

INTERNET

Wealth-X and WSJ recount hedge fund history for “Billions”

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Money

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Researcher and consultancy Wealth-X and WSJ. Custom Studios, part of The Wall Street Journal Advertising Department, have partnered to tell the story of the "gaming of the American Dream."

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The article, "Gaming the American Dream," charts the rise of the U.S. hedge fund billionaire, from "Fortune" magazine associate editor Alfred Winslow Jones' decision in 1949 to pool investors' private money and bet on stocks to drop and fall to the \$3 trillion value reached by hedge funds in the third quarter of 2015 that occurred in the spotlight amidst insider-trading cases. Although the feature serves as an advertisement for the upcoming show "Billions," the content will give consumers a closer look at America's wealth and wealthy.

"Wealth-X is the preeminent keeper of wealth intelligence and WSJ is the reporter with credibility," Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami. "Ultimately they both sell intelligence and guidance.

"Tapping into entertainment, at first seemingly repugnant, makes perfect sense," he said. "Wealth-X's exposure to the mass market enhances their brand equity."

Hedge your bets

The feature is divided into three parts, "History of Hedge," "Gaining Power" and "Acquisition of Wealth." It concludes with an edited version of the pilot for "Billions," the Paul Giamatti-starring Showtime series about a lawyer and an outwardly charitable but corrupt hedge fund manager.



Image from "Gaming the American Dream"

As the article describes, the key to the success of hedge funds is that they bet on a stock not only to go up, but also to drop. To "short" a stock in this manner, investors borrow shares, sell them, and then buy them back and return them to the seller after the price drops. Doing so requires taking on debts having significant assets under management, meaning large chunks of change are a must.

Eventually, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, people began to invest pension funds and college endowments in hedge funds, turning them into an economic tool used by smaller investors in addition to wealthy individuals. The change, as well as the 2008 recession and scrutiny of hedge-fund managers, some of whom gambled away investors' money, led to hedge funds being legally required to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission and disclose data.



Wealth-X interactive infographic

Insider-trading cases have also led many to question the legality of hedge funds. While the concept of hedge funds is not illegal, receiving nonpublic information that could impact a company's performance and using that information to short, buy or sell stock is.

Included in the middle of the article is a Wealth-X infographic that contains data on the number of billionaires in the U.S. at different levels of income, demographic data of the billionaires, as well as the industries in which they make their money, hobbies, assets and other related information.

In total, there are 585 billionaires in the country, 62 percent of which are entirely self-made. Eleven are under the age of 35, three have over \$50 billion and 13 more have \$20 billion to \$50 billion.



Image from "Gaming the American Dream"

For Showtime, a timely and accessible look at real-world economic issues could generate interest in its new series, and Wealth-X and The Wall Street Journal are ideal partners given their target markets. Sponsored content is unusual for Wealth-X, but working with another trusted chronicler of money, The Wall Street Journal, is a good fit and could lead to more exposure.

Get the word out

The marketing savvy of younger consumers means that traditional advertising methods are no longer as effective. Sponsored content offers a less intrusive model that gives the consumer a different reason to pay attention.

For example, in April, jeweler Tiffany & Co. reached out to readers of New York magazine's The Cut with a promoted post about wedding planning.

The sponsored article features celebrity party planner Bronson van Wyck's suggestions for nuptial celebrations, for which he used Tiffany engagement rings for inspiration. Native advertising enables a brand to speak to consumers through engaging content that can be both entertaining and educational ([see story](#)).

More recently, German automaker Mercedes-Benz fine-tuned its image by examining "Passion, Curiosity, Necessity" through sponsored content.

The brand helped produce a series of videos with Variety and Women's Wear Daily featuring celebrities, influencers and creators in the world of fashion, in which the subjects discuss glamour, celebrity, success and the challenges of being a woman in the industry. Although the content does not push Mercedes' vehicles, it helps associate the brand with positive values that could stick with readers further down the road ([see story](#)).

"Wealth has been a subject for entertainment for as long as there has been a stage; from Socrates and Shakespeare to Dallas and Showtime," Mr. Ramey said. "Showtime would like a similar response from finance that AMC's "Mad Men" received from those in advertising. Reality TV is merely shifting."

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