

InterDigital, Inc. (IDCC)

\$61.49 (As of 03/24/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$65.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 02/09/21)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

4-Sell

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:D

Value: B

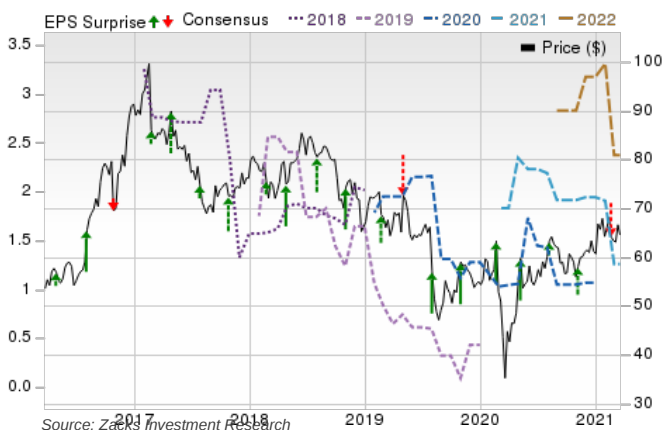
Growth: F

Momentum: D

Summary

InterDigital's global footprint, diversified product portfolio and the ability to penetrate in different markets are noteworthy. The company is poised to gain from future growth opportunities, fueled by the rapid 5G rollout. InterDigital's commitment toward licensing its broad portfolio of technologies to wireless terminal equipment makers, which allows it to expand its core market capability, is also laudable. However, significant investments in research and development to come up with innovative technology solutions lead to spiraled costs. Efforts to expand revenue base through commercialization and technology licensing further dent its margins. InterDigital's policy of acquiring companies also adds to the integration risks. Capitalized patent costs, rise in capital spending and decline in return on capital are other concerns.

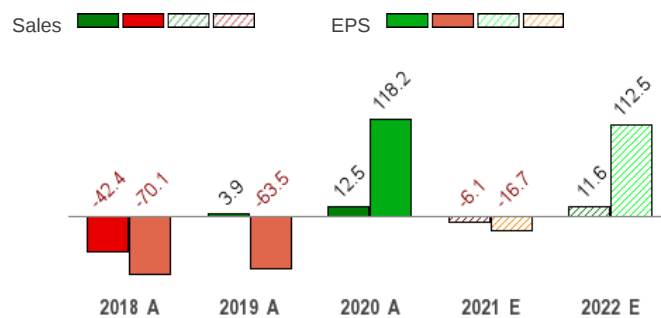
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$69.02 - \$41.61
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	227,274
Market Cap	\$1.9 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	1.3%
Beta	1.12
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$1.40 / 2.3%
Industry	Wireless Equipment
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 33% (83 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-33.3%
Last Sales Surprise	3.1%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-4.6%
Expected Report Date	05/06/2021
Earnings ESP	-86.1%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	98 E	98 E	100 E	103 E	376 E
2021	80 E	81 E	85 E	91 E	337 E
2020	76 A	105 A	87 A	91 A	359 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.79 E	\$0.85 E	\$0.88 E	\$0.92 E	\$2.55 E
2021	\$0.11 E	\$0.19 E	\$0.32 E	\$0.51 E	\$1.20 E
2020	\$0.00 A	\$0.72 A	\$0.17 A	-\$0.04 A	\$1.44 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	72.3
P/E F1	51.2
PEG F1	3.4
P/S TTM	5.3

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 03/24/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 03/25/2021.

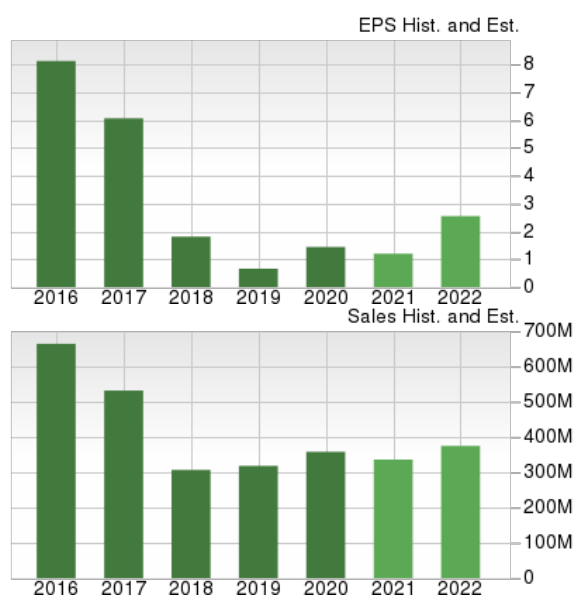
Overview

Headquartered in Wilmington, DE, InterDigital, Inc. is a pioneer in advanced mobile technologies that enables wireless communications and capabilities. The company engages in designing and developing a wide range of advanced technology solutions, which are used in digital cellular as well as wireless 3G, 4G and IEEE 802-related products and networks.

Furthermore, the company's team of skilled engineers has an expertise in major mobile connectivity as well as in technologies related to content delivery. Notably, InterDigital's secure and scalable horizontal platform, oneMPOWER, enables businesses to launch and manage Internet of Things (IoT) applications. The company also provides video encoding and transmission technologies while conducting fundamental research into video coding, IoT, smart home, imaging sciences, augmented reality and virtual reality, and artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies. The patented technologies of the company are used in several products like mobile devices, wireless infrastructure equipment as well as IoT devices and software platforms.

InterDigital derives revenues primarily from patent licensing, with contributions from patent sales, product sales, technology solutions licensing, and sales and engineering services. It has one of the most significant patent portfolios in the wireless and video industries. The company reports under a single operating segment.

The company has incorporated high quality video and artificial intelligence (AI) research team along with an established portfolio of video expertise to expand its footprint in wireless and video technologies and consumer electronics. InterDigital actively contributes to the technical development of standards pertaining to digital cellular and wireless communications and other technologies. Leveraging economies of scale and interoperability functions, these standards provide detailed specifications for wireless communications products and systems. Moreover, the standardization process benefits both implementers and consumers as it encourages the development of ideas and technical solutions that result in innovative standards.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ InterDigital aims to become a leading designer and developer of technology solutions and innovation for the mobile industry, IoT and allied technology areas by leveraging its research and development (R&D) capabilities, technological knowhow and rich industry experience. At the same time, the wireless R&D company intends to enhance its licensing revenue base by adding licensees and expanding into adjacent technology areas that align with its intellectual property position.
- ▲ InterDigital's commitment toward licensing its broad portfolio of technologies to wireless terminal equipment makers, which allows it to expand its core market capability, is laudable. The company has leading companies such as Huawei, Samsung, LG and Apple under its licensing agreement. InterDigital inked new license agreements including cellular-based licensing agreements with ZTE and Google and a video-based licensing agreement with Funai. Furthermore, InterDigital is eyeing annual licensing potential from new consumer electronics business at \$150 million in three to five years. The combined revenue-generating potential of the wireless and consumer electronics licensing platforms has reached around \$650 million.
- ▲ InterDigital's global footprint, diversified product portfolio and the ability to penetrate in different markets are impressive. Apart from the company's strong portfolio of wireless technology solutions, the addition of technologies related to sensors, user interface and video to its offerings are likely to drive considerable value, considering the massive size of the market it licenses. Furthermore, the company remains committed to pursue strategic acquisitions in order to drive its product portfolio and boost organic growth.
- ▲ InterDigital is optimizing its strength in core wireless licensing business and has taken steps to drive shareholder value through the buyout of Technicolor licensing business. This has created significant new licensing opportunity in the video and consumer electronics markets. It has also acquired the Research & Innovation unit of Technicolor SA, a technology leader in the media and entertainment sector. The company is poised to gain from future growth opportunities, fueled by the 5G rollout. Such strategic acquisitions are anticipated to be accretive to InterDigital's financials and contribute to its long-term growth.
- ▲ As of Dec 31, 2020, InterDigital had \$926.6 million in cash and equivalents with \$415.9 million of long-term debt compared with the respective tallies of \$919.4 million and \$411.8 million at the end of the previous quarter. The company currently has a debt-to-capital ratio of 0.32. The times interest earned (TIE) ratio has decreased slightly over the past quarter to 1.8 at present. It has a dividend payout rate of 164.7% compared with 36.8% for the subindustry. It is to be seen whether InterDigital can maintain the momentum in the coming days amid disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 crisis.

InterDigital is optimizing its strength in core wireless licensing business and has taken concrete steps to drive shareholder value through the strategic buyout of Technicolor licensing business.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ InterDigital has been working to expand its revenue base through continuous development, commercialization and licensing of technology projects, which in turn tend to put pressure on margins. The company faces substantial competitive pressure and thus needs to constantly work on product quality and customer service. Also, in order to hedge the competitive pressure, InterDigital has to invest significantly in R&D to come up with innovative technology solutions, which in turn leads to escalated costs. InterDigital's policy of acquiring companies further adds to the integration risks.
- ▼ InterDigital's return on total capital has decreased at a CAGR of 30% from 2012 to 2020. The decline in return on capital despite a rise in the company's capital spending and capitalized patent cost is a concern. This apart, InterDigital's return on equity has also witnessed a negative CAGR of 30% over the same timeframe, indicating its inability to generate profit to reward shareholders with attractive risk-adjusted returns.
- ▼ The uncertain macroeconomic environment due to the pandemic has led to a loss of business for InterDigital. Moreover, latent tensions between the United States and China owing to trade restrictions imposed on the sale of communication equipment and technology solutions to Chinese firms are expected to hurt the industry's credibility. The Zacks Consensus Estimate for the current-year and next-year earnings has been revised 34.7% and 24.5% downward for the past 60 days, respectively.

Decline in return on capital despite a rise in InterDigital's capital spending and capitalized patent cost is worrisome. High research and development cost further reduce the company's profitability.

Last Earnings Report

InterDigital Q4 Loss Wider Than Expected on Top-Line Woes

InterDigital reported sedate fourth-quarter 2020 results owing to coronavirus-induced adversities with wider-than-expected loss. Nevertheless, new licensing avenues highlighted the operating leverage of the company's business model and reflected the strength of its licensing business.

Bottom Line

The company reported net loss of \$1.3 million or loss of 4 cents per share against net income of \$13.7 million or 44 cents per share in the year-ago quarter. The year-over-year decline was largely attributable to top-line contraction and high operating expenses in the reported quarter. Also, the bottom line was wider than the Zacks Consensus Estimate of a loss of 3 cents per share. In full-year 2020, net income improved to \$44.8 million or \$1.44 per share from \$20.9 million or 66 cents per share in 2019.

Revenues

The wireless R&D company's quarterly revenues totaled \$90.8 million, down from \$102.2 million in the year-earlier quarter largely due to continued challenging macroeconomic environment triggered by the pandemic. However, the top line surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$88 million. In full-year 2020, total revenues aggregated \$359 million compared with \$318.9 million in 2019.

Recurring revenues during the reported quarter were \$89.1 million compared with \$77.5 million a year ago driven by six new patent license agreements signed during the year. While total revenues from patent royalties came in at \$87.2 million, the same from current technology solutions aggregated \$3 million.

Other Details

Total operating expenses were \$87.7 million, up from \$76.9 million in the prior-year quarter due to intellectual property enforcement and non-patent litigation costs. Operating income declined to \$3.1 million from \$25.3 million, due to lower revenues and higher operating expenses in the reported quarter.

Cash Flow and Liquidity

In 2020, InterDigital generated \$163.5 million of cash from operating activities compared with \$89.4 million a year ago. Free cash flow in 2020 was \$121.1 million, up from \$51.4 million. As of Dec 31, 2020, the company had \$926.6 million in cash and short-term investments along with \$415.9 million of long-term debt and other liabilities compared with respective tallies of \$924.7 million and \$396.6 million in the year-ago period.

Outlook

Banking on solid licensing agreements with leading consumer electronics customers, InterDigital is eyeing a healthy licensing business despite the coronavirus-induced pandemonium. The company expects the licensing momentum to continue in 2021 driven by diligent execution of operational plans. InterDigital also remains poised to gain from growth opportunities from the 5G rollout.

Quarter Ending	12/2020
Report Date	Feb 18, 2021
Sales Surprise	3.14%
EPS Surprise	-33.33%
Quarterly EPS	-0.04
Annual EPS (TTM)	0.85

Recent News

On Mar 12, 2021, InterDigital and Shared Spectrum Company have been selected by U.S. Department of Defense to develop innovative technologies to boost 5G-backed dynamic spectrum sharing. Markedly, the project will reinforce 5G-enabled augmented/virtual reality for mission planning and training, and address spectrum coexistence and security solutions through modification of 5G protocols.

On Feb 23, 2021, InterDigital announced the launch of CompareAI that enables comparative testing of AI-based image compression algorithms on consumer devices. Operating on resource-constrained consumer hardware, the solution offers a step-by-step interface and includes 15 deep learning-based compression models to realize the compression process in an effective manner.

On Jan 11, 2021, InterDigital announced the election of Ed Ehrlich as the Wireless Technologies and Systems Committee Radio Access Network chair within ATIS, the North American operating partner of the 3GPP.

Valuation

InterDigital's shares are up 35.2% in the trailing 12-month period and up 8.6% in the past six months. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are up 63.7% in the past year and up 15% in the past six months. Stocks in the Zacks Computer and Technology sector are up 62.7% in the past year and up 17.2% in the past six months.

The S&P 500 Index is up 50% in the past year and up 16.8% in the past six months.

The stock is currently trading at 10.72X trailing 12-month EV/EBITDA, which compares to 17.57X for the Zacks sub-industry, 15.76X for the Zacks sector and 17.28X for the S&P 500 Index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 17.69X and as low as 3.19X, with a 5-year median of 6.69X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our \$65 price target reflects 1.6X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for IDCC

Valuation Multiples - IDCC					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	10.72	17.57	15.76	17.28
	5-Year High	17.69	30	17.21	17.68
	5-Year Low	3.19	11.34	9.03	9.62
	5-Year Median	6.69	18.15	12.29	13.34
P/E F12M	Current	40.61	19.02	26.41	22.02
	5-Year High	157.8	33.47	28.38	23.8
	5-Year Low	10.41	14.68	16.95	15.3
	5-Year Median	36.4	19.2	20.04	17.9
P/S F12M	Current	5.35	3.94	4.59	4.49
	5-Year High	10.57	4.62	4.67	4.49
	5-Year Low	3.26	2.27	2.78	3.21
	5-Year Median	6.39	2.88	3.49	3.69

As of 03/24/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 33% (83 out of 254)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Aviat Networks, Inc. (AVNW)	Outperform	1
Ubiquiti Inc. (UI)	Outperform	1
Clearfield, Inc. (CLFD)	Neutral	2
Comtech Telecommunications Corp. (CMTL)	Neutral	3
Ericsson (ERIC)	Neutral	2
Juniper Networks, Inc. (JNPR)	Neutral	3
PCTEL, Inc. (PCTI)	Neutral	4
Sonim Technologies, Inc. (SONM)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Wireless Equipment				Industry Peers		
	IDCC	X Industry	S&P 500	CMTL	ERIC	JNPR
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	4	-	-	3	2	3
VGM Score	D	-	-	C	B	D
Market Cap	1.90 B	586.81 M	28.51 B	633.36 M	43.94 B	8.04 B
# of Analysts	4	3	13	2	4	7
Dividend Yield	2.28%	0.00%	1.41%	1.65%	0.77%	3.27%
Value Score	B	-	-	B	B	B
Cash/Price	0.47	0.17	0.06	0.04	0.12	0.22
EV/EBITDA	8.73	13.29	15.86	14.09	10.28	16.69
PEG F1	3.35	1.70	2.30	NA	0.58	1.70
P/B	2.38	1.88	3.82	1.31	4.73	1.78
P/CF	15.05	16.83	15.83	9.79	14.58	14.23
P/E F1	50.28	18.09	21.27	24.43	16.74	14.98
P/S TTM	5.28	1.67	3.23	1.09	1.73	1.81
Earnings Yield	1.95%	3.94%	4.64%	-10.98%	5.99%	6.69%
Debt/Equity	0.46	0.11	0.67	0.45	0.26	0.38
Cash Flow (\$/share)	4.08	0.71	6.78	2.48	0.90	1.72
Growth Score	F	-	-	C	B	F
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	-41.67%	-2.49%	9.32%	42.13%	-19.65%	-9.95%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-16.67%	51.95%	14.55%	-1,053.57%	23.05%	5.53%
Current Cash Flow Growth	28.38%	3.17%	0.61%	-18.57%	126.38%	-10.25%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	-7.93%	7.40%	7.32%	11.01%	-3.78%	-7.05%
Current Ratio	3.47	1.87	1.39	1.57	1.31	1.51
Debt/Capital	31.60%	16.02%	41.42%	30.99%	20.69%	27.30%
Net Margin	12.48%	4.39%	10.59%	-14.54%	7.68%	5.80%
Return on Equity	3.32%	3.34%	14.75%	3.34%	24.65%	8.04%
Sales/Assets	0.23	0.78	0.51	0.62	0.85	0.50
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-6.19%	8.20%	6.95%	-0.12%	14.70%	3.37%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	C	F	D
Daily Price Change	-1.80%	-1.54%	0.03%	-4.82%	-2.15%	-1.53%
1-Week Price Change	-3.11%	0.00%	-0.30%	-4.60%	-1.11%	-1.57%
4-Week Price Change	-5.99%	-4.82%	0.23%	-16.23%	4.94%	3.16%
12-Week Price Change	1.07%	10.48%	7.22%	18.12%	11.32%	10.36%
52-Week Price Change	49.76%	55.14%	61.36%	55.14%	77.39%	26.16%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	227,274	237,180	2,433,322	247,085	6,396,843	4,484,838
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	-4.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-4.57%	0.00%	0.00%	8.74%	0.00%	0.04%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-38.22%	3.77%	2.13%	8.74%	3.96%	2.79%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-17.31%	0.00%	0.00%	-66.67%	0.00%	2.46%

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	B
Growth Score	F
Momentum Score	D
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.

Disclosures

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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.