

Hitting a Nerve

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CHALLENGES ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT have been at the forefront of the news over the past several weeks, with concerns about fast-rising housing prices and the balance between slowing growth and accelerating inflation occupying WSJ.com readers' time and thoughts.

More than 80% of readers who voted think the housing market is in a bubble -- though most don't expect it to pop this year. Most of you voted to increase Amtrak's federal funding and tapped high labor costs as Detroit's Achilles' heel. Elsewhere in corporate America, most readers backed a MCI-Qwest merger and, looking back, said Apple proprietary PC business was a mistake.

And, yes, just how did young Skywalker get seduced by the Dark Side? Most of you, it seems, probably already know.

These are just a few of the results of recent Question of the Day polls of Online Journal readers. Collected here are the vote tallies and reader responses. Remember, these aren't scientific surveys. But they are an interesting glimpse of what your fellow readers are thinking.

For more polls and discussion forums, see the [Discussions](#) page.

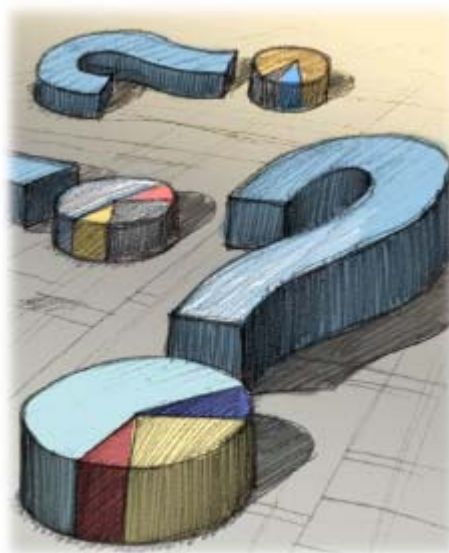


Illustration Jon Keegan

— Compiled by Naureen S. Malik

Is the U.S. housing market in a bubble? (May 19, 2005)

I voted that it is in a bubble and will burst this year. The housing market in the Phoenix area is raising rapidly. People are paying over the asking price for existing homes, and many developers are rationing new home sales, i.e. lotteries or some other method.

— Donald Knafels

Yes. I suspect that really good properties will be safe, but newer housing built to satisfy the boom in less desirable locations will be hit hard. Cheaper housing will probably turnover quickly.

— Tom Stroud

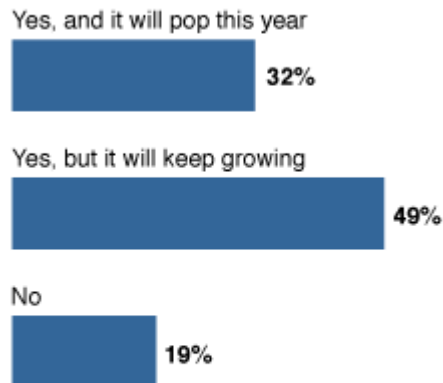
No, it is an asset replacement for the fumbling stock market. My house is worth twice what I paid for it. Where else can you double up in such a short time?

— Travis Nave

From the eyes of the European citizens, the prices here in the U.S. have gone nowhere. Still a bargain.

— Sushil Alag

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Total Respondents: 3,528

Will you see the new "Star Wars" movie? (May 18, 2005)

If it were possible, a year ago, I would have gone into a time machine and set the dial for May 19, 2005, to watch the premiere. You bet your bippy I'll go see "Star Wars"!

— Carlo Rose

Not a chance. It is just amazing how bad, facile, unimaginative, non-fantastic, pedestrian and trite something this expensive to make can be.

— Andrew E. Malone

I'm not a big sci-fi or "Star Wars" fan, I just find Darth Vader to be the absolute best villain in movies (along side Hannibal)... I



didn't see the first two prequels in theaters, but I will see this one sooner than later.

— *Vikram Pant*

Yes. I suspect over, and over, and over, ad nauseum. My son had a "Star Wars" bedroom when the first wave hit. He now has a son that played with the Millennium Falcon model. My husband thinks he arrested Chewbacca once.

— *Maureen Mangon*

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What should the federal government do with Amtrak's funding? (May 10, 2005)

Amtrak's losses are insignificant compared to the airline losses or the cost of the interstate highway system. What Amtrak needs is a major increase in funding for new equipment and improved services so that we have a viable alternative to air and highway transportation.

— *Michael D. Allentoff*

Kill Amtrack. Sell it to private firms. If anything is subsidized, make local, state and federal governments credit the property taxes charged to owners of the railroad beds when passenger trains use their tracks.

— *Carlile Crutcher*

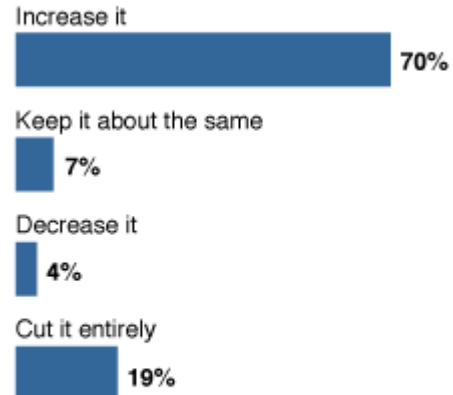
My solution would be to keep certain systems in place, namely Acela and any other high commuter routes, and scrap the rest.

— *Ben Buswell*

We should be focusing on why rail transportation works so much better in Europe.

— *Matthew Macarty*

[Read more comments.](#)



Total Respondents: 6,728

What's the biggest problem in the U.S. auto industry? (May 6, 2005)

The problem with automobiles made by Ford and General Motors is the poor quality and poor construction design due mainly to union rules for workers and extremely high salaries paid.

— *Sam H. McPhaul Sr.*

Management has always blamed the workers. I used to believe them. Now the Japanese build high-quality cars with the same American workers.

— *Steven Croft*

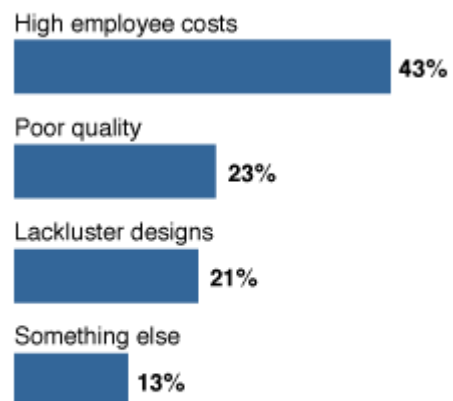
I chose lackluster designs, as truly GM and Chrysler both today have some of the ugliest ducklings on the market.

— *Ray deSola*

Detroit's habit of following fads has gotten it into trouble. The overseas competition has the right products at the right time. Toyota and Honda have jumped out front with their hybrids, and had them even before gas got expensive.

— *Robert Bowers*

[Read more comments.](#)



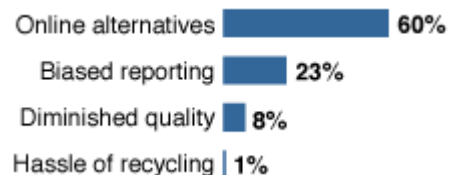
Total Respondents: 6,554

What is the main reason for declines in newspaper circulation? (May 2, 2005)

Undoubtedly it's the Internet. Physical papers are cumbersome on crowded subways, create vast amounts of waste, and are comparably expensive.

— *Andrew Miller*

Three words: shorter news cycles.



— Gabriel Salcido

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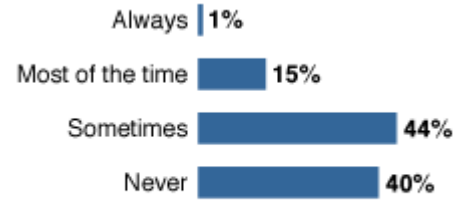
Do you trust news articles that rely on unnamed sources? (May 17, 2005)

Rarely. It all depends on the source and their past credibility.
— John Kelly

The purpose of unnamed sources is to protect "whistle blowers." The use of "unnamed sources" has moved far past that and has simply become a way to avoid confrontation and responsibility.

— Frank Seldin

[Read more comments.](#)



Total Respondents: 2,540

Which is a bigger threat to today's economy, slowing growth or accelerating inflation?

(April 29, 2005)

Slowing growth. For the tens of millions of Americans who live paycheck to paycheck and have huge amounts of consumer debt the prospect of being laid off is much worse.

— Louis Gudema

Inflation has the added disadvantage of hurting the middle and lower classes at a time when there is heavy downward pressure on wages.

— Thomas Fiore

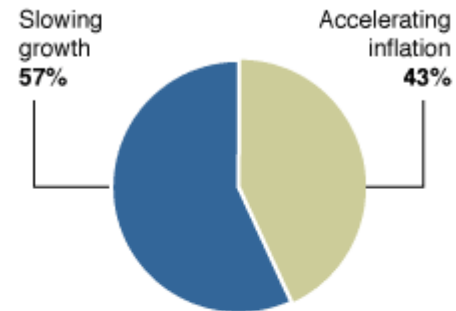
The biggest threat is having both at the same time. Stagflation is nasty and hard to cure (especially by monetary policy alone).

— Andrei Voicu

Energy is the biggest threat, and always will be. How quickly we forget 1974 and 1979 and the ruinous recessions we experienced because of our chaotic energy policy.

— Tom Keyser

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Total Respondents: 3,123

What is the main reason Apple has a small share of the PC market? (April 28, 2005)

I love Macs and think Apple Computers are great. But I don't own one because I don't want to change out all my software.
— Eva Lang

Since my kids use Apple computers at school they are familiar and comfortable with Apple OS. If I could just get over the price difference, I would buy one tomorrow.

— Diane Flis

Because Apples are impossible to figure out! They are also pricey and have fewer features than PCs.

— Carol May

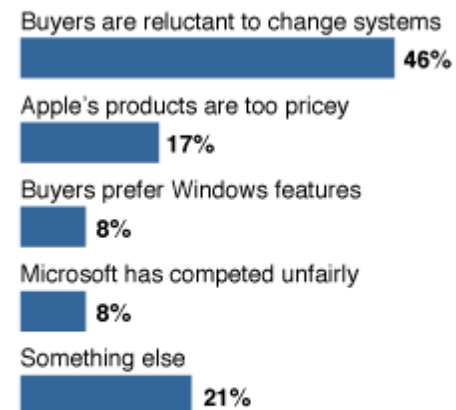
The answer is that Apple's rigidly proprietary, single-sourced hardware is anathema to any competent corporate I.T. manager.

— Riley VanDyke

I think you need to look back 20 years ago when IBM was emerging with their PC. That is when corporate America embraced their technology. Apple just missed the boat.

— Brett D. McEwen

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Total Respondents: 4,244

What's the biggest challenge facing the new pope? (April 20, 2005)

The biggest challenge faced by the new pope is leading Catholics by being a role model, providing hope for the future and encouragement in the present and defining the spiritual issues worth standing up for world-wide.

— *Dave Mosher*

As Pope Benedict XVI has said himself, moral relativism is a strong force. People have made themselves god and have no sense of self-control, much less self-denial.

— *Fawn Kieliszewski*

Let's face it, being absolutely right while everyone else is absolutely wrong is a tough order. It's particularly hard to hold this position when you focus on religious teachings that cannot be found in scripture and defy the needs of people that Christ taught should be ministered to.

— *Sander Abernathy*

All this talk about the church being out of touch with modern society! Is it not more accurate that society is, sadly, out of touch with the church?

— *Greg Johnson*

[Read more comments.](#)

Should the Senate change its rules to prevent filibusters on judicial nominees?

(April 12, 2005)

The main reason for the business at hand is to provide the executive branch the power to control the judicial branch. This can not be permitted, else the freedom so many have died to protect dating back to our origins will have been wasted.

— *James Webster*

In a New York minute. Obstruction will be the order of the day for as long as we leave the present rules in place. The present minority has wasted enough time and spent too much doing it.

— *Bill Gordon L. Stafford*

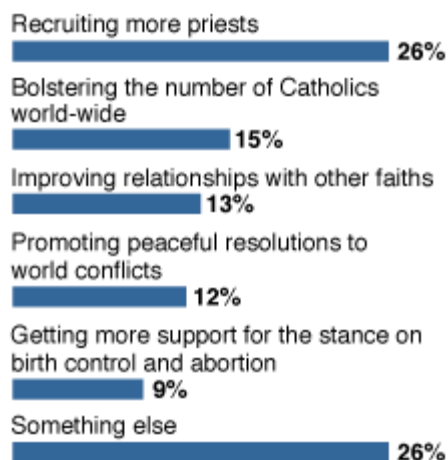
I voted to keep the filibuster for judicial nominees because it is clearly working. The minority is using it to keep a few of W.'s worst choices from negatively affecting the lives of the majority of Americans.

— *Ray Olson*

I believe that Democrats are abusing the rules. Rather, a more pragmatic approach would be for the Republicans to call the Democrats' bluff.

— *Joe Klein*

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Total Respondents: 3,175

Which deal would be better for MCI shareholders? (April 7, 2005)

The Qwest/MCI deal is the best value for MCI shareowners. Qwest's network combined with MCI's local assets will create a company with strong competitive advantage.

— *Andrew Leyba*

Both Verizon and Qwest have been in a fairly narrow trading range for the past three years, so, the upside potential is not very great.

— *Nick Roper*

I have difficulty seeing how a \$7.5 billion dollar offer can be considered a superior offer to a \$8.9 billion. Additionally, the MCI employees who believe that either merger would not result in similar job cuts is naive.

— *Paul Gallagher*

The lesson of history is to beware the Siren song of the "best offer." The alleged "synergies" of the WorldCom deal almost destroyed the company that gave us all better phone rates.

— *Tim Galvin*

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Total Respondents: 3,035



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