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Sep 01, 2020

Bank of America (BAC)

$25.74 (As of 08/31/20)

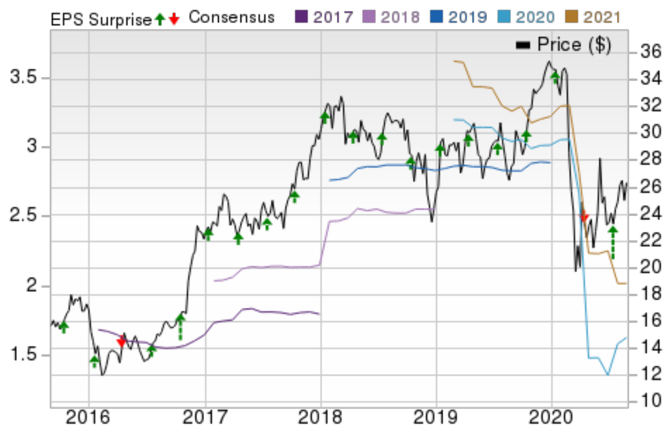
Price Target (6-12 Months): **$27.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 05/25/20) Prior Recommendation: Underperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**3-Hold**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:F
	Value: C | Growth: F | Momentum: D	

Summary

Bank of America's shares have outperformed the industry over the past year. It has an impressive earnings surprise history, having outpaced the Zacks Consensus Estimate in three of the trailing four quarters. Opening of new branches, steady improvement in digital offerings and efforts to manage expenses will likely aid profitability. A strong balance sheet and liquidity position are expected to continue supporting the company's financials amid economic slowdown. However, near-zero interest rates and no near-term chance of any change in the same are expected to hurt the bank's margins and interest income. Also, coronavirus-induced concerns will likely continue to hamper business activities. Thus, loan growth is expected to be muted. Further, dependence on capital markets performance makes us apprehensive, given its cyclical nature.

Price, Consensus & Surprise

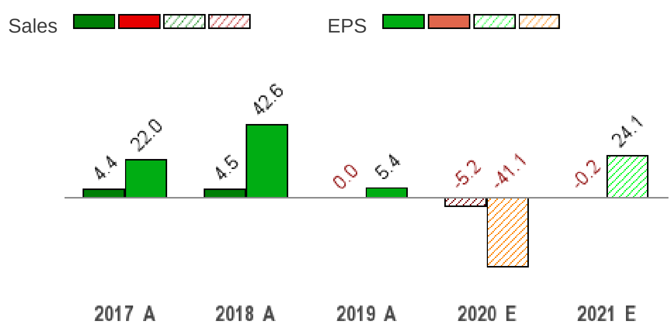


Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$35.72 - $17.95**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**54,356,120**
Market Cap	**$223.0 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**-26.9%**
Beta	**1.54**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$0.72 / 2.8%**
Industry	**Banks - Major Regional**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 10% (226 out of 251)**
Last EPS Surprise	**32.1%**
Last Sales Surprise	**2.6%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**2.8%**
Expected Report Date	**10/21/2020**
Earnings ESP	**26.9%**
P/E TTM	**12.4**
P/E F1	**15.9**
PEG F1	**1.8**
P/S TTM	**2.1**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	21,519 E	21,568 E	21,825 E	21,659 E	86,298 E
2020	22,767 A	22,326 A	20,757 E	20,521 E	86,465 E
2019	23,004 A	23,084 A	22,807 A	22,349 A	91,244 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	$0.42 E	$0.49 E	$0.57 E	$0.65 E	$2.01 E
2020	$0.40 A	$0.37 A	$0.43 E	$0.38 E	$1.62 E
2019	$0.70 A	$0.74 A	$0.56 A	$0.74 A	$2.75 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 08/31/2020. The reports text is as of 09/01/2020.

Overview

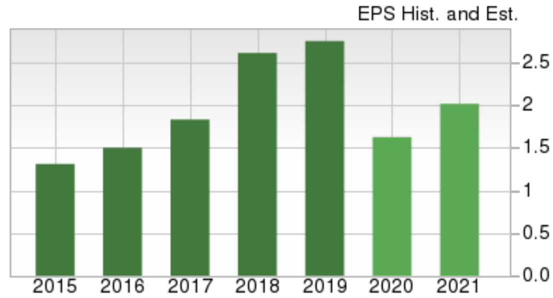
Headquartered in Charlotte, NC, Bank of America Corporation (incorporated in 1874) is one of the largest financial holding companies in the United States. With total assets worth $2.74 trillion as of Jun 30, 2020, it provides a diverse range of banking and non-banking financial services and products.

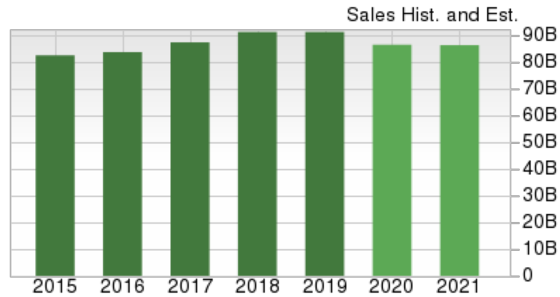
Bank of America presents results of operations through the following business segments:

- ***Consumer Banking*** (33.0% of total assets in 2019), comprising Deposits and Consumer Lending businesses, provides a wide range of credit, banking and investment products and services to consumers and businesses.

- ***Global Wealth & Investment Management*** (12.3%) consisting of Merrill Lynch Global Wealth Management and U.S. Trust, Bank of America Private Wealth Management, offers wealth structuring, investment management, trust and banking needs and specialty asset management services.

- ***Global Banking*** (19.1%), which includes Global Corporate Banking, Global Commercial Banking, Business Banking and Global Investment Banking, provides lending-related products and services, integrated working capital management and treasury solutions, and underwriting and advisory services.





- ***Global Markets*** (26.4%) offers sales and trading, market-making, financing, securities clearing, settlement and custody, and risk-management services globally.

- ***All Other*** (9.2%) consists of ALM activities, equity investments, the international consumer card business, liquidating businesses, residual expense allocations and other.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

Rising loans and deposits, manageable expenses and expansion into new markets will support Bank of America. Further, technological upgrades are likely to continue aiding cross selling opportunities.

- Bank of America remains focused on acquiring the industry's best deposit franchise and strengthening the loan portfolio. Despite a challenging market environment, deposits and loan balances have remained strong over the past several years. Loan and deposit balances are likely to grow further as the economy recovers gradually.

- Further, Bank of America's balance sheet position remains solid. As of Jun 30, 2020, the company had a total debt of $539.6 billion, and cash and cash equivalents worth $289.3 billion. Its second-quarter 2020 times-interest-earned ratio of 3.1 has remained steady over the last several quarters. Thus, given the favorable factors and record of consistent earnings growth, Bank of America has lesser likelihood of default of interest and debt repayments if the economic situation further worsens.

- Further, prudent expense management continues to support Bank of America's financials. Its expense-saving plan – Project New BAC (launched in 2011) – helped improve overall efficiency and save as much as $8.0 billion in operating expenses annually till the end of 2014. Over the last four years, the bank incurred roughly $54 billion expenses annually, despite undertaking several strategic growth initiatives. During the first six months of 2020, operating expenses rose just 1.5%. The company is likely to manage expenses prudently going forward.

- Bank of America continues to align its banking center network according to the customer needs. The bank is on track to open 500 new centers in new cities and redesign 2,500 centers with technology upgrades by 2021. The company is opening fully automated branches that will feature ATMs and video conferencing facility, allowing customers to communicate with off-site bankers. Further, the company plans to add 2,200 more ATMs to its network. These initiatives, along with the success of Zelle and Erica, will enable the company to improve digital offerings, and cross sell several products including mortgages, auto loans and credit cards.

- Bank of America's capital deployment activities look impressive. The company will be maintaining the current dividend payout level of 18 cents per share in the third quarter, following the announcement of 2020 stress test results. Further, the bank plans to resume share repurchases only after the economic situation improves significantly. Given the robust capital position and earnings strength, the bank is expected to be able to sustain capital deployment activities in the future.

- Shares of Bank of America have outperformed the industry over the past six months. Also, the company's 2020 earnings estimates have moved 13.2% upward over the past 60 days. Hence, given the strong fundamentals and positive estimate revisions, the stock has upside potential.

Reasons To Sell:

- After slashing interest rates thrice last year, the Federal Reserve cut the rates to near zero in March, with an aim of supporting the U.S. economy from coronavirus-induced mayhem. This has hurt Bank of America's net interest income (NII) growth and resulted in contraction of net interest yield over the last several quarters. A similar trend is expected to continue in the near term as it is less likely that the central bank will raise rates anytime soon. Thus, this is likely to hamper overall top-line growth of the company.

- Further, Bank of America's dependence on capital market performance to generate fee income is a matter of concern. Global economic slowdown amid coronavirus-related mayhem will likely result in extreme volatility in the company's markets and investment banking performances. Thus, this is expected to make fee income growth challenging, going forward.

Near-zero interest rates and coronavirus-related economic slowdown will hamper Bank of America's financials in the upcoming quarters. Further, fee income growth challenges are major concerns.

- Bank of America's trailing 12-month return on equity (ROE) undercuts its growth potential. The company's ROE of 9.11% compares unfavorably with 14.66% for the S&P 500, reflecting the fact that it is less efficient in using shareholder funds.

- Further, Bank of America seems overvalued than the broader industry. Its current price/book and price/earnings (F1) ratios are above the respective industry averages.

Last Earnings Report

Bank of America's Q2 Earnings Top, Provisions Up on Coronavirus Woes

Quarter Ending	06/2020
Report Date	**Jul 16, 2020**
Sales Surprise	**2.62%**
EPS Surprise	**32.14%**
Quarterly EPS	**0.37**
Annual EPS (TTM)	**2.07**

Bank of America's second-quarter 2020 earnings of 37 cents per share outpaced the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 28 cents. The earnings included the impact of a reserve build of $4 billion, mainly done to combat persistent economic slowdown.

A low interest rate environment and muted loan demand hurt Bank of America's net interest income. Moreover, the company's operating expenses rose moderately from a year ago.

Additionally, as expected, Bank of America's total card income decreased 14% on a year-over-year basis. Advisory fees plunged 36% from the prior-year quarter.

However, solid underwriting business supported the investment banking business. Equity and debt underwriting fees jumped 140% and 55%, respectively. This led to a 65% surge in investment banking fees.

Further, BofA came out with impressive trading numbers. Sales and trading revenues (excluding DVA) grew 35% from the prior-year period, driven by a 50% jump in fixed income trading and 7% rise in equity trading income.

Performance of the company's business segments, in terms of net income generation, was disappointing. All segments, except Global Markets, witnessed a drastic decline in net income. Overall, net income plunged 52% from the prior-year quarter to $3.5 billion.

Lower Rates Hurt Revenues, Expenses Rise

Net revenues amounted to $22.3 billion, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $21.8 billion. However, the figure was down 3% on a year-over-year basis.

Net interest income, on a fully taxable-equivalent basis, declined 11% year over year to $10.8 billion, mainly due to lower interest rates, partly offset by loan and deposit growth. Also, net interest yield contracted 57 basis points to 1.87%.

Non-interest income grew 5% from the year-ago quarter to $11.5 billion.

Non-interest expenses were $13.4 billion, up 1% mainly due to continued investments in franchise.

Efficiency ratio was 60.06%, up from 57.48% in the year-ago quarter. Increase in the efficiency ratio indicates deterioration in profitability.

Credit Quality Worsens

Provision for credit losses surged significantly on a year-over-year basis to $5.1 billion. The rise was due to a reserve build, primarily done to combat dismal economic conditions, thanks to coronavirus-related economic concerns.

Net charge-offs jumped 29% from the year-ago quarter to $1.1 billion.

As of Jun 30, 2020, non-performing loans and leases was 0.44%, which was unchanged year over year.

Strong Capital Position

The company's book value per share as of Jun 30, 2020 was $27.96 compared with $26.41 in the corresponding period of 2019. Tangible book value per share as of second quarter-end was $19.90, up from $18.92 in the comparable year-ago period.

At the end of June 2020, its common equity tier 1 capital ratio (Basel 3 Fully Phased-in) (Advanced approaches) was 11.4%, down from 12.0% as of Jun 30, 2019.

Outlook

Management expects card deferral to decline in third-quarter 2020 driven by "the expiration in these payment observations."

NII for the third quarter is anticipated to be adversely impacted by commercial loan paydowns, which will likely lower NII by around $200 million. Also, NII growth will likely be hampered by the impacts of longer-term asset repricing. Beyond the third quarter, NII will likely depend on loan growth "and/or redeployment of deposits into higher yielding securities rather than cash."

Moreover, effective third-quarter 2020, the company will start accounting for merchant services separately and not through a joint venture. As a result, the business is likely to add roughly $200 million on a quarterly basis to overall operating expenses. Further, additional revenues for merchant services are expected to be roughly $100 million a quarter, which will likely improve as the economy recovers.

The effective tax rate (in absence of unusual items) is expected to be roughly 11% for the rest of 2020.

Recent News

Dividend Update

On Jul 22, Bank of America announced a quarterly cash dividend of 18 cents per share. The dividend will be paid out on Sep 25 to shareholders on record as of Sep 4.

Valuation

Bank of America's shares are down 27% in the year-to-date period and 6.5% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Finance sector are down 33.7% and 14.2% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are down 18.2% and 5.1%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 9% in the year-to-date period and 20.3% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 13.66X forward 12 months earnings, which compares to 13.09X for the Zacks sub-industry, 16.91X for the Zacks sector and 23.47X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 16.80X and as low as 6.09X, with a 5-year median of 11.05X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our $27 price target reflects 14.52X forward earnings.

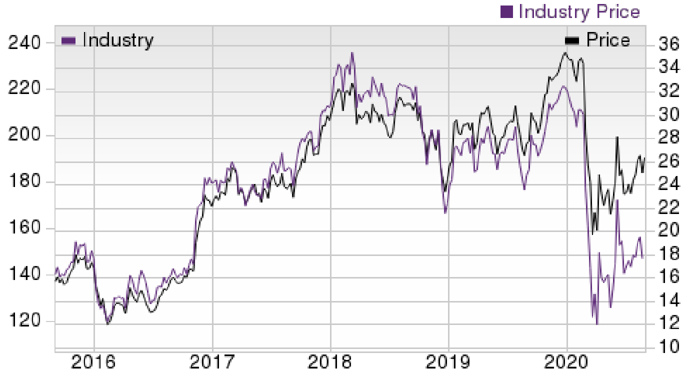
The table below shows summary valuation data for BAC

Valuation Multiples - BAC

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	13.66	13.09	16.91	23.47
	5-Year High	16.8	14.2	16.91	23.47
	5-Year Low	6.09	8.01	11.6	15.25
	5-Year Median	11.05	11.37	14.26	17.6
P/TB TTM	Current	1.3	1.52	3.42	13.83
	5-Year High	2.01	2.68	4	13.83
	5-Year Low	0.78	1.21	2.01	6.03
	5-Year Median	1.53	2.11	3.48	9.53
P/S F12M	Current	2.58	2.8	6.23	3.84
	5-Year High	3.66	4.59	6.67	3.84
	5-Year Low	1.33	2.39	4.97	2.53
	5-Year Median	2.73	3.59	6.07	3.07

As of 08/31/2020

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Bottom 10% (226 out of 251)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Morgan Stanley **(MS)**	Outperform	1
Citigroup Inc. **(C)**	Neutral	4
The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. **(GS)**	Neutral	3
JPMorgan ChaseCo. **(JPM)**	Neutral	3
The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc **(PNC)**	Neutral	4
State Street Corporation **(STT)**	Neutral	3
Truist Financial Corporation **(TFC)**	Neutral	4
Wells FargoCompany **(WFC)**	Neutral	4

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Banks - Major Regional

Industry Peers

	BAC	X Industry	S&P 500	C	JPM	WFC
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	4	3	4
VGM Score	F	-	-	F	D	F
Market Cap	223.01 B	32.76 B	23.72 B	106.42 B	305.34 B	99.50 B
# of Analysts	9	8	14	10	10	11
Dividend Yield	2.80%	3.99%	1.65%	3.99%	3.59%	1.66%
Value Score	C	-	-	D	C	D
Cash/Price	4.27	2.41	0.07	8.77	4.08	4.09
EV/EBITDA	-8.99	-0.87	13.28	-12.42	-8.82	-1.57
PEG F1	1.77	2.26	3.03	1.51	3.36	65.17
P/B	0.92	0.85	3.17	0.61	1.30	0.63
P/CF	7.02	6.39	12.87	5.01	7.14	3.64
P/E F1	15.93	14.16	21.63	15.89	16.81	632.50
P/S TTM	2.10	1.86	2.53	1.06	2.20	1.08
Earnings Yield	6.29%	7.06%	4.39%	6.30%	5.95%	0.17%
Debt/Equity	1.08	0.88	0.70	1.60	1.35	1.45
Cash Flow ($/share)	3.67	6.63	6.93	10.20	14.04	6.63
Growth Score	F	-	-	F	D	F
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	21.29%	10.96%	10.41%	10.06%	13.82%	-6.26%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-40.93%	-42.47%	-4.75%	-57.55%	-44.38%	-99.13%
Current Cash Flow Growth	3.02%	2.66%	5.22%	2.56%	9.35%	-1.58%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	27.50%	9.49%	8.49%	7.31%	10.67%	1.85%
Current Ratio	0.93	0.89	1.35	0.98	0.88	0.88
Debt/Capital	49.62%	44.79%	42.92%	59.26%	56.09%	56.18%
Net Margin	19.09%	18.16%	10.25%	13.64%	18.16%	6.26%
Return on Equity	9.11%	8.52%	14.66%	7.40%	10.75%	4.33%
Sales/Assets	0.04	0.05	0.50	0.05	0.05	0.05
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-5.24%	-1.23%	-1.40%	0.29%	0.15%	-15.86%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	B	D	B
Daily Price Change	-2.13%	-2.19%	-0.82%	-2.22%	-2.51%	-2.19%
1-Week Price Change	5.28%	5.54%	2.59%	6.04%	5.60%	4.44%
4-Week Price Change	3.00%	3.00%	3.55%	1.45%	4.26%	-0.58%
12-Week Price Change	-9.81%	-15.48%	-0.44%	-16.53%	-11.69%	-27.52%
52-Week Price Change	-6.43%	-20.56%	2.80%	-20.56%	-8.80%	-48.14%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	54,356,120	4,238,303	1,839,384	17,481,268	15,340,878	35,422,968
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	-0.07%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	2.81%	0.00%	0.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	13.40%	12.57%	3.87%	5.62%	16.22%	-95.06%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	2.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Value Score	C
Growth Score	F
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	F

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

Disclosures

This report contains independent commentary to be used for informational purposes only. The analysts contributing to this report do not hold any shares of this stock. The analysts contributing to this report do not serve on the board of the company that issued this stock.The EPS and revenue forecasts are the Zacks Consensus estimates, unless indicated otherwise on the reports first page. Additionally, the analysts contributing to this report certify that the views expressed herein accurately reflect the analysts personal views as to the subject securities and issuers. ZIR certifies that no part of the analysts compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the specific recommendation or views expressed by the analyst in the report.

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ZIR uses the following rating system for the securities it covers. **Outperform-** ZIR expects that the subject company will outperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Neutral-** ZIR expects that the company will perform in line with the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Underperform-** ZIR expects the company will underperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months.

Additional Disclosure

This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forwardlooking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a mediumterm price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

# of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the mostrecent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every $1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as a the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at $35 and expected to earn $3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 (3/35 = 0.0857) or 8.57%. In other words, for $1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow ($/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every $1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every $1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated $2.50 in sales for every $1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is $1.10 now versus $1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from $1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.