

mySA.com/Business

For more photos from the Consumer Electronics Show

"Last year, it was all about connect-
TVs having Hulu and Netflix and
what was about it," said Bryan Gonz-
z of the Entertainment Technology
center at USC. "This year, it's an evo-
lution not only to have Hulu and Net-
flix, but 'how do I have access to the
content I want in the best way possi-
ble?' 3D is just an added feature."

Perhaps sensing the pounding foot-
steps of Apple, which is widely ru-
mored to be preparing to pounce on
their turf, major TV makers like
Sharp and Samsung unveiled big
screen TVs that tie into what consum-
ers are already doing with their tab-
lets, smart phones and PCs — a con-
cession that today's viewers no longer
just watch TV, but multitask.

Sharp, for example, said all of its

See SMART TV/4C

loans to make up for wages that haven't kept pace
with inflation this year.

Holiday sales were solid in November, and the
U.S. auto industry had its two best sales months
for the year in November and December. The Fed-
eral Reserve's credit report appeared to reflect
those sales.

The category that measures credit card debt
rose in November by \$5.6 billion, the most since
March 2008. The gauge that tracks auto loans and
student loans increased \$14.8 billion, nearly
matching July's gain that was the biggest since
February 2005.

See CREDIT/2C

rial is postponed

y. But it has been res-
ed for Oct. 1.
cloud computing com-
has accused Cain and
of taking money from
ount funded by the com-
or the city of Windcrest
for infrastructure im-
ments around the com-
headquarters in the
Windsor Park Mall.
space's lawsuit sparked
ninal investigation that
the arrest of Cain, 55,
s brother, former Wind-
City Manager Ronnie
61, who is alleged to
participated in the
e. The money allegedly
or personal expenses.

The Cains were charged
with three felony counts in a
November 2010 indictment, ac-
cused of embezzling from the
city and Rackspace. The pair,
who deny the charges, could
spend the rest of their lives in
prison if convicted.

The brothers' criminal trial
is slated to start Feb. 2 before
state District Judge Ron Rang-
el. But it could be postponed
again. It originally had been
set to start last August.

Adam Kobs, Ronnie Cain's
criminal defense lawyer, had
no immediate comment. Jim-
my Parks Jr., Gary Cain's

See LAWSUITS/4C

Don't be afraid to contract IT services

Does anyone really love being
in a contractual commitment?
You're locked into something or
someone long term. What if you
don't get what you need? What
you paid for? By the way ...
what ARE you paying for? And
if it ends badly, then what?

I, too, have had my own aver-
sions to contractual relation-
ships, so I understand the hesi-
tations. However, being in a
contractual relationship with an
information technology firm
that provides managed services
can be an ideal situation.

Managed services at one time

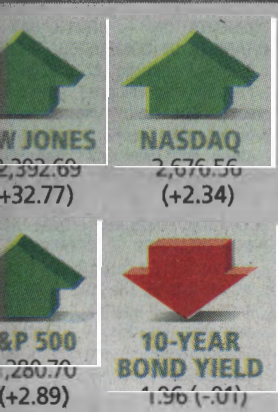


Nancy Victor:
President of systems
integration firm Help
Me!! Tech Team.

had a bad reputation. Business
owners often said they paid for
a product that went unused
(like an insurance policy) and
thus did not see the value. But
times and tools have changed to
make it a more meaningful of-
fering that better reflects today's
business needs and preferences.

See VICTOR/2C

MARKET CLOSINGS



average price for a gallon of
gas in San Antonio was
9 Monday, up 0.1 cent from
day. The average U.S. price
\$3.374, AAA says.

Biz Bits

ALCOA LOSS: Alcoa Inc. is re-
porting a fourth-quarter net
loss of \$191 million as a slower
global economy hurt alumi-
num demand. That compares
with net income of \$258 mil-
lion a year ago.

FREE TAX HELP: The free prepa-
ration of the 1040EZ forms will
be available at more than
3,000 Wal-Mart stores.

VW TOPS TOYOTA: Volkswagen
said it delivered 8.156 million
vehicles in 2011, a 14 percent
rise over the previous year. As
expected, that puts it ahead of
Toyota, which has reported
sales of 7.9 million vehicles.
General Motors Co., which is
expected to become No. 1, has
not yet reported.

CUBA-BOUND: Federal officials
said a drilling rig heading for
Cuban waters near Florida to
explore for oil and gas gener-
ally meets international and
U.S. standards. U.S. officials in-
spected the Scarabeo 9, a mo-
bile offshore-drilling unit that
privately owned Spanish com-
pany Repsol plans to use.

SHOPPING NEWS: U.S. shopping
centers had their first net gain
in occupied space in four years,
Reis Inc. said.

SLOWING GROWTH: Standard &
Poor's 500 Index companies
may have earned \$24.74 a
share in the fourth quarter, ac-
cording to analysts' estimates
compiled by Bloomberg. The
projected 6 percent gain is the
smallest against a year-earlier
quarter since September 2009.

MYSA.COM

Clocking In: Where business blogs

Hit us to read posts about local
businesses, national economic
trends and other financial
news. We also throw in the oc-
casional goofy business bit.

Nest Fest: Real estate in house

Got a home? Need a home?
Selling a home? Our blog will
be your new home for bits on
the local real estate market
and more.



Sung Won Sohn, an economics professor at the Martin Smith School of Business at California State University, said many consumers likely were persuaded by incentives that retailers and auto dealers offered to boost sales.

Paul Edelstein, director of financial economics at IHS Global Insight, expressed concern consumers may have relied on their credit cards to finance ho-

cks. Inflation-adjusted, after-tax incomes shrank by nearly 2 percent in the July-September period.

To make up the difference, many consumers have reduced the amount they save. The savings rate fell in November to 3.5 percent — the lowest level since the recession began. The savings rate jumped in 2008 to 5 percent and stayed above that level until early last year.

Sohn said he expects the sav-

ing more. Those gains would allow consumers to finance their spending with rising incomes.

In December, employers added 200,000 jobs and the unemployment rate fell to 8.5 percent, the government said Friday. It was the sixth month in a row that the economy had added at least 100,000 jobs, the longest streak since 2006. And the unemployment rate dropped to its lowest level in nearly three

lead more companies to add workers, which ultimately drives more spending and more hiring. Economists call that a virtuous cycle.

Still, a recession in Europe could dampen demand for U.S. exports and weaken financial markets.

The report covers auto loans, student loans and credit cards. It excludes mortgages, home equity loans and other loans tied to real estate.

VICTOR

CONTINUED FROM 1C

Let's be honest, most of us can't get through lunch without checking our email, text messages, etc., let alone being "down" for a day.

Consumers have changed throughout the years along with the evolution of technology. They need things to work NOW, and having a network down in business is costly. Today, businesses can't afford to have paid employees standing around idle while waiting for the "all systems go."

In the good ol' days when you had a problem, you could just call the local IT house and

they would drop everything to rush out and put out the fire with no commitment or obligation for you to use them in the future. Today, IT companies are more like your primary care physician, who is trying to prevent ailments and works best as your partner over the long term. If your IT provider hasn't changed the way they do business, they soon will.

This means that IT companies are moving from handling service in a reactionary model to a proactive model, in which we keep things running smoothly by monitoring your network 24/7/365.

Depending on the level of care you choose, updates are performed automatically and we are alerted by the monitor-

ing system we put in place before your equipment fails — giving us time to do something about it. Then, when things do go wrong, you receive priority treatment. No waiting until your IT guy "can get to it." It's better for your budget, your schedule and your sanity while allowing service providers to remain open and ready to serve without adding to your overhead.

You might think that going with a hosted server will save you the trouble of committing to a technology firm. This sounds good on the surface, but you still have a network to maintain even if your server is hosted elsewhere. Hardware, as in individual workstations, software applications and anything

else attached to your network (cameras, telephones, etc.), still need to play together nicely. Additionally, you still will need to maintain constant Internet connectivity on your end to stay attached to the cloud.

So don't be afraid to make a commitment and hop on board the managed services ship with a service provider that you trust, then sit back and enjoy the free sailing, well OK, reasonably priced value-packed cruise! That is, after you've done your homework, carefully compared plans and found the best fit for your business.

Nancy Victor is president of Help Me!! Tech Team, a 20-year systems integration firm serving San Antonio.