Fireworks: Big jobs report lifts Wall Street

Dow tops 17,000 as unemployment rate falls to 6.1%

Adam Shell
@adamshell
USA TODAY

A robust employment report Thursday sent stocks to new records, as the Dow topped 17,000 for the first time and notched a new all-time closing high, as did the S&P 500.

Powered by the strong jobs report — 288,000 were added in June, dropping the jobless rate to 6.1% — the Dow Jones industrial average ended up 0.5% to 17,068.26, the S&P 500 gained 0.6% to 1985.44 and the Nasdaq composite finished up 0.6% to 4485.93. The Nasdaq ended at a 14-year high.

Literally from the opening bell, the blue-chip index shot past the big number and stayed well above the milestone through the abbreviated trading day. The closing bell rang at 1 p.m. ET, three hours earlier than usual, because of the July Fourth holiday.

"Let's just hope today's report is not equivalent to a fireworks grand finale."

Todd Schoenberger, market analyst

"Let's just hope today's report is not equivalent to a fireworks grand finale," said market analyst Todd Schoenberger of the jobs news.

The Dow eclipsed the 17,000 milestone for the first time in its 118-year history, building on the bullish start to the second half of 2014.

After coming within 2 points of 17,000 Tuesday, the Dow finally cracked what Wall Street is dubbing "Dow 17K." The 6.1% unemployment rate is the lowest level since September 2008.

"The headline jobs number and underlying data reinforces the fact that the domestic economy is thriving," said Schoenberger, managing partner at LandColt Capital.

It took the Dow 153 trading days to go from 16,000 to 17,000, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. Compare that with the 21,652 sessions (or more than 75 years) it took to get to Dow 1000.

Historically, it has been nasty bear markets, or multiyear downturns, that have extended the wait to reach fresh 1,000-point Dow milestones.

Wall Street couldn't help but give the resilient bull some credit.

It signals the "continuation of a bull market," said Gary Kaltbaum, president of Kaltbaum Capital Management. "I am not a big round number person, but I guess it has meaning."