STEARNS FINANCIAL GROUP

FINANCIAL TRENDS

Think Ahead. Play Smart. • A Publication of Stearns Financial Group • WINTER 2015

Stearns Financial Group

Stearns Financial is an independent wealth management firm providing investment management, financial planning, and business transition and planning services.

Financial Trends is a newsletter for our clients, allied professionals, and friends of the firm. We provide information from our extensive research network that helps better inform our readers on a variety of current and future investment, financial, and business planning areas.

SFG believes in being a strong consumer advocate for our clients, being pro-active, transparent and well-informed. Our research-driven team is constantly on the outlook for threats and opportunities for our clients that will impact them as they move toward their financial goals.

Would you like a member of your family or a friend to receive this newsletter?
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(manderson@StearnsFinancial.com)
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WELCOME to our WINTER 2015 issue of *Financial Trends.*

The increase in the volatility of the U.S. stock market has again caused many investors to lose sight of what investing in stocks is really all about. You are buying part of a company whose future fortunes depend on its ability to sell its products, make a profit, and innovate to stay ahead of competition. Converging Super Trends have provided both headwinds and tailwinds to many companies. This issue of *Financial Trends* focuses on the all-important "moat" around each company's castle, a concept popularized by Warren Buffet. We believe moat analysis will become increasingly important as the winds of change accelerate and "barbarians" (the competition) increase in their ability to storm the castle walls.

Have a Happy New Year!
Glenn Joyce, CFA, CFP®, *Director of Research*

SUPER TRENDS: The Importance of Moats in a Rapidly Changing World

Highlights of this issue

- **The reason moats are important**
- **Examples of moat analysis in practice**
- **Stearns Financial News of Interest is on** ***page 12.***

SUPER TRENDS:

The Importance of Moats in a Rapidly Changing World

IN OUR FALL 2014 ISSUE of *Financial Trends* we profiled the powerful and accelerating forces that will destroy and create jobs and businesses in the future at a rate faster than the world has ever seen. The protection of a dependable barrier, like the "moat" around the castle in medieval days, is an extension of the changing future of jobs. We also provided examples and tools to help our clients and their children and grandchildren survive and prosper in their careers in this brave new world. Essentially, we highlighted ways that individuals can create better moats around their own career castles. In this issue, we offer a special report on how SFG uses the moat concept to provide extra safety for our clients in their investment portfolios.

Three decades of experience in investing have taught us that most world-class companies get to the top by building a strong moat. They stay on top by inventing and innovating new products and services before competitors have the chance to beat them. This is the ancient equivalent of "adding water and crocodiles" to the moat. If they have a leaky moat, if they don't stay on top of innovation, companies run the risk of having competitors take away customers, which usually is then accompanied by price discounting that erodes profit margins. Competition – the barbarians – may not actually take over the castle in these situations, but they make the castle irrelevant by starving the occupants.

Cash flow is the lifeblood of any business. Increasing cash flow over time will almost always increase earnings, and earnings are what drove stock prices higher over every ten-year period of the last century. Our investment success over many decades has stemmed from our focus on key cash-flow metrics in a company or sector of the market. It is not the only path to investment nirvana, but it is one of the more reliable paths we have found that consistently works.

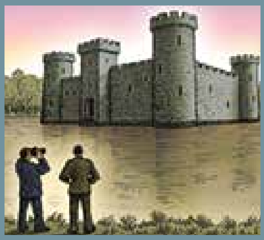
> *"The key to investing is determining the competitive advantage of any given company and, above all, the durability of that advantage. The products or services that have wide sustainable moats around them are the ones that deliver rewards to investors."*
>
> **– Warren Buffet, Fortune magazine, 1999**

GREAT BUSINESSES: Fending Off Competitors and Earning High Returns on Capital

A great business or castle is built on a foundation that can endure the test of time. This foundation may be characterized by a solid idea or a strong balance sheet, but these attributes alone do not create a sustainable business. A durable and profitable business model must be installed and maintained on top of the foundation. There are many characteristics present in a great business, but one key to success is creating and maintaining competitive advantages over existing and potential competitors. A management team with a clear strategy for the future, including sound fiscal management, must capitalize on the competitive advantages. This can be accomplished by implementing policies and making decisions that convert the competitive advantages into sustainable profits.

One way to measure the profitability of a company is to look at return on invested capital (ROIC). This return metric compares the operating earnings of a business to "invested capital," which can be defined in its simplest form as the net sum of debt and equity on the balance sheet. The ratio between these two figures produces an ROIC metric that can be used in evaluating whether a company is producing attractive earnings based on the amount of capital invested. Ideally, a company's ROIC should exceed its cost of capital and grow over time.

A company's value and profitability can be enhanced by a management team that pursues a judicious allocation of capital that is dynamic in nature and takes into consideration the economy and the strength of the business. Different economic environments provide an attentive management team with opportunities to enhance value through actively managing the liability and equity side of the balance sheet. An example of this is the opportunity that companies have had over the past few years to borrow or refinance in a low-interest-rate environment. Another action that, pursued at the right time, can increase value is reducing the amount of equity through a share repurchase program. Unfortunately, many businesses incur headwinds when it comes to capital allocation because the management team either overleverages the company at the wrong time or repurchases their own shares at an elevated stock price. With a disciplined management team in place, a company can distinguish itself by exploiting competitive advantages that are already in place and being diligent in the pursuit and construction of new competitive advantages. A competitive advantage is a condition or circumstance that can put a company in a position to be more profitable, access more consumers, or enter a new market that keeps it ahead of the competition. Essentially, a company wants to build a defense system around its business and revenue streams. Over time, the competition may chip away at this defense system, which is why it is essential for management to innovate and adapt as the world changes and evolves. One image that this defense system conjures is that of a moat.



Christophe Vorlet, Wall Street Journal

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SUPER TRENDS *continued from page 3*

WHAT IS A MOAT?

For many the word *moat* brings to mind an image of a medieval castle surrounded by water. The water provided defense on all sides to protect the castle from potential enemy invasions. The fact that moats were dug in advance of an enemy invasion was crucial; waiting until the enemy was at the gate would leave the castle exposed. Additionally, the wider the moat, the more effective it was in preventing or delaying the invasion.

Centuries later, Warren Buffett and others have taken the concept of a moat and used it to describe the economic characteristics of a great business. Companies should, when possible, build moats around their businesses to prevent competition from encroaching upon their customers and profitability. The five sources of economic moats are: intangible assets, cost advantage, switching costs, network effect, and efficient scale. SFG also believes that strong, deep leadership teams and cultures create an additional moat feature. Companies that exhibit one or more of these moat sources typically have competitive advantages over the competition that allow for durable businesses to be sustained and profitable for the long run. Based on the evaluation of the moat sources, Morningstar now assigns each company a "moat rating" of wide, narrow, or none.

THE FIVE PRIMARY SOURCES OF A MOAT

1. **Intangible Assets:** Brands, patents, or government licenses make it harder for a competitor to sell a similar product or service. But simply having a well-known brand or patent does not create a moat unless it provides a competitive advantage over competitors within the same industry. Also, as profiled in a recent SFG *Fireside Chat* about trends in R&D, the U.S. still has a big "R" in research worldwide but has slipped to a "small d" in development in some areas. Companies that have unique protections on both the "R" and "D" side have a stronger moat. Many companies today not only have internal R&D departments but also numerous external research partners. Some companies buy their R&D by acquiring companies that have done the heavy R&D lifting already.

2. **Cost Advantage:** Companies that sell products or services at lower prices while maintaining good profit margins fall into this category, as well as those that sell at the same price but with better profit margins than their competitors. This category is most often associated with economies of scale.

   The power of cost advantage, coupled with other moat strategies, was popularized in *Blue Ocean Strategy*, a 2005 book by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, professors at INSEAD and co-directors of the INSEAD Blue Ocean Strategy Institute. Based on a study of 150 strategic moves

spanning more than 100 years and 30 industries, Kim and Mauborgne argue that companies can succeed not by battling competitors in the bloody "red ocean" but rather by creating "blue oceans" of uncontested market space. They assert that these strategic moves create a leap in value for the company, its buyers, and its employees while unlocking new demand and making the competition irrelevant.

3. **Switching Costs:** These are the one-time inconveniences or expenses a customer experiences when switching from one product or service to another. In today's fast-paced society, higher switching costs are a powerful disincentive to change service providers.

   It is interesting to note that many well-known Internet brands, such as LinkedIn, Google, and Facebook, have made their services so easy that consumers don't see any reason to try something new. The cost of switching isn't in a fee in most of these digital situations; it's in the time and learning curve required to move to something new. In this way, many Internet companies with wide moats are more like consumer brands than technology stocks.

4. **Network Effect:** When the value of a product or service increases as more people become customers, word of mouth can create a tipping point where sales increases are fed by friends sharing information face-to-face or through the expanding social-media world. **Apple** has clearly created many "raving fans" in a very competitive smartphone space, plus a network that stands in line every time Apple introduces its next innovative product. Note in the examples chart below that where Apple really shines in its moat effect is in switching costs, even though most consider its main advantage to be the intangible asset of having millions of "I only buy Apple" customers.

5. **Efficient Scale:** There are thousands of niches where the small size of the market discourages competitors from trying to dislodge existing companies. The cost to enter that market and compete with the market leader isn't worth the potential reward. SFG has many closely held, growing, and highly profitable private business clients who have exploited efficient scale extremely well.

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Examples of Economic Moats

Width of Moat	Intangible Assets	Cost Advantage	Switching Costs	Network Effect	Efficient Scale
Wide	**Pepsi**	**Walmart**	**Apple**	**Visa**	**Kinder Morgan**
	Global brand name that commands a premium for beverages and snacks.	Possesses significant leverage over its suppliers/vendors when it comes to pricing because of its volume of global sales.	Apple "eco-system" comprised of its iOS operating system, iTunes, and iCloud create a captive consumer.	Payment method is accepted by merchants worldwide, which is convenient for cardholders, leading to more transactions.	Building pipelines is capital intensive and involves clearing many regulatory/ environmental hurdles.
Narrow	**AbbVie**	**FedEx**	**Wells Fargo**	**United Health**	**Duke Energy**
	Leading drug company. Majority of sales come from one drug, Humira, that will face generic competition later this decade.	One of the leaders in the global parcel shipping industry. Air freight segment is less efficient as a result of lower margins.	Strong financial firm with large, low-cost deposit base. Cross-selling to customers creates multiple product ties to the company.	Large membership base allows for flexibility in plan offerings as well as opportunities to create new products.	Regulated utility with high barriers to entry as a result of infrastructure costs.
None	**Delta**	**Alcoa**	**JCPenney**	**Sprint**	**Petrobras**
	Well-known brand but consumers typically make airline decisions based on cost.	Leading producer of aluminum but lacks pricing power sufficient to produce consistently strong economic profits.	Large retailer competing in highly competitive market with peers including Macy's and Belk.	Limited pricing power relative to Verizon and AT&T and customer retention has struggled in recent years.	Brazilian government has limited foreign competition in the local oil industry but also placed price controls on Petrobras, limiting profits.

Sources: Morningstar, Stearns Financial Group

SUPER TRENDS *continued from page 5*

IS LEADERSHIP A MOAT CHARACTERISTIC?

In a word, yes. Great leaders, what Jim Collins called "Level 5" leaders in his classic leadership book, ***Good to Great****, have a knack for figuring out ways to fill the moat with water and crocodiles and for plugging leaks quickly and effectively. However, even pretty good leaders make bad decisions from time to time.

Bad decisions are usually the result of one of three factors:

1) **The leader didn't bother to get all the relevant facts;**

2) **The leader made invalid assumptions based on ego, wishful thinking, or fear; or**

3) **The leader didn't trust the input of good advisors or relied on poor advisors.**

Here are some cautionary tales from Erika Andersen's good book ***Leading So People Will Follow***:

How many zeros? In 1977 the senior execs at 20th Century Fox made an astonishingly shortsighted decision. They signed over all product merchandising rights for *any and all Star Wars films* to George Lucas – in exchange for a mere $20,000 cut in Lucas' studio paycheck. The combined revenue from merchandising is estimated to have exceeded three billion dollars and continues to grow annually, making it the most lucrative deal ever struck between an individual and a corporate studio.

And your hair is weird, too. In 1962 the Beatles auditioned at the London office of Decca Records. The executive in charge of talent rejected them: He thought they sounded too much like a currently popular group called The Shadows (who?), and he told their manager Brian Epstein, "We don't like your boys' sound. Groups are out; four-piece groups with guitars particularly are finished." Well over two *billion* Beatles albums have since sold worldwide.

We're a serious business, thank you very much. In 1876 William Orten was president of Western Union, which had a monopoly on the most advanced communications technology available, the telegraph. Orten was offered the patent on a new invention, the telephone, for $100,000 (worth about $2M in current dollars). He considered the whole idea ridiculous and wrote directly to Alexander Graham Bell, saying, "After careful consideration of your invention, while it is a very interesting novelty, we have come to the conclusion that it has no commercial possibilities....What use could this company make of an electrical toy?" Two years later, after the telephone began to take off, Orten realized the magnitude of his mistake and spent years (unsuccessfully) challenging Bell's patents.

Say Cheese! The Eastman Kodak company developed the first digital camera in 1975, then proceeded to sit on it (and the core technology for the cell phone as well). Its management decided not to follow through with digital, fearing it would cannibalize their film business (at one point Kodak had a 90% share of the U.S. film market.)

Groundhog Day, or Say Cheese, Part II. In the early 1980s Fuji entered the U.S. film marketplace with lower-priced film and supplies, but Kodak management believed that U.S. consumers would never abandon their homegrown brand. In 1984 Kodak passed on the chance to be the official film of the Los Angeles Olympics. Fuji won the rights, which gave it the strong foothold it needed to catalyze growth in the U.S. marketplace.

Kodak never fully recovered from these and other poor decisions; in 2012 the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Did anybody phone home? In 1981 Amblin Productions called the Mars Company and offered a simple cross-promotional opportunity: How about if we use M&Ms in our new film, giving you free publicity, and in return you can promote our film in your packaging? The advertising and marketing folks at Mars said "No." The film was E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial and the rest is history. Reese's Pieces, the not-nearly-as-well-known M&M competitor, saw sales jump 65% in the months after the film was released featuring their product.

Hot under the collar. In 2000 Gerald Levin, the chairman of Time Warner, was so confident in the deal he had made to merge with America Online that he decided to forego placing a collar on the transaction. A collar enables the seller – in this case Time Warner – to revisit the terms of the transaction if the buyer's stock falls below a certain price. Almost as soon as the merger was announced, and before it was completed, the Internet bubble burst and AOL shares plunged 50%. Without a collar, Time Warner wouldn't be able to renegotiate the deal. Time Warner execs urged Levin to re-think the deal, but he didn't. The rest is history, and Time Warner shareholders are still paying for his stubbornness.

It's easy to see the folly of these decisions in retrospect; hindsight is 20/20, and no one can make the right decision all the time. If each of these leaders had approached these decisions with a little more curiosity, a little more open-mindedness, and a little less certainty about the rightness of his position, we might all be using Western Union Kodak smartphones!

SFG's Take: SFG uses several criteria for accessing leadership effectiveness, but we have found grading leadership teams is more art than science. Never underestimate the power of a single leader to build a powerful moat or leap a competitor's moat. Here the name that comes immediately to mind is Steve Jobs, who led primarily through intuition and didn't believe in consumer focus groups. It's easy to criticize Tim Cook for what has gone wrong since he succeeded Jobs. For example, the launch of Apple Maps was clearly a blunder, and Cook even had the guts to admit it. However, when criticizing someone for his or her failures, we must also give credit where credit is due. Under Cook, Apple has matched a powerful competitor (Samsung) stride for stride and grown its "raving fan" base.

"He's no Steve Jobs" are words that are often spoken in comparing Cook to the legendary founder of Apple, and while that certainly is true, Cook has strengths of his own. Under his leadership Apple has chosen to forge partnerships based on the talent it has to offer. Cook aims to build relationships, and although that may lead to slower decision-making, it also has reduced a certain disorder that came from managing Apple as Jobs did.

It's important to note that Jobs had a lot of faith in Cook. He apparently told him he should never ask himself, "What would Steve Jobs do?" Instead, he should make Apple his own. It may be true that Apple is different under the direction of Cook, but it is likely it will be many years before we can say whether his leadership is better or worse.

The real decision scorecard is usually written based on the team the leader has assembled around him- or herself and how they all make decisions in the different growth stages of a company and in good times as well as bad.

Editors note:** Dennis Stearns' first book, ***CEO Road Rules, Right Focus, Right People, Right Execution, was called a "must-have company leadership guide" by one of Jim Collins' Level 5 leaders featured in ***Good to Great***, Daniel Jorndt, retired CEO of Walgreens.

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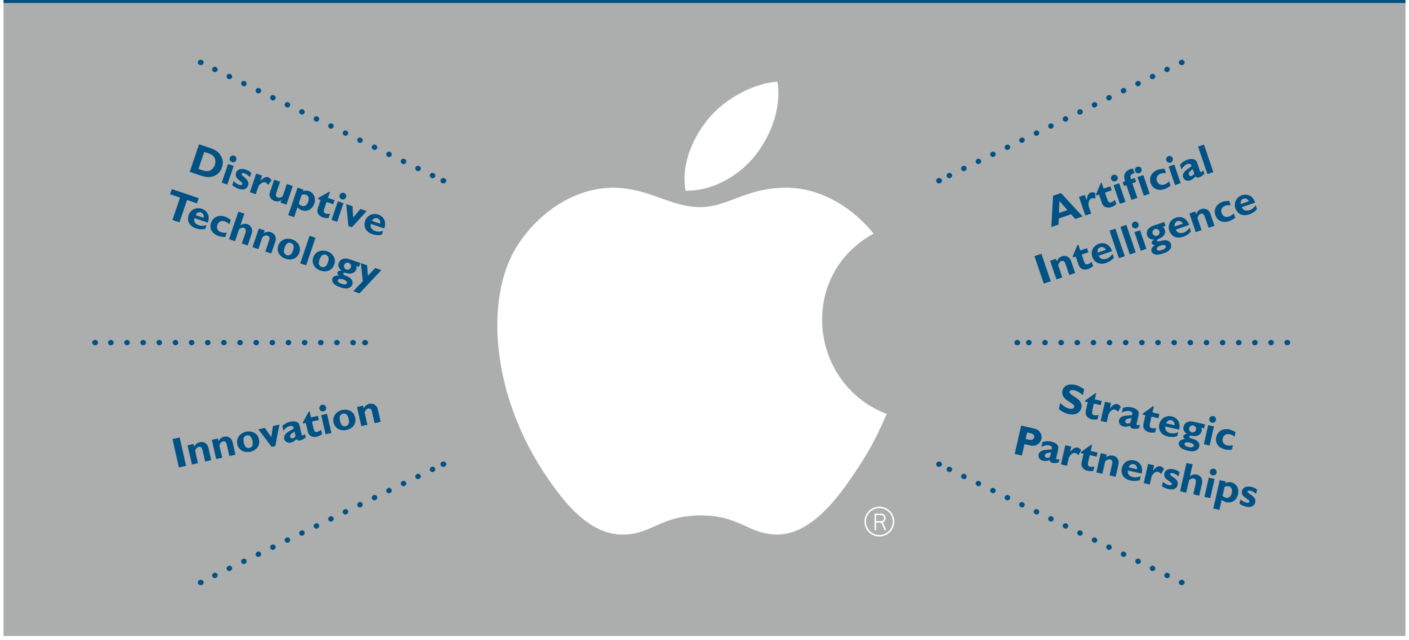
Grading leadership teams is more art than science.



Apple is a registered trademark of Apple Inc.

SUPER TRENDS *continued from page 7*

DOES THE PRESENCE OF A MOAT SIGNIFY THAT A COMPANY OFFERS AN ATTRACTIVE EQUITY INVESTMENT?

The short answer is no. The presence of a moat can be used as an indicator of a quality business that could potentially be an attractive stock to buy, but it should not be used as the sole determinant when evaluating an investment. The reason: **Price matters**. Great companies purchased at expensive prices may not produce good investments.

Let's take a closer look at a competitor in some areas of Apple, a wide-moat company that has built an enduring business with growing cash flow but has produced varied equity returns over time depending on when an investor purchased shares in the company.

Microsoft Scorecard

Metric	December 1999	December 2012
Intangible Assets	√	√
Efficient Scale	√	√
Network Effect	√	√
ROIC	A	A
Valuation	D/F	B

This scorecard compares the same company in two time periods: 1999, which was a time when tech companies could do no wrong, and 2012, which was a pivotal moment for Microsoft as it wrestled with sagging investor confidence and how to compete with Apple, Google, and a host of other threats to its varied business units. The comparison shows a company that has been able to adapt and maintain its competitive advantages in a technology sector that has experienced accelerating change over the past few decades. During this time Microsoft has been able to consistently increase its revenue, cash flow, and earnings per share. However, Microsoft has not always been a good investment.

Looking at this company as an equity investment and purchasing Microsoft in the late 1990s at the height of the dotcom bubble produced subpar returns in the following years. This was a result of the purchase being made at an elevated price based on its future growth prospects and relative to its valuation history and the current valuation levels at that time of the broader market outside of technology. The fundamentals of Microsoft and other tech names did not support the elevated valuations observed during this time. Considering Microsoft in 2012, an investor who didn't get starry eyed about Apple and other newer technology darlings would have observed a very reasonable valuation at which to make a long-term investment in a company that maintained the same competitive advantages as those observed in 1999.

Now we turn to the future trends that may impact the ability of companies to enhance their moat effect.

12 Certainties *That Will Transform Our World*

In a previous issue we profiled author Daniel Burrus (***Flash Foresight***) and discussed his list of "12 Certainties" about future trends that contain **great opportunities and great threats to careers and businesses**. He separates "hard" from "soft" trends; the former are likely to occur no matter what the economy, politicians, and other outside forces do in the near future.

Burrus' latest list of "12 Certainties" represents a way for companies to build a stronger moat, or a way that competitors can leap a company's moat. **After each technology-driven certainty listed on the next several pages, SFG has cited the moat effect that will be most affected by it. Note we have identified both positive and negative moat effects from each technology, making it even more challenging (and more lucrative in many cases) for future management teams to stay ahead of their competitors.**

1. **Mobile Hardware, Software, and Services:** will continue to rapidly evolve, creating many new careers, as all phones become smartphones and our primary computers and tablets continue to evolve, eventually replacing our laptops. This new level of mobility will allow any size business to transform how it markets, sells, communicates, collaborates, educates, trains, and innovates.

   • Cost Advantage • Network Effect • Efficient Scale

2. **Remote Visual Communications:** will become a primary relationship-building tool for businesses of all sizes as employees use smartphones, tablets, and laptops, in combination with current video conferencing systems, to communicate at new levels with customers, partners, and employees.

   • Intangible Assets • Cost Advantage
   • Network Effect • Efficient Scale

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CERTAINTIES *continued from page 9*

3. Social Business Enterprise Management:

will grow rapidly as organizations shift from an Information Age "informing" model to a Communication Age "communicating and engaging" model. New careers will emerge as social software for business rapidly grows with applications to enhance relationships, collaboration, networking, social validation, and more. Social search will increasingly shape careers as marketers, researchers, and those on Wall Street create applications and services to tap into millions of daily tweets and Facebook conversations, providing real-time analysis of many key consumer metrics.

• Intangible Assets • Network Effect

4. Cyber Security and Forensics:

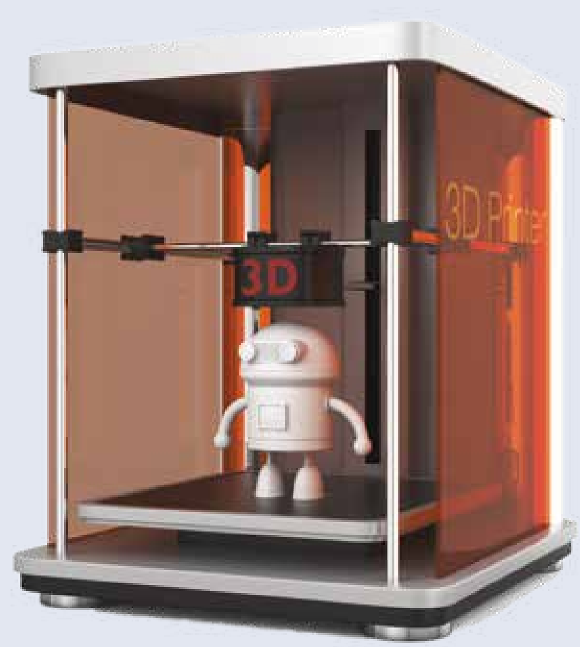
careers will grow rapidly as we become increasingly connected and dependent on computer systems and machines using intelligent sensors connected to just about everything. The "Internet of Things" previously profiled in SFG newsletters and special reports will offer great benefits to society but will be vulnerable to hackers. Careers in data and information forensics will grow rapidly as the need to solve cyber crimes increases.

• Intangible Assets • Switching Costs

5. Additive Manufacturing (3D Printing):

will create many new careers in manufacturing as this revolutionary technology allows any size company to manufacture quickly, locally, and with far fewer costs. Additive manufacturing builds things by depositing material, typically plastic or metal, layer by layer until the final product is finished. Examples of final products today include jewelry, iPhone cases, shoes, car dashboards, parts for jet engines, and prosthetic limbs. In the near future, printing new organs and your latest prescription drug may become common place.

• Intangible Assets • Cost Advantage



6. Gamification of Education:

will create many new careers as corporations and educational institutions at all levels accelerate learning using advanced simulations and skill-based learning systems that are self-diagnostic, interactive, game-like, and competitive, all focused on giving the user an immersive experience thanks to a photo-realistic 3D interface.

• Intangible Assets • Network Effect

7. Cloud Services and Virtualization:

will be increasingly embraced by businesses of all sizes; this represents a major shift in how organizations obtain and maintain software, hardware, and computing capacity. IT is rapidly becoming an on-demand service that is transforming all business processes, resulting in a rapid evolution of current careers as well as creating new careers in every functional area.

• Network Effect • Switching Costs

8. Big Data and Real-Time Analytics:

describe the technologies and techniques that capture and utilize exponentially increasing streams of data with the goal of using enterprise-wide insights to make rapid critical decisions. This new level of data integration and analytics will require many new skills and cross-functional training in order to take advantage of new opportunities as well as break down the many data and organizational silos that still exist.

• Intangible Assets • Network Effect

9. Intelligent e-Personal Assistants:

using natural language voice commands were launched with Apple's Siri, which was rapidly followed by Google, Microsoft, and others all offering what will become a mobile electronic concierge on your phone, tablet, and television. The technology today is so-so but will rapidly evolve, and within five years every profession from retailers to maintenance workers will have a Siri-like assistant. Adding an e-personal assistant to support an existing product or service will create many new careers.

• Intangible Assets • Network Effect

10. 3D Web:

will transform today's Internet experience (which is like looking at a flat piece of paper with a few photos, embedded video, and some hyperlinks) into a true 3D experience similar to today's video games; you will be able to "virtually" walk into a showroom, look around, and both listen to and see the new car you are interested in – or whatever product or service the retailer is trying to show you. This will employ many new graphic artists, designers, and programmers.

• Intangible Assets • Network Effect

11. Connected Intelligent Objects:

using chips, microsensors, and both wired and wireless networks will create a rapidly growing "Internet of Things" sharing real-time data, performing diagnostics, and making remote repairs. Many jobs will be created as we add intelligent connected sensors to bridges, roads, buildings, homes, and much more. By 2020 there will be well over a billion machines talking to each other, and people will be needed to design, install, maintain, and upgrade them.

• Intangible Assets • Switching Costs

12. Advanced Robotics and Automation:

will take a giant leap forward thanks to networked sensors, artificial intelligence, and Siri-like voice communications, taking the next level of repetitive jobs from humans. This will create many new career opportunities – from design, programming, and installation, to service and maintenance, to name only a few.

• Intangible Assets

Stearns Financial NEWS OF INTEREST

- The *Sandwich Generation* guide (co-authored by Dennis Stearns, CFP®) was featured in the **"Top Resources for Women" newsletter from Pax World management.**

Pax is one of the leading socially conscious investment managers. This guide helps children of aging parents and the parents themselves think through difficult age-related issues, including the pros and cons of aging in place (staying in your own home) versus a dizzying new array of continuing-care facilities and service models.

Clients, professional advisors we work with, and friends of the firm were sent this *Sandwich Generation* guide in early 2014. **Additional copies are available by calling our office.**

New *Sandwich Generation* guide supplements include a questionnaire on retirement housing, tips on communicating with seniors, and frequently asked questions about messy aging issues.

- Dennis presented **"Spooky Economic Tales"** to several Rotary and Kiwanis organizations.

SFG's research debunks some of the popular scary areas today in the economy, investments, and geopolitics while identifying other areas that we should really be concerned with going forward. Dennis will be doing an expanded version of this talk to several national consumer and financial industry organizations in 2015.

Contact Libby Stafford (lstafford@StearnsFinancial.com) at SFG if you would like to request Dennis to present "Spooky Economic Tales" to your own favorite group, company leadership retreat, or association.

- Haleh Moddasser, CPA, lead advisor in SFG's triangle office, and Dennis Stearns, CFP®, spoke to **the American Association of Individual Investors on the keys to successful aging, "Putting More Gold in the Golden Years."**

Copies of this program are available by calling our office. SFG also did a national webinar on this topic that is available in the "clients only" section of our website.

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