First American(FAF)

$53.14 (As of 12/16/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$56.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 10/22/20) Prior Recommendation: Outperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**2-Buy**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:A
	Value: A | Growth: C | Momentum: B	

Summary

First American Financial should continue to benefit from strength in commercial business. The company has been actively pursuing acquisitions to strengthen its core business, and expand its valuation and data businesses. It also expects increased demand among millennials for first-time home purchases. Growing direct premiums, escrow fees and agent premiums should drive revenues. Moreover, effective capital deployment bodes well. The company has been consistently increasing its dividend payout each year. It aims 12-14% return on equity over the long term. Shares of First American have underperformed the industry in a year. However, higher expenses put strain on margins. Low rate environment is a headwind. High debt level and poor interest coverage pose financial risk. Its third-quarter bottom line missed estimates on account of higher costs.

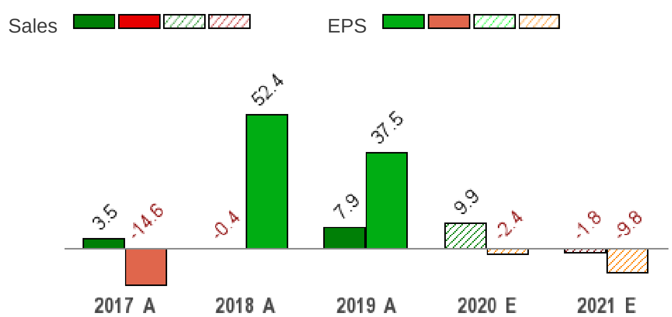
Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$66.78 - $29.36**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**724,719**
Market Cap	**$5.9 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**-8.9%**
Beta	**1.14**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$1.84 / 3.5%**
Industry	**Insurance - Property and Casualty**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 11% (227 out of 255)**
Last EPS Surprise	**-3.0%**
Last Sales Surprise	**13.2%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**0.9%**
Expected Report Date	**02/11/2021**
Earnings ESP	**0.0%**
P/E TTM	**10.2**
P/E F1	**9.5**
PEG F1	**0.9**
P/S TTM	**0.9**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	1,582 E	1,632 E	1,727 E	1,757 E	6,698 E
2020	1,413 A	1,609 A	1,914 A	1,884 E	6,819 E
2019	1,304 A	1,499 A	1,671 A	1,729 A	6,202 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	$0.91 E	$1.25 E	$1.61 E	$1.39 E	$5.07 E
2020	$1.06 A	$1.05 A	$1.31 A	$1.63 E	$5.62 E
2019	$0.74 A	$1.58 A	$1.64 A	$1.80 A	$5.76 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 12/16/2020. The reports text is as of 12/17/2020.

Overview

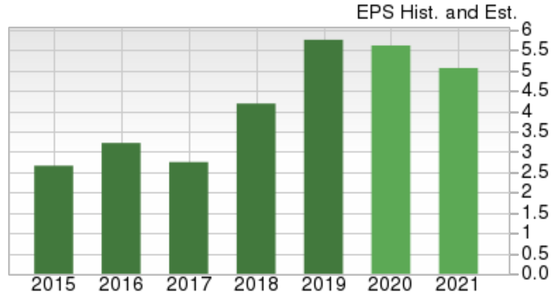
Headquartered in Santa Ana, CA., First American Financial serves homebuyers and sellers, real estate professionals, loan originators and servicers, commercial property professionals, homebuilders and others involved in residential and commercial property transactions with products and services specific to their needs.

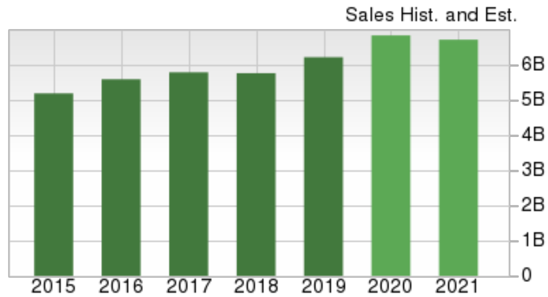
The company was founded in the state of Delaware in January 2008. On Jun 1, 2010, the company's common stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

First American Financial core business lines include title insurance and closing/settlement services; property data and automated title plant records and images; home warranty products; property and casualty insurance; banking, trust and wealth management services; and other related products and services.

Further, providing banking services via First American Trust enhances agents' efficiency and lowers risk.

The company provides financial services through its Title Insurance and Services segment and its Specialty Insurance segment.





Title insurance and Services segment (91.8% of 2019 revenues) provides title insurance, closing and/or escrow services and similar or related services domestically and internationally in connection with residential and commercial real estate transactions. It also provides products, services and solutions that are designed to mitigate risk or facilitate real estate transactions. Many of these products, services and solutions involve use of real property-related data, including data derived from proprietary databases. It maintains, manages and provides access to title plant records and images. It also provides banking, trust, document custodial and wealth management services. This segment offers products through a network of direct operations and agents in 49 states and in the District of Columbia, and Canada, the U.K., Australia, South Korea, and internationally.

Specialty insurance segment (8.2%) issues property and casualty insurance policies and sells home warranty products. Additionally, corporate function consists of certain financing facilities and the corporate services that support business operations.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

> Increased demand among millennials for first-time home purchases, improved rate environment, strength in commercial business and effective capital deployment should drive growth.

- First American Financial remains well poised to capitalize from the increased demand among millennials for first-time home purchases. Purchase transactions generate more than twice the revenues of refinance transactions. The company thus anticipates housing inventory constraints to continue driving further price appreciation and in turn incremental revenues. Closed order growth and increased fee per file has been driving purchase revenues, which improved 20% year over year in the third quarter. With purchase open orders increasing 14% year over year in the third quarter and the trend continuing in October, we remain optimistic about its improvement in the near future.

- The company noted that strength in purchase and refinance businesses have been benefiting from robust order trends and consistent cost-control efforts. After witnessing a slowdown owing to the COVID-19-induced market volatility, the commercial market started to grow during the third quarter with improvements varying according to asset class. Though commercial business declined 29% year over year in the third quarter, it fared better than a plunge of 39% in the second quarter. Though the company does not anticipate the business meeting the robust performance of the prior year, it remains optimistic about its improvement in the fourth quarter. Also, the company anticipates refinance and purchase activity to remain at high levels for the rest of the year on the back of low mortgage rates and strong demand for housing.

- Net investment income, a major component of an insurer's top line, witnessed improvement in the past several quarters, witnessing a CAGR of 21.2% over the past five years (2014-2019). However, this momentum did not sustain in the first nine months of 2020 when the metric slumped 33.7% year over year to $156.8 million. The current low interest rate environment in the United States is likely to keep investment yields under pressure, which would consequently weigh on its overall investment income. Increases in short-term interest rates and higher average balances, which is driven by strength in the company's commercial business, are expected to drive the metric going forward.

- The company has been generating improving revenues over the years on the back of growing direct premiums and escrow fees, agent premiums and net investment income. The momentum continued in first nine months of 2020, with the metric rising 10.3% year over year to $4.9 billion driven by higher direct premiums and escrow fees, agent premiums and, information and other. Though expenses have been increasing over the years, the magnitude of revenue increase has been driving margin expansion.

- First American Financial has been focusing on strategic initiatives to strengthen its product offerings and intensify focus on its core business. Recently, it inked a deal to acquire ServiceMac, whose mortgage subservicing business is likely to enable First American Financial to provide enhanced end-to-end mortgage, settlement, post-closing services and servicing-related products and solutions. Other notable buyouts made by the company this year include Docutech in March and full acquisition of Title Security Agency in January. The company has consolidated its capabilities with Forsythe Appraisals, RedVision and TD Service Financial, among others. The company also pursued small title agency buyouts in the regions that it identifies as growth markets. In the third quarter, information and other revenues surged 38% year over year owing to the acquisition of Docutech. It looks for opportunities to intensify focus on its core business and redeploy capital to those areas which fetch higher returns. First American Financial has unveiled plans to divest its property and casualty insurance business, which is not performing as per expectation.

- Given a strong operational performance, the company engages in shareholder-friendly moves. The company has been consistently increasing its dividend payout each year. In January 2020, the board of directors at First American Financial approved a 5% hike in its quarterly dividend to 44 cents per share, which witnessed 5-year CAGR (2015-2020) of 12%. Its dividend yield is currently 3.5%, way above the industry average of 0.4%. Also, the payout ratio of 33.3 compares favorably with the industry average of 13.6. These make the stock an attractive pick for yield seeking investors.

- Return on equity, a measure of profitability reflecting how efficiently the company is utilizing its shareholders' value, has improved to 15.7% in 2019 from 9% in 2014. Return on equity is 13.1%, which compares favorably with the industry average of 5.6%. The company aims 12-14% return on equity over the long term.

- Shares of First American Financial have lost 12% in a year compared with the industry's decline of 3.4%. Nevertheless, increased demand among millennials for first-time home purchases, growing direct premiums, escrow fees and agent premiums, and effective capital deployment should drive shares in the days ahead.

Reasons To Sell:

Escalating expenses attributable to higher personnel costs, premiums retained by agents, operating expenses and interests and continued decline in the purchase market are headwinds.

- First American Financial has been recording escalating expenses over the year, attributable to higher personnel costs, premiums retained by agents, operating expenses, premium taxes and interests. Expenses increased 13.9% to $4.4 billion in the first nine months of 2020, primarily due to increase in operating cost on account of higher production-related costs as a result of growth in order volume, impact of recent acquisitions and higher incentive compensation expense and salary expense. This was partly offset by reduced employee benefit expense. The company must strive to control costs or increase revenues at a higher magnitude than expenses, else margin can be eroded. In the second quarter, net margin contracted 40 bps sequentially and 20 bps year over year.

- First American Financial's debt position also remains a concern. As of Sep 30, 2020, the company's current debt was $1 billion, up 39% from the 2019-end level, with total debt to total capital of 17.6%, up 350 bps from 2019 level. Further, the company's times interest earned of 16.6 as on Sep 30, 2020 was lower compared with the 2019-end figure of 19.9, implying that its earnings are not sufficient to cover interest obligations. Thus, the company's inadequate financial flexibility remains a concern for investors.

- This year in March, the central bank lowered interest rates to its near-zero level due to COVID-19 pandemic. This is expected to slow down economic growth and lead to a sluggish inflation in 2020. Given the present financial market volatility on account of the pandemic, First American Financial remains uncertain regarding the impact of the prevailing environment on claims. Consequently, the company intends to maintain the loss rate at 5%, up from the loss rate of 4% in fourth-quarter 2019.

Last Earnings Report

First American Financial Q3 Earnings Miss, Revenues Top

Quarter Ending	09/2020
Report Date	Oct 22, 2020
Sales Surprise	13.17%
EPS Surprise	-2.96%
Quarterly EPS	1.31
Annual EPS (TTM)	5.22

First American Financial reported third-quarter 2020 operating income per share of $1.31, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate by about 3%. The bottom line declined 20.1% year over year. The purchase and refinance businesses continued to perform well, benefiting from strong order trends and continued focus on cost efficiency. However, expenses increased.

Behind the Headlines

Operating revenues of $1.9 billion increased 15% year over year on the back of higher agent premiums, direct premiums and escrow fees and information and other revenues. Moreover, the top line beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 13.2%. Net investment income however decreased 31.5% to $52.5 million.

Total expense of $1.7 billion increased 17.1% year over year due to higher personnel costs, premiums retained by agents, provision for policy losses and other claims, depreciation and amortization, interest, and other operating expenses.

Segment Results

Title Insurance and Services: Total revenues increased 15% over year to $1.8 billion. The upside was driven by improved direct premium and escrow fees; increased agent premiums as well as higher information and other revenues, which can be primarily attributed to the recent acquisition of Docutech and growth in mortgage originations that led to higher demand for the company's title information products. However, pretax margin expanded 250 basis points (bps) year over year to 19%.

Title open orders increased 29.4% to 410,600 while Title closed orders increased 30% year over year to 291,500, driven by an 85% increase in refinance orders. Average revenue per order decreased 13%, driven by the shift to refinance transactions. Average revenue per direct title order declined to $2,193, primarily attributable to shift in the mix of direct title orders to lower premium refinance transactions. Average revenue per order for purchase transactions increased 8% while average revenue per order for commercial transactions decreased 17%.

Specialty Insurance: Total revenues increased 6% year over year to $136.3 million, driven by higher direct premiums and escrow fees. However, pretax margin was (52.9%) against 8.5% in the year-ago quarter.

The company initiated a process to divest the property and casualty business. While this business has performed well over the years, the title insurer has decided to focus on its core business and redeploy capital to areas with higher expected returns. A pretax impairment of assets held for sale of $73.3 million or 49 cents per share was recorded related to the property and casualty business.

Financial Update

First American exited the quarter with cash and cash equivalents of $1.5 billion, up 1.8% from 2019 end. Notes and contracts payable were $1 billion, up 38.9% from 2019 end. Stockholders' equity was $4.7 billion, up 6.9% from 2019 end. Cash flow from operations was $313.3 million, up 0.8% year over year.

Outlook

Given low mortgage rates and robust demand for housing, the company expects refinance and purchase activity to remain at elevated levels for the remainder of the year.

Recent News

First American Financial's Unit Partners With Encompass – Nov 12, 2020

First American Financial's unit First American Docutech announced a rationalized consolidation with Encompass, a loan origination software by Ellie Mae. This strategic combination will boost First American Docutech's digital solution suite integration within Encompass. Lenders will get the opportunity to implement the suite of solutions with limited effort, aiding them to digitize their process from point-of-sale origination through closing, and on to secondary market delivery.

First American to Share More Profits, Ups Dividend by 5% - Nov 3, 2020

First American's board of directors recently approved a 5% hike in its quarterly dividend in a bid to enhance shareholder value. The company will now pay out a quarterly dividend of 46 cents per share compared with 44 cents. The meatier dividend was paid out on Dec 15, 2020 to shareholders of record as of Dec 8.

First American Inks Deal to Acquire ServiceMac – Oct 26, 2020

First American Financial inked an agreement to acquire ServiceMac. The buyout will enable the company to provide enhanced end-to-end mortgage, settlement, post-closing services and servicing-related products and solutions to lenders and servicers Subject to customary approval, the deal is expected to be complete by the end of the next year.

Valuation

First American Financial shares are up 4% in the last six months period but down 12% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Finance sector are up 19.1% and 18.1% in the last six months period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are down 3.4% and 3.9%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index are up 18.7% in the last six months period and 16.2% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 1.25x trailing 12-month book value, which compares to 1.27x for the Zacks sub-industry, 2.79x for the Zacks sector and 6.27x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 1.98x and as low as 0.84x, with a 5-year median of 1.52x. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our $56 price target reflects 1.25x trailing 12-month book value.

The table below shows summary valuation data for FAF

Valuation Multiples - FAF

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/B TTM	Current	1.25	1.27	2.79	6.27
	5-Year High	1.98	1.67	2.93	6.28
	5-Year Low	0.84	0.93	1.74	3.74
	5-Year Median	1.52	1.45	2.57	4.92
P/S F12M	Current	0.89	1.67	7.06	4.28
	5-Year High	1.21	11.3	7.06	4.29
	5-Year Low	0.59	1.4	5.01	3.17
	5-Year Median	0.92	1.78	6.1	3.68
P/E F12M	Current	10.5	25.46	17.01	22.68
	5-Year High	16.37	31.56	17.01	23.47
	5-Year Low	6.22	21.02	11.59	15.27
	5-Year Median	12.24	25.77	14.45	17.77

As of 12/16/2020 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Bottom 11% (227 out of 255)

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. **(THG)**	Outperform	2
Arch Capital Group Ltd. **(ACGL)**	Neutral	3
American Financial Group, Inc. **(AFG)**	Neutral	3
Axis Capital Holdings Limited **(AXS)**	Neutral	4
Cincinnati Financial Corporation **(CINF)**	Neutral	3
Markel Corporation **(MKL)**	Neutral	3
National General Holdings Corp **(NGHC)**	Neutral	4
W.R. Berkley Corporation **(WRB)**	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Insurance - Property And Casualty

	FAF	X Industry	S&P 500	ACGL	AXS	CINF
				Industry Peers		
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	3	4	3
VGM Score	A	-	-	B	B	B
Market Cap	5.93 B	1.53 B	26.40 B	14.37 B	4.38 B	13.20 B
# of Analysts	2	2	14	3	3	2
Dividend Yield	3.46%	0.99%	1.51%	0.00%	3.16%	2.93%
Value Score	A	-	-	B	C	B
Cash/Price	0.26	0.26	0.06	0.22	0.33	0.07
EV/EBITDA	3.99	6.39	14.41	7.63	9.99	5.10
PEG F1	0.86	2.20	2.80	2.70	NA	NA
P/B	1.25	1.08	3.58	1.16	0.93	1.35
P/CF	7.36	11.63	13.86	11.15	11.63	17.50
P/E F1	9.50	16.24	21.99	27.02	NA	29.20
P/S TTM	0.89	0.93	2.77	1.82	0.89	1.67
Earnings Yield	10.58%	4.39%	4.33%	3.70%	-1.85%	3.43%
Debt/Equity	0.00	0.23	0.70	0.28	0.37	0.10
Cash Flow ($/share)	7.22	3.12	6.94	3.17	4.47	4.69
Growth Score	C	-	-	C	B	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	19.02%	5.43%	9.69%	12.37%	-24.21%	2.55%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-2.43%	-15.55%	1.00%	-53.55%	-137.96%	-33.10%
Current Cash Flow Growth	20.75%	3.81%	5.22%	21.44%	-8.72%	25.16%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	18.51%	4.75%	8.33%	15.01%	-11.78%	9.30%
Current Ratio	0.91	0.45	1.38	0.58	0.56	0.28
Debt/Capital	0.00%	18.73%	42.00%	21.30%	25.13%	9.03%
Net Margin	9.61%	5.24%	10.44%	15.08%	-2.53%	NA
Return on Equity	13.06%	5.25%	14.99%	5.68%	-2.79%	5.14%
Sales/Assets	0.55	0.31	0.50	0.20	0.19	NA
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	9.95%	0.00%	0.35%	14.76%	-6.50%	2.32%
Momentum Score	B	-	-	C	C	C
Daily Price Change	0.59%	0.00%	-0.25%	1.35%	-1.44%	1.37%
1-Week Price Change	2.88%	-0.15%	-1.29%	-1.23%	-2.72%	-3.36%
4-Week Price Change	6.22%	2.02%	3.00%	1.46%	0.89%	3.19%
12-Week Price Change	5.75%	20.34%	18.91%	26.75%	21.36%	9.46%
52-Week Price Change	-12.01%	-11.07%	6.25%	-16.39%	-13.77%	-20.97%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	724,719	127,560	1,961,038	2,597,589	338,939	818,992
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.90%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.90%	0.00%	0.00%	6.07%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	23.79%	-1.12%	3.94%	32.32%	-345.30%	-10.22%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	5.84%	0.00%	0.00%	11.59%	0.00%	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	A
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	B
VGM Score	A

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

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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.