

Mercury Systems (MRCY)

\$77.86 (As of 09/25/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$66.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation: Underperform

(Since: 08/12/20)

Prior Recommendation: Neutral

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

5-Strong Sell

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: F

Growth: A

Momentum: F

Summary

Mercury's shares have underperformed the industry year to date. The company's prospects face significant risk from increasing chances of lower discretionary spending on defense due to the growing prospect of another round of fiscal stimulus to rejuvenate the coronavirus-ravaged economy. Moreover, higher coronavirus-related expenses related to continued supplies and services, including COVID-19 testing at Mercury's major manufacturing facilities, are expected to hurt bottom line. Further, capital expenditure is expected to increase due to continued investment on Mercury's custom microelectronics business as well as increased spending on COVID-19-related testing and facility modernization. This is expected to hurt free cash flow in fiscal 2021. Additionally, low-margin contract mix is expected to remain a drag on profitability.

Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$96.29 - \$52.24
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	336,759
Market Cap	\$4.4 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	12.7%
Beta	1.01
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Computer - Peripheral Equipment
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 24% (189 out of 250)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	24.1%
Last Sales Surprise	1.6%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.0%
Expected Report Date	11/03/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	33.9
P/E F1	34.3
PEG F1	3.0
P/S TTM	5.5

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					968 E
2021	199 E	213 E	226 E	240 E	879 E
2020	177 A	194 A	208 A	217 A	797 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					\$2.65 E
2021	\$0.47 E	\$0.54 E	\$0.60 E	\$0.65 E	\$2.27 E
2020	\$0.44 A	\$0.54 A	\$0.60 A	\$0.72 A	\$2.30 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 09/25/2020. The reports text is as of 09/28/2020.

Overview

Headquartered in Andover, MA, Mercury Systems, Inc. was founded in 1981. The company is one of the world's leading providers of sensor and safety critical mission processing subsystems. Earlier, the company was known as Mercury Computer Systems. However, in November 2012, it changed the name to Mercury Systems, Inc.

The company operates across the United States, Europe, and the Asia Pacific and its products and solutions are used for various critical aerospace, defence, commercial aviation, and intelligence programs. Additionally, Mercury Systems' products and solutions are supplied to about 300 defense and intelligence programs with over 25 different defense prime contractors.

This apart, the company manufactures hardware products, including components, such as power amplifiers and limiters, switches, oscillators, filters, equalizers, converters, chips, integrated circuits, and memory and storage devices.

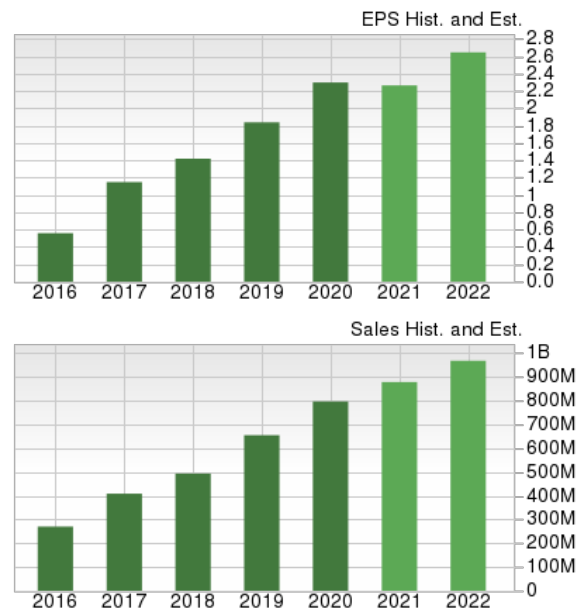
Other products offered by Mercury Systems include embedded processing modules and boards, switch fabric boards, input/output boards, digital receiver boards and transceivers, etc. Graphics and video processing, Ethernet and integrated subsystems are also part of the company's portfolio.

Additionally, Mercury Systems is involved in the designing, marketing and licensing of software and middleware technology under the name MultiCore Plus to expedite the development of signal and image processing applications on various heterogeneous and multi-computing platforms.

Mercury Systems claims that its investments in R&D is more than double that of its customers, which allows it better assisting customers in areas including cost minimization, reduce technical risks, time and budget management, and ensure trust and security in the supply chain. Its strategy has helped it in winning contracts across several programs, including Aegis, Predator, F-35, Reaper, F-16 SABR, and Surface Electronic Warfare Improvement Program.

In fiscal 2020, Mercury Systems generated \$796 million in revenues.

Mercury Systems faces significant competition from Harris Corporation, CACI International and Science Applications as the provider of technology services to the U.S. government.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ In fiscal 2019, about 95% of Mercury's revenues came from sales to the U.S. federal government either as a prime contractor or subcontractor. Due to this massive dependency, changes in the government's IT spending budget is a huge deciding factor for the company's top-line growth. The growing prospect of another huge fiscal stimulus to help the U.S. economy recover is expected to negatively impact discretionary budget spending that doesn't bode well for Mercury. Moreover, these contracts are subject to extensive legal and regulatory hurdles, which are stringent, and subject to change from time to time. The government also investigates operations periodically to ensure that the terms and conditions have been properly adhered to. These factors make the stock risky for investors.
- ▼ Unfavorable contract mix is likely to hurt the Mercury's profitability. The company continues to witness increase in service-led contracts compared with legacy product based deals, which is expected to be a drag on margins. Though Mercury has been steadily winning development contracts from the federal government, these low-margin deals threaten to affect the company's profitability in the long term
- ▼ Customer concentration is a major risk for Mercury. Its revenues were concentrated in two defense prime contractors, including Lockheed Martin and Raytheon for the last three consecutive years. These defense prime contractors comprised an aggregate of 37% of revenues in fiscal 2019, which is significant. This exposes the company to major revenue loss even if one of the customers ends its association with Mercury.
- ▼ Mercury competes primarily in the government IT services arena, which, like other government sectors, consists of many competitors of various sizes. Its main competitors include ManTech International Corporation, CACI, Unisys, Accenture, IBM — all of which are established players in the industry. Consequently, the company has to continuously invest in value drivers, which act as a hedge against competition. These increase its operating costs and reduce profitability.

Unfavorable contract mix, defense budget related risk and large number of low-margin contracts are hurting Mercury's profitability.

Risks

- Mercury is expected to benefit from high demand for electronic warfare, ISR and other related market segments in the coming years, as it continues to hone its expertise in design and development of electronic subsystems for these markets. The company works with a number of key defense prime contractors on a regular basis, which should ensure healthy flow of orders. Moreover, the long-term DoD budget pressure due to the two-year Budget Control Act, additional expenditures creeping into Overseas Contingency Operations account, flat budget growth and like, is making more and more contractors opt for upgrades of the electronic subsystems on existing platforms. This is expected to increase the demand for the company's cost-effective and open-architecture products.
 - Mercury's continued efforts and investments, which have resulted in successful completion of deals, have created about \$800 million worth of potential C4I opportunity based on the estimated lifetime value of its top 30 programs. Management noted that the C4I market, which encompasses avionics, command and control, electronic warfare (EW), and dedicated communications, is growing faster than the overall defense space, which is encouraging it to increase its stronghold in it.
 - Mercury's domain expertise in analog and digital integration has helped it build a solid business relationship with defense prime contractors for a long time. Its embedded computing servers including the suite of EnsembleSeries blades have delivered processing solutions with long lifecycles, high performance, environmental resiliency, interoperability and SWaP optimization for 35 years.
 - Mercury has a history of expanding through acquisitions. These buyouts have added significant value to the company and expanded its total addressable market. In the fourth quarter of fiscal 2020, Mercury reported acquired revenues (5.5% of total revenues) of \$11.9 million, primarily attributable to the buyouts of The Athena Group, Syntonic Microwave and American Panel Corporation. We believe that continued acquisitions will aid the company's growth.
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Last Earnings Report

Mercury Q4 Earnings Beat, Organic Revenues Aid Growth

Mercury Systems reported fourth-quarter fiscal 2020 non-GAAP earnings of 72 cents per share that beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 24.1%. The figure jumped 50% year over year.

Revenues of \$217.4 million also surpassed the consensus mark by 1.6% and grew 22.8% year over year driven by robust organic growth.

The company generated most its revenues from SEWIP, Filthy Buzzard, F-35, F-16 SABR, and a classified radar program.

Quarter Ending	06/2020
Report Date	Aug 04, 2020
Sales Surprise	1.61%
EPS Surprise	24.14%
Quarterly EPS	0.72
Annual EPS (TTM)	2.30

Quarterly Details

Organic revenues (94.5% of total revenues) grew 17.5% to \$205.5 million in the reported quarter.

Moreover, acquired revenues (5.5% of total revenues) of \$11.9 million soared from \$2.1 million reported in the year-ago quarter, primarily attributable to the buyouts of The Athena Group, Syntonic Microwave and American Panel Corporation.

Mercury's total bookings increased 15% year over year to \$278.6 million, resulting in a 1.28 book-to-bill ratio. The company's largest bookings in the reported quarter were F-35, SEWIP, LTAMDS, a classified radar program, and Filthy Buzzard.

The company ended the quarter with a backlog of \$831.1 million, up \$205.7 million year over year. Within the next 12 months, \$567.7 million worth of products from this backlog of orders are expected to be shipped.

Operating Details

Gross margin in the fiscal fourth quarter contracted 70 basis points (bps) year over year to 44.4%.

Adjusted EBITDA grew 30.8% year over year to \$49.6 million. Also, adjusted EBITDA margin expanded 140 bps year over year to 22.8%.

Selling, general & administrative expenses as a percentage of revenues decreased 100 bps year over year to 15.4%.

However, research & development expenses as a percentage of revenues increased 90 bps to 12.4%.

Operating margin expanded 40 bps year over year to 12.2%.

Balance Sheet and Cash Flow

Mercury had cash and cash equivalents of \$226.8 million as of Jul 3, 2020, up from \$407.1 million at the end of the previous quarter.

The company generated \$28.7 million of cash flow from operating activities compared with \$30.1 million in the previous quarter and \$26 million in the year-ago quarter.

Free cash flow was \$17.2 million, down from \$19.2 million sequentially but slightly up on a year-over year basis.

Key Q4 Developments

In April, Mercury received a \$4.7 million order from a leading defense prime contractor to provide artificial intelligence-processing technology for integration into an advanced airborne electro-optic system. The order was booked in the company's fiscal 2020 third quarter and is expected to be shipped over the next several quarters.

Moreover, it received a \$30 million multi-year award from a leading defense prime contractor to provide video-display technology for integration into mobile ground vehicles. The award has a 36-month planned performance and shipment period.

Further, Mercury announced the SpectrumSeries RFM3103s ultra-wideband dual upconverter, which is designed to align with the emerging sensor open systems architecture's technical standard for electronic-warfare environments.

In June, Mercury announced the new GSC6204 OpenVPX which is NVIDIA's Turing architecture-based GPU co-processing engine. The solution provides accelerated high-performance computing capabilities to commercial aerospace and defense applications.

Moreover, the company received a \$49 million order from a leading defense prime contractor for high-performance signal processing and radio-frequency solutions for a missile-defense program. The order was booked in Mercury's fiscal 2020 fourth quarter and is expected to be shipped over the next several quarters.

The company also received a \$3.9 million multi-phase contract award from a leading defense prime contractor for the development of a high-density system-in-package solution for radar systems utilizing its novel 2.5D chip-scale integration technology.

Further, it received a \$25 million follow-on order from a leading defense prime contractor for integrated radio frequency and digital subsystems for an advanced naval electronic-support application. The order was booked in Mercury's fiscal 2020 fourth quarter and is expected to be shipped over the next several quarters.

Mercury also announced volume production of its newest, high-density secure memory device, with the highest capacity in the smallest form factor available.

Guidance

For the first quarter of fiscal 2021, revenues are expected to be \$190-\$205 million.

Adjusted EBITDA is anticipated in a band of \$38-\$41 million. Adjusted earnings are projected to be 43-47 cents per share.

The company expects CapEx in the first quarter of fiscal 2021 to be roughly 7% of revenues.

Mercury expects fiscal 2021 revenues of \$860-\$885 million. Top-line growth is expected to be driven by high single-digit organic-revenue growth.

Adjusted EBITDA is expected to be \$188-\$196 million. Adjusted earnings are estimated to be \$2.15-\$2.26 per share.

Recent News

On Sep 9, Mercury Systems announced the RFS1080, the first commercially available offering in its trusted system-in-package (SiP) product family. The company's SiP devices revolutionize edge-processing applications by maximizing performance in a trusted, highly customizable architecture.

On Aug 18, Mercury Systems announced the receipt of a new U.S. patent covering various methods to protect controller area network ("CAN")-based systems from malicious cyberattacks. This new patent adds to Mercury's IP portfolio of more than 80 issued patents.

On Jul 22, Mercury Systems received \$11.7 million in orders against its previously announced \$152 million 5-year sole-source basic-ordering agreement (BOA) to deliver advanced Digital RF Memory (DRFM) jammers to the U.S. Navy.

On Jun 30, Mercury Systems announced it received a \$25 million follow-on order from a leading defense prime contractor for integrated radio frequency and digital subsystems for an advanced naval electronic support application.

On Jun 25, Mercury System announced receiving a \$3.9 million multi-phase contract award from a leading defense prime contractor.

On Jun 23, Mercury Systems announced volume production of its newest, high-density (HD) secure memory device, with the most capacity in the smallest form factor available.

On Jun 15, Mercury Systems announced receiving a \$49 million order from a leading defense prime contractor for high-performance signal processing and RF solutions for a missile defense program.

On Jun 11, Mercury Systems unveiled the new GSC6204 OpenVPX 6U NVIDIA Turing architecture-based GPU co-processing engine. The newly launched product will provide accelerated high-performance computing capabilities to commercial aerospace and defense applications.

Valuation

Mercury shares have gained 12.7% in the year to date (YTD) period while have lost 4.1% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Computer & Technology sector have increased 22.1% and 20.1%, respectively, YTD. Over the past year, while the Zacks sub-industry increased 29.8%, the sector soared 33.6%.

The S&P 500 Index has increased 2.4% YTD and 10.9% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 4.84X forward 12-month sales, which compares to 0.73X for the Zacks sub-industry, 4.17X for the Zacks sector and 4.01X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 6.38X and as low as 2.12X with a 5-year median of 4.3X. Our Underperform recommendation indicates that the stock will perform worse than the market. Our \$66 price target reflects 4.11X forward 12-month sales.

The table below shows summary valuation data for MRCY

Valuation Multiples - MRCY					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F 12M	Current	4.84	0.73	4.17	4.01
	5-Year High	6.38	6.93	4.49	4.29
	5-Year Low	2.12	0.51	2.70	3.11
	5-Year Median	4.30	5.01	3.43	3.66
EV/Sales TTM	Current	5.15	1.24	4.71	3.74
	5-Year High	7.11	1.27	5.23	4.15
	5-Year Low	1.93	0.29	2.85	2.60
	5-Year Median	4.97	0.58	3.82	3.56
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	25.55	23.78	14.28	14.24
	5-Year High	33.10	24.21	15.83	15.61
	5-Year Low	13.23	1.62	8.27	9.51
	5-Year Median	25.60	3.58	11.84	13.03

As of 09/25/2020

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 24% (189 out of 250)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
CACI International, Inc. (CACI)	Neutral	3
CurtissWright Corporation (CW)	Neutral	3
FLIR Systems, Inc. (FLIR)	Neutral	3
Heico Corporation (HEI)	Neutral	3
Leidos Holdings, Inc. (LDOS)	Neutral	3
Northrop Grumman Corporation (NOC)	Neutral	3
Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)	Neutral	3
Teledyne Technologies Incorporated (TDY)	Neutral	2

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Computer - Peripheral Equipment				Industry Peers		
	MRCY	X Industry	S&P 500	CACI	NOC	SAIC
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Underperform	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	5	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	A	A	A
Market Cap	4.36 B	104.67 M	23.02 B	5.42 B	54.68 B	4.54 B
# of Analysts	6	1.5	14	9	8	7
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.69%	0.00%	1.77%	1.90%
Value Score	F	-	-	B	B	A
Cash/Price	0.05	0.19	0.07	0.02	0.07	0.04
EV/EBITDA	28.65	8.08	12.89	11.68	15.82	13.61
PEG F1	2.98	2.80	2.88	1.21	NA	NA
P/B	3.13	1.94	3.15	2.04	5.63	3.13
P/CF	27.97	9.87	12.43	12.46	11.89	9.54
P/E F1	34.74	31.84	21.02	15.37	14.60	12.81
P/S TTM	5.47	1.24	2.38	0.95	1.58	0.68
Earnings Yield	2.92%	0.35%	4.52%	6.51%	6.85%	7.81%
Debt/Equity	0.00	0.04	0.70	0.51	1.47	1.83
Cash Flow (\$/share)	2.78	0.54	6.93	17.32	27.58	8.18
Growth Score	A	-	-	A	A	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	37.43%	-8.74%	10.41%	19.60%	23.60%	18.11%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-1.45%	1.67%	-4.56%	11.40%	5.89%	7.52%
Current Cash Flow Growth	29.10%	-33.59%	5.26%	22.78%	2.21%	74.09%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	44.93%	-1.66%	8.49%	17.39%	14.43%	23.85%
Current Ratio	5.04	2.03	1.35	1.41	1.35	1.03
Debt/Capital	0.00%	4.29%	42.92%	33.78%	59.48%	64.69%
Net Margin	10.76%	-7.93%	10.25%	5.62%	6.91%	3.00%
Return on Equity	7.92%	-5.39%	14.59%	12.66%	40.24%	25.96%
Sales/Assets	0.50	0.86	0.50	1.04	0.82	1.25
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	10.30%	0.00%	-1.44%	6.84%	4.91%	12.11%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	B	D	D
Daily Price Change	2.45%	0.00%	1.35%	1.42%	1.01%	1.67%
1-Week Price Change	12.93%	0.00%	0.79%	-1.77%	0.77%	-0.42%
4-Week Price Change	4.66%	-2.70%	-4.19%	-8.22%	-6.01%	-6.34%
12-Week Price Change	-3.00%	13.64%	3.17%	-1.61%	5.82%	0.80%
52-Week Price Change	-6.02%	-13.81%	-1.37%	-7.68%	-14.17%	-10.00%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	336,759	28,198	2,095,310	169,110	578,836	626,791
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.10%	0.78%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-12.06%	12.73%	4.08%	1.06%	1.54%	0.78%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.46%	-0.24%	-3.10%

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	F
Growth Score	A
Momentum Score	F
VGM Score	C

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

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Periods:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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