

Burlington Stores(BURL)

\$324.70 (As of 04/09/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$344.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 06/02/20)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: D

Growth: B

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of Burlington Stores have risen and outperformed the industry over the past three months. The stock looks well poised to carry the momentum, given the company's robust business model, successful execution of Burlington 2.0 strategy and strong growth prospects. Markedly, the company posted stronger-than-anticipated fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 results. We note that comparable store sales trend improved sequentially throughout the quarter, with the metric registering double-digit growth in January, thanks to the federal stimulus checks. Also, management raised its long-term store target to 2,000 from 1,000 stores. However, the company has been witnessing higher SG&A expenses, including product-sourcing costs. With respect to gross margin, management anticipates elevated freight costs to continue building pressure in fiscal 2021.

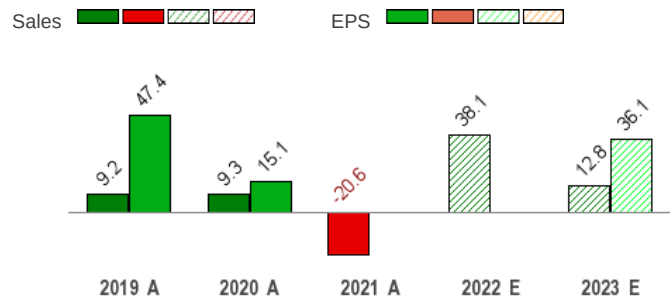
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$324.99 - \$155.03
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	622,460
Market Cap	\$21.6 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	24.1%
Beta	0.98
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Retail - Discount Stores
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 9% (232 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	15.1%
Last Sales Surprise	9.9%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.1%
Expected Report Date	05/27/2021
Earnings ESP	-8.4%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2023					8,976 E
2022	1,710 E	1,781 E	2,006 E	2,536 E	7,960 E
2021	802 A	1,012 A	1,665 A	2,283 A	5,764 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2023	\$1.27 E	\$1.91 E	\$2.21 E	\$4.61 E	\$9.38 E
2022	\$0.73 E	\$1.05 E	\$1.52 E	\$3.71 E	\$6.89 E
2021	-\$4.76 A	-\$0.56 A	\$0.29 A	\$2.44 A	-\$2.57 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	47.1
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	3.8

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 04/09/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 04/12/2021.

Overview

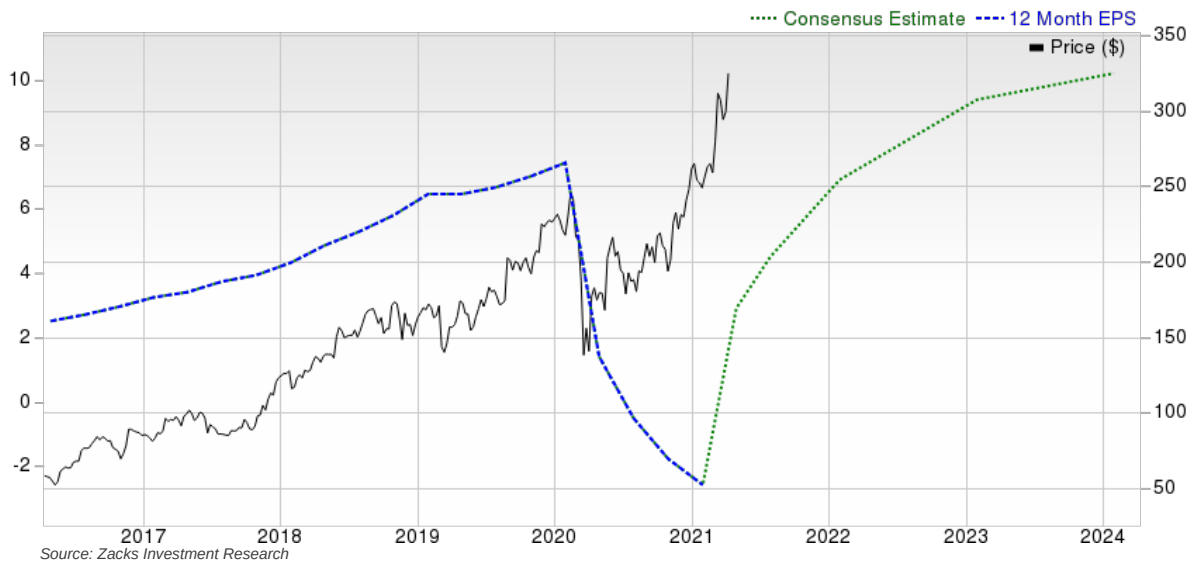
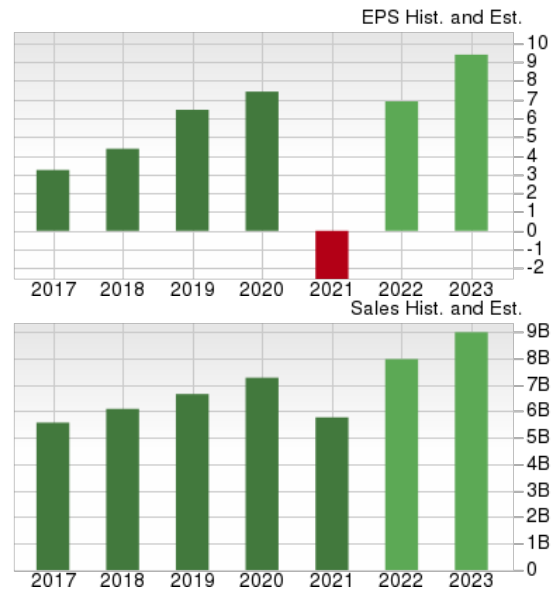
Founded in 1972, and headquartered in New Jersey, Burlington Stores, Inc. functions as a retailer of branded apparel products and is also a Fortune 500 company. It operates in the United States and Puerto Rico. The company offers products such as ladies sportswear, menswear, youth apparel, baby furniture, accessories, home décor and gifts, and coats. The company which started business as a coat-focused off-price retailer is now focusing on “open to buy” off-price model. The current model is helping customers to get nationally branded, fashionable, high quality as well as right priced products.

The company's wider selection provides a broad range of apparel, accessories and furnishings for all age groups. Burlington Stores provide customers a full line of assortments, comprising - women's ready-to-wear apparel, accessories, footwear, menswear, youth apparel, baby, home, coats, beauty, toys and gifts.

In addition, the company purchases both the pre-season and in-season merchandise in order to respond quickly to evolving market conditions and consumer fashion preference. Moreover, Burlington Stores' continues to emphasize rich heritage of coats and outerwear, and are known as the destination for coat shoppers.

Furthermore, Burlington Stores' selection of staple and destination products lures customers from beyond the local trade areas. These products drive higher store traffic and differentiate the company from its competitors.

As of Jan 30, 2021, the company had 761 stores across 45 States and Puerto Rico.



Reasons To Buy:

▲ **Better-Than-Expected Q4:** Burlington Stores reported better-than-expected earnings and revenues for fourth-quarter fiscal 2020. The company delivered fourth-quarter adjusted earnings of \$2.44 per share that surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$2.12. Also, total revenues were \$2,282.9 million, up 3.4% year over year and above the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$2,078 million. Moreover, net sales increased 3.5% year over year. The robust quarterly performance was primarily buoyed by the successful execution of the core Burlington 2.0 initiative.

In such a competitive retail landscape, Burlington Stores has made multiple changes to its business model to adapt to the ongoing changes in the industry.

Further, comparable-store sales (comps) were flat in the reported quarter. Notably, comps returned to positive with a 17% increase in January, given normal weather conditions and disbursement of federal stimulus payments. Gross margin expanded 40 basis points (bps) on a 110-bp rise in merchandise margins owing to lower markdowns. Management also raised its long-term store target. Going ahead, management continues to plan the business conservatively, with a focus on tight control over liquidity, inventory and costs. We note that shares of Burlington Stores have risen 25.8% in the past three months against the industry's 0.8% decline.

▲ **Burlington 2.0 Off-Price Initiative:** The main objective of Burlington 2.0 initiative is to significantly improve the execution of the off-price model. Via this strategy, the company focuses on three aspects, marketing, merchandising, and store prototype. Under marketing aspect, the company looks to communicate a stronger and more direct off-price value message, and hence deliver this communication in a more cost-effective manner. This new marketing program is expected to leverage the company's marketing reach and expenditure in the upcoming years. With respect to merchandising, management expects investing in the merchandising capabilities to better execute the off-price model and boost growth. This includes a blend of external hires and the development of internal talent.

Markedly, the Burlington 2.0 initiative is focused on offering great customer value by effectively managing liquidity, chasing sales, buying opportunistically, managing inventories, getting fast fresh receipts to the sales floor and making the store model flexible.

▲ **Strategic Initiatives:** In an era of competitive retail landscape, Burlington Stores has made multiple changes to its business model to adapt to the ongoing changes in the industry. The company which started business as a coat-focused off-price retailer is now focusing on "open to buy" off-price model. The current model is helping customers to get nationally branded, fashionable, high quality as well as right priced products. Further, over the years the company has increased vendor counts, made technological advancements, initiated better marketing approach and focused on localized assortments. Burlington Stores' long-term strategies include enhancement of assortments with primary focus on home, beauty and gifts categories, in order to make the business less weather sensitive. With regards to the company's marketing endeavors, it is experiencing favorable results from its multichannel engagement strategy.

▲ **Store-Expansion Strategy:** In order to drive top-line growth, Burlington Stores is focused on store expansion. The company's store count has increased from 13 in 1980 to 761 stores in fiscal 2020. In fiscal 2021, management anticipates to open 100 new stores and close or relocate 25 stores, resulting in 75 net new outlets.

In addition, management raised its long-term store target to 2,000 stores from 1,000, given the smaller store format enabled by the Burlington 2.0 strategy coupled with the accelerating retail disruption and industry-wide store closures. Moreover, management is encouraged by a 25,000-square foot store prototype. The company projects nearly a third of its store openings in fiscal 2021 in this format. Over time, this smaller prototype is likely to represent majority of the company's new store openings. Via this smaller prototype, the company aims to operate with leaner in-store inventory levels.

▲ **Financial Analysis:** At the end of fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 (Jan 30, 2021), Burlington Stores had a long-term debt of \$1,927.8 million, which decreased 11.1% sequentially. Moreover, the company's debt-to-capitalization ratio of 0.81 has declined from 0.88 on a quarter-over-quarter basis. Again, the company's cash and cash equivalents of \$1,380.3 million at the quarter-end suggest growth of 2.3% from \$1,348.7 million reported at the end of the preceding quarter. In the fiscal fourth quarter, the company paid the outstanding \$250 million on its ABL facility, with no outstanding ABL balances.

Reasons To Sell:

▼ **Higher Costs:** During fourth-quarter fiscal 2020, adjusted selling, general and administrative (SG&A) expenses increased about 11% year over year on elevated store-related and corporate expenses, partly offset by lower marketing costs. The SG&A includes product-sourcing costs that jumped 60.7%, which comprise cost of processing goods via supply chain and buying costs. Further, adjusted EBIT was \$223.5 million during the reported quarter, down nearly 24% from the year-ago quarter.

▼ **Outlook:** Management did not provide specific sales and earnings view for fiscal 2021 (the 52-weeks ending Jan 29, 2022) given the uncertainty regarding the pace of recovery of consumer demand amid the pandemic. It projects flat comps for fiscal 2021 versus fiscal 2019. With respect to gross margin, management forecasts elevated freight costs to continue building pressure in fiscal 2021. However, higher merchandise margin is expected to offset freight costs.

Further, EBIT margin is likely to decline 20-30 bps on a one-year basis or 40-60 bps over two years of expense growth. It expects persistent cost pressure and deleverage from product sourcing costs in fiscal 2021 on higher supply-chain costs. Also, pandemic-related SG&A expenses cannot be ruled out.

▼ **Dip in Consumer Sentiment May Impact Sales:** Any dip in consumer confidence – a key determinant of the economy's health – may have serious bearing on spending. The company's customers remain sensitive to macroeconomic factors including interest rate hikes, increase in fuel and energy costs, credit availability, unemployment levels, and high household debt levels, which may negatively impact their sentiment. For now, the novel coronavirus has wreaked havoc. The retail sector, in particular, remains under pressure due to major supply-chain bottlenecks, reduced traffic, an increasing number of store closures and limited hours of working. Again, analysts are expecting job losses as well as lower disposable income due to this catastrophe.

▼ **Competitive Pressure:** Burlington Stores, which operates in a highly competitive discount retail business, faces stiff competition from other general merchandise, discount, food, dollar store and online retailers. This may result in loss of market share as well as fall in sales and operating margins. Competitors with larger number of stores, greater market presence and better financial resources will continue to weigh on the results.

With respect to gross margin, Burlington Stores forecasts elevated freight costs to continue building pressure in fiscal 2021. Also, pandemic-related SG&A expenses cannot be ruled out.

Last Earnings Report

Burlington Stores' Q4 Earnings & Revenue Beat Estimates

Burlington Stores reported better-than-expected results for fourth-quarter fiscal 2020. Moreover, the top line improved year over year. The robust quarterly performance was primarily buoyed by the successful execution of the core Burlington 2.0 initiative. In addition, management raised its long-term store target to 2,000 stores from 1,000, given the smaller store format enabled by the Burlington 2.0 strategy coupled with the accelerating retail disruption and industry-wide store closures.

Quarter Ending 01/2021

Report Date	Mar 04, 2021
Sales Surprise	9.88%
EPS Surprise	15.09%
Quarterly EPS	2.44
Annual EPS (TTM)	-2.59

Let's Introspect

The company delivered fourth-quarter adjusted earnings of \$2.44 per share that surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$2.12. However, the bottom line tumbled nearly 24% from adjusted earnings of \$3.21 in the prior-year quarter.

Total revenues were \$2,282.9 million, up 3.4% year over year and above the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$2,078 million. Further, net sales increased 3.5% year over year to \$2,278.9 million, while Other revenues plunged 44.4% to \$4 million.

Further, comparable-store sales (comps) were flat in the reported quarter. Notably, comps dropped 10% in November on unfavorable warm weather conditions. However, the comps trend improved thereafter but remained flat in December. Impressively, comps returned to positive with a 17% increase in January given normal weather and disbursement of federal stimulus payments.

Gross margin expanded 40 basis points (bps) to 42.5% in the fiscal fourth quarter owing to a 110-bp rise in merchandise margins stemming from lower markdowns, compensating for a 70-bp rise in freight costs.

Adjusted SG&A expenses were \$553.8 million, up about 11% year over year on elevated store-related and corporate expenses, partly offset by lower marketing costs. The SG&A includes product-sourcing costs that jumped 60.7% of \$143 million, which comprise cost of processing goods via supply chain and buying costs. Further, adjusted EBIT was \$223.5 million during the reported quarter, down nearly 24% from the year-ago quarter.

Other Financial Aspects

The company ended the reported quarter with cash and cash equivalents of \$1,380.3 million, long-term debt of \$1,927.8 million and stockholders' equity of \$464.8 million. Also, it had \$477-million cash on its ABL facility. In the reported quarter, it paid the outstanding \$250 million on its ABL facility, with no outstanding ABL balances.

Moreover, merchandise inventories were \$741 million, down 5% from last year, while comparable in-store inventories fell 16%. The decline was because of the company's strategy of leaner in-store inventories. Further, Reserve Inventory, consisting of the entire inventory stored for release later in the season or in the subsequent season, accounted for 38% of total inventory at the end of the reported quarter.

On Mar 19, 2020, management suspended the share-repurchase program. At the end of the fiscal fourth quarter, Burlington Stores had a remaining authorization of \$348 million. We note that the company operated 761 stores at the end of fiscal 2020.

Outlook

Management projects flat comps for fiscal 2021 versus fiscal 2019. With respect to gross margin, management forecasts elevated freight costs to continue building pressure in fiscal 2021. However, higher merchandise margin is expected to offset freight costs. Further, EBIT margin is likely to decline 20-30 bps on a one-year basis or 40-60 bps over two years of expense growth. It expects 75 net new stores in fiscal 2021. It expects persistent cost pressure and deleverage from product sourcing costs in fiscal 2021 on higher supply-chain costs. Also, pandemic-related SG&A expenses cannot be ruled out.

Furthermore, capital expenditures, net of landlord allowances for fiscal 2021 are likely to be \$470 million. In the fiscal year, management projects opening 100 new stores and closing or relocating 25 stores, resulting in 75 net new outlets.

It expects depreciation & amortization, exclusive of favorable lease costs, of nearly \$260 million. Interest expense, excluding \$32 million non-cash interest on convertible notes, is projected at about \$80 million for the fiscal year. The effective tax rate for fiscal 2021 is envisioned at approximately 24-25%.

Valuation

Burlington Stores shares are up 24.8% in the year-to-date period and nearly 95.4% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are down 2.2% but the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector is up 0.2%, in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 43.4% and 42.4%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 10.7% in the year-to-date period and 52.8% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 44.02X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 27.53X for the Zacks sub-industry, 30.49X for the Zacks sector and 23.12X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 121.1X, as low as 2.1 with a 5-year median of 23.93X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$344 price target reflects 46.64X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for BURL

Valuation Multiples - BURL					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	44.02	27.53	30.49	23.12
	5-Year High	121.1	29.98	34.07	23.83
	5-Year Low	2.1	17.93	19.1	15.3
	5-Year Median	23.93	20.55	23.73	18
P/S F12M	Current	2.65	1.66	1.34	4.64
	5-Year High	3.06	1.66	1.34	4.64
	5-Year Low	0.66	0.95	0.84	3.21
	5-Year Median	1.47	1.2	1.02	3.71
P/B TTM	Current	46.38	13.33	4.83	6.7
	5-Year High	109.6	13.33	6.48	6.7
	5-Year Low	NA	7.02	3.78	3.83
	5-Year Median	37.21	9.25	5.09	4.97

As of 04/09/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 9% (232 out of 254)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Big Lots, Inc. (BIG)	Neutral	3
Dollar General Corporation (DG)	Neutral	4
Dollar Tree, Inc. (DLTR)	Neutral	3
Kohls Corporation (KSS)	Neutral	3
Ross Stores, Inc. (ROST)	Neutral	4
Target Corporation (TGT)	Neutral	3
The TJX Companies, Inc. (TJX)	Underperform	5

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Retail - Discount Stores				Industry Peers		
	BURL	X Industry	S&P 500	BIG	DG	DLTR
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	4	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	A	B	A
Market Cap	21.61 B	36.58 B	29.66 B	2.36 B	49.45 B	27.44 B
# of Analysts	9	10.5	12	6	26	10
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.78%	1.33%	1.78%	0.81%	0.00%
Value Score	D	-	-	A	B	A
Cash/Price	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.23	0.03	0.05
EV/EBITDA	-192.56	12.64	17.00	1.85	12.64	11.35
PEG F1	NA	2.34	2.38	1.07	2.02	1.85
P/B	46.38	7.60	4.01	1.96	7.60	3.79
P/CF	389.66	19.70	17.08	5.86	15.68	13.60
P/E F1	46.91	26.85	22.05	12.03	21.82	19.20
P/S TTM	3.75	1.09	3.45	0.38	1.47	1.08
Earnings Yield	2.12%	3.77%	4.47%	8.31%	4.58%	5.21%
Debt/Equity	4.15	0.62	0.66	0.03	0.62	0.44
Cash Flow (\$/share)	0.83	6.59	6.78	11.49	13.18	8.64
Growth Score	B	-	-	B	C	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	17.45%	11.74%	9.39%	11.74%	20.85%	12.33%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	368.18%	11.78%	15.24%	438.14%	-10.83%	1,202.34%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-92.22%	-0.42%	0.61%	52.18%	44.07%	-3.20%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	-30.80%	6.93%	7.37%	10.45%	16.24%	13.68%
Current Ratio	1.49	1.35	1.39	1.58	1.21	1.35
Debt/Capital	80.57%	38.28%	41.26%	2.72%	38.28%	30.69%
Net Margin	-3.76%	2.59%	10.59%	10.15%	7.87%	5.26%
Return on Equity	-51.65%	19.46%	14.86%	24.21%	37.64%	19.46%
Sales/Assets	0.86	1.31	0.51	1.58	1.31	1.24
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	38.16%	2.50%	7.36%	-6.14%	0.09%	2.50%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	A	D	C
Daily Price Change	3.72%	0.56%	0.62%	0.42%	-0.26%	0.57%
1-Week Price Change	1.79%	-0.10%	0.35%	-1.67%	-0.33%	1.35%
4-Week Price Change	7.23%	6.66%	4.25%	1.22%	8.96%	8.27%
12-Week Price Change	28.31%	2.91%	8.87%	29.07%	-3.09%	6.89%
52-Week Price Change	83.56%	48.02%	52.90%	243.10%	22.11%	51.56%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	622,460	1,856,014	2,047,782	783,138	3,125,463	1,627,152
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.47%	0.00%	0.00%	0.18%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.13%	0.06%	0.00%	0.18%	-5.37%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-2.17%	-3.60%	2.24%	-5.30%	-5.03%	-0.58%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-6.58%	-0.14%	0.00%	0.58%	-4.33%	0.00%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

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.

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.

Value Score	D
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	C

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.

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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 medium-term 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 most recent 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.