Monday, January 13, 2014
Morningstar data shows that 157 ETFs were launched in 2013, the lowest number since 2009 (136), according to Marketwatch.com. The total for 2013 was roughly half the 305 ETFs brought to market in 2011. The number of ETFs liquidated in 2013 totaled 67, the second highest total on record behind the 100 closed in 2012. ETFs need at least $50 million in assets to be profitable for the sponsor, according to Tom Lydon, editor of ETFtrends.com. Total assets invested in ETFs stood at $1.643 trillion in November 2013, up from $1.295 trillion in November 2012, according to the Investment Company Institute. The $1.643 trillion broke down as follows: Domestic Equity ($998.7 billion); Global/International Equity ($395.2 billion); Hybrid ($1.4 billion); and Bond ($247.7 billion).

Tuesday, January 14, 2014
BizBuySell, an online business for sale exchange, reported that sales of small businesses grew by approximately 49% in 2013, according to Foxbusiness.com. There were over 7,000 small business transactions last year, up from 4,730 in 2012. The median sale price rose 13% to $180,000. Restaurants and retail stores were the most active industries. Economic recoveries, fueled by higher consumer spending, tend to show up first in restaurants and retail, according to BizBuySell GM Curtis Kroeker. The improving economy is finally enabling many Baby Boomers to sell their businesses and transition towards retirement. Over 75% of business brokers expect more Baby Boomers to sell their small businesses in 2014.

Wednesday, January 15, 2014
The construction of large-scale solar plants in the U.S. has slowed, according to the Los Angeles Times. Of the 365 federal solar applications since 2009, just 20 plants are on track to be built. Only three large-scale solar plants have gone online – two in California and one in Nevada. Financing has been harder to come by in recent years and there is uncertainty over federal tax credits. While Congress could elect to extend federal tax credits, if tax credits are dropped it is scheduled to drop to 10% at the end of 2016. There also appears to be some difficulty in negotiating agreements between solar developers and utilities. Solar power currently costs more than traditional energy sources. The Obama administration has opened up millions of acres in the West for bidding to developers, but no takers to date. The first auction held last October in Colorado did not draw a single bid.

Thursday, January 16, 2014
Data from the National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts shows that publicly-traded REITs raised a record $76.96 billion via equity and debt offerings in 2013, surpassing 2012’s record take of $73.3 billion, according to REIT.com. REITs raised $46.22 billion through equity offerings and $30.74 billion from debt issuance. A total of $5.71 billion was raised via 19 IPOs, the strongest IPO activity since 2004, when $8.27 billion was raised from 29 IPOs. The overall REIT industry grew from $603 billion in 2012 to $670 billion in 2013. The ability for REITs to raise record amounts of capital in back-to-back years speaks to the rebound in the fundamentals following the financial crisis in 2008.

Friday, January 17, 2014
Michael Robinet at IHS Automotive Consulting sees global sales of new light vehicles growing at an annual rate of 3.9% through the end of this decade, according to a release recapping the Chicago Fed’s annual Economic Outlook Symposium. Robinet believes that the majority of sales growth will come from the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs). Global light vehicle production is forecasted to rise from around 85 million units in 2014 to 116.29 million units in 2020. North American production is expected to rise from around 16.29 million units in 2013 to 18.0 million units in 2017 and remain flat through 2020. The NASDAQ OMX Global Automotive Index posted a total return of 37.33% in 2013, compared to 32.36% for the S&P 500.