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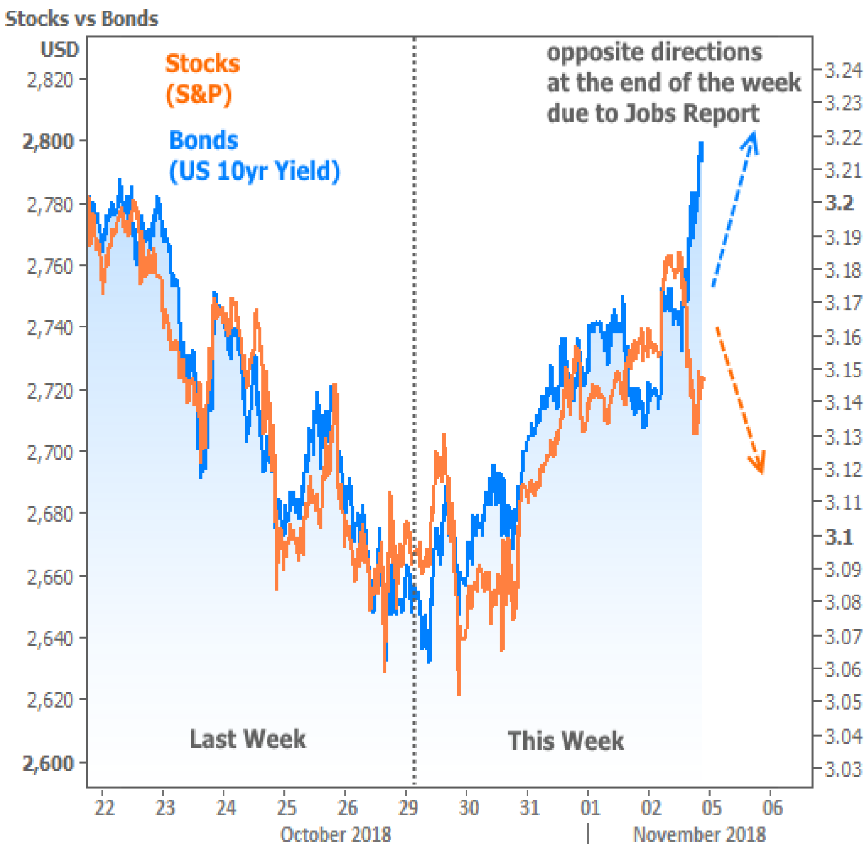
Why Strong Job Gains Hurt Both Sides of The Market

October has a bit of a reputation in financial markets as being more prone to volatility than most months. While there are solid theories as to why (earnings, start of Federal fiscal year, seasonal staffing patterns among traders), there's no solid rhyme or reason as to how the volatility will play out.

This time around, October was **horrible** for stocks and mixed for bonds/rates. In general, most days saw stocks and rates move lower together, but that changed in a big way this week as markets transitioned into November.

In stark contrast to last week, both sides of the market moved **almost exclusively higher**. The only exception was the divergent move seen after Friday's surprisingly strong jobs report.



National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	7.07%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.45%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.51%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.26%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	7.02%	-0.01	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.86%	-0.01	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.16%	+0.03	0.00

Rates as of: 6/28

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	98.49	-0.45
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.10	-0.44
10 YR Treasury	4.4030	+0.0050
30 YR Treasury	4.5640	0.0000

Pricing as of: 7/1 4:50AM EST

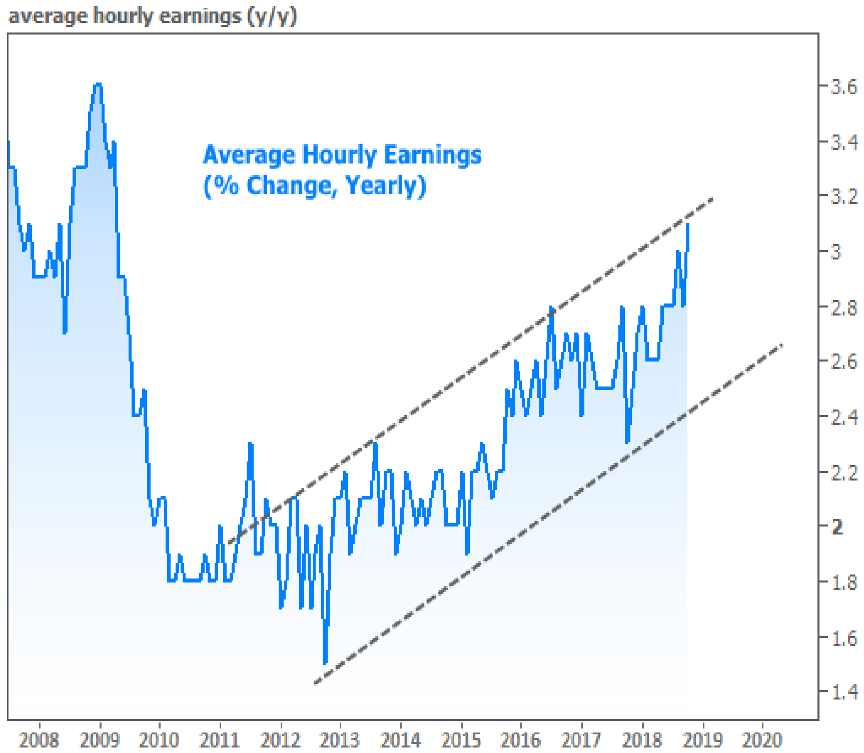
Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jun 12	208.5	+15.58%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%

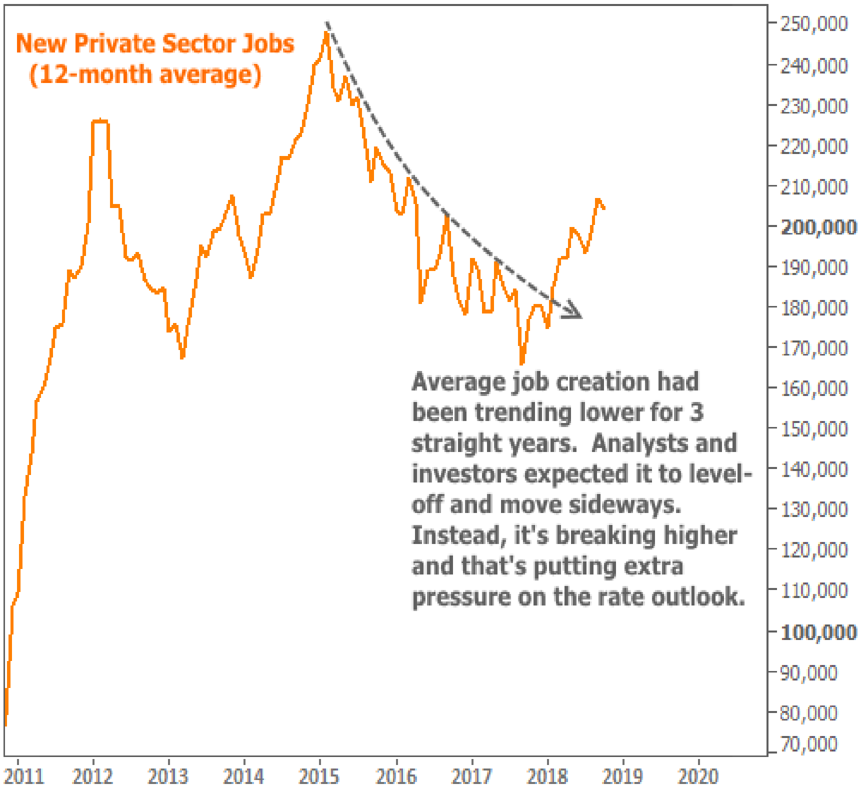
Strong economic data tends to help stocks and hurt bonds/rates. **Why did it hurt stocks this time around?** The short answer is that the jobs report was so good that it increased the odds of additional Fed rate hikes. And the stock market doesn't like rate hikes any more than the bond market!

Investors are **already** counting on a few more rate hikes by the middle of next year. That means the current trajectory of Fed rate hikes is baked in to current trading levels. If something happens to change the trajectory, trading levels can change fairly quickly, and the jobs report was strong enough to do just that.

What was so good about the jobs report? On a purely objective level, wage growth is the highest it's been since before the recession. Wages are seen as a key driver of inflation. The Fed is tasked with keeping inflation in check--something it does via rate hikes. Logically then, faster wage growth should steel the Fed's rate hike resolve.



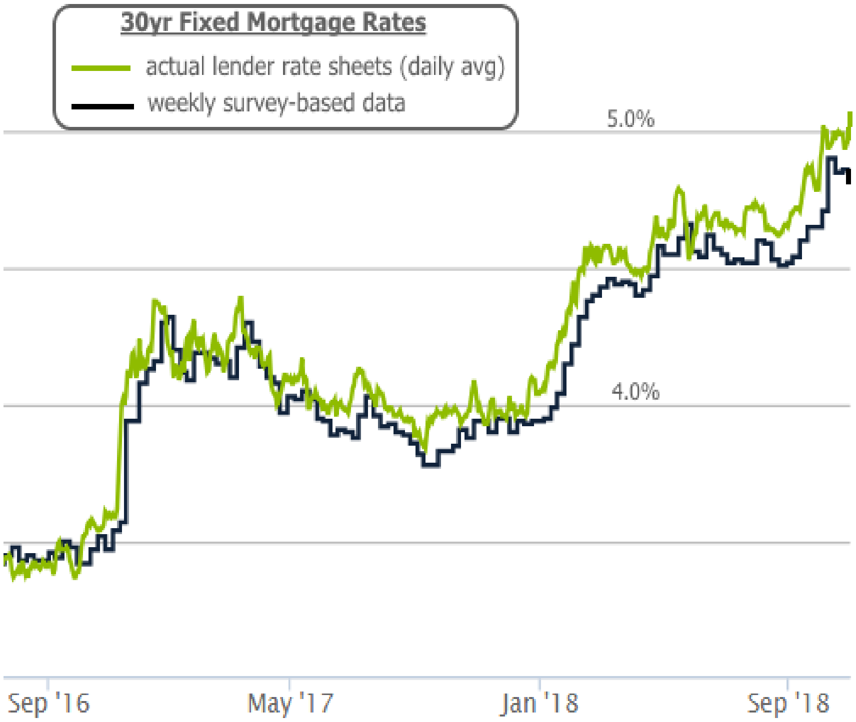
On a more subjective note (but with objective data to back it up), the pace of job growth has been **surprisingly strong** lately. The following chart shows the 12-month average of new private sector jobs created. Based on past economic cycles, most investors were expecting to see job growth level-off and hold fairly flat for the next few years.



Instead, job growth has broken higher in a way not normally seen at this phase of an economic cycle. That's forced traders to make **increasingly abrupt adjustments** as this weird new reality continues to assert itself month after month. The fallout from such adjustments can be seen in another breakout for interest rates.

The chart above shows 10yr Treasury yields--the most widely followed representation of "longer-term rates" in the US. Of course those of us with a stake in the housing market are generally **more interested** in mortgage rates.

Unfortunately, the bonds that underlie mortgages **don't** cope with volatility as well as plain old US Treasuries. As such, mortgage rates have been underperforming. In fact, the week ended with average 30yr fixed rates at their **highest** levels in more than 7 years. This assertion is at odds with several mortgage rate headlines from well known publications, and that's normal. Those publications are relying on survey based data from Freddie Mac which is based primarily on rate quotes from the first 2-3 days of any given week. As such, if there is a big move in the 2nd half of the week, Freddie's survey might indicate rates moved one direction when they actually moved another.



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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Monday, Oct 29				
8:30AM	Sep PCE (y/y) (%)	+2.0		2.2
8:30AM	Sep Core PCE (y/y) (%)	+2.0	2.0	2.0
Tuesday, Oct 30				
9:00AM	Aug CaseShiller 20 yy (%)	+5.5	5.8	5.9
10:00AM	Oct Consumer confidence	137.9	136.0	138.4
Wednesday, Oct 31				
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	224.9		228.4
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	884.2		919.6
8:15AM	Oct ADP National Employment (k)	227	189	230
9:45AM	Oct Chicago PMI	58.4	60.0	60.4
Thursday, Nov 01				
8:30AM	Q3 Productivity Preliminary (%)	2.2	2.2	2.9
8:30AM	Q3 Labor Costs Preliminary (%)	1.2	1.0	-1.0
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	214	215	215
10:00AM	Oct ISM Manufacturing PMI	57.7	59.0	59.8
10:00AM	Oct ISM Mfg Prices Paid	71.6	65.0	66.9
10:00AM	Sep Construction spending (%)	0.0	0.1	0.1

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
☆ Low
★ Moderate
★★ Important
★★ Very Important

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Friday, Nov 02				
8:30AM	Oct Non-farm payrolls (k)	250	190	134
8:30AM	Oct Unemployment rate mm (%)	3.7	3.7	3.7
8:30AM	Oct Average earnings mm (%)	0.2	0.2	0.3
8:30AM	Sep International trade mm $ (bl)	-54.0	-53.6	-53.2
9:45AM	Oct ISM-New York index	831.9		822.0
10:00AM	Sep Factory orders mm (%)	0.7	0.5	2.3
Monday, Nov 05				
10:00AM	Oct ISM N-Mfg PMI	60.3	59.3	61.6
Wednesday, Nov 07				
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	861.8		884.2
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	213.6		224.9
Thursday, Nov 08				
8:30AM	w/e Jobless Claims (k)	214	215	214
2:00PM	N/A FOMC rate decision (%)	2.000 - 2.250	2.125	2.125
Friday, Nov 09				
8:30AM	Oct Producer Prices (%)	0.6	0.2	0.2
8:30AM	Oct Core Producer Prices YY (%)	2.6	2.3	2.5
10:00AM	Nov Consumer Sentiment	98.3	98.0	98.6
10:00AM	Sep Wholesale inventories mm (%)	0.4	0.3	0.3
10:00AM	Nov 1yr Inflation Outlook (%)	2.8		2.9
10:00AM	Nov 5yr Inflation Outlook (%)	2.6		2.4
Wednesday, Jan 09				
1:00PM	10-yr Note Auction (bl)	24		
Thursday, Jan 10				
1:00PM	30-Yr Bond Auction (bl)	16		

Real Talk

At The Rate Shop, we're not your average mortgage banker. We specialize in bringing you ridiculously low interest rates that will make you wonder what the other guys are doing. In fact the ONLY objection we ever hear is “your rates sound too good to be true”. Well they’re not, and here is why…

After 15 years in the retail banking world I was frustrated with the high interest rates that came from that business model. As I looked around at all the bloated layers of management and their expensive salaries and the overhead of running a larger company (think rent costs, employee health and benefit costs, payroll taxes, and on and on) it dawned on me that I was a part of the problem, and the solution, for me at least, was so easy to see.

Start my own mortgage brokerage shop. No expensive executive salaries, no expensive building to pay rent at, no unnecessary employees and all the costs that are associated with that. What happens when you cut out all the fat? You can provide lower rates and lower closing costs. It’s simple. Now here is the best part, you still get great service from a local Kansas City Lender. My mission is to let everyone know that low rates and great customer service are NOT mutually exclusive.

Thanks for coming along on this journey where Low Rates meet Great Service. The two do NOT have to be mutually exclusive. It’s just a lie that the big box mortgage companies have been telling you for years. Don’t believe me? Give me a call or shoot me a text on my personal cell phone today and compare my rates and costs up against any other lender in the country, and be prepared to be blown away.

Mike Baker