

Middleby Corporation (MIDD)

\$130.90 (As of 02/18/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$137.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 06/16/20)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

2-Buy

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:D

Value: C

Growth: D

Momentum: F

Summary

In the past three months, Middleby's shares have outperformed the industry. The company is poised to benefit from the efforts to broaden the product portfolio, a healthy liquidity position and growth opportunities within its segments (especially Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group and Residential Kitchen Equipment Group). Synergistic gains from acquired assets might be beneficial too going forward. However, market-related challenges caused by the pandemic still weigh on the company. Also, high debt levels can impact its financial obligations. Notably, the company's ability to repay its debt obligations has weakened over the past quarter. Headwinds arising from its international operations might hurt Middleby. In the past 30 days, the company's earnings estimates have been raised for the fourth quarter, 2020, and 2021.

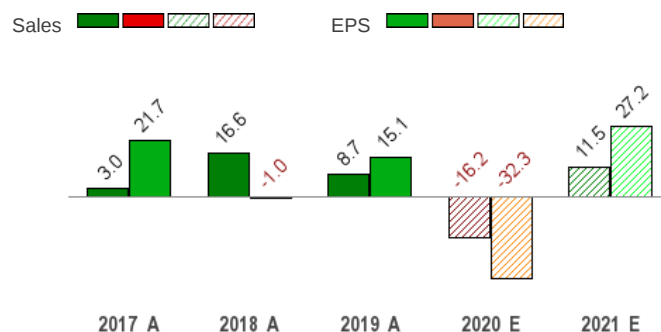
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$149.39 - \$41.73
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	705,229
Market Cap	\$7.3 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	1.5%
Beta	1.72
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Manufacturing - General Industrial
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 34% (87 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	31.4%
Last Sales Surprise	6.3%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.4%
Expected Report Date	02/24/2021
Earnings ESP	6.2%
P/E TTM	24.5
P/E F1	21.7
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	2.8

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	663 E	645 E	711 E	765 E	2,767 E
2020	677 A	472 A	635 A	697 E	2,481 E
2019	687 A	761 A	724 A	788 A	2,959 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$1.32 E	\$1.46 E	\$1.64 E	\$1.89 E	\$6.04 E
2020	\$1.46 A	\$0.55 A	\$1.34 A	\$1.40 E	\$4.75 E
2019	\$1.38 A	\$1.70 A	\$1.72 A	\$2.00 A	\$7.02 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 02/18/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 02/19/2021.

Overview

Elgin, IL-based The Middleby Corporation (MIDD) provides cooking, warming, food preparation and packaging equipment to commercial, industrial processing and residential markets. Formerly known as Oven Company, it was acquired by TMC Industries Ltd. in 1983. Post the acquisition, the company's name was changed to Middleby Corporation in 1985.

The company has manufacturing and distribution operations in Europe, Asia and Latin America.

The company operates in three main segments.

- **Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group** (58.5% of total revenues in third-quarter 2020) manufactures cooking equipment for restaurants and institutional kitchens. The products include conveyor ovens, proofing ovens, speed cooking ovens and induction cooking equipment. The equipment in this segment are sold under brands like Combi, Lang, MPC, PrefectFry, CookTek, Southbend and Wells.

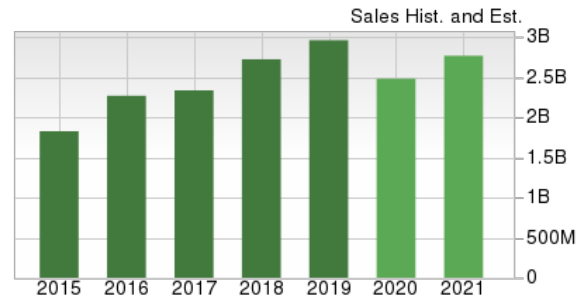
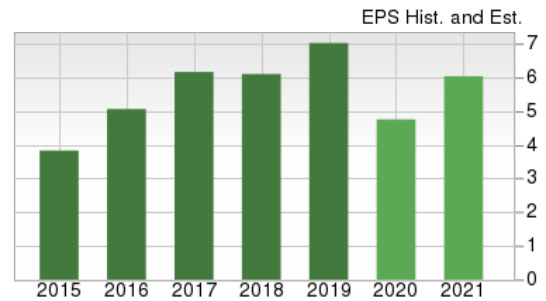
Notably, this segment's manufacturing operations are based in Arkansas, Illinois, California, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, Washington, Australia, China, Denmark and Italy, among others.

- **Food Processing Equipment Group** (17.4%) manufactures equipment for the food processing industry. It offers a variety of products including batch ovens, processing ovens, defrosting and packaging equipment among others. The products are sold under various brands such as Auto-Bake, Alkar, Cozzini and RapidPak.

This segment's manufacturing operations are located in Georgia, North Carolina, Illinois, Iowa, Oklahoma, Washington, Denmark, France, Germany, India, and the United Kingdom, among others.

- **Residential Kitchen Equipment Group** (24.1%) manufactures equipment for the residential market, recording the revenues for Viking and Brigade. It offers ovens, dishwashers, cooktops, microwaves and other outdoor equipment.

Notably, this segment's manufacturing facilities are located in California, Mississippi, Michigan, Wisconsin, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ In third-quarter 2020, Middleby's earnings and sales surpassed estimates by 31.4% and 6.3% respectively. In the quarters ahead, the company is poised to gain from investments in product innovation and technological-advancement actions. Notably, the company unveiled Bluezone by Middleby — a system dedicated for purification of indoor air — in November 2020. Also, the company believes revival in restaurant business as well as hike in preferences for automated cooking systems, beverage systems and ventless products will prove advantageous for the Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group in the quarters ahead. For the Residential Kitchen Equipment Group, the company expects healthy home sales trend, revival in new construction, digital marketing actions, product innovations and sales initiatives will create growth opportunities. Meanwhile, for the Food Processing Equipment Group, investments in innovation will be beneficial.
- ▲ Middleby's robust liquidity position adds to its strength. In the last three years (2017-2019), the company's cash flow from operations increased 8.7% (CAGR - compounded annual growth rate). Notably, in the third quarter, its cash flow from operations increased 18.2% on a year-over-year basis to \$151.4 million. Notably, in the reported quarter, the company's free cash flow recorded an increase of 24.5% to \$144.4 million on a year-over-year basis. In addition, its cash and cash equivalents was \$220.3 million at the end of the third quarter, up compared with \$94.5 million at 2019-end. Notably, the company's healthy liquidity position might help it tide over the difficult operating conditions caused by the pandemic.
- ▲ Over time, Middleby has expanded its market share, product offerings and customer base through its acquisition-based growth strategy. In 2019, it acquired Synesso, Evo, Powerhouse Dynamics, Ss Brewtech and Cooking Solutions Group for its Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group, whereas it acquired Brava for its Residential Kitchen Equipment Group and Pacproinc for its Food Processing Equipment Group. In January 2020, Middleby acquired RAM Fry Dispensers. This buyout strengthened Middleby's product offerings in the restaurant automation platform. Also, the company's Deutsche Beverage buyout (March 2020) is helping it strengthen its product offerings in the beverage platform. In addition, the acquisition of Wild Goose Filling (in December 2020) will create strong growth opportunities for Middleby in the canned beverages market. Notably, acquired assets boosted its sales by 2.3% and 1.1% in the second and third quarters of 2020, respectively. In the past 30 days, the company's earnings estimates have increased 3.7% for fourth-quarter 2020, 1.3% for 2020 and 3.6% for 2021. In the last three months, Middleby's shares declined 3.2% compared with the industry's growth of 0.8%.

Business acquisitions, healthy liquidity position and growth opportunities within the segments will likely enhance Middleby's prospects in the quarters ahead.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ In third-quarter 2020, Middleby's organic sales declined 14.1% year over year due to the market challenges caused by the pandemic. In the quarters ahead, the disruptions caused by the coronavirus mayhem will likely continue affecting the company's top-line performances. Travelling related restrictions due to the pandemic might adversely impact the orders for the Food Processing Equipment Group.
- ▼ The company's long-term debt in the last three years (2017-2019) rose 22.2% (CAGR). Also, at the end of the third quarter of 2020, the metric stood at \$1,809 million. This balance represents decline of 3.3% from 2019-end and fall of 23.8% sequentially. Despite the decline in debts, we find the company's weakening ability to repay its debts more concerning. Notably, the company's times interest earned at third-quarter end was 5.6x, down from 5.8x at the end of second-quarter 2020. Also, return on total capital has declined from 7.9% in the second quarter to 7.4% in the third. It is worth noting here that Middleby, this August, amended its senior credit facility. With this amendment, the company's secured senior credit facility will be worth \$3.1 billion, which comprises of a term loan of \$350 million and revolving credit facility (multiple currencies) of \$2.75 billion. In addition, it offered \$747.5 million worth of convertible senior notes. We believe such types of offerings in the future will add to its debts and in turn, will lead to inflation in financial obligations.
- ▼ International businesses have exposed Middleby to risks arising from geopolitical issues, unfavorable movements in foreign currencies and others. For instance, in the third quarter of 2020, forex woes had negative impacts of 0.4% on adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) margin of Residential Kitchen. Also, it is worth mentioning here that the company's non-U.S. revenues for Commercial Foodservice decreased 31.7% year over year in the third quarter, while that for Food Processing declined 10.6%.

The pandemic-related market challenges as well as headwinds related to high debts levels and international exposure might weigh on Middleby's performance in the quarters ahead.

Last Earnings Report

Middleby Q3 Earnings & Sales Beat Estimates, Fall Y/Y

Middleby reported better-than-expected results for third-quarter 2020, with earnings surpassing estimates by 31.4%. Also, sales in the third quarter outpaced estimates by 6.3%.

The company's adjusted earnings in the reported quarter came in at \$1.34 per share, beating the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1.02. However, the bottom line decreased 22.1% from the year-ago quarter figure of \$1.72 on weak sales generation and lower margins.

Quarter Ending 09/2020

Report Date	Nov 05, 2020
Sales Surprise	6.32%
EPS Surprise	31.37%
Quarterly EPS	1.34
Annual EPS (TTM)	5.35

Revenue Picture

In the third quarter, Middleby's sales were \$634.5 million, reflecting a year-over-year decline of 12.4%. Organic revenues in the quarter slid 14.1% year over year mainly on the coronavirus mayhem. Acquired assets boosted sales by 1.1% and movements in foreign currencies had a positive impact of 0.6%.

However, net sales exceeded the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$596.8 million.

The company reports net sales under three segments. A brief discussion of those segments is provided below:

Sales from the **Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group** were \$371.2 million, down 25.9% year over year. Organic sales in the quarter decreased 27.4% on market-related challenges and the pandemic's impact. Buyouts and movements in foreign currencies had a positive impact of 1.2% and 0.3%, respectively.

Sales from the **Residential Kitchen Equipment Group** totaled \$152.7 million, up 14% year over year. Organic sales in the quarter increased 11.4%, while buyouts and movements in foreign currencies positively impacted results by 1% and 1.7%, respectively. Business for premium appliance brands was healthy in the quarter.

Sales from the **Food Processing Equipment Group** summed \$110.7 million, increasing 24.1% year over year. Organic sales in the quarter grew 22.4% while buyouts and movements in foreign currencies had a positive impact of 0.9% and 0.8%, respectively.

Margin Profile

In the September-end quarter, Middleby's cost of sales dropped 9.3% year over year to \$411.8 million. It represented 64.9% of sales compared with the year-ago quarter's 62.7%. Gross profit fell 17.5% year over year to \$222.7 million. Gross margin shrunk 220 basis points (bps) to 35.1%.

Selling, general and administrative expenses fell 10.8% year over year to \$128.8 million. It represented 20.3% of sales in the reported quarter. Operating income in the July-September quarter decreased 28.6% year over year to \$86.7 million. Operating margin fell 310 percentage points year over year to 13.7%.

Net interest expenses and deferred financing amortization totaled \$18.4 million, down from the year-ago quarter's \$20.9 million.

Balance Sheet and Cash Flow

Exiting the third quarter, Middleby had cash and cash equivalents of \$220.3 million, down 66.1% from the \$649.7 million witnessed at the end of the last reported quarter. Long-term debt decreased 23.8% sequentially to \$1,809 million.

In the reported quarter, the company generated net cash of \$151.4 million from operating activities, reflecting growth of 18.2% from the year-ago quarter. Capital expenditure totaled \$7.1 million versus the \$12.2 million recorded in third-quarter 2019. Free cash flow increased 24.5% year over year to \$144.4 million.

Outlook

In the quarters ahead, Middleby anticipates to benefit from its investments in sales and technological-enhancement initiatives.

For the Commercial Foodservice Equipment Group, the company expects to benefit from increased preferences for beverage systems, ventless products and automated cooking systems. Also, revival in restaurant businesses is a healthy sign.

For the Residential Kitchen Equipment Group, healthy orders driven by revival in new construction, healthy home sales trend and product innovations have been proving beneficial. Also, digital marketing actions, sales initiatives and investments in showrooms will open up opportunities.

For the Food Processing Equipment Group, innovation investment and healthy backlog will likely aid its performance. However, disruptions caused by the pandemic-induced travel restrictions might hurt near-term orders.

Recent News

Middleby Purchases United Foodservice Equipment Group

On **Dec 21, 2020**, Middleby acquired China-based United Foodservice Equipment Group. However, the financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

United specializes in the manufacture, design and supply of countertop commercial foodservice equipment since 2001. The company operates under the brand name, Thor, and is fully owned by United Foodservice Group (an Australian invested company).

Markedly, the strategic deal is expected to diversify Middleby's offerings in targeted growth markets and propel new product introduction with an augmented footprint across China on the back of United's best-in-class manufacturing capabilities.

Middleby's Wild Goose Buyout to Boost Beverages Portfolio

On **Dec 8**, Middleby completed the acquisition of Wild Goose Filling. However, the financial terms of the transactions were kept under wraps.

Based in Louisville, Co, Wild Goose is a leading designer and manufacturer of liquid filling systems for craft beverages. The company's advanced patented beverage filling technology helps in maintaining the top level of quality for packaged beverages.

Wild Goose is believed to be a strategic fit for Middleby. Notably, the buyout will create strong growth opportunities for Middleby in the canned beverages market. The inclusion of Wild Goose's solid expertise in brewing, canning, and bottling craft beverages will enable Middleby's Ss Brewtech and Deutsche brands to provide a comprehensive equipment solution to its craft beverage customers.

Valuation

Middleby shares are up 41.6% and 16.9% over the past six months and trailing 12-month period, respectively. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are up 12.5% over the past six months, while stocks in the Zacks Industrial Products sector are up 27% in the same period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are up 2.6% and 23.5%, respectively.

The S&P 500 Index is up 17% in the past six months and 18.5% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 20.98x forward 12-month earnings per share, which compares to 25.25x for the Zacks sub-industry, 22.88x for the Zacks sector and 22.9x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 26.93x and as low as 5.91x, with a 5-year median of 19.23x. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our price target of \$137 reflects 22.12x forward 12-month earnings per share.

The table below shows summary valuation data for MIDD.

Valuation Multiples - MIDD					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	20.98	25.25	22.88	22.9
	5-Year High	26.93	28.11	22.99	23.8
	5-Year Low	5.91	15.83	12.64	15.3
	5-Year Median	19.23	20.56	17.94	17.84
P/Sales F12M	Current	2.59	3.61	3.48	4.59
	5-Year High	3.46	3.77	3.48	4.59
	5-Year Low	0.8	1.72	1.62	3.21
	5-Year Median	2.48	2.34	2.12	3.68

As of 02/18/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 34% (87 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Altra Industrial Motion Corp. (AIMC)	Neutral	3
Applied Industrial Technologies, Inc. (AIT)	Neutral	2
Colfax Corporation (CFX)	Neutral	4
Flowserve Corporation (FLS)	Neutral	3
Graham Corporation (GHM)	Neutral	3
IDEX Corporation (IEX)	Neutral	3
Ingersoll Rand Inc. (IR)	Neutral	2
Nordson Corporation (NDSN)	Neutral	2

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Manufacturing - General Industrial				Industry Peers		
	MIDD	X Industry	S&P 500	AIT	CFX	IEX
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	2	4	3
VGM Score	D	-	-	A	C	C
Market Cap	7.28 B	2.01 B	27.57 B	3.16 B	4.79 B	14.66 B
# of Analysts	5	3	13	2	10	6
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.43%	1.62%	0.00%	1.03%
Value Score	C	-	-	B	B	D
Cash/Price	0.03	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.01	0.07
EV/EBITDA	13.67	14.43	14.58	12.62	17.06	24.45
PEG F1	NA	2.29	2.36	NA	2.74	3.27
P/B	3.58	2.73	3.82	3.58	1.34	5.77
P/CF	14.86	14.86	15.33	9.11	10.89	30.43
P/E F1	21.71	24.02	20.86	21.25	20.04	32.73
P/S TTM	2.83	1.90	3.09	1.03	1.56	6.23
Earnings Yield	4.61%	3.98%	4.73%	4.71%	5.00%	3.05%
Debt/Equity	0.89	0.44	0.66	0.89	0.61	0.41
Cash Flow (\$/share)	8.81	2.74	6.64	8.92	3.71	6.36
Growth Score	D	-	-	A	C	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	9.58%	7.04%	9.32%	12.04%	6.93%	11.02%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	26.95%	19.25%	13.98%	0.39%	44.14%	13.97%
Current Cash Flow Growth	13.23%	-3.33%	2.02%	28.52%	-19.48%	-7.79%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	16.08%	5.49%	7.55%	16.72%	3.20%	6.18%
Current Ratio	2.08	2.03	1.38	2.70	1.68	4.15
Debt/Capital	47.10%	30.64%	41.22%	47.07%	38.06%	29.13%
Net Margin	10.28%	3.82%	10.60%	-0.76%	1.39%	16.06%
Return on Equity	15.18%	8.98%	14.86%	16.73%	5.62%	16.82%
Sales/Assets	0.50	0.73	0.51	1.35	0.42	0.56
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	11.53%	5.54%	6.63%	-4.18%	9.81%	10.27%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	D	B	C
Daily Price Change	-2.09%	-0.19%	-0.49%	0.56%	5.59%	0.06%
1-Week Price Change	-2.57%	2.11%	1.44%	0.79%	2.93%	3.91%
4-Week Price Change	-4.63%	0.38%	1.26%	-1.97%	0.87%	-0.98%
12-Week Price Change	-4.28%	13.90%	6.26%	1.11%	6.56%	1.02%
52-Week Price Change	16.86%	17.34%	8.06%	20.10%	10.34%	11.55%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	705,229	88,248	2,033,954	175,623	949,586	473,922
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.71%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.42%	0.00%	0.71%	11.35%	1.16%	1.20%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	3.58%	3.08%	2.08%	11.35%	0.76%	2.70%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	1.02%	0.00%	0.23%	12.00%	-6.40%	4.03%

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	C
Growth Score	D
Momentum Score	F
VGM Score	D

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

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Periods:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.