
WHICH COMPANIES PLANNED FOR A STRONG YEN IN 2017?

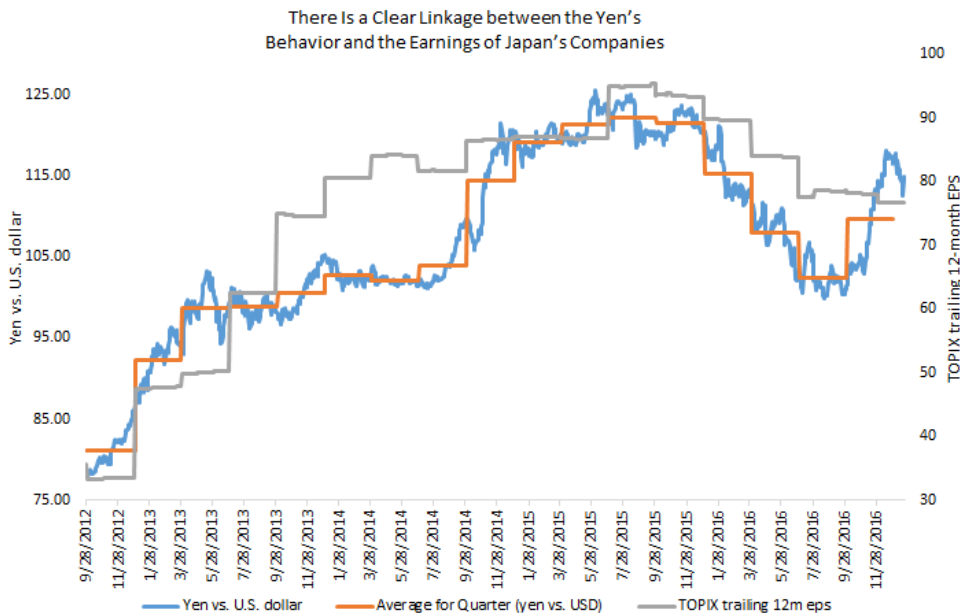
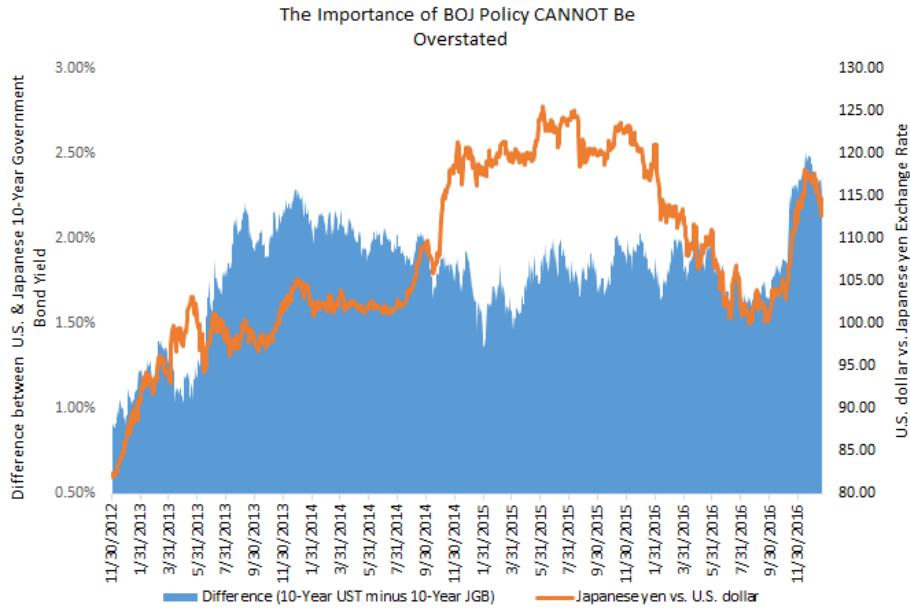
Christopher Gannatti – Global Head of Research
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In reviewing the most recent company presentations from some of Japan's largest exporters, we noticed the following:¹

- Toyota lost ¥565 billion in the first half of fiscal year 2017, due to a stronger yen.²
- Nissan lost ¥179.8 billion over the same period for the same reason.³
- Honda lost ¥943.9 billion in the first half of fiscal 2017, due to currency impacts.⁴
- Bridgestone's operating income was down ¥49.2 billion over the first nine months of 2016 compared to the first nine months of 2015, and currency was a ¥48 billion negative headwind.⁵
- Denso, a manufacturer of electronic parts for automobiles, saw a negative ¥59 billion impact compared to the second quarter of Japan's 2016 fiscal year, which ended September 30, 2015.⁶

Clearly, the yen matters—something that we've been saying for some time. A weaker yen creates the potential to unlock the [valuations](#) of Japan's equity markets.

For Japan's Equities Today, There Are Two Driving Dynamics



Sources: WisdomTree, Bloomberg, with data shown for the period 12/30/12–1/20/17. You cannot invest directly in an index. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

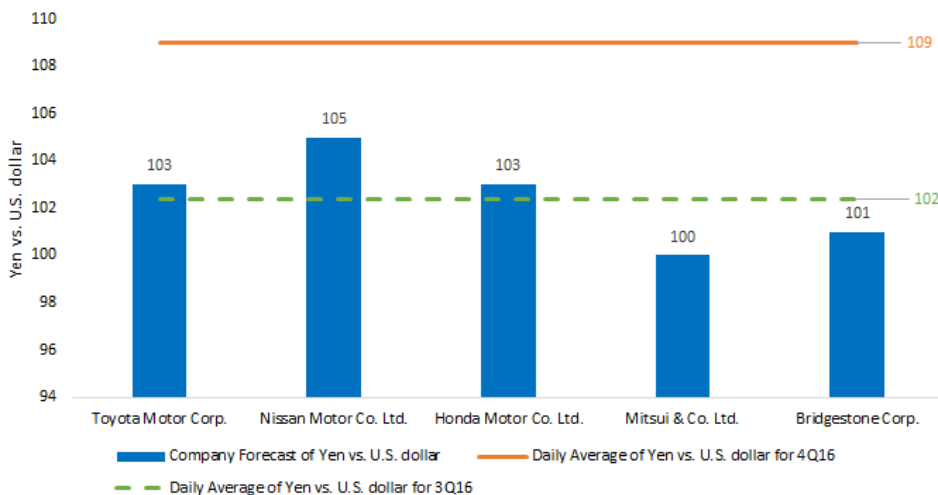
- On September 21, 2016, the yen had a closing value of ¥100.32 against the U.S. dollar⁷ as the Bank of Japan (BOJ) announced a policy that would target the [yield](#) of the [10-year Japanese government bond \(JGB\)](#) at close to 0%. In its statement, the BOJ also mentioned a commitment to overshooting the 2% [inflation](#) target, showing a tendency to move slower rather than faster when it is time to remove monetary stimulus.⁸ In hindsight, this was the perfect setup for the surprise presidential election victory of Donald Trump and the [reflation](#) trade that followed. As the differential between the [U.S. 10-Year Treasury yield](#) and the Japanese government bond yield increased, the yen weakened almost in lockstep.

- A clear relationship exists between the level of the yen—particularly its average over a given quarter—and the subsequent earnings of Japan’s equity market. The two largest depreciations in the yen’s quarterly average against the U.S. dollar occurred during the initial publicity around [Abenomics](#) and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s election and then BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda’s surprise October 31, 2014, move to expand the [QQE program](#).⁹
- The highest [earnings per share](#) that we’ve seen in recent history on the [Tokyo Stock Price Index \(TOPIX\)](#) occurred during 2015—the same year in which we saw the yen touch ¥ 125-126 levels against the U.S. dollar—the weakest that we have seen during Abenomics.
- We haven’t yet seen any response within the earnings of TOPIX to the post-2016 U.S. presidential election yen weakness, but it is also notable that it is too early for many of the firms to have reported fourth-quarter results. A change in trend could be powerful here, if it is seen.

Companies Planned for a Stronger Yen Than Was Seen

As part of their corporate planning process, Japanese companies—especially the larger exporters—tend to predict where they think that the yen will be over the upcoming quarter. Most recently, this process occurred as companies closed the books on the third quarter of 2016.

The “Trump Election” Move Led to Significant Depreciation of the Yen in the Fourth Quarter of 2016



Sources: Bloomberg, company presentations depicting financial results for the period ended 9/30/16. You cannot invest directly in an index. Holdings subject to change.

Above, we looked at the actual estimates provided in the most recent company presentations for the five largest companies within the Consumer Discretionary and Industrials sectors from within the [WisdomTree Japan Hedged Equity Index](#). What we saw is that their estimates were very much in line with the average for the third quarter of 2016—and it makes sense that companies were prepared for the environment that they had just experienced. ¥109—the daily average level of the yen for the fourth quarter against the U.S. dollar—is a big move up. As of this writing, the yen was at approximately ¥113, indicating still further depreciation compared to the average for the fourth quarter of 2016.

Bottom Line: Can Earnings Momentum Increase?

The current expectations are for 10% earnings growth in 2017, based on assumptions of ¥105 to the U.S. dollar.¹⁰ If this level is ¥115, an incremental 8% to 10% could be added to these growth estimates, in our view.¹¹ While we recognize that the market has moved upward, finding such strong earnings potential in global markets today is far from easy.

¹For current holdings of WisdomTree Indexes and Funds, visit wisdomtree.com.

²Source: "FY2017 Second Quarter Financial Results," Toyota Motor Corporation, 11/8/16.

³Source: "FY2016 First Half Financial Results," Nissan Motor Co., Ltd., 11/7/16.

⁴Source: "FY17 2nd Quarter Financial Results," Honda Motor Co., Ltd., 10/31/16.

⁵Source: "Financial Results for 3rd Quarter of Fiscal 2016," Bridgestone Corporation, 11/9/16.

⁶Source: "FY 2017 2nd Quarter Financial Results ended Sep 30, 2016," Denso Corporation, 10/28/16.

⁷Source: Bloomberg.

⁸Source: "New Framework for Strengthening Monetary Easing: 'Quantitative & Qualitative Monetary Easing with Yield Curve Control,'" Bank of Japan, 9/21/16.

⁹Source: "Expansion of the Quantitative & Qualitative Monetary Easing," Bank of Japan, 10/31/14.

¹⁰Source: Bloomberg.

¹¹Source: WisdomTree Japan.

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DEFINITIONS

Valuation: Refers to metrics that relate financial statistics for equities to their price levels to determine if certain attributes, such as earnings or dividends, are cheap or expensive.

Yield: The income return on an investment. Refers to the interest or dividends received from a security that is typically expressed annually as a percentage of the market or face value.

Japanese Government Bond (JGB): A bond issued by the government of Japan. The government pays interest on the bond until the maturity date. At the maturity date, the full price of the bond is returned to the bondholder. Japanese government bonds play a key role in the financial securities market in Japan.

Inflation: Characterized by rising price levels.

Reflation: The term is used to describe the first phase of economic recovery after a period of contraction. This period is typically characterized by the act of stimulating the economy through accommodative central bank policies and reducing taxes, to bring growth and inflation back up to the long-term trend.

10-year government bond yield: Yields on the 10 year government debt security.

Abenomics: Series of policies enacted after the election of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on December 16, 2012 aimed at stimulating Japan's economic growth.

Quantitative and qualitative monetary easing (QQE): A central bank monetary policy occasionally used to increase the money supply by buying government securities or other securities from the market. Quantitative easing increases the money supply by flooding financial institutions with capital, in an effort to promote increased lending and liquidity.

Earnings per share: Total earnings divided by the number of shares outstanding. Measured as a percentage change as of the annual Index screening date compared to the prior 12 months. Higher values indicate greater growth orientation.

Tokyo Stock Price Index (TOPIX): A free float-adjusted market capitalization-weighted index that is calculated based on all the domestic common stocks listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange First Section.

Momentum Factor: Characterized by assets with recent price increase trends over time. This term is also associated with the Momentum Factor which associates these stock characteristics with excess return vs the market over time.