Markel Corporation (MKL)

$1,099.51 (As of 02/05/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$1,154.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 02/08/21) Prior Recommendation: Neutral	**Outperform**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**1-Strong Buy**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:B
	Value: C | Growth: B | Momentum: B	

Summary

Markel strives to grow via acquisitions and organic initiatives as these not only diversify and strengthen its portfolio but also expand its international footprint. Solid performance at Insurance and Reinsurance segments of Markel should drive premiums. It stands to benefit from its niche focus and effective management of insurance risk. Markel is banking on the strength of its underwriting, investment and Markel Ventures operations, which position it well for long-term growth. It boasts a sturdy capital position, which enables it to deploy capital effectively via share repurchases. Its shares have underperformed the industry in last six months. However, high costs continue to put strain on margin expansion. Also, exposure to catastrophe loss induces underwriting volatility. Markel's fourth-quarter earnings beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

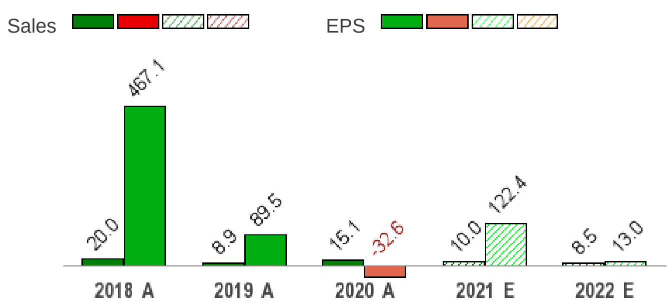
Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$1,347.64 - $710.52**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**65,718**
Market Cap	**$15.1 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**6.4%**
Beta	**0.67**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$0.00 / 0.0%**
Industry	**Insurance - Property and Casualty**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 26% (188 out of 253)**
Last EPS Surprise	**75.1%**
Last Sales Surprise	**3.7%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**0.2%**
Expected Report Date	**NA**
Earnings ESP	**2.9%**
P/E TTM	**22.3**
P/E F1	**18.8**
PEG F1	**2.1**
P/S TTM	**1.6**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					10,885 E
2021	2,394 E	2,431 E	2,511 E	2,517 E	10,031 E
2020	2,017 A	2,221 A	2,372 A	2,507 A	9,117 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	$15.68 E	$17.06 E	$16.32 E	$16.86 E	$65.94 E
2021	$13.39 E	$15.23 E	$14.58 E	$15.12 E	$58.35 E
2020	-$8.92 A	$14.89 A	$4.41 A	$15.83 A	$26.24 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 02/05/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 02/08/2021.

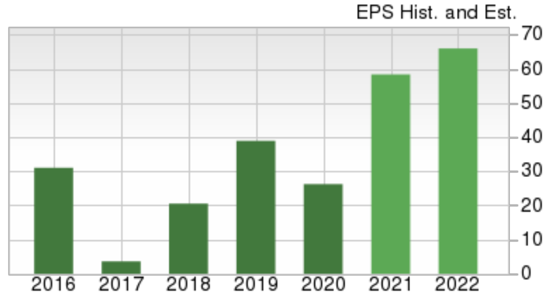
Overview

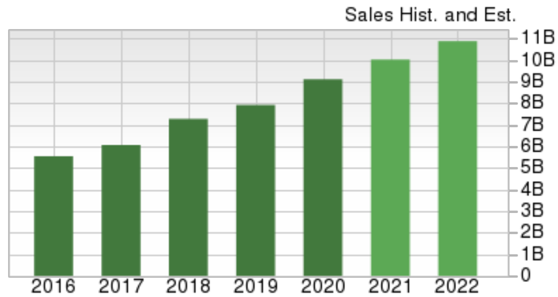
Founded in 1930 and headquartered in Glen Allen, VA, Markel Corporation markets and underwrites specialty insurance products in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and internationally.

Starting from first-quarter 2018, Markel has revised its reportable segments keeping in mind its sustained growth as well as diversification. Effective Jan 1, 2018, the company reported through two segments, namely Insurance and Reinsurance.

The **Insurance** segment (84.2% of 2020 gross premium) offers general and professional liability, property, personal lines, marine and energy, specialty programs, and workers' compensation insurance products. Business in this segment is primarily written through Markel Assurance, Markel Specialty and Markel International divisions. As a result of the acquisition of State National Companies, Inc. (State National), effective November 2017, the company created the State National division. The State National division's collateral protection underwriting business is included in the Insurance segment.

The **Reinsurance** segment (15.8%) includes property and casualty treaty reinsurance products offered to other insurance and reinsurance companies globally through the broker market. Treaty reinsurance offerings include both quota share and excess of loss reinsurance and are typically written on a participation basis, which means each reinsurer has a proportional share in the business ceded under the reinsurance treaty written.





Markel Ventures: Through wholly owned subsidiary Markel Ventures, Inc. (Markel Ventures), the company own interests in various businesses that operate outside of the specialty insurance marketplace. These businesses are viewed by management as separate and distinct from insurance operations. Local management teams oversee the day-to-day operations of these companies, while strategic decisions, including investment and capital allocation decisions, are made by senior management.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

Markel Corporation’s niche focus, improved pricing, effective management of insurance risk and focus on developing and maintaining underwriting as well as pricing guidelines should drive growth.

- Shares of Markel have lost 15.1% compared with the industry’s decline of 4.5% in the past year. Nevertheless, solid fundamentals are likely to help shares outperform its industry.

- Markel Corporation’s solid operational result is primarily driven by better performance at insurance, investments and Markel ventures. Markel’s impressive performance can be attributed to its niche focus, improved pricing and effective risk management. This in turn have been driving improved premiums. Gross written premiums grew 11% to $7.2 billion in 2020 on solid performance of the Insurance segment, which was driven by both new business and improved pricing within its professional liability and general liability product lines, as well as personal and marine and energy product lines. However, the company expects significant volatility in gross premium volume in Reinsurance segment due to individually significant contracts and multi-year contracts, as well as the timing of renewals going forward. Given a competitive market, the company has progressed to some extent with regard to raising adequate rates across all its businesses. This in turn should help the compnay attain its guidance of delivering double-digit top-line growth in 2021.

- Markel’s net investment income has been rising over the past many years. However, in 2020, net investment income decreased 17.7% to $371.8 million. The decline was largely due to lower short-term interest rates, as well as lower holdings and lower yields on fixed maturity securities in 2020. Investment yield contracted 60 basis points to 2.4% in 2020. Nevertheless, increased equity holdings and higher dividend income, higher short-term investment income, higher short-term interest rates, increase in interest income on fixed maturity portfolio, and increase in the fair value of equity securities are likely to drive net investment income in the near term.

- Markel Corporation considers strategic buyouts a prudent approach to ramp up its growth profile. Acquisitions have helped the company enhance its surety capabilities, ramp up Markel Ventures’ revenues and expand its reinsurance product offerings. In 2020, revenues in Markel Ventures increased 36% to $2.8 billion year over year due to the contribution of revenues from Lansing, which was acquired in April 2020, and VSC Fire & Security, Inc. (VSC), which was acquired in November 2019. Through its Markel Ventures, the company will be investing in the ownership of the best of asset management firms. Markel has been pursuing acquisitions to achieve profitable growth in insurance operations and to create additional value on a diversified basis in Markel Ventures operations.

- Markel Corporation boasts a solid balance sheet with liquidity rising. We expect to see an improvement in the same moving ahead owing to a robust capital position. It has a solid cash balance of $24.9 billion, which improved 11.6% from 2019-end level. The increase was primarily attributable to higher net cash provided by operating activities of $1.7 billion in 2020, thanks to higher net premium collections in the Insurance segment as well as greater cash flows for Markel Ventures. Banking on strong capital position, the company has engaged in share buybacks. However, it presently prefers to invest in organic growth initiatives for its Insurance business. It suspended shares repurchases in March 2020 and is focusing on expense reductions across the company. Also, the company has been issuing debts amid the low interest rate environment and effectively lowering its interest burden.

Risks

- As a property and casualty insurer, Markel is exposed to catastrophes loss, inducing volatility in underwriting results. In 2020, the company's underwriting profit decreased 54.5% year over year to $127.6 million. Combined ratio deteriorated 400 basis points (bps) year over year to 98% in 2020 due to losses attributed to COVID-19 and higher natural catastrophe losses. Catastrophe losses in 2020 were attributed to Hurricanes Isaias, Laura, Sally, Delta and Zeta, as well as wildfires in western U.S. and a derecho in Iowa. Exposure to cat loss always remains a concern given its unprecedented nature. The company expects to deliver combined ratio of 90 or lower in 2021.

- Markel Corporation has been experiencing an increase in operating expenses due to higher losses and loss adjustment expenses, underwriting, acquisition and insurance expenses. Total operating expenses increased 20% year over year to $8.5 billion in 2020. Therefore, the company should strive to ensure that growth in total revenues outpaces the rise in expenses. Otherwise, the company's operating margin is likely to suffer. As the pandemic still impacts, the company expects losses indirectly related to it and a broader range of coverages within the professional liability, trade credit and workers compensation product lines among others, including the reinsurance product lines, in the remainder of 2020.

- Markel's debt levels have increased over the past few years. However, as of Dec 31, 2020, the company's long-term debt was $3.4 billion, which decreased 1.4% from the 2019-end level. Total debt to capital of 22.7% compared unfavorably with the industry's measure of 20.6%. Also, the company's times interest earned of 4.6 compared unfavorably with the industry's figure of 12.4%, implying that its earnings are not sufficient to cover interest obligations.

- The company's return on equity, a profitability measure reflecting how effectively the company is utilizing its shareholders fund, is 3.9%, which compares unfavorably with the industry average of 5.6%.

Last Earnings Report

Markel Q4 Earnings and Revenues Surpass Estimates

Quarter Ending	12/2020
Report Date	Feb 02, 2021
Sales Surprise	3.67%
EPS Surprise	75.11%
Quarterly EPS	15.83
Annual EPS (TTM)	26.21

Markel Corporation reported fourth-quarter 2020 earnings of $15.83 per share, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 75.1%. Moreover, the bottom line increased 140.9% year over year.

The company witnessed higher premiums at Insurance and Reinsurance Segments and increased profit at Markel Ventures, which were partially offset by higher expenses and lower net investment income.

Full-Year Highlights

For 2020, Markel reported net income of $55.63 per share, which decreased 56.9% year over year. Total operating revenues of $9.1 billion trumped the consensus mark by 1.8% and also improved nearly 15% year over year.

Combined ratio deteriorated 400 basis points (bps) on a year-over-year basis to 98% in the quarter under review.

Quarterly Operational Update

Total operating revenues of $2.5 billion beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 3.6%. The top line rose 22.2% year over year on higher premiums, services and other revenues, partly offset by lower net investment income.

Net written premiums increased 13.7% year over year to $1.4 billion, primarily driven by higher premiums at Insurance segment and Reinsurance segment.
Net investment income declined 13.2% year over year to $97.6 million in the fourth quarter.

Total operating expenses of Markel increased 20.9% year over year to $2.21 billion primarily due to higher losses and loss adjustment expenses, underwriting, acquisition and insurance expenses, services and other expenses, amortization of intangible assets.

Markel's combined ratio improved 400 basis points (bps) year over year to 89% in the reported quarter.

Segment Update

Insurance: Net written premiums were up 13.7% year over year to $1.29 billion in the quarter under review. Underwriting profit came in at $165.3 million, which increased 28.3% year over year. Combined ratio improved 200 bps year over year to 87% in the quarter under discussion.

Reinsurance: Net written premiums increased 16.3% year over year to $139 million. Underwriting loss was $31.4 million, narrower than $45.7 million incurred in the year-ago quarter. Combined ratio improved 2400 bps year over year to 96% in the fourth quarter.

Markel Ventures: Profit of $53.3 million increased 149.6% year over year.

Financial Update

Markel exited the fourth quarter with investments, cash and cash equivalents and restricted cash and cash equivalents (invested assets) of $24.9 billion as of Dec 31, 2020, up 12.1% year over year. Debt balance decreased 1.4% year over year to $3.48 billion as of Dec 31, 2020.

Book value per share increased 10.3% from year-end 2019 to $885.13 as of Dec 31, 2020. Net cash from operating activities was $1.7 billion in 2020, up 30.8% year over year.

Recent News

Markel's Unit Expands Capacity Offering – Dec 31, 2020

Markel Surety, a part of Markel's Specialty division, has increased its capacity offering to $500 million for the most qualified accounts with the establishment of a National Accounts segment.

Valuation

Markel shares are up 0.03% in the last six-months period but down 15.1% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Finance sector are up 6% and 20.1% in the last six-period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are down 4.5% and up 0.9%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index are up 17.3% in the last six-months period and 18.2% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 1.34x trailing 12-month book value, which compares to 1.27x for the Zacks sub-industry, 2.98x for the Zacks sector and 6.66x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 1.79x and as low as 0.93x, with a 5-year median of 1.54x. Our Outperform recommendation indicates that the stock will perform better than the market. Our $1,154 price target reflects 1.40x trailing 12-month book value.

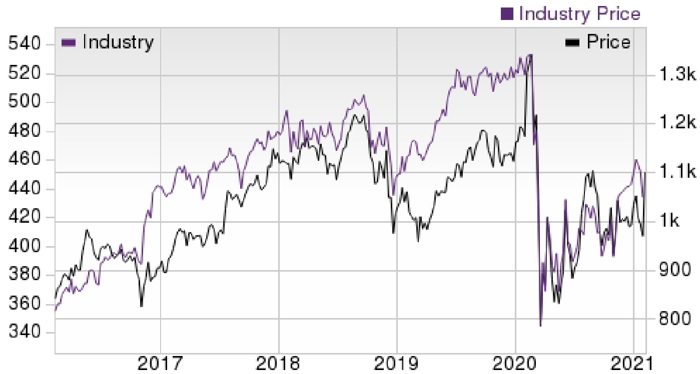
The table below shows summary valuation data for MKL

Valuation Multiples - MKL

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/B TTM	Current	1.34	1.27	2.98	6.66
	5-Year High	1.79	1.69	2.98	6.66
	5-Year Low	0.93	0.95	1.74	3.73
	5-Year Median	1.54	1.47	2.59	4.95
P/S F12M	Current	1.49	1.53	7.17	4.54
	5-Year High	3.14	11.39	7.17	4.54
	5-Year Low	1.15	1.41	5.02	3.2
	5-Year Median	2.24	1.8	6.12	3.68
P/E F12M	Current	18.59	25.97	16.71	22.81
	5-Year High	202.25	31.65	17.12	23.8
	5-Year Low	18.18	21.1	11.59	15.3
	5-Year Median	30.1	25.98	14.56	17.85

As of 02/05/2021 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Bottom 26% (188 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
W.R. Berkley Corporation **(WRB)**	Outperform	2
Arch Capital Group Ltd. **(ACGL)**	Neutral	3
American Financial Group, Inc. **(AFG)**	Neutral	5
Cincinnati Financial Corporation **(CINF)**	Neutral	3
CNA Financial Corporation **(CNA)**	Neutral	3
Fidelity National Financial, Inc. **(FNF)**	Neutral	3
Everest Re Group, Ltd. **(RE)**	Neutral	3
Alleghany Corporation **(Y)**	Neutral	2

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Insurance - Property And Casualty

	MKL	X Industry	S&P 500	Industry Peers AFG	CNA	Y
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Outperform	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	1	-	-	5	3	2
VGM Score	B	-	-	B	C	C
Market Cap	15.15 B	1.39 B	27.69 B	8.70 B	11.06 B	8.49 B
# of Analysts	4	2	13	1	2	1
Dividend Yield	0.00%	1.09%	1.43%	2.00%	3.63%	0.00%
Value Score	C	-	-	A	A	B
Cash/Price	0.54	0.27	0.06	0.47	0.18	0.23
EV/EBITDA	4.43	6.30	14.96	4.85	8.95	6.45
PEG F1	2.09	1.99	2.44	NA	2.05	NA
P/B	1.34	1.02	3.71	1.40	0.92	0.99
P/CF	18.76	11.70	15.54	8.66	11.55	18.64
P/E F1	18.84	13.29	20.33	16.69	10.25	12.89
P/S TTM	1.56	0.97	3.01	1.10	1.04	1.00
Earnings Yield	5.31%	7.18%	4.83%	5.99%	9.74%	7.76%
Debt/Equity	0.31	0.23	0.68	0.33	0.23	0.24
Cash Flow ($/share)	58.60	3.02	6.78	11.57	3.53	32.24
Growth Score	B	-	-	C	D	D
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	4.88%	5.43%	9.46%	10.38%	9.44%	-22.60%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	122.35%	57.43%	13.31%	-28.91%	57.43%	238.04%
Current Cash Flow Growth	13.53%	3.81%	4.43%	7.42%	12.18%	25.33%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	9.05%	4.50%	8.19%	12.34%	0.21%	-8.44%
Current Ratio	0.68	0.46	1.37	0.18	0.23	0.30
Debt/Capital	23.90%	18.76%	41.33%	24.95%	18.76%	20.95%
Net Margin	8.41%	5.94%	10.59%	9.26%	5.41%	-0.30%
Return on Equity	3.88%	5.25%	14.84%	12.88%	5.75%	0.57%
Sales/Assets	0.25	0.31	0.51	0.11	0.17	0.31
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	10.02%	3.76%	6.14%	-25.89%	9.27%	NA
Momentum Score	B	-	-	C	F	D
Daily Price Change	2.74%	0.33%	0.38%	3.89%	0.67%	0.89%
1-Week Price Change	-2.45%	-3.51%	-4.02%	10.96%	-3.88%	-3.17%
4-Week Price Change	4.17%	-0.42%	0.24%	9.29%	1.22%	-5.95%
12-Week Price Change	8.01%	5.83%	10.12%	20.36%	18.94%	-0.20%
52-Week Price Change	-15.28%	-13.03%	7.73%	-10.62%	-13.31%	-26.80%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	65,718	120,630	2,075,178	615,785	170,117	54,931
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.75%	0.00%	0.00%	-20.59%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.23%	0.00%	0.46%	-20.59%	0.00%	2.98%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	5.37%	0.00%	1.32%	-20.59%	0.00%	2.98%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	4.76%	0.00%	0.08%	0.00%	NA	2.93%

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	B
Momentum Score	B
VGM Score	B

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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Additional Disclosure

This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forwardlooking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Periods:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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