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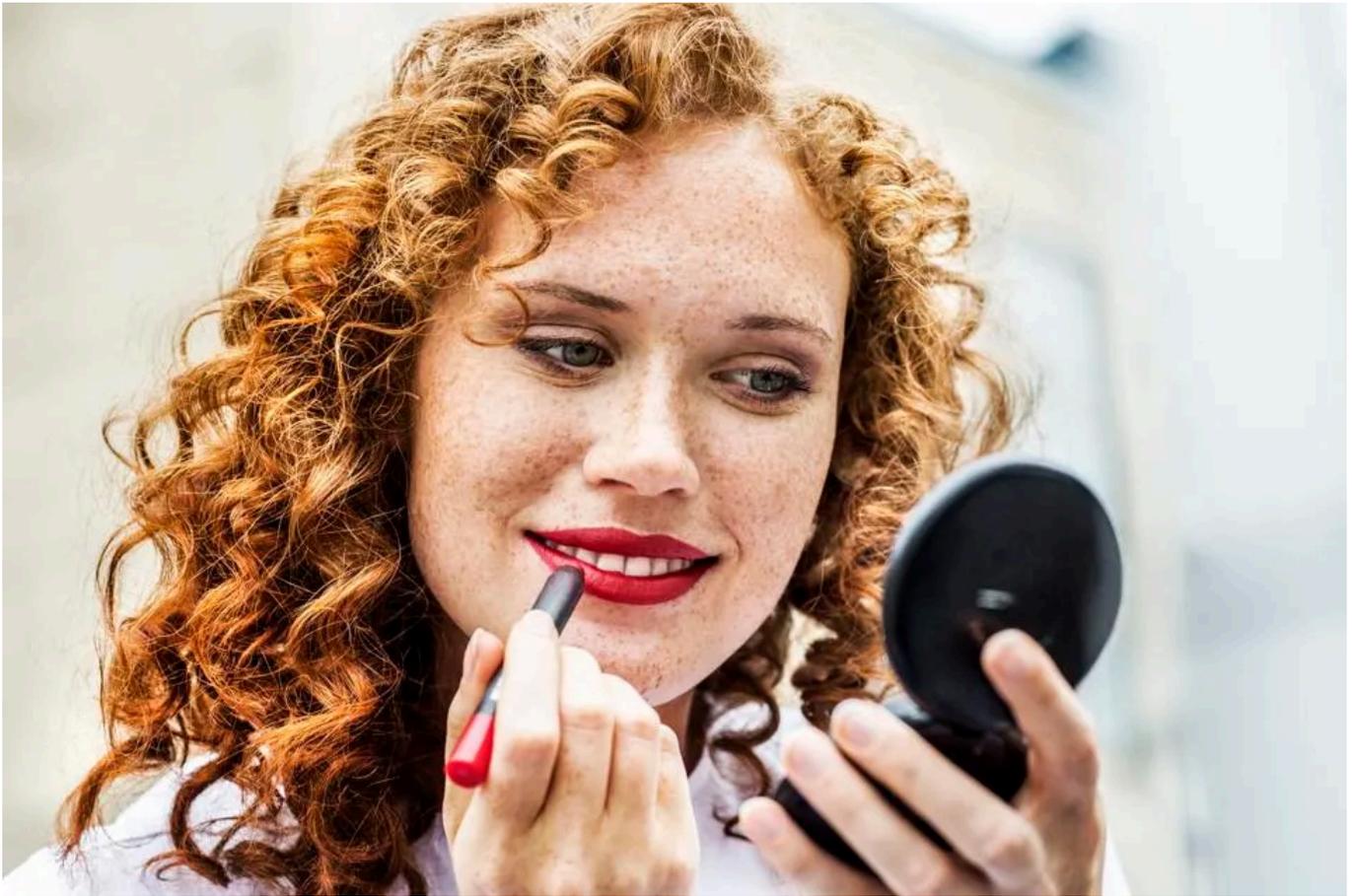
Skirt Lengths, Lipstick, Men's Underwear And Champagne Sales Are All Recession Indicators

By [Jack Kelly](#), Senior Contributor. ⓘ Jack Kelly covers career growth, job mark... ▼

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The "lipstick index" is based on the thought process that women tend to spend money on small ... **More**
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There are several dry, specific metrics used by economists and Wall Street prognosticators to predict when a recession will happen. They center around economic activities, gross domestic production and yield curves.

However, for those who are not interested in or shy away from economic jargon and insider explanations predicting a recession, there are a number of amusing and quirky ways for the average American to gauge the odds of an upcoming recession.

There are consumer-based indicators that are not used in official United States government reports, but historically have been helpful predictive benchmarks in determining which way the economic winds are blowing.

Wacky Recession Indicators

Paying attention to what people do instead of what they say is a smart way to know what will happen next.

Men's Underwear

Men are more likely to put off buying new undergarments in a fiscally restrictive environment. [Men's underwear sales fell](#) during the Great Recession and in 2020 during the pandemic, as people cut back

on non-essential purchases, according to Euromonitor data substantiated by David Swartz, a senior equity analyst in the consumer research group for Morningstar Research Services.

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Champagne

Champagne sales also tend to decrease during a recession. Champagne is seen as a luxury purchase, and people tend to buy the high-end product when the economy is humming along nicely with a rosy outlook for future growth. Like underwear, in choppy economic waters, people won't want to spend much money on champagne and other luxury items.

Lipstick

On the other end of the spectrum, women purchase more lipstick during a recessionary environment. The "lipstick index" is based on the thought process that women tend to spend money on small luxuries that make them feel good when they feel economically insecure.

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When consumer spending dipped during the recessionary period following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, cosmetics company Estee Lauder distinctly saw an increase in lipstick sales. However, the lipstick index has failed to serve as a reliable indicator in recent recessions. [Lipstick sales dropped](#) during the financial crisis and throughout the pandemic, according to the Kline Cosmetics and Toiletries USA report.

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Hemlines

The “hemline index” indicates that when the economy is doing well, hemlines go up to match the exuberant atmosphere. The [dress lengths fall when things look dark](#), and it’s a more somber vibe.

“In the 1920s, hemlines rose with the stock market before falling during the Great Depression. They climbed back up in the mid-1930s and stayed knee-length during the supposed wartime boom of the 1940s. When Dior released long, voluminous skirts in 1947, the trend seemed to foreshadow the recession of 1949. Then, once the market righted itself, a slow and steady rise began, introducing us to the minis of the ‘60s, which stuck around through the ‘80s millionaire boom. Eventually, midi lengths popped up when the stock market crashed in 1987,” *InStyle* reported.

Hair Dye

Fewer people get their hair dyed when household budgeting is in cost-cutting mode. This is another example of people cutting back on non-essential expenses. When people are between jobs and every dollar counts, people will skip out on expensive hair salon color treatments.

Dining Out

For those who are back in the office, if you notice more packed lunches in the refrigerators or the free meals offered by the company have stopped, it's a red flag that times are difficult. You'll also see fewer people dining out, cooking more at home and buying bulk at Costco and other lower-priced discount stores.

Real Estate Development

There is a theory that when the economy is booming, developers have access to financing to commence large construction projects. Conversely, the projects are canceled or put on hold when the situation looks negative.

Why These Metrics Are Important

Monitoring these trends is essential, as they will likely affect your job. If the U.S. goes into recession, businesses will need to be more efficient and cut costs. This will include laying off workers, canceling contracts for gig and temporary workers, pausing hiring and rescinding job offers until there is more clarity.

You'll miss out on the signs if you bury your head in the sand like an ostrich. You want to be ahead of the game. Some companies will be impacted more than others. Each company will have its own process for retaining or downsizing workers.

What You Should Do

Ensure you are one of the most valued go-to people within your organization. Forge close ties with your boss and key decision-makers at the firm, and exceed expectations to stand out amongst your peers.

If the company offers remote or hybrid work options, go into the office daily, even if you are not mandated to do so. Out of sight and out of mind is real when it comes to upward mobility. The ones at home may be overlooked compared to those in the office.

Since you are readily available, the career-enhancing tasks and responsibilities will be assigned to you, as it's easier than tracking those who are working remotely. To hedge your bets, get in touch with headhunters, career coaches, résumé writers, mentors and people in your network to help find a new job, if your company's financial outlook is bleak.

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Knowing that high data quality is crucial for effective decision-making, reporting accuracy, a painless user experience, and future innovation Edgewell Personal Care developed a methodology in-house to tackle the issue.
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By Gillian Hixson, SAP News

Strategic decision-making practices in HR rely on accurate and accessible people data for talent acquisition, performance management, employee engagement, compliance, and more. Plus, having a “clean” data foundation is an imperative to take advantage of AI-driven tools. To set itself up for future success and better service and manage its over 7,000 employees around the world, U.S.-based [Edgewell Personal Care](#) embarked an 18-month-long project to improve its HR data quality within its SAP SuccessFactors solutions.

Edgewell’s portfolio of more than 25 well-known personal care brands, including Schick, Banana Boat, Wilkinson Sword, and Wet Ones, drove [\\$2.25 billion in net sales in 2024](#). The company relies on a people-first culture that enables the right environment for employees to be efficient and the company at large to “win the shelf,” as Colin Emery, director of Global HR Systems at Edgewell, puts it.

In 2022, Emery was tasked with establishing a People Analytics function at Edgewell, but he quickly realized that the underlying data he needed was inaccurate. “Our system of record was no longer the

system of record. We didn't actually have one," Emery explains. At that time, the company's HR data accuracy was just 37% for key data fields within the Position and People Profile.

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Since Edgewell was formed in 2015, Emery says, it has relied on the "infinite configurability" of [SAP SuccessFactors solutions](#) to scale, systemize, and standardize the company's HR systems across the world. While the solutions were working as designed, the data housed in them wasn't being maintained properly, causing a backlog of inaccuracies to flow downstream. "It was clear that the quality of our data within SAP SuccessFactors was less than perfect in some parts of the world, particularly in countries where we don't have SAP SuccessFactors Payroll integrated," he says.

Knowing that high data quality is crucial for effective decision-making, reporting accuracy, a painless user experience, and future innovation—but not having the budget or time to engage external resources—Emery decided to develop Edgewell's methodology in-house to tackle the issue.

Upskilling to establish HR data champions

After identifying the priority data fields that needed to be cleaned and maintained to have the most impact on data quality, Emery turned to the people who owned and best understood the data: the HR business partners (HRBPs). To ensure the success of the data quality project, the HRBPs needed to buy in. This required a mindset shift and significant change management, he says, since not all HRBPs felt responsible for maintaining the data in the SAP SuccessFactors solutions and some needed training to understand systemized HR processes.

To help with the transition, Emery established an HR data steward program to upskill Edgewell's HRBP community. Designated data stewards receive weekly reports and are

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tasked with personally resolving the data errors or informing an appropriate colleague.

They are trained on the causes and consequences of the inaccuracies and how to remedy them, empowering the data stewards to become experts and educate other HRBPs. Upskilling the HRBPs helped them shift from a reactive to a more proactive mindset, which was a critical factor in the data quality project's success, Emery says.

Case in point: the number of data inaccuracies has decreased from 2,700 to just a handful. "It's a tiny, tiny fraction of what it was," Emery says. "That's based on the fact that the HRBPs are getting it right the first time, instead of making errors that need to be fixed."

The project began in the U.S. and eventually flowed to Europe, LATAM, and APAC. Now, Edgewell's data accuracy consistently holds at 96%–97%, Emery says.

Quality data drives quality decision-making

The success of its data quality and data steward project is clear, and now Edgewell can reap the rewards of a clean HR data foundation. This has had profound effects on the reliability of the company's HR reporting, for which Edgewell uses stories in SAP SuccessFactors solutions. "There's a massive advantage to using stories when we're using live, in-the-moment SAP SuccessFactors data," Emery says, adding that the ability to send a link that is accessible based on existing role-based permissions makes sharing the data simple and fast. Edgewell uses stories to look at data around inclusion and belonging, leadership, tenure, talent acquisition, and more, sharing the insights with company leadership, HR leaders, and HRBPs.

This data-driven culture has helped Edgewell identify areas of improvement and make strategic HR decisions. For example, in looking at the data, the People Analytics team uncovered a short-term turnover issue for specific roles and locations. Based on this insight, Edgewell's HR function created a new candidate experience to help improve and systemize recruiting and onboarding processes.

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Called "Joyful Journey," the program also doubles as a way for the company to share about itself and attract talent to the organization. "We never would have known that was the right thing to do without the data," Emery says. "That then led us to invest time, effort, and dollars in those processes, which immediately made a positive impact on short-term turnover."

"Over the last three years, we have been providing data and explaining its importance by cleaning up the data within the system to make it more meaningful to us," Emery adds. "For us, it's never going to be data for data's sake. It has to be about what the actions that this data suggests."

Ready for the future

Not only does Edgewell’s impressive data quality equip its leaders with actionable insights, but it creates a strong foundation for the personal care company to take advantage of HR innovations, especially considering that many, like [AI](#), require clean data to work properly. AI copilots and agents, like [Joule](#), are only as good as the data they run on, which is why data quality and data governance initiatives are becoming business imperatives.

In that case, Edgewell is ahead of the curve. “When I started working on People Analytics three years ago, I knew that we had to focus on [cleaning up the data] first to prepare for super automation and the AI tools that were coming,” Emery says. “It will set us up in good stead for the next iteration of tools.”

Discover how SAP SuccessFactors solutions enable companies to maintain quality HR data, which is crucial for efficient HR management, future innovations like AI, and overall business success.



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