

Cintas Corporation (CTAS)

\$333.88 (As of 08/28/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$384.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation: **Outperform**
(Since: 07/27/20)

Prior Recommendation: Neutral

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5) **2-Buy**

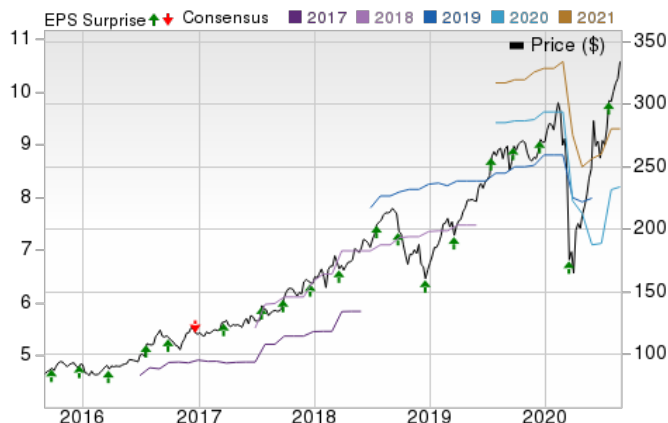
Zacks Style Scores: VGM:D

Value: F | Growth: B | Momentum: F

Summary

In the past three months, Cintas' shares have outperformed the industry. Going forward, we believe that solid product offerings, investment in technology and buyouts might be beneficial for the company. Also, Cintas' cash position remains impressive, as evident from a 20.9% year-over-year increase in cash flow from operating activities in fiscal 2020. Policy of rewarding shareholders handsomely might be favorable. For first-quarter fiscal 2021, the company anticipates revenues of \$1.675-\$1.700 billion and earnings of \$2.00-\$2.20 per share, suggesting improvement from the sequential numbers of \$1,619.6 million and \$1.35, respectively. Further, earnings estimates for the first quarter and fiscal 2021 have gone up in the past 60 days. However, it refrained from providing fiscal 2021 projections due to the pandemic-related uncertainties.

Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$334.60 - \$154.33
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	389,354
Market Cap	\$34.6 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	24.1%
Beta	1.46
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$2.55 / 0.8%
Industry	Uniform and Related
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 3% (8 out of 252)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	9.8%
Last Sales Surprise	4.1%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.0%
Expected Report Date	09/22/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	1,822 E	1,861 E	1,854 E	1,781 E	7,523 E
2021	1,698 E	1,765 E	1,768 E	1,774 E	7,040 E
2020	1,811 A	1,844 A	1,811 A	1,620 A	7,085 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$2.45 E	\$2.35 E	\$2.32 E	\$2.30 E	\$9.29 E
2021	\$2.13 E	\$2.06 E	\$2.03 E	\$1.98 E	\$8.19 E
2020	\$2.32 A	\$2.27 A	\$2.16 A	\$1.35 A	\$8.11 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	41.2
P/E F1	40.8
PEG F1	3.4
P/S TTM	4.9

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 08/28/2020. The reports text is as of 08/31/2020.

Overview

Founded in 1968 and headquartered in Cincinnati, OH, Cintas Corporation provides specialized services to businesses of all types throughout North America. It also operates in Europe, Asia and Latin America. The company designs, manufactures, implements corporate identity uniform programs, and provides entrance mats, restroom supplies, promotional products and first aid and safety products for diversified businesses.

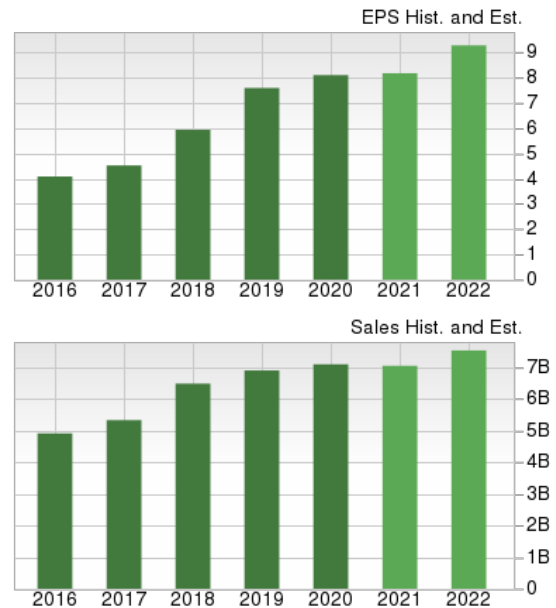
Notably, the company provides products and services through distribution and retail channels to small service and manufacturing companies as well as leading corporations.

The company primarily reports revenues under two operating segments — Uniform Rental and Facility Services, and First Aid and Safety Services.

- **Uniform Rental and Facility Services** (78.5% of fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 revenues) segment includes rental, and servicing of uniforms, mats and towels as well as the provision for restroom supplies, and other facility products and services. Further, selling items from catalogs to customer routes are reported under this segment.
- **First Aid and Safety Services** (12.1% of fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 revenues) segment includes the sale and servicing of first aid products, safety products and training to customers.

Businesses, with Uniform Direct Sale and Fire Protection Services, are included in **All Other**. Revenues generated from All Other businesses represented 9.4% of fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 revenues.

It's worth mentioning here that results of First Aid and Safety Services segment and All Other businesses are grouped under Other Services in Cintas' income statement.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Cintas delivered earnings and sales surprises of 9.8% and 4.1%, respectively, in fourth-quarter fiscal 2020. Benefits from buyouts, investment in technology and the company's focus on enhancement of product portfolio and customer base will be advantageous, going forward. For first-quarter fiscal 2021, it anticipates revenues of \$1,675-\$1,700 million for the quarter, while earnings are expected to be \$2.00-\$2.20 per share. The projections for both revenues and earnings suggest improvements from that reported in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020.
- ▲ Acquisitions have been Cintas' preferred mode of business expansion. One of the important acquisitions made by the company is that of G&K Services Inc. This was completed in March 2017 and added to Cintas' Uniform Rental and Facility Services. Since acquired, G&K Services helped strengthen the company's customer profile, product portfolio, processing capacity and customer service. In addition, Cintas invested \$53.7 million in acquisitions in fiscal 2020. This reflects an increase from \$9.8 million used for buyouts in fiscal 2019.
- ▲ Over the years, Cintas has consistently returned significant cash to shareholders through dividends and share repurchases. In fiscal 2020, the company repurchased common stock worth \$464.5 million under its buyback program. Also, during the year, it paid out cash dividends of approximately \$268 million, higher than \$220.8 million in fiscal 2019. It is worth noting here that the company increased the annual dividend rate by 24.4% to \$2.55 in October 2019. Also, Cintas' cash position remains impressive, as evident from a 20.9% year-over-year increase in cash flow from operating activities in fiscal 2020. A sound cash flow profile will help the company to continue rewarding its shareholders handsomely.
- ▲ In the past three months, Cintas' shares have risen 33.1% compared with the industry's growth of 30.9%. Also, analysts have become increasingly bullish about the company over the past 60 days. Its earnings estimates for first-quarter fiscal 2021 have been increased by 33.1% on account of five upward estimate revisions versus none downward. In addition, over the same time frame, earnings estimates for fiscal 2021 and fiscal 2022 have been increased by 16.5% and 5.4%, respectively.

Solid product offerings, investment in technology, acquired assets and shareholder-friendly policies might be beneficial for Cintas, going forward. Projections for first-quarter fiscal 2021 suggest sequential improvement.

Risks

- On an EV/EBITDA (TTM) basis, Cintas is overvalued compared with the industry, with respective tallies of 24.09x and 20.72x. Also, the company's multiple is higher than the industry's three-month highest level of 20.72x. This makes us cautious about the stock. In fourth-quarter fiscal 2020, the company's earnings declined 34.8% year over year on weak sales and a fall in the margin. Organic sales were down 8.4% year over year and reflected adverse impacts of the pandemic. Being wary about the pandemic-related uncertainties, the company refrained from providing any projections for fiscal 2021.
 - Escalating cost of sales and expenses have been a major cause of concern for Cintas. In the last five fiscals (2016-2020), the company's costs of sales increased 7.4% (CAGR), while its selling and administrative expenses escalated 9.2%. Notably, in fiscal 2020, its aggregate costs and expenses jumped 3.1%, respectively, on a year-over-year basis. We believe, if unchecked, escalating costs and expenses will likely continue hurting the company's margins. Also, the company faces stiff competition from national, regional and local companies on various factors such as design, price, quality, service and convenience to customers. Specifically, its first-aid and fire protection services are decidedly commoditized markets and hence, are subject to fierce competition. The company has to continually invest in value drivers to fend off competition, which further weakens profitability.
 - Cintas' long-term debt in the last five fiscals (2016-2020) increased 19.5% (CAGR). At the end of the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020, long-term debt remained roughly stable sequentially at \$2,539.7 million. Notably, the stock looks relatively more leveraged than the industry. Its debt/capital ratio is currently 0.44, higher than 0.41 recorded by the industry. Having said that, we believe that a highly leveraged balance sheet can inflate the company's financial obligations and hurt profitability. Another thing that is concerning is its weak ability to repay its financial obligations. At fourth-quarter fiscal 2020, the company's times interest earned was 11.0x, lower than 12.1x at the end of the previous quarter.
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Last Earnings Report

Cintas Q4 Earnings & Sales Beat Estimates, Fall Y/Y

Cintas has kept its earnings streak alive in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020 (ended May 31, 2020). It recorded an earnings beat of 9.8% and a sales beat of 4.1% in the quarter under review.

The company's earnings in the reported quarter were \$1.35 per share, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1.23. On a year-over-year basis, the bottom line decreased 34.8% from the year-ago figure of \$2.07 on weak sales and a fall in the margin.

For fiscal 2020, the company's earnings were \$8.11 per share, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$7.98. Also, the bottom line expanded 6.7% year over year.

Quarter Ending	05/2020
Report Date	Jul 23, 2020
Sales Surprise	4.10%
EPS Surprise	9.76%
Quarterly EPS	1.35
Annual EPS (TTM)	8.10

Revenue Details

In the quarter under review, Cintas' net sales were \$1,619.6 million, reflecting a decline of 9.7% from the year-ago quarter. Organic sales in the quarter decreased 8.4% year over year. The pandemic played a spoilsport in the quarter.

Further, the top line surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1,556 million.

The company has two reportable segments — Uniform Rental and Facility Services, and First Aid and Safety Services. Other businesses like Uniform Direct Sale and Fire Protection Services are included in All Other. Quarterly sales data is briefly discussed below.

Revenues from the **Uniform Rental and Facility Services** segment (representing 78.5% of the reported quarter's net sales) were \$1,271 million, decreasing 11% year over year. Organic sales in the quarter decreased 9.6%.

Revenues from the **First Aid and Safety Services** segment (representing 12.1% of the reported quarter's net sales) totaled \$196.3 million, increasing 20% year over year. Organic sales in the quarter increased 21.9%.

Revenues from the **All Other** business (representing 9.4% of the reported quarter's net sales) were \$152.3 million, decreasing 24.5% year over year.

For fiscal 2020, the company's net sales were \$7.085 billion, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$7.02 billion. On a year-over-year basis, net sales increased 2.8%.

Margin Profile

In the quarter under review, Cintas' cost of sales (comprising costs related to uniform rental and facility services as well as others) decreased 6% year over year to \$911.8 million. It represented 56.3% of net sales compared with 54.1% in the year-ago quarter. Gross profit in the quarter decreased 14.1% year over year to \$707.8 million. Gross margin decreased 220 basis points (bps) year over year to 43.7%.

Selling and administrative expenses totaled \$500.4 million, reflecting a 1.5% decline from the year-ago figure. It represented 30.9% of net sales. Operating margin in the quarter decreased 470 bps year over year to 12.8%.

Balance Sheet and Cash Flow

Exiting the quarter, Cintas' cash and cash equivalents were \$145.4 million, down 38% from \$234.4 million at the end of the previous quarter. Long-term debt remained more or less unchanged sequentially at \$2,539.7 million.

In fiscal 2020, the company generated net cash of \$1,291.5 million from operating activities, increasing 20.9% from the previous year. Capital expenditure totaled \$230.3 million, reflecting a year-over-year decline of 16.8%. Free cash flow increased 34.1% year over year to \$1,061.2 million.

During fiscal 2020, the company repurchased shares worth \$464.5 million and paid out dividends totaling \$268 million.

Outlook

The company is wary about the uncertainties related to the coronavirus outbreak. It refrained from providing any projections for fiscal 2021 (ending May 2021).

However, the company provided projections for the first quarter. It anticipates revenues of \$1.675-\$1.700 billion for the quarter, while earnings are expected to be \$2.00-\$2.20 per share.

The projections for both revenues and earnings suggest improvements from that reported in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020.

Valuation

Cintas shares are up 24.1% in the year-to-date period, while increased 26.5% over the trailing 12 months period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Industrial Products sector are up 21.3% and 0.2% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are up 23.5%, while stocks in the Zacks Industrial Products sector increased 14.7% in the same time frame.

The S&P 500 index has moved up 9% year to date and increased 20.2% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 39.44x forward 12-month earnings per share, which compares to 36.51x for the Zacks sub-industry, 22.1x for the Zacks sector and 23.49x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 41.15x and as low as 16.73x, with a 5-year median of 25.5x. Our Outperform recommendation indicates that the stock will perform better than the market. Our \$384 price target reflects 45.36x forward 12-month earnings per share.

The table below shows summary valuation data for CTAS.

Valuation Multiples - CTAS					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	39.44	36.51	22.1	23.49
	5-Year High	41.15	36.51	22.1	23.49
	5-Year Low	16.73	17.85	12.55	15.25
	5-Year Median	25.5	25.25	17.5	17.6
P/Sales F12M	Current	4.83	3.95	2.99	3.84
	5-Year High	4.83	3.95	2.99	3.84
	5-Year Low	1.72	1.59	1.52	2.53
	5-Year Median	2.59	2.34	2.04	3.05

As of 08/28/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 3% (8 out of 252)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Superior Uniform Group, Inc. (SGC)	Outperform	1
Acco Brands Corporation (ACCO)	Neutral	3
Albany International Corporation (AIN)	Neutral	3
Unifirst Corporation (UNF)	Neutral	3
Aramark (ARMK)	Underperform	4
Ecolab Inc. (ECL)	Underperform	5
Guess, Inc. (GES)	Underperform	4
Canada Goose Holdings Inc. (GOOS)	Underperform	4

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Uniform And Related				Industry Peers		
	CTAS	X Industry	S&P 500	AIN	SGC	UNF
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Outperform	-	-	Neutral	Outperform	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	3	1	3
VGM Score	D	-	-	A	B	C
Market Cap	34.56 B	3.72 B	23.71 B	1.71 B	362.11 M	3.72 B
# of Analysts	8	4	14	3	1	4
Dividend Yield	0.76%	0.76%	1.63%	1.44%	1.69%	0.51%
Value Score	F	-	-	B	C	C
Cash/Price	0.00	0.01	0.07	0.13	0.01	0.12
EV/EBITDA	23.95	15.26	13.37	7.21	15.26	9.76
PEG F1	3.35	2.58	3.08	NA	0.93	NA
P/B	10.74	2.18	3.22	2.42	2.08	2.18
P/CF	27.68	17.73	12.90	8.38	17.73	14.00
P/E F1	40.77	27.90	21.82	17.07	12.98	27.90
P/S TTM	4.88	2.01	2.52	1.72	0.80	2.01
Earnings Yield	2.45%	3.58%	4.41%	5.87%	7.70%	3.58%
Debt/Equity	0.79	0.40	0.74	0.62	0.40	0.02
Cash Flow (\$/share)	12.06	12.06	6.94	6.31	1.33	14.07
Growth Score	B	-	-	A	B	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	22.51%	10.17%	10.41%	25.26%	4.88%	10.17%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	0.96%	2.59%	-4.94%	-24.65%	130.38%	-17.11%
Current Cash Flow Growth	4.40%	4.40%	5.22%	25.88%	-22.17%	23.96%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	17.86%	6.83%	8.50%	13.14%	6.03%	6.83%
Current Ratio	2.61	2.61	1.35	3.67	2.33	4.72
Debt/Capital	43.98%	28.55%	43.86%	38.12%	28.55%	1.79%
Net Margin	12.36%	7.70%	10.25%	11.17%	5.64%	7.70%
Return on Equity	27.57%	15.74%	14.66%	18.98%	15.74%	8.49%
Sales/Assets	0.91	0.91	0.50	0.68	1.28	0.88
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-0.64%	0.28%	-1.43%	-15.81%	25.34%	0.28%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	C	B	F
Daily Price Change	1.55%	0.70%	0.71%	1.15%	-1.09%	0.70%
1-Week Price Change	1.25%	1.25%	-1.45%	-6.36%	1.83%	-3.83%
4-Week Price Change	10.63%	10.63%	4.59%	9.72%	38.27%	4.70%
12-Week Price Change	24.02%	24.02%	4.86%	-19.53%	129.42%	4.23%
52-Week Price Change	26.18%	26.18%	3.09%	-35.85%	64.10%	-0.13%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	389,354	86,081	1,887,168	186,633	86,081	50,090
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.79%	9.29%	142.67%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	15.50%	15.50%	3.43%	9.29%	142.67%	5.65%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-7.52%	150.00%	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.

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	F
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	F
VGM Score	D

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 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.