



## PRECISION ENGINEERING

### MARKET CONDITIONS SURVEY: RESULTS

#### Q3 2017

**5 October 2017** - A sense of stability has returned to the UK's precision engineering industry, according to Columbia Metals' Q3 2017 survey of market conditions in the sector. Expectations of growth and investment levels are relatively consistent with the previous quarter following a period of considerable political uncertainty. The survey reveals that precision engineers are particularly optimistic about an increase in staffing levels over the next year.

"The negativity in the immediate aftermath of the UK's general election result in June has receded to some extent," says David Stephenson, Managing Director of Columbia Metals. "Precision engineers have a slightly more optimistic view of sales and staffing levels over the next 12 months. Pricing concerns are becoming more apparent as commodity prices have ticked up over the last quarter, even if precision engineers do not expect competition to intensify to any great extent."

Columbia Metals' survey shows that the proportion of precision engineers expecting increases in sales and staffing levels has increased compared with the previous quarter. Expectations of increased expenditure on plant and machinery, or an increase in the competitive environment, have remained broadly unchanged.

The full results of the survey, and comments by participants, are shown overleaf.

#### **About Columbia Metals**

Columbia Metals ([www.columbiametals.com](http://www.columbiametals.com)) is a leading stockholder of copper and nickel alloys, stainless steel and titanium, supplying precision manufacturers in a wide range of industries. The company stocks almost 100 alloy grades in round bar, hexagon, sheet, plate, tube and square and offers immediate delivery worldwide from its three warehouses in the UK.

#### **About this survey**

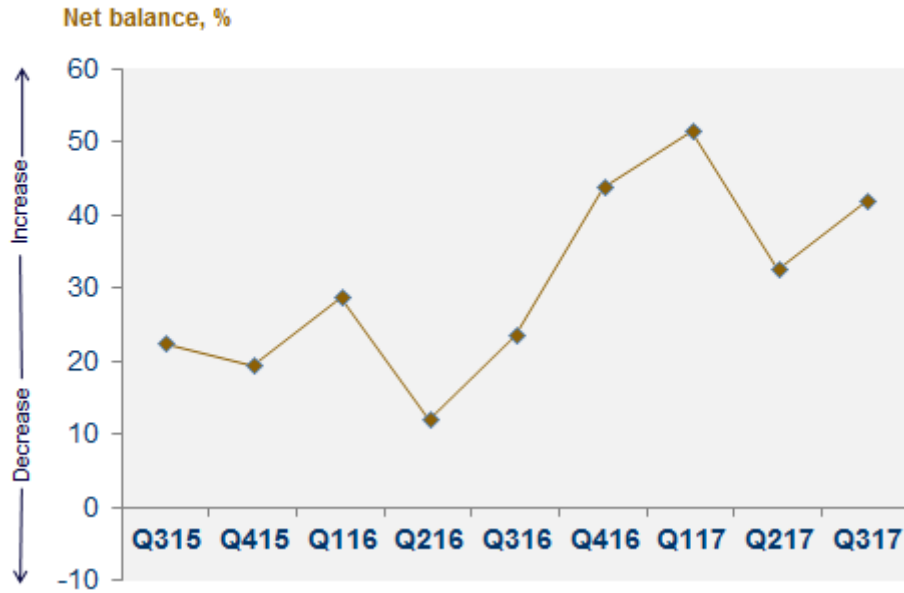
Columbia Metals contacted precision engineering companies in September 2017 with its survey on current market conditions in the sector. Participants in the survey were principally precision engineering machinists in the oil & gas, aerospace, motorsport and marine industries.

#### **Contact**

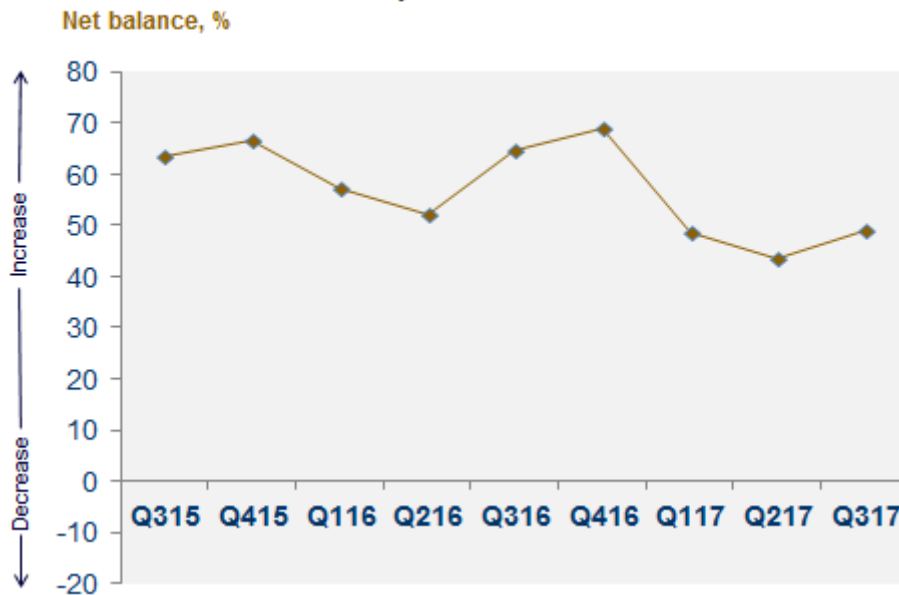
David Stephenson  
Managing Director  
020 7732 1022

[sales@columbiametals.co.uk](mailto:sales@columbiametals.co.uk)

**How do you expect your company's sales turnover to change in the next 12 months?**

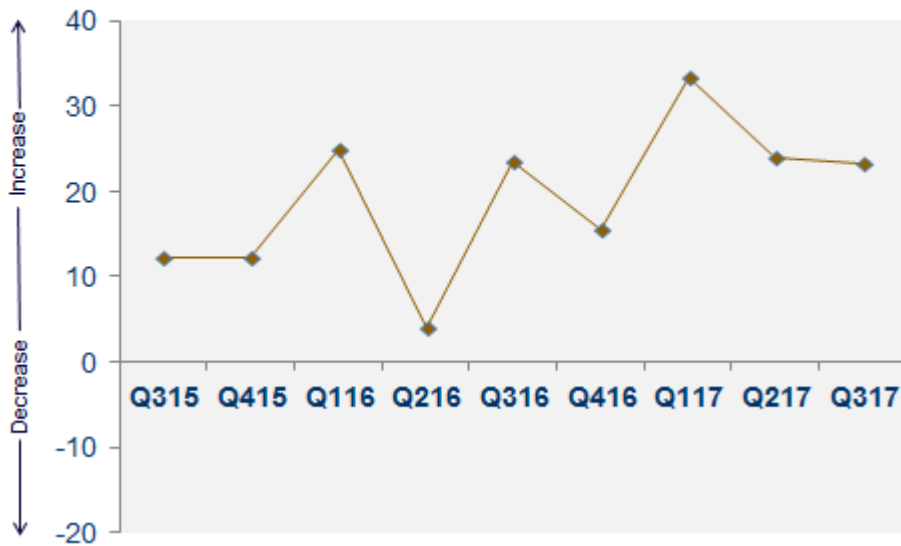


**How do you expect the competitive environment to develop in the next 12 months?**



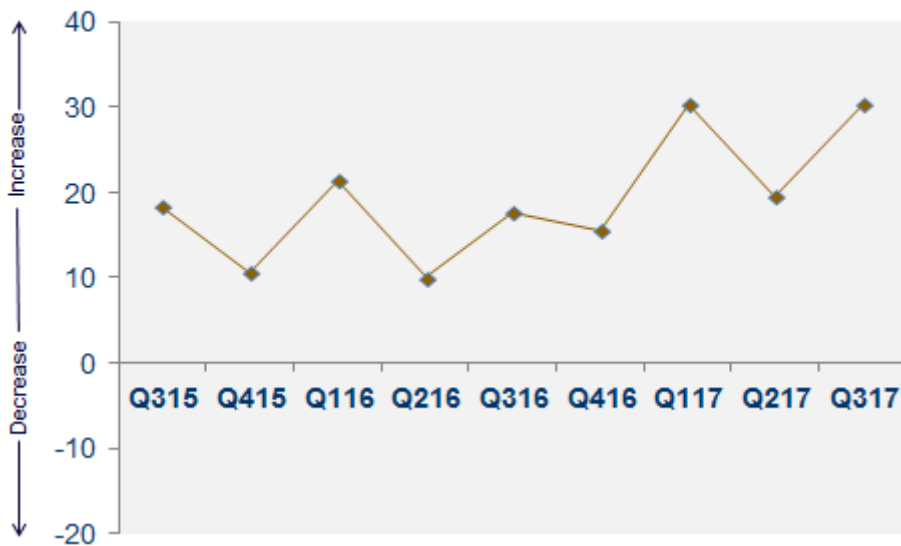
**How do you expect your company's investment levels (plant, machinery etc) to change in the next 12 months?**

Net balance, %



**How do you expect your company's full-time staffing levels to change in the next 12 months?**

Net balance, %



### **Participants' Comments**

- “For us, the past 12 months have been the best for a number of years. It’s just a shame the media stir up negativity with its scaremongering and false predictions regarding Brexit etc.”
- “[There are] massive opportunities as many companies are moving business from the EC and Far East back to the UK.”
- “Let’s train our young engineers at basic levels then move on to more involved machining techniques.”
- “Customers are still trying to drive prices down by asking for discounts over a 12 month fixed period. We have fallen in line before but can no longer do it. All our overheads and supplies are increasing and it is affecting our profitability. We have had to take a stance and say ‘no’, enough is enough.”
- “[Conditions are] buoyant.”
- “We should stay in Europe!”
- “[The market is] showing a current downturn in order placement over the last 6-8 weeks but interest levels remain constant.”
- “[It’s] not looking good I’m afraid.”
- “[There is] little confidence.”
- “There is always work about – as always, price rules.”
- “Consumer spending is down and it is affecting trade.”
- “[The market is] unsettled; it feels like a recession coming.”