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This Week's Biggest Market Mover: Twitter!

Twitter might not be the first place you look for authoritative financial news, but its impact on markets is increasingly **undeniable**. That's actually been the case for a long time, but weeks like this really drive home the point.

First of all, let's disambiguate the concept of Twitter as far as financial news sources are concerned. In and of itself, Twitter is nothing more than a **medium** to facilitate faster, broader communication. It's not a market mover because it is hosting new, unique news, but simply because it provides a **venue** for more rapid dissemination of news that already existed.

Whereas only a handful of market participants (let's say "thousands") might have seen a newswire on a trading terminal 15 years ago, Twitter can get that newswire in front of **millions** in the time it takes one of the aforementioned market participants to copy and paste it. **That's** why it matters. It vastly extends the reach of news that might move markets.

It's a **sign of the times** that this week's biggest market mover was a tweet that happened an hour before the release of the Fed Minutes (a more detailed account of the late-July Fed meeting). While we didn't necessarily expect any shocking news from the Fed Minutes, traders still treat it with respect. It still garners a noticeable uptick in volume (and sometimes volatility).

This time around, any of the typical reaction reserved for the Fed Minutes was **overshadowed** by a single Trump tweet. The president said "Rather than putting pressure on the businesspeople of the Manufacturing Council & Strategy & Policy Forum, I am ending both. Thank you all!"

Different media outlets have slightly **different ideas** on why this mattered to markets so much. In general, they agree that several CEOs had already quit the council/forum over Trump's "blame on both sides" press conference following the violence in Charlottesville, VA," and that Trump was in some way **preempting** further attrition.

Regardless of one's political views, the disbanding of a group of CEOs that were brought together in order to work with the administration toward a stronger economy is almost sure to be seen as a **net-negative** for the economy. At the very least, it increases **economic uncertainty**--something that tends to push rates lower.

That's exactly what happened on Wednesday. By the time the Fed Minutes came out 47 minutes later, most of the move was over.

National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.89%	0.00	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.05%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.58%	0.00	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.77%	-0.09	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.05%	-0.11	0.00

Rates as of: 7/22

Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	99.39	-0.01
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.78	+0.00
10 YR Treasury	4.2384	-0.0141
30 YR Treasury	4.4594	-0.0131

Pricing as of: 7/23 4:48AM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jul 10	206.1	-0.19%
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%

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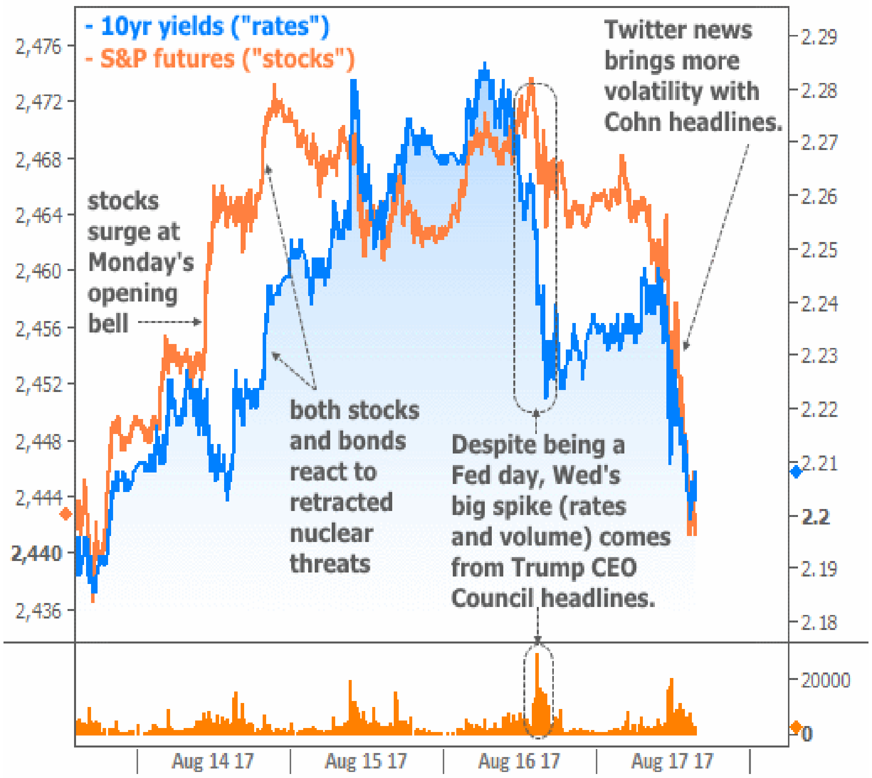
Just in case the Twitter factor wasn't clear, markets were rocked on Thursday by mere **RUMORS** that Gary Cohn would step down as Trump's Economic Advisor. Those rumors were later denied, but the market movement **remained** intact. With that, all of the upward movement in stocks and rates seen after de-escalation of the North Korea situation was erased.



If you're **wondering why** markets wouldn't bounce back after the Cohn headlines were debunked, you're not alone. It actually doesn't make good logical sense at first glance. The underlying reason has to do with trading positions--specifically the "set it and forget it" type of trading protocols that are typical for the time of year.

In an attempt to make a complicated topic as simple as possible, let's imagine a bond trader is out of the office and has left instructions (with a computer program or human associates) to make **one** trade if markets are moving in a certain direction. These trades will typically "close" an "open" position in order to **prevent further losses** or to book a certain amount of profit. Once that position is closed, there are no further instructions about re-opening it. The trader is no longer exposed, so they'll deal with taking on new positions next week.

Bottom line: if a fake event moves markets enough to trigger these automated trades (which incidentally tend to add to market movement in the prevailing direction), and if those automated trades are "one-and-done," it's no surprise to see a lack of response when the truth comes out.

In housing-specific news, there was only one key economic report this week. The Census Bureau reported a downtick in Housing Starts and Building Permits in July. These construction metrics are increasingly showing signs of stagnation at **historically interesting** levels. At roughly 1.2 million units (annual pace), the numbers are right in line with the lower edge of the prevailing range for the 30 years that preceded the financial crisis. Housing optimists hope that this stagnation is merely a pause before further improvement while housing bears see it as something of a "new normal." Either way, it will take years to find out who's right.

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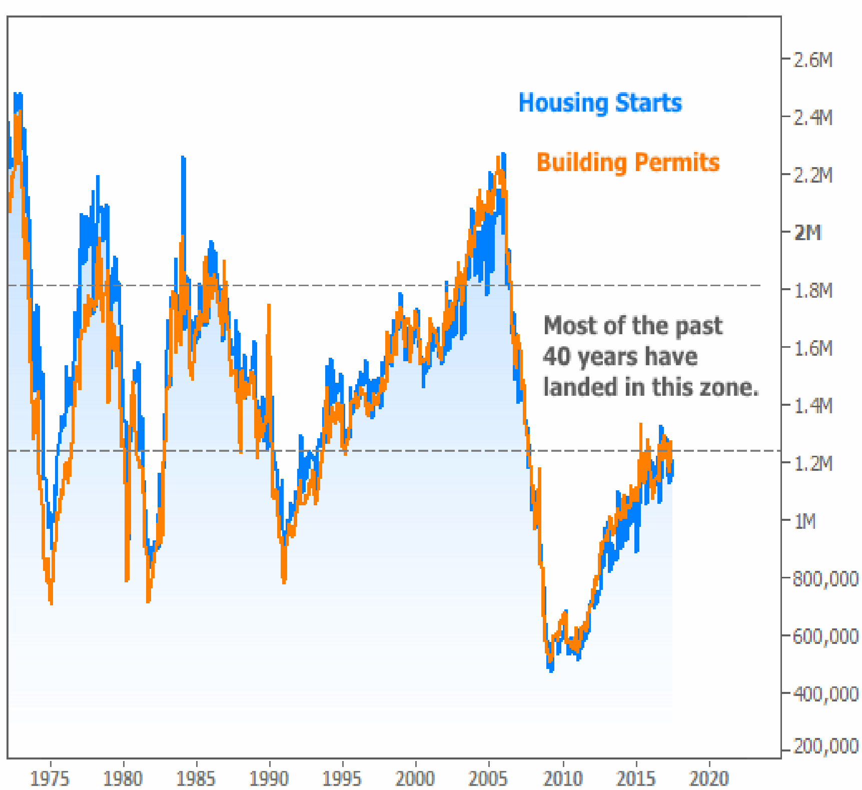

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Tuesday, Aug 15				
8:30AM	Jul Retail sales mm (%)	0.6	0.4	-0.2
8:30AM	Jul Import prices mm (%)	+0.1	0.1	-0.2
8:30AM	Jul Export prices mm (%)	+0.4	0.2	-0.2
8:30AM	Aug NY Fed manufacturing	+25.2	10.00	9.80
10:00AM	Jun Business inventories mm (%)	+0.5	0.4	0.3
Wednesday, Aug 16				
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Market Index	419.1		418.7
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	1455.9		1433.2
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	233.8		237.3
8:30AM	Jul Housing starts number mm (ml)	1.155	1.220	1.215
8:30AM	Jul House starts mm: change (%)	-4.8		8.3
8:30AM	Jul Build permits: change mm (%)	-4.1		9.2
8:30AM	Jul Building permits: number (ml)	1.223	1.250	1.275
2:00PM	FOMC Minutes			
Thursday, Aug 17				
8:30AM	Aug Philly Fed Business Index	18.9	18.5	19.5

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
Low
Moderate
Important
Very Important

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Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
8:30AM	w/e Initial Jobless Claims (k)	232	238	244
9:15AM	Jul Industrial Production (%)	+0.2	0.3	0.4
9:15AM	Jul Capacity Utilization (%)	76.7	76.7	76.6
Tuesday, Aug 22				
9:00AM	Jun Monthly Home Price mm (%)	0.1		0.4
Wednesday, Aug 23				
10:00AM	Jul New home sales chg mm (%)	-9.4	0.3	0.8
Thursday, Aug 24				
10:00AM	Jul Existing home sales (ml)	5.44	5.57	5.52
Friday, Aug 25				
8:30AM	Jul Durable goods (%)	-6.8	-6.0	6.4
Thursday, Dec 21				
1:00PM	5-Yr Note Auction (bl)	14		

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Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

After requests from real estate companies, a nonprofit consumer watchdog group the Consumer Federation of America has developed a list of factors to consider when creating a buyer contract in preparation for upcoming practice changes in the industry.

CFA released its “Proposed Criteria for Evaluating Home Buyer Contract Forms” on Tuesday. The 15 criteria focus on the contracts’ form — whether the documents are readable and understandable — and content — whether they are fair to homebuyers.

-the document’s expiration date (CFA recommends buyers asks for a three-month contract and never sign one longer than six months)
-the right to terminate the contract
-the disclosure that compensation is negotiable
-the broker’s compensation clearly stated and that the buyer broker can’t receive additional compensation for facilitating a sale
-that any additional fees, such as for showing a home, will be deducted from the broker’s commission if there is a successful sale
-that the commission is due only if there is a successful closing
-that buyers have an obligation — for no longer than 60 days, CFA recommends — to pay a broker who earlier showed them a home they purchased after the contract ended
-seller concessions paid directly to buyers
-dual agency not pre-approved by the contract
-an explanation of how a broker treats different buyer clients interested in the same property
-that buyers should not be required to first go through mediation or arbitration if they have a complaint

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