easily cannibalize in-store sales for big-box retailers, which will squeeze the margins even further. The ever-intensifying competitive nature of the market is only making things harder for big-box retailers, and 2017 may be the year where the stronger ones come out of the shadows."

Will Target emerge as one of the stronger retailers? If it doesn't, despite its status as the most effective marketer in online retail, it will suggest that the "seismic shift" Target's Cornell sees will leave more destruction in its wake than even big retail bears have predicted.

https://www.clickz.com/target-is-the-top-retail-digital-marketer-so-why-is-it-struggling/109993/?utm_source=clickz&u

Brick-and-Mortar Retailers: Here's what Consumers Want

As brick-and-mortar retailers seek to turn their physical stores into an asset instead of a liability to compete against online retailers, they will need to make sure they are heeding the demands of today's increasingly mobile phone dependent consumers.

For one, while studies have showed in-store shopping remains important to a majority of shoppers, an International Council of Shopping Centers survey released on Monday showed that more than three-fifths of consumers expect that by 2020 they will actually prefer to be left alone to do their own thing while in stores instead of engaging with a sales person. The only caveat: stores have to provide easy access to products and sizes available there.

ICSC didn't respond to a request for more details on any historical and other findings of the survey.

The survey of more than 1,000 people in February conducted by Opinion Research Corp. for ICSC also found more than half of the consumers said they prefer to virtually see how home furnishings and accessories fit in a home before they make a purchase. Separately, more than half said they want to compile a shopping list on a store app and receive a floor map to locate products.

The survey also showed how much consumers have come to rely on click-and-collect services, and how mobile is a key part of the experience: Nearly three-quarters of shoppers said they've made a purchase using their mobile device and picked up the product in store. Not surprisingly, millennials were even more likely than the average, with 87% of them saying they had made mobile purchase to pick up in store.

More retailers are trying to turn that to a traffic-driving weapon.

"We introduced buy online and pick up in store and buy online and ship to store" without any shipping fee, Crate & Barrel COO Michael Relich said in an interview earlier this year. "We are trying to use that to drive store traffic. When they come in, we give them bounce-back coupons. They use our stores as a showroom first. We actually see a lot of transactions start in one channel and finish in another. Brick and mortar is good for us."

While retailers such as Crate & Barrel are capitalizing on the shifting consumer behavior, a late 2016 survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for JDA, a supply chain software provider, showed that most retailers are still behind when it comes to designing a digital strategy that would give them a leg up in winning consumers' wallet share.

Against the backdrop that some retailers are debating the economics of whether to use their mobile sites or roll out their own apps to target shoppers, the ICSC survey suggested there's demand for retail apps: 71% of consumers said they have one or more retailer apps on their phones and 74% of them access them at least once a week. Some 86% of millennials accessed a retailer's app weekly, outpacing 74% of Generation X and 61% of Baby Boomers.

In another sign there's room for growth for voice-activated personal assistants like Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa, 37% of consumers said they've used a digital assistant to build shopping lists or to place orders for in-store pickups. The survey also offered an encouraging sign for mobile payment: 35% of survey respondents said they've used that feature.

With personalization a key buzzword for retailers seeking to stand out and offer a product or service only available in their stores, the survey indicated it's time for them to take a closer look at prices: more than two-fifths of consumers said they are open to the idea of retailers "personalizing" prices based on their shopping patterns and demographics.

https://retail.emarketer.com/article/brick-and-mortar-retailers-heres-what-consumers-want/58c71918ebd400016cd37b72?ecid=NL1014

Former Macy's Suitor Sets Sights on Retail Rival

The company that was looking to acquire Cincinnati-based Macy's Inc. has reportedly left that deal behind and is now seeking to purchase a different retail chain.

The Wall Street Journal reports that the private equity firms that own Neiman Marcus Group are in discussions to sell it to Hudson's Bay Co. Hudson's Bay, until recently, was in talks to acquire Macy's (NYSE: M).

The company that was looking to acquire Cincinnati-based Macy's Inc. has reportedly left that deal behind and is now seeking to purchase a different retail chain.

Hudson's Bay is a Toronto-based company whose flagship Hudson's Bay department store operates 90 locations in Canada. It purchased Saks in 2013 for $2.9 billion and acquired Lord & Taylor (formerly owned by Macy's) in 2012 for an undisclosed sum.

The deal to purchase Macy's appeared to have stalled earlier this month when it was reported that Hudson's Bay was struggling to line up funding.

Despite that, one analyst believes that Macy's is primed for acquisition because of its real estate – valued at between $10 billion and $20 billion – and its steady, if declining, cash flow.

If any deal goes through, Macy's outgoing CEO Terry Lundgren stands to make $18.3 million. Lundgren's employment agreement offers him that much in severance and accelerated benefits in the event of a takeover, per Macy's proxy statement.

It would also potentially impact Cincinnati employees of the company, 3,000 of whom work between the downtown headquarters, Springdale office and Mason call center along with another 1,000 in local stores.

All of this is happening as Lundgren prepares to hand over the reins to the company's president, Jeff Gennette, who takes the top office on March 23.

Macy's operates about 870 stores under the Macy's, Macy's Backstage, Bloomingdale's, Bloomingdale's Outlet and Bluemercury brands, primarily within the United States. The company has about 4,000 local employees.

http://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2017/03/14/former-macys-suitor-sets-sights-on-retail-rival.html?ana=e_ae_set1&s=scroll&ed=2017-03-14&u=xQeDzsnDNIz7tZRd3rOZapkwQDb&t=1489528401&j=77648671

Google, Facebook Increase Their Grip on Digital Ad Market

US digital ad spending will reach $83.00 billion in 2017, representing an increase of 15.9%, according to eMarketer's latest forecast.

Google will maintain its dominance and account for 40.7% of US digital ad revenues in 2017—more than double Facebook's share.

eMarketer expects Google's share of the search market to grow 16.1% to $28.55 billion in 2017. The search giant will claim roughly 78% of total US search ad revenues this year.

"Google's dominance in search, especially mobile search, is largely coming from the growing tendency of consumers to turn to their smartphones to look up everything from the details of a product to directions," said eMarketer forecasting analyst Monica Peart. "Google and mobile search as a whole will continue to benefit from this behavioral shift."

As Google dominates search, Facebook rules display. The social network's US display business will jump 32.1% to $16.33 billion, capturing 39.1% of the US display market, taking share away from Google, Yahoo, and Twitter.

Facebook's revenue growth can be attributed to growth in both usage and time spent, which continues to draw advertisers in greater numbers. Instagram is also helping to drive Facebook's revenue growth. In fact, Instagram will make up 20% of Facebook's US mobile revenue this year, up from 15% last year.

Meanwhile, Google's display business will rise to $5.24 billion, but its share of the display market will drop to 12.5%.

"Facebook's users are increasingly captivated by videos on the platform—not just on Facebook, but on Instagram as well. Video, both live and recorded, is a key driver of growing user engagement and advertiser enthusiasm," said Peart.

Where does Snapchat fit in?

With its IPO now behind it, Snapchat is poised for explosive growth this year. In 2017, Snapchat's ad revenue will grow 157.8% to $770 million in the US. That's slightly lower than the $800 million previously projected, due to higher-than-estimated revenue sharing with partners.

Snapchat's ad business, which is made up entirely of mobile display, is still small. Snapchat will account for 1.3% of the US mobile ad market this year. By 2019, that will grow to 2.7%.

https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Google-Facebook-Increase-Their-Grip-on-Digital-Ad-Market/1015417?ecid=NL1001

48 Million Twitter Accounts Exposed as Bots

Study suggests that Twitter is delivering misleading analytics

Data has never been more important to marketers, which is why it is always all the more alarming when it's suggested that a platform is delivering false analytics.

Approximately 15% of Twitter accounts — some 48 million — are bots rather than people, according to new research from the University of Southern California and Indiana University

While the research is troubling news for Twitter, which has struggled to elevate its user base in the face of growing competition; it is perhaps more frustrating for marketers who trusted the engagement data.

The report elaborates on the percentage of bots, by stating that complex bots could have shown up as humans in their model, "making even the 15% figure a conservative estimate."

There are benefits to social media bots, such as automatic alerts of natural disasters or customer service responses; yet the report points out downsides as well.

"...there is a growing record of malicious applications of social bots. Some emulate human behavior to manufacture fake grassroots political support… [and] promote terrorist propaganda and recruitment," says the report. There have been many — and recent — reports of Russian Twitter bot armies delivering propaganda.

Another downside, not listed in the report, is the implication for brands using Twitter to elevate reputation and deliver marketing messages. How can they evaluate social marketing performance if engagement data is artificially inflated?

http://www.dmnews.com/social-media/48-million-twitter-accounts-exposed-as-bots/article/644127/

Facebook Lets Publishers Place More Ads in Instant Articles

Publisher partnerships with Facebook have proven to be something of a roller coaster — promising developments alternate with setbacks amid constantly changing rules and endless tweaks to the newsfeed algorithm.
This week, the ride is taking a positive turn with Facebook's announcement that it will allow publishers to place more ads in content delivered via Instant Articles.

Unveiled in a Facebook blog post from the social network's Journalism Project, beginning this week, the new rules governing ad placements will allow publishers to place ads after every 250 words of editorial content in Instant Articles. That compares to the previous proportion of one ad for every 350 words.

Publishers can place the ads manually or using Facebook's Automatic Ads Placement feature, which also allows placements after every 350 and 500 words.

In addition to allowing more ads, the blog post also hinted that new ad formats and placements are on their way, although these are still in the works. This could be a boon for publishers that have complained standardization for Instant Articles limited the custom ad experiences they can offer advertisers.

According to previous posts, Facebook's Journalism Project is also working on story packages that allow publishers to entice readers with more than one article at a time and a subscription service integrating Facebook's payment system, among other new features.

These offerings come as the social network continues to compete with rivals, including Google and Apple for access to publisher content. Last month, for example, Google announced it would let AMP users share source links from the publishers' own Web sites and apps, rather than limiting them to Google's own AMP links.

For its part, Facebook added video ads to Instant Articles last year; it began letting partner publishers run animated ads and "click to play" videos. Overall, Facebook offers publishers 100% of the revenue from ads they run inside the service directly and takes 30% of revenue from ads that it sells on their behalf through the Facebook Audience Network.

Despite all these attempts to woo publishers, distribution partnerships remain a relatively small proportion of total revenues for a number of big publishers, per a Digital Content Next report published in February.
The report from DCN, the publishing industry trade organization previously known as the Online Publishers Association, found platform partnerships accounted for just 14% of total publisher revenues, based on a survey of 19 of its members, including big names like ESPN, The New York Times and Bloomberg.

http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/297104/facebook-lets-publishers-place-more-ads-in-instant.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headline&utm_campaign=101356&hashid=

Joplin Globe Hires new Advertising Director

The Joplin Globe has hired Bob Barth, a 40-year newspaper industry veteran, as its newest advertising director. Barth began work in his new role Monday.

Before coming to Joplin, Barth worked in seven media markets and for newspapers such as the Bismarck, North Dakota, Tribune; the Topeka Capital-Journal; and the Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. He has also worked as regional advertising director for Scripps.

"I started in the business in the trenches, in the mail room and press room," Barth said. "I worked my way up through sales of all kinds — retail, classified, direct mail, commercial printing, specialty publications.

"It's amazing to me looking back at what newspapers used to be; just a simple newspaper. We are now a full-fledged total media company. The customers that we work with, their business is changing so fast and we have to change to be at the forefront of those changes to help them do their marketing and advertising."

Barth said that while Joplin is similar in size to other markets where he has worked, businesses in all markets across the country struggle to find the best ways to reach customers.

"The struggles the customers are facing out there are real challenges," he said. "And they have to be at the top of their game every day, making sure they're getting the right customers and the right products into their stores. And we have to do the same thing here; make sure we have the right product mix to meet the needs of those customers."

Over the course of his career, Barth also worked as a director of online advertising, and that will be a focus for him at the Globe, he said.

http://www.joplinglobe.com/news/local_news/joplin-globe-hires-new-advertising-director/article_54a7773c-12ea-5602-ae8e-6167aff6c7b5.html

Nexstar Media Group Joins the Local Media Consortium

The Local Media Consortium (LMC), a strategic partnership of local media companies, today announced that Nexstar Media Group, Inc., the second largest TV station operator in the country, has become the latest media company to join its strategic alliance of local multiplatform media and technology companies.

With 171 full power television stations in 100 markets reaching approximately 39 percent of U.S. television households and 50+ million unique users connecting to 120+ locally focused web sites, Nexstar will bring the LMC's total membership to 1,700 print, broadcast and online media companies. The LMC now represents more than half of local broadcast news stations and two-thirds of local newspapers in the United States.

"At Nexstar Media Group we are committed to localism, innovation and growth. Our goal is to maximize every opportunity to become the local consumer's and advertiser's number one choice across all screens. Through our LMC membership, we will have the valuable opportunity to collaborate with other leading local media and technology companies, while further extending the reach and accessibility of Nexstar's content and services," said Tom O'Brien, Nexstar Media Group's Executive Vice President, Digital and Chief Revenue Officer. "We are pleased to join the LMC and look forward to working together with this distinguished group of media companies to develop new innovations and processes that help our industry meet the evolving needs and demands of our viewers, readers and advertising partners, while ensuring local media continues to thrive over the long-term."

As a new member, Nexstar will benefit from the LMC's established partners, including Google, Yahoo and Monster, which provide premiere technology and content solutions to the LMC's members.

"The Local Media Consortium continues to attract the most loyal and engaged audiences across the web," said Jason Washing, Director, Global Partnerships – News and Local Media, Google. "Adding Nexstar to their membership only solidifies LMC's mission of connecting technology companies to our local communities and the information that impacts their daily lives. As a function of Google's partnership with the LMC, Nexstar will have access to our joint initiatives that drive additional opportunities for the local news ecosystem for years to come."

The LMC was founded in 2013 to address the needs of advertisers seeking to reach high-quality audiences on brand-safe local digital properties at scale, and its membership spans more than 75 local media companies in top markets across the United States and Puerto Rico. The LMC audience footprint exceeds 157 million unduplicated monthly unique visitors, and LMC member companies served more than 4.5 billion page views to readers. The addition of Nexstar is expected to increase the LMC's audience and further the LMC's position as a premiere advertising network.

"As a trusted and respected local media leader, Nexstar is a valuable addition to our team of high-quality publishers and broadcasters," said Rusty Coats, Executive Director of the LMC. "With journalists, anchors and employees that live and work in the local communities they serve, local media has a distinct competitive advantage in providing critical information and services in real-time. As the LMC continues to grow, we strengthen our efforts to sustain local journalism and the essential services our industry provides to local communities across the United States."

http://www.talkingnewmedia.com/2017/03/13/nexstar-media-group-joins-the-local-media-consortium/

Former Sun-Times Publisher Named Canadian Diplomat here

John Cruickshank, the Canadian journalist and media executive who earned respect and trust during seven years as an editor and publisher of the Sun-Times, is returning to Chicago as a diplomat for his country.

Cruickshank, 63, has been named consul general of Canada in Chicago. The Midwest consulate covers Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Northwest Indiana and the Kansas City metropolitan area. He will assume the post in mid-April.

"Mr. Cruickshank personally exemplifies the many links between Canada and the United States, which includes his time in Chicago and his tenure as publisher of the Chicago Sun-Times," Chrystia Freeland, foreign affairs minister of Canada, said in a statement Monday. "With his proven leadership, I have no doubt that he will successfully represent the best of Canada in Chicago."

The Toronto native, who stepped down last March after seven years as publisher of the Toronto Star, most recently has served as chairman of the Canadian Journalism Foundation and co-chair of Canadian Press Enterprises. He previously held senior editorial roles at CBC News, Vancouver Sun, Montreal Gazette and the Globe and Mail.

Starting in 2000, Cruickshank was highly regarded as a stabilizing figure during the tumultuous reign of Conrad Black and David Radler, top executives of Sun-Times parent company Hollinger International. Both Black and Radler eventually served prison time for fraud.

“John was the cheerful peacemaker, the steady hand, who came in after the dismissals of Black and Radler and told us the good news was, the Sun-Times had been making more money than we thought, and the bad news was, it had been stolen,” the late Sun-Times film critic Roger Ebert said of Cruickshank when he stepped down as publisher in 2007. “He was a calming, encouraging influence.”

Of his tenure at the Sun-Times, where he rose from vice president of editorial to chief operating officer and publisher, Cruickshank later joked he “was the only one who wasn’t under FBI investigation at the time that they needed a new publisher.”

http://www.robertfeder.com/2017/03/14/former-sun-times-publisher-john-cruickshank-named-canadian-diplomat/