



The Clues Within November Jobs Report

Weekly Update – December 8, 2014

Markets ended the first week of December with a bang, rallying for the seventh straight week, though the Nasdaq gave in to selling pressure and closed slightly down. Investors used an upbeat November jobs report as an excuse to rally, giving the Dow another record close for the year. For the week, the S&P 500 added 0.38%, the Dow grew 0.73%, but the Nasdaq fell 0.23%.¹

The November jobs report showed that the economy gained 321,000 new jobs last month, though the unemployment rate held steady at 5.8%. Job growth was widespread, showing improvement in several sectors of the economy.²

Another report supported the view that the labor market is making great strides. Americans quit their jobs in greater numbers in September than in any period since April 2008. Voluntary separations are a sign of increased dynamism in the labor market as workers quit to take advantage of better opportunities. Young employees are among the most aggressive job-switchers; many that were forced to take low-paying jobs early in the recovery are taking better positions. Employers, who have long held the upper hand, are scrambling to keep key workers, and recruitment for many in-demand areas is up.³

What does this mean for the economy? Hopefully, higher incomes, increased upward mobility, and higher consumer spending. We may also see increased demand in the housing market as household formation among young Americans - which dropped precipitously during the recession - picks up.⁴

Black Friday numbers came in last week and showed that spending over the Thanksgiving weekend unexpectedly dropped about 12% over last year.⁵ While the results are quite puzzling, given the general improvement in consumer fundamentals, research shows that Black Friday trends are not strongly correlated with overall holiday season shopping.⁶ Though the early numbers are a bit of a disappointment, there's still room for a solid retail season.

ECONOMIC CALENDAR:

Tuesday: JOLTS

Wednesday: EIA Petroleum Status Report, Treasury Budget

Thursday: Jobless Claims, Retail Sales, Import and Export Prices, Business Inventories

Friday: PPI-FD, Consumer Sentiment

Data as of 12/5/2014	1-Week	Since 1/1/14	1-Year	5-Year	10-Year
Standard & Poor's 500	0.38%	12.28%	16.27%	17.53%	7.42%
DOW	0.73%	8.34%	13.51%	14.57%	6.95%
NASDAQ	-0.23%	14.47%	18.54%	23.57%	12.26%
U.S. Corporate Bond Index	-0.83%	3.24%	3.60%	2.06%	0.92%
International	-0.41%	-4.38%	-0.26%	2.74%	2.17%
Data as 12/5/2014	1 mo.	6 mo.	1 yr.	5 yr.	10 yr.
Treasury Yields (CMT)	0.02%	0.08%	0.18%	1.69%	2.31%

Notes: All index returns exclude reinvested dividends, and the 5-year and 10-year returns are annualized. Sources: Yahoo! Finance and Treasury.gov. International performance is represented by the MSCI EAFE Index. Corporate bond performance is represented by the DJCBP. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Indices are unmanaged and cannot be invested into directly.

HEADLINES:

Gas prices fall below \$2.00/gallon. Pump prices for regular unleaded plummeted across the nation, dropping below \$2.00/gallon in Oklahoma. With prices this low, the spread between area prices is growing; Hawaiians have the highest average prices at \$3.883.⁷

Factory orders fall for third straight month. New orders for factory goods fell in October for the third month in a row, indicating that manufacturing activity may have slowed down in the fourth quarter.⁸

Federal Reserve Beige Book report optimistic about economy. The Fed's assessment of economic conditions across the country in October and November shows important gains in business conditions and employment, though the housing market remains an area of concern.⁹

Black Friday deal making drives auto sales. U.S. sales of light vehicles grew 5% year-over-year in November, driven by attractive deals, lower gas prices, and increasing wages. Though the November volume may chip away at December sales, the fundamentals are in place for a solid quarter for automakers.¹⁰



“Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, it empties today of its strength.”

– Corrie ten Boom

Brie Crostini



These tasty appetizers come together in less than 20 minutes.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

1 baguette or loaf of crusty bread
2 cloves garlic, halved
1/4-1/2 pound Brie, thinly sliced
1/2 cup orange or quince marmalade
2 tablespoons olive oil
kosher salt
freshly ground black pepper
2 sprigs of fresh thyme, minced

Directions:

1. Slice the baguette or loaf into ½ inch rounds. Halve the slices, if necessary, to keep them bite-sized.
2. Preheat the oven to 400° F. Rub each round with the garlic cloves and brush with the olive oil. Top with a slice of Brie.
3. Place the crostini in a single layer on a baking sheet or pizza stone and sprinkle salt and pepper over top. Place in the pre-heated oven. Bake 3 to 4 minutes until the Brie bubbles. Watch carefully to ensure they don't burn.
4. Warm the marmalade or jam in the microwave for 30 seconds. Top each crostini with ½ teaspoon of preserve and a sprinkle of thyme. Serve warm.

Recipe adapted from Kay Chun | RealSimple.com¹¹



Check Your Flex Spending Accounts

The end of the year is approaching, and it's time to check the balance on any flexible spending accounts or health savings accounts you have contributed to throughout the year. While flex spending accounts are "use-it-or-lose-it," some employers have adopted grace periods that allow employees to spend 2014 funds as late as March 15, 2015. Check with your benefits provider to learn about the specifics of your program. If you don't have a grace period and have a balance left in your account, plan to make a trip to the dentist, drug store, doctor, or optometrist.

Tip courtesy of IRS.gov¹²

GOLF TIP



Pull the Trigger!

Ever freeze up before a swing? Most golfers have experienced an attack of nerves or had unhelpful thoughts derail their shot. The cure to pre-shot nerves is both mental and physical. A good pre-swing mental routine and a couple of warm-up exercises will help you plan your shot and stay loose. Before addressing the ball, ask yourself some strategic questions:

- Where do I want to put the ball?
- What is the lie?
- Have I played this kind of shot before?
- What club is best and why?

Once you have your game plan, warm up with a few practice swings and a visualization of how you intend to play the ball. With your mind clear and your muscles loose, step up and pull the trigger on your swing.

Tip courtesy of Shawn Clement, CPGA | Golf Tips Mag¹³



Fight the Flu With These Healthful Foods

'Tis the season to catch the flu, and a healthful diet can help you fight off winter colds. To ward off the flu, add these seven foods to your diet:

- Almonds are rich in Vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant that boosts the immune system.
- Black-eyed peas contain zinc, a mineral that can help prevent fatigue.
- Carrots are full of infection-fighting Vitamin A.
- Mushrooms are rich in selenium, which has been shown to fight the flu.
- Tomatoes and citrus fruits have a ton of immune-boosting Vitamin C.

Tip courtesy of AARP¹⁴



Reduce Phantom Energy Use

Did you know that many appliances and electronic items continue to draw power even when turned off? Most appliances with internal clocks or stand-by settings as well as chargers for electronic items, continue to use energy after you press the power button. Though the amount of energy used can seem small, it may contribute as much as 10% to your monthly power bill. The cure? Plug items into a power strip and turn off the entire strip or unplug the item from the wall when not in use.

Tip courtesy of Tucson Electric Power¹⁵

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We love being introduced!*

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Investing involves risk including the potential loss of principal. No investment strategy can guarantee a profit or protect against loss in periods of declining values.

Diversification does not guarantee profit nor is it guaranteed to protect assets

The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price-weighted average of 30 significant stocks traded on the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ. The DJIA was invented by Charles Dow back in 1896.

The Nasdaq Composite is an index of the common stocks and similar securities listed on the NASDAQ stock market and is considered a broad indicator of the performance of stocks of technology companies and growth companies.

The MSCI EAFE Index was created by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) that serves as a benchmark of the performance in major international equity markets as represented by 21 major MSCI indexes from Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia.

The Dow Jones Corporate Bond Index is a 96-bond index designed to represent the market performance, on a total-return basis, of investment-grade bonds issued by leading U.S. companies. Bonds are equally weighted by maturity cell, industry sector, and the overall index.

The S&P/Case-Shiller Home Price Indices are the leading measures of U.S. residential real estate prices, tracking changes in the value of residential real estate. The index is made up of measures of real estate prices in 20 cities and weighted to produce the index.

The 10-year Treasury Note represents debt owed by the United States Treasury to the public. Since the U.S. Government is seen as a risk-free borrower, investors use the 10-year Treasury Note as a benchmark for the long-term bond market.

Google Finance is the source for any reference to the performance of an index between two specific periods.

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You cannot invest directly in an index.

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¹ <http://goo.gl/9lOen5>

² <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102243210>

³ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102242847>

⁴ <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2014/09/22/rate-of-americans-starting-own-households-disturbingly-slow/>

⁵ <https://nrf.com/media/press-releases/early-promotions-online-shopping-and-improving-economy-changing-the-face-of>

⁶ <http://www.businessinsider.com/black-friday-sales-mean-nothing-for-total-holiday-sales-2014-12>

⁷ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102243855>

⁸ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102243404>

⁹ <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102236679>

¹⁰ <http://www.zacks.com/stock/news/156146/black-friday-deals-drive-november-us-auto-sales>

¹¹ <http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/warm-garlic-brie-crostini>

¹² <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-13-71.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.golftipsmag.com/instruction/strategy-troubleshooting/pull-the-trigger.html#.VIO46WTF-pw>

¹⁴ <http://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-12-2013/health-tips-for-new-year.2.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.tep.com/efficiency/tools/phantom/>