

Waiting for the Boom

I've always been a big fan of thunderstorms. I especially enjoy that quiet moment of anticipation right after you see a flash of lightning.

There's a tension in the air, a sense of excitement. You know what's coming, and you wait for it...

I feel like we're in that moment, right now. We're waiting for the boom.

The manufacturing economy has enjoyed solid growth over the past few years. Most every prognosticator says the fundamentals are good, and confidence is high that we should see another year of steady, sustainable growth in the 2-3% range. Overall, business is good, and it looks like it will stay that way for a while.

At the same time, there also seems to be a sense of anticipation, especially among manufacturers. The Trump Administration has dangled some tantalizing ideas in front of America, not the least of which are tax reform and the proposed \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure investment. There's a giddy, hopeful excitement in the air. No one's really sure about the long-term effects of the Administration's plans. No one knows for sure if there will actually be a boom, but they sure are excited by the idea.

Theoretically, lowering the corporate tax rate should free up a lot of dollars for capital investment, which means more machinery, which means more bearings, motors and gearboxes. The same is true for infrastructure investment. Building roads, bridges and railways would significantly increase demand for construction equipment, compressors, locomotives and lots of other power transmission-consuming machinery.

However, booms are awfully hard to predict, whether you're talking about thunderstorms or the economy. Sometimes the brightest, most impressive flash turns out to be just a flash. You wait and wait, but in the end you get nothing more than faint rumblings.

Maybe there's a boom coming, maybe not. Only time will tell.



But you have to admit that—politics aside—it's an exciting time to be involved in manufacturing. Technology continues to change at an ever-increasing pace, and it's evident everywhere you look. Our cars can now drive themselves. Our homes talk to us. Our mobile devices connect us to everyone on the planet, and soon they'll connect us to every *thing*. Oh, yes, the Internet of Things is real, alright. It's unstoppable, and it's not going away.

You can see it even in something as mundane as a gear drive or actuator. Just flip through the pages of this magazine and you'll see that components are getting smarter, systems are becoming more efficient, and Big Data is being put in the hands of every decision-maker.

The world is changing, and clearly, manufacturing is at the heart of that change.

So in the end, it doesn't really matter if there's going to be a manufacturing boom, just like it doesn't really matter if there's thunder after the lightning. What really matters is the rain. The rain is like that slow and steady economy. It may not be as exciting, but it provides the fuel for growth.

And when you look beyond all the flash and thunder, you'll notice there's a manufacturing renaissance going on. That's what's important, and that's what's fun to be a part of.

A large, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Stott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'R' at the beginning.