

Methanex Corporation (MEOH)

\$37.58 (As of 02/17/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$43.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Outperform

(Since: 02/08/21)

Prior Recommendation: Neutral

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

1-Strong Buy

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM: C

Value: B

Growth: C

Momentum: C

Summary

Methanex's adjusted earnings for the fourth quarter missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate while sales beat. The company is seeing strong production at its Geismar facilities. Production in the quarter benefited from the completion of low-cost debottlenecking project at its Geismar 1 plant. Methanex's Geismar plants are running at full operating capacities and witnessed record production. Further, the company remains committed to strengthen its balance sheet and maintain its strong liquidity position. It should also gain from an improvement in methanol pricing. The company also expects to meet its financial commitments, execute attractive growth opportunities and deliver excess cash to shareholders in the form of dividends and share repurchases.

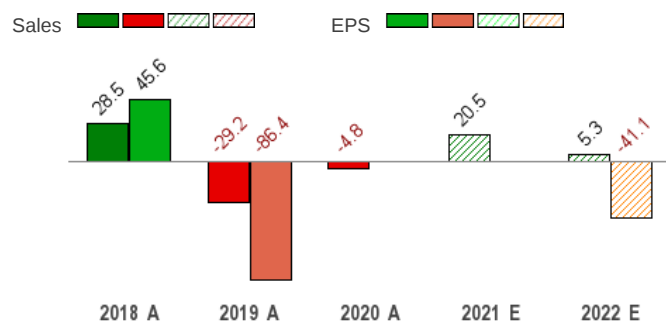
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$49.27 - \$9.10
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	547,921
Market Cap	\$2.8 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	-19.6%
Beta	2.21
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.15 / 0.4%
Industry	Chemical - Diversified
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 20% (51 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-42.3%
Last Sales Surprise	22.9%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	2.6%
Expected Report Date	05/04/2021
Earnings ESP	3.2%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					3,360 E
2021	825 E	771 E	737 E	809 E	3,192 E
2020	745 A	512 A	581 A	811 A	2,650 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.20 E	\$0.18 E	\$0.21 E	\$0.24 E	\$1.23 E
2021	\$1.05 E	\$0.10 E	\$0.11 E	\$0.82 E	\$2.09 E
2020	\$0.10 A	-\$0.84 A	-\$1.03 A	\$0.15 A	-\$1.62 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	18.0
PEG F1	1.2
P/S TTM	1.1

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 02/17/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 02/18/2021.

Overview

Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, Methanex Corporation is the world's largest supplier of methanol to North America, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America. Around two-thirds of all methanol demand is used to produce traditional chemical derivatives including formaldehyde, acetic acid and a variety of other chemicals that form the basis of a large number of chemical derivatives for which demand is influenced by levels of global economic activity. The remaining one-third of methanol demand comes from energy related applications. Methanol is also used to produce methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE), a gasoline component, and an emerging application is for methanol demand into olefins.

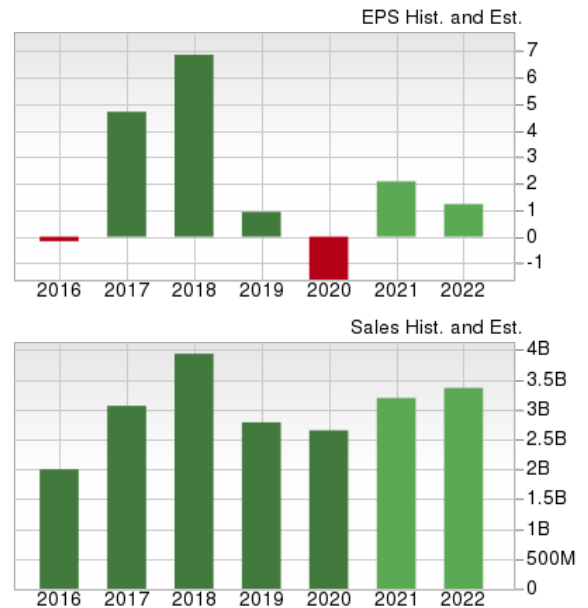
Methanex generated \$2,650 million in revenues in 2020. Its sales volume was 10.7 million tons of methanol for 2020.

Methanex's total annual production capacity, including its equity interests in jointly owned plants, is 7.6 million tons. Methanex purchases methanol from others under contract and on the spot market to meet customer requirements. The company sells methanol through a global marketing and distribution system.

Methanex currently operates production sites in New Zealand, the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, Egypt, Canada and Chile. It has marketing rights for 100% of the production from the jointly-owned plants in Trinidad and Egypt that provides it with an additional 1.3 million tons of methanol offtake supply annually when the plants are operating at full capacity.

Apart from the methanol made at its production sites, the company also purchases methanol manufactured by others under methanol offtake contracts and on the spot market. This gives it the flexibility in managing supply chain while continuing to address customer needs.

Methanex completed the restart of its Chile IV plant in October 2018. The plant had been idle since 2007. In August 2018, Methanex signed natural gas supply agreements for its Chile operations. Notably, the gas agreements will allow the company for a two-plant operation in Chile during summer months in the southern hemisphere and up to a maximum of 75% of a two-plant operation annually till mid-2020. Methanex expects to secure sufficient gas supply without seasonal restrictions to continue its two-plant operation.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Strong production at Geismar facilities is driving the company's methanol production. Methanex's both plants in Geismar ran at full operating rates during fourth-quarter 2020. Production in the quarter benefited from the completion of low-cost debottlenecking project at its Geismar 1 plant. A 10% increase in daily production capacity was witnessed in the same. Methanex expects to finish the debottlenecking work at its Geismar 2 plant in 2021. Once the debottlenecking process is complete, Geismar plants are expected to have operating capacity of 2.2 million tons annually. The company also witnessed record production at its Geismar facilities.
- ▲ Methanex remains committed to boost its balance sheet and maintain liquidity. It ended 2020 with a strong liquidity position of over \$800 million in cash and a \$300 million undrawn revolving credit facility. The company expects to meet its financial commitments in future, execute attractive growth opportunities and deliver excess cash to shareholders in the form of dividends and share repurchases. It remains focused on operating its plants safely and reliably, maintaining its strong financial position and delivering secure and reliable supply to its customers.
- ▲ Methanex is benefiting from an improvement in methanol pricing. Prices rose around 10% year over year and 30% sequentially in the last reported quarter. Methanol industry supply outages and the delayed start-up of new industry capacity additions resulted in tighter market conditions and reduced global inventory levels in the fourth quarter, which coupled with higher demand led to an increase in methanol prices. The company expects methanol prices to be higher on a sequential comparison basis in first-quarter 2021.

Methanex's Geismar plants are driving its production. The company is also committed to strengthen its balance sheet. It should also gain from an improvement in methanol pricing.

Risks

- Methanex has underperformed the industry it belongs to in the past year. The company's shares gained 11% in this period against the industry's rise of 20%. For full-year 2020, Methanex's financial results were lower compared to 2019 mainly due to lower realized methanol prices. Global methanol demand also witnessed a 3% year-over-year decrease. The methanol industry functioned at lower operating rates in 2020 owing to plant shutdowns, resulting from lower demand and many planned and unplanned outages. Methanol demand for traditional chemical applications fell 5% year over year in 2020. Demand is expected remain affected by the uncertain path for global economic recovery moving ahead. The company expects demand to be flat to down sequentially in first-quarter 2021.
 - Production outages are also affecting the company's operations. There have been various unplanned outages. The company's outlook for production in New Zealand remains uncertain due to significant production declines at a major offshore gas field that supplies to the New Zealand market, which could lead to lower gas deliveries. The company is temporarily idling its Waitara Valley plant in anticipation of lower gas deliveries. Moreover, the Titan facility in Trinidad will remain idle indefinitely as the company is yet to strike a long-term gas supply deal and all production is expected from the Atlas facility. In Chile, due to lower gas deliveries as a result of upstream production declines in Argentina, the company could not run both plants in December 2020. The Chile IV plant also remains idle currently due to gas supply issues. Construction of the Geismar 3 project is also on hold due to the pandemic.
 - The company's high debt level is concerning. At the end of the fourth quarter of 2020, its long-term debt was \$2,323.6 million, up roughly 34% year over year and essentially stable compared with the sequentially prior quarter.
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Last Earnings Report

Methanex's Q4 Earnings Lag, Revenues Surpass Estimates

Methanex logged a loss (attributable to shareholders) of \$27 million or 35 cents per share in the fourth quarter of 2020, compared with a profit of \$9 million or 12 cents per share in the year-ago quarter.

Adjusted earnings per share (barring one-time items) in the reported quarter were 15 cents, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 26 cents.

Revenues rose around 5% year over year to \$811.3 million in the quarter. It surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$660 million. The company saw improved global demand and prices for methanol in the fourth quarter.

Adjusted EBITDA for the reported quarter was flat year over year at \$136 million.

Segment Highlights

Production in the quarter totaled 1,607,000 tons, down around 24% year over year. Total sales volume was 2,868,000 tons, down roughly 4% year over year.

Average realized price for methanol was \$282 per ton in the quarter, up roughly 10% from \$256 in the prior-year quarter. Methanol industry supply outages and the delayed start-up of new industry capacity additions resulted in tighter market conditions and reduced global inventory levels in the fourth quarter, which coupled with higher demand led to an increase in methanol prices.

FY20 Results

Loss (as reported) for full-year 2020 was \$2.06 per share, compared with earnings of \$1.01 per share a year ago. Revenues dropped around 19% year over year to \$2,650 million

Financial Position

Cash and cash equivalents doubled year over year to \$833.8 million at the end of 2020. Long-term debt was \$2,323.6 million, up around 34% year over year.

For the fourth quarter, cash flow from operating activities was \$98 million, down around 14% year over year.

Outlook

While Methanex is encouraged by sustained improvement in methanol demand and prices, it noted that the uncertain path for global economic recovery makes the near-term difficult to predict. The company believes that methanol industry fundamentals remain strong and demand for methanol will continue to improve as the global economy recovers. It remains focused on preserving liquidity and financial flexibility.

Quarter Ending 12/2020

Report Date	Jan 27, 2021
Sales Surprise	22.93%
EPS Surprise	-42.31%
Quarterly EPS	0.15
Annual EPS (TTM)	-1.62

Recent News

Methanex's Trinidad Facility to Remain Idle Indefinitely

Methanex, on **Jan 7, 2021**, announced that it is expecting its Titan methanol facility in Trinidad to remain idle indefinitely. The facility has an annual operating capacity of 875,000 tons.

Methanex will restructure its operations in Trinidad to support a one-plant operation. The company also plans to decrease its workforce in Trinidad by roughly 60 positions filled by employees and long-term contractors.

Methanex has been unable to reach an agreement for longer-term natural gas deal. With the uncertainty associated with the economy recovery path, it has decided to reduce costs while still making efforts to secure a longer-term gas supply.

The Atlas methanol facility is underpinned by a separate natural gas supply agreement and remains unaffected by the change.

Methanex's Unit Adds Eight Methanol Dual-Fuel Vessels

Methanex's fully-owned subsidiary, Waterfront Shipping Company Ltd., on **Dec 1, 2020** announced the addition of eight new methanol dual-fuel vessels to its fleet. The company frequently replaces older vessels with newer more efficient ones as part of its fleet renewal program, highlighting its commitment to responsible, safe and reliable transport of cargo.

Further, these vessels are in addition to Waterfront Shipping's existing fleet of 11 methanol-fueled ships that are recognized by the marine industry as clean-burning methanol or lower emission fuel. These vessels have been established as viable marine fuel solution, having surpassed more than 90,000 combined operating hours. Per the company, they are also in compliance with the most stringent emissions regulations. Notably, methanol in the form of marine fuel lowers CO2 emissions by up to 15% compared with traditional marine fuels.

Moreover, the new eight 49,999 deadweight ton vessels will be built in Hyundai Mipo Dockyard, South Korea. They will be delivered to Waterfront Shipping between 2021 and 2023. The vessels are designed with the MAN second-generation B&W ME-LGIM two-stroke dual-fuel engines. The dual-fuel engine provides flexibility by enabling them to operate on methanol or traditional marine fuels. Additionally, methanol can be produced from renewable sources. It is the most widely-traded chemicals in the world and it is readily available at around 90% of the top 100 ports worldwide.

Valuation

Methanex's shares are up 11% over the trailing 12-month period. Over the past year, the Zacks Chemical - Diversified industry and the Zacks Basic Materials sector are up 20% and up 34.1%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 18.1% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 14.3X trailing 12-month enterprise value-to EBITDA (EV/EBITDA) ratio, which compares to 10.05X for the Zacks sub-industry, 11.62X for the Zacks sector and 16.67X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 28.26X and as low as 4.26X, with a 5-year median of 8.72X.

Our Outperform recommendation indicates that the stock will perform above the market. Our \$43 price target reflects 2.28X tangible book value.

The table below shows summary valuation data for MEOH:

Valuation Multiples - MEOH					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	14.3	10.05	11.62	16.67
	5-Year High	28.26	13.12	18.41	16.99
	5-Year Low	4.26	5.19	6.49	9.56
	5-Year Median	8.72	7.71	9.75	13.26
P/B TTM	Current	1.99	2.31	3.4	6.7
	5-Year High	3.68	2.82	3.47	6.7
	5-Year Low	0.45	0.87	1.22	3.84
	5-Year Median	2.04	1.75	2.25	4.96
P/S TTM	Current	1.08	1.65	3.33	5.38
	5-Year High	2.36	1.78	3.4	5.38
	5-Year Low	0.22	0.62	1.38	2.8
	5-Year Median	1.34	1.11	2.59	3.86

As of 02/17/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 20% (51 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Cabot Corporation (CBT)	Outperform	2
Tronox Holdings PLC (TROX)	Outperform	2
Albemarle Corporation (ALB)	Neutral	3
Koppers Holdings Inc. (KOP)	Neutral	3
Kronos Worldwide Inc (KRO)	Neutral	3
Lithium Americas Corp. (LAC)	Neutral	3
Stepan Company (SCL)	Neutral	3
TOKUYAMA CORP (TKYMY)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Chemical - Diversified				Industry Peers		
	MEOH	X Industry	S&P 500	ALB	CBT	TKYMY
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Outperform	-	-	Neutral	Outperform	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	1	-	-	3	2	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	F	A	A
Market Cap	2.82 B	3.46 B	27.78 B	18.92 B	2.83 B	1.78 B
# of Analysts	3	3	13	9	4	1
Dividend Yield	0.40%	1.30%	1.41%	0.95%	2.80%	1.89%
Value Score	B	-	-	D	B	A
Cash/Price	0.28	0.10	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.43
EV/EBITDA	13.01	11.72	14.78	24.70	21.03	4.32
PEG F1	1.20	2.83	2.37	3.75	NA	NA
P/B	1.96	2.38	3.81	3.99	2.94	1.00
P/CF	12.23	11.05	15.45	19.50	10.10	4.62
P/E F1	17.98	18.21	20.87	41.06	13.14	8.55
P/S TTM	1.07	1.10	3.07	5.83	1.07	0.63
Earnings Yield	5.64%	5.46%	4.71%	2.44%	7.61%	11.70%
Debt/Equity	1.61	0.66	0.68	0.68	1.13	0.47
Cash Flow (\$/share)	3.07	3.00	6.70	8.07	4.91	2.71
Growth Score	C	-	-	F	A	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	22.93%	4.51%	9.32%	8.19%	-2.13%	NA
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	228.81%	18.86%	13.98%	-1.74%	82.69%	-9.09%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-43.57%	-11.88%	2.56%	6.86%	-27.16%	-6.84%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	-7.13%	4.90%	7.55%	14.46%	-17.14%	NA
Current Ratio	2.08	1.98	1.38	1.38	1.97	2.28
Debt/Capital	61.72%	39.97%	41.31%	40.47%	53.00%	32.09%
Net Margin	-5.91%	4.33%	10.60%	11.77%	-8.32%	6.37%
Return on Equity	-7.93%	9.71%	14.86%	11.96%	15.05%	13.22%
Sales/Assets	0.46	0.68	0.51	0.32	0.89	0.81
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	20.48%	7.90%	6.46%	1.26%	11.06%	-7.71%
Momentum Score	C	-	-	C	C	A
Daily Price Change	1.38%	-0.28%	-0.05%	-2.92%	-0.80%	-2.18%
1-Week Price Change	3.04%	1.65%	1.44%	4.75%	3.67%	18.05%
4-Week Price Change	-0.95%	1.15%	1.42%	-12.61%	3.51%	15.47%
12-Week Price Change	-9.92%	10.43%	6.38%	16.88%	13.65%	5.38%
52-Week Price Change	10.95%	20.95%	8.82%	76.26%	16.21%	1.13%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	547,921	138,426	2,013,641	2,189,891	337,685	80
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-1.36%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	2.62%	0.75%	0.68%	-1.47%	13.01%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	807.25%	3.92%	1.97%	-0.81%	35.71%	2.74%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	2.61%	1.31%	0.27%	93.96%	7.81%	NA

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	C
Momentum Score	C
VGM Score	C

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

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Periods:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as 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.