


The Weekly Listen: A social network that improves society, the 'serial churners,' and are shoppable ads paying off?

Audio



On today's podcast episode, we discuss how social networks could improve society, the NBA's plan to remake its TV deals, US consumers' feelings on shoppable ads, how many folks are "serial churners," how disruptive Sweetgreen's salad-making robot might be, a scientific breakthrough from a 14-year-old, and more. Tune in to the discussion with our forecasting writer Ethan Cramer-Flood, forecasting analyst Zach Goldner, and director of forecasting Oscar Orozco.

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Episode Transcript:

Marcus Johnson:

Hello everyone and thanks for hanging out with us for the Behind the Numbers Weekly Listen, an eMarketer podcast. This is the Friday show that shuts the lights off and hides from kids on

Halloween so he doesn't have to give out candy. Isn't that right, Oscar?

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah. I'm not going to deny it. That's what I do. It's fine.

Marcus Johnson:

You terrible human being.

Oscar Orozco:

Candy's expensive. Come on.

Marcus Johnson:

In this economy.

Oscar Orozco:

Have you seen inflation?

Marcus Johnson:

How old are you? Unbelievable. I'm your host Marcus Johnson. In today's show, how good could social networks actually be?

Zach Goldner:

My issue and where I don't see it really evolving is the engagement on these platforms are coming from the far left and far right, people that really want to voice their opinion. I don't think that's necessarily going to come from the moderates.

Marcus Johnson:

How the NBA plans to remake TV deals.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I think it would actually be better for the NBA to have a solid partner all in one place like ESPN. It would solve both of their problems. Disney and the NBA should sit down and make this happen, but that's probably not what's going to happen. Instead, it's just going to get split up all into a million places and we're all going to just have a headache.

Marcus Johnson:

Are shoppable ads paying off?

Oscar Orozco:

I think it's something that brands undoubtedly have to keep doing. I mean, we're seeing more scanning of QR codes and payment platforms being able to be accessed on smart TVs. All of this shows that shoppable ads are something consumers want and expect at this point.

Marcus Johnson:

What share of subscribers are serial churners? Sweetgreen's got a salad making robot and what invention just won this year's Young Scientists challenge?

Join me for this episode. We have three people, let's meet. Then we start with our principal forecasting writer based in New York City. It's Ethan Kramer Flood.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I am here.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello fella. That was odd. We're also joined by one of our directors of forecasting based in New York as well. It's Oscar Orozco.

Oscar Orozco:

That's right. Thanks for having me, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Hey, chap. And finally we have one of our senior forecasting analysts based in Colorado. It's Zach Goldner.

Zach Goldner:

Thanks, Marcus. I'm also here.

Marcus Johnson:

Hello. That was a weird intro. It's going to be an odd show. So what do we have in store for you? Well, the story of the week. That's where we'll begin. We'll talk about whether we can make social networks better. Someone has an idea on how to do that. We'll see if it's viable. Then we'll move to the game of the week. Our panelists will try to win the championship belt and then we end with some random trivia in the final segment. Let's start with the story of the week. The internet could be so good, really. It's the title of the call we were reading for this segment. So last week for context, we talked about what social networks keep getting wrong and basically the answer was they're upsetting their users in different ways, whether that's X and Twitter and some of the changes they've made, whether it's Reddit changing its API, whether it's Tumblr banning adult content, big sweeping changes, upsets users, they're unhappy.

But today we're talking about what social networks could look like. And so the article we read for this reads, today's social platforms are designed for spectacle and entertainment, but it's not too late to build a platform that improves society. And this was a suggestion from a professor of media and arts and sciences at MIT, Deb Roy in a recent Atlantic article. He believes rather optimistically, you can argue, that social platforms don't have to encourage cruelty snap reactions and disinformation and that new kinds of social networks can be designed for constructive communication, listening, dialogue, deliberation, things like that. The old guide of social networks are about entertainment. He cites media critic Neil Postman famously writing in 1985 about his fears that a TV centric culture meant we were amusing ourselves to death.

And so these new social networks, he says, don't need to compete with these legacy social platforms, Facebook, X, formerly Twitter and TikTok in terms of entertainment value, but they might provide scalable spaces designed for high quality and authentic public discourse. And so Mr. Roy and his team used a new voice recording tool to lead small facilitated group conversations in which people would speak and listen to one another about local issues and whilst being recorded. And then the facilitators would bring in invoices from prior conversations that were recorded and play them back.

You'd have a conversation that's being recorded when you made a point, maybe there was another point made in another conversation that was played back into this one to add to the conversation and make it better. One of the takeaways here was these conversations had clear roles for key participants, conversation organizers, facilitators, prompt designers, et cetera, et cetera. And inviting individuals to play these roles in a social dialogue network was

an opportunity to participate in civic in a democratic process or processes, processes, something. Gents, your take on the article.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Yeah, I mean it all sounded really good, but in no way are these ideas designed to give the users what they want or improve the user experience or address the complaints that you were referring to earlier. These proposals were more about improving society, creating a platform where people can really or will really listen to one another and be civilized and address our social issues and strengthen our democracy. It all sounded nice and I applaud these scholars for doing the work, but even the way that the author described it was in a very cheerleading way. It still sounded a lot like getting people to eat their vegetables, like doing homework.

It didn't sound at all like something fun or attractive or the kind of thing that would really draw in users at scale or would be sustainable because even they admitted that it wasn't necessarily a moneymaking proposition. They even wanted it to be a nonprofit or government sponsored. I like this kind of stuff, but it didn't strike me as sort of reflective of addressing the problems with our major social media companies in such a way that was going to make anyone happy or draw anyone in.

Zach Goldner:

I couldn't agree with Ethan more here. In the peripheral world, I'd say yes, get rid of all the current social medias and come up with something better. Social networking isn't what was supposed to be a decade ago when it was supposed to be connecting with your friends, family. It'd be great to get back to something like that or something where you can have real general discourse. My issue and where I don't see it really evolving is the engagement on these platforms are coming from the far left and far right people that really want to voice their opinion. I don't think that's necessarily going to come from the moderates and that's kind where the traffic is coming from when it comes to X and others.

Speaking of which, I had to get rid of my X account last week because it was just so overwhelming. If you not believing what's real, what's false, once again, it's coming from those far extremes. To me, I question who's going to fund it. That to me is I don't see with that ad-free model, are people really going to bring up on their own and pay subscription to this business? Or the other question too, are people going to join a government funded social networking site? In my opinion, I don't see it happening. Here's other people's thoughts.

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah, I completely very interesting read Marcus. It's one of those Atlantic pieces that can draw you in, make you think, but ultimately agree with the guys here. Read a little bit more like a sort of political manifesto or something like that, like a utopia, something that in an ideal world would work, but ultimately humans are how humans are with all our faults and all our needs and desires and that's what has driven us to create social media into what it is now. And I don't think also given the fact that we live in capitalism that anything like this would ever work because ultimately it is about businesses and monetization and creating a self-sustainable model. The article didn't talk about any of this.

So yes, do I think the platforms are doing harm? For sure in many ways, but I think that's why we always talk about educating the people who are using it. I think that's what we have to focus on here. That's really where the control, the regulation needs to come from, but not changing the model or trying to push some sort of platform on us that we're not interested in. That's what Ethan said, we're not interested in spending our time using what they proposed in the article, ultimately.

Zach Goldner:

As one other interesting trend model or interesting initiative model is meta launching their ad free subscription in Europe. And that's not going to get rid of either rage bang, the trolling, all that, but it's going to be able to see there really is an appetite for subscription-based social networking and maybe that could then evolve into one or the other forms of talked about in this article.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Well Threads is also ad free and civil right now and nobody's there because it's boring.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, it's an interesting point about the ad free version in Europe. They were forced into it because of title rules in Europe, but they have, so it's interesting to watch how that plays out. A lot of the conversation from this piece and in the past has been on smaller scale networks. People have a chance to interact within their communities. The article was saying that people also have more of a stake in the game. They can see their participation actually making a difference. And he also referenced LinkedIn in the piece saying it's a place where folks use

their real names to look for jobs and that helps disincentivize bad behavior. There's accountability, there is consequence. Yeah, the problem is those types of social networks are for socializing, which is at least perhaps on the internet, less fun than being entertained. And so to Zach, what you were saying, social networks have evolved from social networking, social media to social entertainment, and so maybe people don't want a social network anymore, they just want to be entertained, in which case these wouldn't have a place.

There is a social network Nextdoor. I'm just looking at their financials. Total weekly active users, 40 million. This was the end of last year. So there's an audience there. It is not huge and it's not daily, but there are some folks there. Interesting to see what kind of interactions are happening over there. But yeah, it seems like maybe there's not an appetite for this and also if there is an appetite for it, to your point, how do you make money for this? Are folks going to pay 10 bucks for this type of a service?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Reddit has these highly moderated communities where you have pretty civil discussions and hundreds of thousands of people participating. Now, that's text-based. People are just typing in comments in a sort of moderated and regulated environment to talk about deeply political or deeply sensitive topics and it works. These folks, the proposal in the article you sent around is more about audio and visual, getting really hearing people's stories, et cetera. But between LinkedIn and Reddit and maybe Nextdoor though I find Nextdoor to be a site full of people complaining and whining and negativity so I actually quit Nextdoor also. But these kinds of things exist in smaller batches in existing services, but they're just not going to take off, right? It's not like TikTok, what people want to be doing.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, I guess a huge part of the problem here is that no one is on the internet to listen to one another, and the article was saying that encouraging sharing of personal experiences stories, Ethan, what you mentioned, rather than opinions was a way to increase mutual respect, more show than folks sharing facts and opinions, but no one's on the internet to listen, but people aren't trying to listen to people in the real world, let alone on the internet. So yeah, sounded good. We'd love to see something, but probably pretty unlikely. That's what we've got time for the story of the week. Let's move to the game of the week. Today's game, what's the point?

I read out four stories is how we play and have contestants, Oscar, Zach, and Ethan tell us what they think is the main takeaway of the story. Okay, answers get one point, good answers, get to and answers that give you the same feeling as hearing the swish noise a basketball net makes when you get your shot straight in. Oscar, you're probably not too familiar with that noise, but I can explain it after the show. I'm kidding. I've played basketball against Oscar, he's good. Answers that leave you with that feeling and they'll get you three points, 20 seconds to answer before you hear this.

If you run long minus two points, two offenses, will see you eliminated from the game. Most points wins gets the last word. Best play. We start with Zach for round one. How the NBA plans to remake TV deals? Amal Sharma and Isabella Simoni of the Wall Street Journal explain. As the NBA enters its first media negotiations in a decade, its biggest partners, Disney's, ESPN, and Warner Brothers Discoveries, TNT, which together pay 2.6 billion a year, aren't looking to pony up big spending increases. Due to pressure from investors, ESPN and TNT which carry over 150 nationally televised games combined are exploring smaller packages, the article notes, which could allow the league to create a package for a streaming player. The article also points out that Amazon and others have suggested they'd like it if the NBA could package national TV rights with local market rights. So folks in Indiana, for example, could watch their hometown Pacers. I don't know why you'd want to ha, ha, ha. But Zach, how the NBA plans to remake TV deals, what's the point?

Zach Goldner:

Yeah. Well, as TB networks budgets are getting slimmer and slimmer, I think we can expect more and more streamers to come to the table, take a bigger slice of the pie. And I do think the choice is better because we're already looking for football now you have to start getting Amazon Prime video to be able to watch Thursday football. Costs are going to continue to increase and increase. Interestingly enough, I am from Utah. Utah has started to allow one of those local players to play their own play jazz games, if you're in the local market. However, that's even more expensive than NBA league pass, which gets you the availability to watch all games except for those within your local market. So prices are going to continue to increase.

Marcus Johnson:

Ethan.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Part of this story I think is that it's going to come out the other end of this in an even more annoying situation than other sports are in because it's going to end up divided up all over the place because it basically has to and it's just going to get harder and harder to find what you want to watch. The author tossed around this number, 78 billion, they're talking about a doubling or tripling of the rights, the income that the NBA generated in the last deal 10 years ago. No one has that kind of money. That money would be divided up among all the various platforms. No one can afford it, so it's going to get split up all over the place.

Personally, I still think that ESPN and the NBA should just form a strategic partnership. Bob Iger was out there saying that the ESPN is becoming untenable. It's still a cash cow, but it's declining rapidly and that they need partnerships in order to continue. I think it would actually be better for the NBA to have a solid partner all in one place like ESPN. It would solve both of their problems. Disney and the NBA should sit down and make this happen, but that's probably not what's going to happen. Instead, it's just going to get split up all into a million places and we're all going to just have a headache.

Oscar Orozco:

Hold on, Ethan. If you were to get rid of TNT, that means you lose Shaq, you lose Charles Barkley. Come on now, we can't lose them.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I don't want to lose those guys either. I love those guys.

Oscar Orozco:

They're a national treasure.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

They unfortunately work for a company that has no money, so we might be saying goodbye to them in a couple of years.

Marcus Johnson:

Brutal, Oscar.

Oscar Orozco:

I mean Ethan is speaking from the perspective of a fan, but to me the point of this is how much is the 12th man on the Pacers making right now, Zach? Is he making like 25 million a year? The real winners in all this are the players. If you make it to the NBA, you are set for life and it's because of what my colleagues here are saying, the fragmentation is going to continue to increase, and so they're the big beneficiaries in all of this. Tons of more money is going to flow through the NBA every league, really. And that's really the point of all of this. And I would just say I've been warning you guys as a soccer fan, this has been happening first with soccer, with all the leagues being played on Paramount Plus, the Zone, Fox, BN, everything like that. So what you've seen in soccer over the last five, six years start to happen, it'll be happening with the NBA and has already started with the NFL.

Marcus Johnson:

Hate to fact check you Oscar, but the 12th man gets like \$2 million.

Oscar Orozco:

They make a ton of money.

Marcus Johnson:

I did want to say that. I get the point.

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

If they invest, well then they can make it to 25.

Oscar Orozco:

NBA players are making so much money.

Marcus Johnson:

Compound interest. So yeah, decent sized audiences and the most recent season article, noting NBA games averaging about 1.6 million viewers, playoff gets about 5 million a piece according Nielsen, and it's a way to get to most popular programming across all TV audiences for under 50 year olds. So very attractive audience still. So yeah, they're probably going to be

able to command a lot more money for the new rights package. Also, the last sports train out of town, the NBA will be the last major sports media property to come up for bidding in a long time notes Lee Burke of consulting company LHB Sports and Entertainment Media.

Let's move to round two, we start with Ethan. Shoppable ads are paying off for smart TV owners. Bill Bradley of Ad Week notes that recent data from AI powered video and tech platform curve and Samsung ads found that folks are welcoming to screen experiences. Found a few things in its research. One, over a quarter of people shop online whilst watching TV and quarter look for an item after seeing it on TV. Two, half have interacted with a shoppable ad. Three, four, and five, either scanned the shoppable QR code or looked up the product online to find out more info after seeing the ad. And four, of those who made a purchase through a shoppable ad, half bought it through their TV even more on their smartphone. But Ethan, shoppable ads paying off, what's the point?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Yeah, it seems like this is promising. The point of this article is that I'm not crazy when I imagine that there's a lot more QR codes popping up on my streaming services or when I'm watching my CTV. We have a new forecast, I think, guys, this is a brand new one. We have shoppable media buyers. I don't think we have spending yet, but we've got a buyer's figure that we just came out with 94 million at least once during the year who have clicked on one of the things or otherwise made a purchase because of it. The numbers in that article also reflected seemingly positive. Some of the data from Roku said was a little bit more cautious, but overall, yeah, this is all heading in the right direction and we're all just going to get a lot more of this all the time.

Marcus Johnson:

Real quick, Ethan, 94 million and growing pretty well or?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

5.7% increase this year, 4.4% increase next year. So it almost seems like we're saying this is already common enough that there isn't a massive growth spurt coming, but everyone's, it's once a calendar year. So what we're assessing right now is how common, how normalize is this and it's rapidly become normalized.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. Oscar?

Oscar Orozco:

I mean, I absolutely believe it. I know leading into some other forecasts of ours, specifically our simultaneous media users, we estimate 77% of the US adult population regularly watches TV while connected to a device, essentially almost everybody at this point. Multitasking is a way of life, and so just shoppable ads having that, it's kind of similar to one click shopping and not just inspiring consumers to make a purchase, but putting it right in front of them. I think it's something that brands undoubtedly have to keep doing. I mean, we're seeing more scanning of QR codes and payment platforms being able to be accessed on smart TVs. All of this shows that shoppable ads are something consumers want and expect at this point.

Marcus Johnson:

Zach.

Zach Goldner:

Yeah, I think this is a net benefit, but I think we have to hold our horses a little bit on results of the survey because I don't think grandma has learned how to use the shoppable ad in their QR code on their phone anytime soon. But with that being said, I think that we're seeing content consumption and commerce converge together. And it's a really exciting time for advertisers and viewers and if they're able to dive in deeper and purchase an ad or go further on their own research and discovery phase, I think that's great for both sides.

Marcus Johnson:

Very nice. All right, gents at the halfway mark. Ethan and Oscar tied with four. Zach just behind with three. We move to round three.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Oscar is going to kick us off.

Marcus Johnson:

What share of subscribers are serial churners? Well, according to research company Antenna, 33% of premium SVOD, subscription video on demand users frequently sign up for and then quite subscription streaming platforms making them churners, serial churners, 33%. Before

the pandemic, that number was just 10%. Antenna also pointed out that today about a third of those who'd quit premium SVOD services returned within a 12 month span. Nearly a quarter returned within three months. But Oscar, the share of subscribers that are serial churners, what's the point?

Oscar Orozco:

I think this was a really interesting study, Marcus, I'm glad you brought this up today. I think it's an incredibly meaningful stat and a concerning one, I would think, especially given as you said that the number in 2019 was 10% jumped to 33%. But I think it attests to what we're seeing, which is that there are a lot of platforms to choose from and that price increases are happening across the board. So people are having to pick and choose seasonally for what they want. I'm sure that the platforms are not happy with that number, that 33% number shows that price elasticity has its limits, but it also does explain this shift to ad supported models and why they might not care that that number could be maybe at 20%. I just think that 33% number is pretty high and I'm sure they do not want that to continue increasing.

Marcus Johnson:

Zach.

Zach Goldner:

In honor of Halloween, I'd say spooky. I recently had someone approach me and ask me what streaming service is going to cut their prices at times soon. Spoiler, it's not happening. Prices are going to continue to go up. We've already seen a lot of these streaming services, these platforms, they're operating at already unsustainable rates. So with those turn rates continue to increase and I expect them to go past further than that. Once we see these price rates going to affect, you're going to have them increase their prices even more and more, which is going to further the turn and you're going to the whole cycle. So I think that where we're going to have to see is that companies are going to have to maintain their large content libraries. Then on top of that, they're going to have to win customers with their good programming and schedule it equally across their whole fiscal year.

Marcus Johnson:

Ethan?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Yeah, these people are the quiet heroes of streaming consumer services. I love them. I'm glad they exist. I am too lazy to actively churn, but I love that people are out there churning because they will keep the streamers honest. They will force them to continue to put significant effort into creating compelling new content and investing in new shows that I want to watch because these other folks are out there and they're actually willing to quit all the time when there isn't anything good on unlike me where I just never get around actually quitting. So thank you for your service, serial churners.

Oscar Orozco:

I want to make clear. I'm just like Ethan, I don't know why people are not lazy and seem to do that all the time because I am way too lazy. I don't think I've ever canceled the service guys ever in my life.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I canceled HBO like a dream after Game of Throne season eight. That's the only time I ever canceled a service and I never went back. All the others, I never canceled.

Zach Goldner:

I watched Successions sometimes, don't Ethan?

Marcus Johnson:

It's like a dream.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I don't have it. I do not forgive. I do not forget. Season eight. Never again.

Zach Goldner:

It was a lot down.

Marcus Johnson:

In faith, the serial churners wrap, they're with first respondents and military personnel. Thank you for your service. So how many folks do stick with a service for a year? That was also part of the study. So among us premium SVOD users, the survival rate as they're calling it, those, sticking with a service for 12 months, for the first time subscribers was 45%. So 45% of

people making it through a year without canceling. That dropped to 36% for folks who'd come back for a second go and dropped to 26% for folks who came back for a third time.

Oscar Orozco:

Put this in perspective, Apple TV Plus, it's getting raised from 699 to 999. You look at this time last year, it was 499. It's doubled in just over a year. That's a lot.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah.

Oscar Orozco:

Still cheaper than cable. Still cheaper than cable.

Zach Goldner:

That one you add them all up.

Marcus Johnson:

Why do you still have cable then, Oscar?

Oscar Orozco:

How did you know?

Zach Goldner:

You're the only person left. You forgot to cancel it.

Oscar Orozco:

I can't get rid of it. It's just so hard. Local sports, Marcus. Local sports. That's why.

Marcus Johnson:

And the C. Network.

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah, exactly.

Marcus Johnson:

Anyone listening who needs a customer, Oscar's-

Oscar Orozco:

Come on over. Come to my house.

Marcus Johnson:

... Oscar's your guy.

Oscar Orozco:

I'll rent you a couple hours.

Marcus Johnson:

Lifetime loyalty from this guy. Let's move to round four, gents. Oscar and Ethan's still tied on six. Zach with five, but double points round four. So all to play for, we start with Zach. We're talking about Sweetgreen salad making robot. Will it be the star of future restaurants? That's one suggestion from our senior retail analyst, Zach Stamble. According to the Wall Street Journal, the large system which shoots ingredients down tubes into bowls that travel on a conveyor belt can take up to 10% of the locations floor space. Sweetgreen says automation roughly reduced by half, both the number of workers and the time it takes to assemble a salad. Zach, Sweetgreen salad making robot, what's the point?

Zach Goldner:

I don't like it. I have robots drive my cars, but I need some tender loving care in my soup. There's really something to be said about a human doing the work behind the soup. I'd worry about a night getting caught in the salad ingredients. It scares me. And I mean for them to cut costs even more when the salad's costing \$16 or however much the Sweetgreen is right now, they're just doing whatever they can to be profitable and I don't see the end result coming anytime soon.

Marcus Johnson:

Ethan.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Yeah, I don't have a problem with this in theory. I mean in a lot of these places you don't see your food being prepared anyway, so I wouldn't know that it's a machine or a person if it's being done in the back. A couple of weeks ago we came on and discussed that in the sort of brick and mortar shopping environment, that retailers really need to be hiring more human beings to improve the shopping experience or they're going to lose customers because it has become so bad in a lot of these stores. But that's not fast food, right? I don't think I have too much of a problem with this in theory.

But what my mind immediately jumped to is that when you bring in all these machines and all these robots, you're just bringing in something that's going to break and you're going to end up hiring maintenance people. Or it's just going to break for a couple hours here. It's going to break again tomorrow, it's going to break again next week, and then that location loses all this business because it's become reliant on equipment that inevitably is unreliable. This unfortunately is just how it goes, but I don't have a sort of philosophical opposition to it like Zach.

Marcus Johnson:

Oscar.

Oscar Orozco:

Well, the first thing I thought about, what was that Charlie Chaplin movie, the Conveyor Belts. Do you remember the name of that? But the reason I thought of that is because I love-

Marcus Johnson:

How old you?

Oscar Orozco:

Come on, it's all over. You must've watched that when you were a kid. Come on now.

Marcus Johnson:

No.

Oscar Orozco:

But the reason I thought of it is because I would love to see, as they're testing this out, they should charge tickets for people to come in and watch all the mayhem that happens. Just

picturing salad dressing and lettuce all over the restaurant and things are just going to go wrong, like Ethan said. But that's automation. That's automation. And I think this wouldn't work for your standard kitchen in a restaurant, but I think QSRs would be negligent not to explore some sort of automation and I think especially salad places, things like that. It could work. It could work. But I picture all the laughs watching things go wrong, when they will.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. So you mentioned QSRs experimenting with the article, noting from Zach, noting Chipotle recently began testing hyphen collaborative robot or a cobot as apparently we're calling them, that makes burrito bowls and salads alongside employees as well as a robot that can prepare avocados for guacamole called autocado. That's a shame. White Castle also experimenting with flippy, which is another robot. So we'll see. Oscar for reference, that Charlie Chaplin movie you were referring to the factory scene was 1936.

Oscar Orozco:

Back in the tough years, I think I was in elementary school.

Marcus Johnson:

No I did not watch it as a child.

Oscar Orozco:

It was on. It was in school. Come on, I'm sure the listeners will remember.

Marcus Johnson:

Probably not. Anyway, so we've got time for the game of the week. We check the scorecard, we take a drum roll. Ethan, is this week's winner of the game of the week with 12, Oscar with 10, and Zach with nine. Congratulations to Ethan. He gets the championship belt and of course the last word.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Oh man, the last word. Well, I thought of this when Oscar at the top of the hour was talking about avoiding trick or treaters. So I live in a building, I live in a co-op in Manhattan, and we actually have a signup sheet down at the front desk so that you can alert all the parents and children in the building as to whether or not they're welcome to knock on your door on

Halloween, which is incredibly convenient and kind of brilliant because then everybody knows who's in and who's out. And then Zach doesn't have to worry about people knocking on his door. He thinks they're asking for candy and they're not even asking for candy. It all gets sorted out in advance. And you can be a Grinch if you want to be. You can save money on candy because apparently Oscar can't afford candy.

Oscar Orozco:

Are there any openings in this building? Are there any openings?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I would say, well, if you're in a building, you got to recommend this.

Oscar Orozco:

Sounds like my type of place.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Everyone should be doing it. It's a win-win.

Oscar Orozco:

I don't have to interact with people. Count me in, just leave the candy outside. Maybe that's-

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

People do that too. People do that too.

Oscar Orozco:

There we go.

Marcus Johnson:

Terrible. This is terrible, but then everyone can see on the list who the terrible people are. You just, oh yeah.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Yeah. But it's a big building, right? There's hundreds and hundreds of people in here, so no one really keeps track.

Marcus Johnson:

It's like that Friends episode where it's like, oh, hello, 3B. 3B? Anyone who's watched Friends, you know what I'm talking about. All right, folks, that's what we've got time for for the game of the week. Congratulations to Ethan, he's this week's winner. Let's move to dinner party data. This is the part of the show where we tell you about the most interesting thing we've learned this week. We start with Ethan because he won the game of the week. Ethan, what you got for us?

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

All right, I got a fast one and it's just one big complaint. So my dinner party data is what I heard on New York one yesterday, which is that New York City has had eight consecutive weekends of rain. Eight in a row every single weekend in September, every single weekend in October it rained. And since the beginning of the summer, since the beginning of June, it has rained 16 out of 22 weekends. I object, I'm unsatisfied. This is completely unacceptable. There's my data, someone needs to do something about this.

Marcus Johnson:

Try living in England, mate.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

No, I'm not going to try that.

Marcus Johnson:

Just the age straight.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

I'm from Syracuse. I left Syracuse to get away from this. I don't know if this is an all time record, but in my head it's an all-time record.

Oscar Orozco:

It must be.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

We just have not had any good weekends for five months. It's ridiculous.

Marcus Johnson:

Brutal. Yeah. I can't remember living in New York for seven years. I can't remember if eight consecutive. That's tough.

Oscar Orozco:

16 of 22.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

16 out of 22 going back to the beginning of June.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah, New York do better. Oscar.

Oscar Orozco:

All right, I have an interesting one today, but I wanted to take 10 seconds just to congratulate Leonel Messi on his eighth Ballon d'Or as well.

Marcus Johnson:

That's ridiculous, isn't it?

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah, it's insane.

Marcus Johnson:

And Cristiano's got five, so they basically just swapped for the last decade and a half. Just your turn, my turn.

Oscar Orozco:

Back and forth. But there's a clear winner here, so just wanted to take a second to do that. But completely switching topics. This is the dinner party data here. I was down one of my Wikipedia rabbit holes, I'm sure you guys will all do it. And I was reading about the Inkan Empire, you know me and my history.

Marcus Johnson:

Casual.

Oscar Orozco:

Of course, but have you guys ever heard about Chaskis in the Inka Empire? They were messengers and I don't don't know if you guys ever heard anyone has. No. Okay, I thought you wouldn't. Super fascinating stuff. So the Inkans, they controlled a huge empire that ran from Columbia all the way down to Chile, tons of elevation of course, and they had really sophisticated road system. So about 25,000 miles is what's estimated at that point, pre-Columbian era, like 1400 that say they think it was the most sophisticated row in more than anything that existed in Europe, even the Middle East. But how do they move information and even packages through this whole empire? Well, they used people, they were called Chaskis who were essentially short distance relay runners and they delivered messages sometimes parcels. There was no written language. So if there was a message, they had to remember it and then pass it on to the person.

But they would run at really fast speeds about six to nine miles, and then they would get into this little house and transfer the information or the parcels to someone else who would then run again. And they would use about 25 runners that would cover, they estimate almost up to 200 miles in a day. So they could go from the length of the empire in about six days. So if you do the math, these guys were running like six to seven minute miles on unpaved paths and up and down dirt mounds and just extremely tough terrain. But that was the fastest way to get information across. So next time you're on a treadmill, think about the Chaskis.

Marcus Johnson:

This was in what time?

Oscar Orozco:

This was the Inkan Empire. So this was before any sort of colonization over there. So 1300s, 1400s, probably even before that.

Marcus Johnson:

Right about when this Charlie Chaplin film came out?

Oscar Orozco:

Yeah.

Marcus Johnson:

Okay. Just checking.

Oscar Orozco:

A little bit before.

Marcus Johnson:

Fascinating. Very good, very good. Zach, you're up.

Zach Goldner:

Yeah, well in honor of the end of Halloween, or to some aches passing, I just want to mention for Slap Duck running the wind of whoever, Oscar's were just mentioning. So candy fact here. So every year in America, there's \$400 million worth of leftover candy at the bottom of the bowl. So that would equate out to roughly \$5 on uneaten candy per American. So Oscar, to put that in perspective, that's half of the Apple TV plus subscription that you forgot to cancel.

Marcus Johnson:

That's the problem though, is you can't run out of candy, so you have to get more, right? Is that how it works?

Zach Goldner:

About that one.

Marcus Johnson:

I've only done it once. I bought candy. So I lived in New York most of the time I've been in the States and so I don't know where I've been every Halloween, but one Halloween I was like, I lived in an apartment building, I was like, I'm going to buy candy and I'm excited to hand out to kids when they come past and I bought like 50 bucks worth of candy. Not a single child came past the door. Come on. Was furious. Yeah, so I over-indexed on that slightly and that has ruined Halloween for me forever. Thanks America. All right folks, I've got one for you real quick. A scientist, I don't know if you guys saw this, just developed a soap or is in the process of developing a soap that could help fight skin cancer. Did you guys see this?

Zach Goldner:

No.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

No. Seems like a good idea.

Marcus Johnson:

It is indeed. In an NPR article, Max Barnhart writes, that's not even the most impressive part of this story. Max Barnhart writes that Heman Bekele is a 14-year-old at a high school in Fairfax, Virginia, originally born in Ethiopia. He's the winner of this year's 3M Young scientist challenge. And he came up with this idea. So his soap invention delivers cancer fighting drugs via lipid nanoparticles. Don't ask me what they do, which worked... Oh, it explains it here. Which work to activate the body's immune cells to fend off cancer. Don't ask me any more than that.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the US according to the CDC. Millions of Americans seek treatment for skin cancer each year at a cumulative cost of \$9 billion. And the average price of skin cancer treatment globally is almost \$40,000. And so he said he wanted to create this as a way cheaper, much more affordable option. Heman said he has a five-year plan, including acquiring FDA certification and conducting human testing by 2028. By the time he's 19, he hopes to turn his passion project into a nonprofit organization where he can provide an equitable and accessible skin cancer treatment to as many people as possible.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

All right. That guy is slightly more of a hero than the streaming service serial churners. But they're on par. They're on par.

Marcus Johnson:

Just absolutely remarkable.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Well done, young man.

Marcus Johnson:

Yeah. Congratulations indeed. That's where we leave today's episode, thank you so much to my guest as always. Thank you to Zach.

Zach Goldner:

Thanks for having me, Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

Yes sir. Thank you to Oscar.

Oscar Orozco:

Happy to be here and thanks Marcus.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you to this week's winner of the game in the week, Ethan.

Ethan Cramer-Flood:

Always glad to be in out of the rain.

Marcus Johnson:

And thank you to Victoria who edits the show, James who copy edit it, Stewart, who runs the team, and Sophie who runs our social media. Thanks to everyone for listening in. You can find us on Instagram if you want. It's insiderintelligence, one word for all the behind the scenes content you can possibly consume. And we'll see you guys hopefully on Monday for the Behind the Numbers Daily: an e-Marketer Podcast. Happy weekends.

Zach Goldner:

Too late to dress up as the Sweetgreen salad robot for Halloween?

Marcus Johnson:

Never.