

Old Dominion Freight (ODFL)

\$208.04 (As of 02/11/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$219.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 11/09/20)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:A

Value: C

Growth: B

Momentum: A

Summary

Old Dominion's efforts to add shareholder value are impressive. The company shelled out \$435.1 million to its shareholders in 2020 through share buybacks (\$364.1 million) and dividends (\$71 million). We are also encouraged by the company's measures to reduce costs. Owing to these tailwinds, shares of Old Dominion have outperformed its industry in a year's time. However, coronavirus woes are hurting demand for the company's services. Despite the recent improvement, freight demand is way below the 2019 levels. As a result, LTL (less than truckload) tonnage and LTL shipments dipped 2.2% and 5.4% year over year in 2020, respectively. Moreover, revenues from LTL services slid 2.3% year over year in the past year. Also, high capex may play spoilsport. Capex in 2020 was \$225.1 million. The same is expected to rise to \$605 million in 2021.

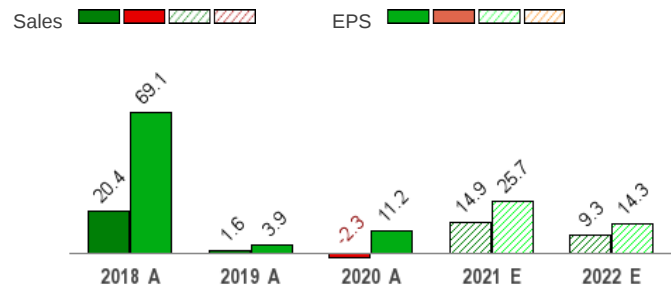
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$227.21 - \$119.01
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	677,633
Market Cap	\$24.4 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	6.6%
Beta	0.98
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.80 / 0.3%
Industry	Transportation - Truck
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 17% (44 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	2.6%
Last Sales Surprise	3.2%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	4.6%
Expected Report Date	04/22/2021
Earnings ESP	2.1%
P/E TTM	36.6
P/E F1	29.1
PEG F1	3.9
P/S TTM	6.1

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	1,203 E	1,295 E	1,347 E	1,260 E	5,043 E
2021	1,089 E	1,172 E	1,186 E	1,142 E	4,613 E
2020	987 A	896 A	1,058 A	1,073 A	4,015 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$1.69 E	\$2.12 E	\$2.20 E	\$1.93 E	\$8.16 E
2021	\$1.56 E	\$1.90 E	\$1.93 E	\$1.78 E	\$7.14 E
2020	\$1.11 A	\$1.25 A	\$1.71 A	\$1.61 A	\$5.68 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 02/11/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 02/12/2021.

Overview

Old Dominion Freight Line, founded in 1934, is a leading LTL company. The company based in Thomasville, NC, offers LTL services on a regional, inter-regional and national basis. The services are inclusive of ground and air expedited transportation, apart from consumer household pickup and delivery through a single integrated organization.

The company also offers LTL services across North America through strategic alliances. Additionally, it provides value-added services like container drayage, truckload brokerage, supply chain consulting and warehousing. The company operates multiple service and maintenance centers.

While bulk of the centers is owned by the company, the remaining are leased. The service centers are endowed with responsibility pertaining to the pickup and delivery of freight locally. Moreover, the maintenance centers are responsible for performing operations that are related to the routine and preventive maintenance as well as repairs of the company's equipment.

Old Dominion's infrastructure allows for smoother freight transportation offering next-day and second-day service through each of its regions across the United States. Over the past several years, the company has opened numerous service centers which have increased capacity across its service network. This in turn places the company for future growth prospects.

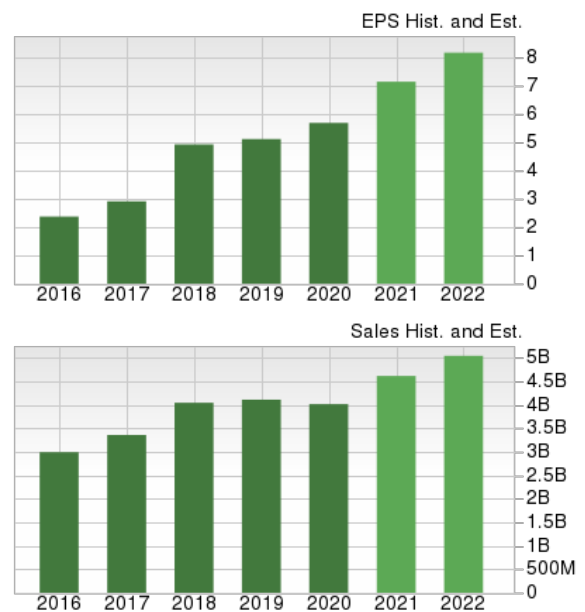
The company constantly works towards improving customer service by increasing on-time performance and reducing cargo claims. It primarily focuses on increasing shipments and tonnage growth in order to generate higher revenues.

The company faces primary competition from regional, inter-regional and national LTL carriers. It also faces secondary competition from truckload carriers, small package carriers, airfreight carriers and railroads.

In 2019, total revenues increased 1.6% year over year to \$4.1 billion. LTL service revenues were up 1.6% and accounted for bulk of the top line (98.7%). Remainder of the top line (1.5%) was generated from non-LTL revenues.

Notably, LTL tons declined 4.4% year over year as LTL shipments fell 2.2% from 2018 levels. However, LTL weight per shipment, excluding fuel surcharges, increased 7.3% in 2019.

Moreover, the company's fiscal year coincides with the calendar year.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Old Dominion's efforts to reward shareholders through dividends and share buybacks are impressive. During 2019, the company rewarded shareholders to the tune of \$295.5 million. The same increased to \$435.1 million in 2020. In February, the company's board of directors declared a quarterly cash dividend of 20 cents per share. After taking into account the three-for-two stock split, this dividend payment represents a 33.3% increase from the quarterly cash dividend paid out in the first quarter of 2020.
- ▲ Old Dominion's efforts to reduce its debt levels are quite encouraging. The company's total debt was around \$250 million in 2008. This has been lowered to \$99.9 million at the end of fourth-quarter 2020. Additionally, the company's cash and cash equivalents at the end of the fourth quarter stood at \$401.4 million, way above the debt load. Moreover, its current ratio (a measure of liquidity) increased to 3.33 at the end of the fourth quarter from 2.53 at the end of the September quarter. A high current ratio indicates that a company is able to meet its short-term obligations.
- ▲ Improvement in operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of revenues) in 2020 is encouraging. The metric improved to 81.4% in the first quarter from 82% in the year-ago quarter due to lower operating expenses. Even in the June quarter, operating ratio improved 10 basis points to 77.8% despite the revenue deterioration. The ratio improved to 74.5% at the end of the third quarter from 79.3% a year ago. In the fourth quarter, the ratio improved 500 basis points to 76.3%. At the end of 2020, the metric stood at 77.4%, compared with 80.1% at the end of 2019. Notably, lower the value of this metric the better. Operating ratio is likely to improve in first-quarter 2021 as well.

Old Dominion's efforts to reduce its debt levels are quite encouraging.

Reasons To Sell:

▼ The sluggish freight environment is a major concern for Old Dominion. As an evidence, LTL tonnage declined 4.4% in 2019 from 2018 levels. The metric has decreased 4.4% year over year in the first nine months of 2020. The adversity is due to lower volumes on account of soft freight demand. LTL shippments slipped 5.4% in 2020.

LTL shippments slipped 5.4% in 2020 from 2019 levels.

▼ Even though, capital expenditures are likely to aid long-term growth, the high capex may hurt the company in the near term. Capex in 2020 was \$225.1 million. The same is expected to rise to \$605 million in 2021 even though coronavirus-related woes are still present. Of the total, \$275 million is anticipated to be invested in real estate and service-center expansion. The company expects to spend \$290 million and \$40 million on tractors and trailers, and information technology and other assets, respectively. The elevated capex may hurt the company's free cash flow generating ability.

▼ The truck industry, of which Old Dominion is an integral part, has been persistently battling driver shortage for several years. As old drivers are retiring, trucking companies are finding it difficult to hire new drivers since the job mostly does not appeal to the younger generation. According to an estimate given by Costello, the United States will face a crisis of 100,000 drivers in five years and a further crunch of 160,000 drivers by 2028. The projection does not bode well for Old Dominion.

Last Earnings Report

Earnings Beat at Old Dominion in Q4

Old Dominion Freight Line's earnings per share of \$1.61 outpaced the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1.57. Moreover, the bottom line surged 34.2% year over year. This upside was driven by a record improvement in the operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of revenues) on the back of the company's cost-containment efforts.

Revenues of \$1073.4 million surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1039.9 million and also increased 6.4% year over year on a 4.9% rise in LTL tons.

Quarter Ending 12/2020

Report Date	Feb 04, 2021
Sales Surprise	3.23%
EPS Surprise	2.55%
Quarterly EPS	1.61
Annual EPS (TTM)	5.68

Other Details

In the quarter under review, Old Dominion reported a 2.4% increase in LTL shipments per day. LTL revenue per hundredweight inched up 1.1%. Moreover, LTL revenue per hundredweight excluding fuel surcharges climbed 4.2%. LTL weight per shipment and LTL revenue per shipment rose 2.5% and 3.7%, respectively.

Revenues from the company's major revenue-generating segment LTL services logged a total of \$1057.9 million, increasing 6.2% year over year. Revenues from other services rose 22.8% to \$15.5 million. Total operating expenses decreased to \$819.1 million, mainly owing to the 11.3% reduction in operating supplies and expenses.

Moreover, operating ratio improved 500 basis points year over year to 76.3%. Notably, lower the value of this metric, the better.

Old Dominion exited the quarter with cash and cash equivalents worth \$401.4 million compared with \$403.6 million at the end of 2019. Capital expenditures incurred in the reported quarter were \$58.6 million and \$225.1 million for 2020. Old Dominion expects a capex of \$605 million for 2021. Of the total, \$275 million is anticipated to be invested in real estate and service-center expansion. The company expects to spend \$290 million and \$40 million on tractors and trailers, and information technology and other assets, respectively.

Moreover, during the fourth quarter of 2020, Old Dominion rewarded its shareholders to the tune of \$74.8.

Recent News

Dividend Update — Feb 4, 2021

The company's board of directors declared a first-quarter 2021 dividend of 20 cents per share (annualized: 80 cents), payable Mar 17, 2021 to its shareholders of record at the close of business on Mar 3. After taking into account the three-for-two stock split, this dividend payment represents a 33.3% increase from the quarterly cash dividend paid out in the first quarter of 2020.

Valuation

Old Dominion shares are up 8.1% and 39.9% in the six-month period and over the trailing 12-month period, respectively. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are up 11% and those in the Zacks Transportation sector are up 16.4% in the past six months. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry is up 33.2% and the sector is up 13.7%.

The S&P 500 index is up 17.3% and 18% in the past six-month period and in the past year respectively.

The stock is currently trading at 29.42X forward 12-month price-to-earnings, which compares to 21.41X for the Zacks sub-industry, 26.62X for the Zacks sector and 22.84X for the S&P 500 Index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 36.22X and as low as 14.71X, with a 5-year median of 21.77X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$219 price target reflects 31X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for ODFL

Valuation Multiples - ODFL					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	29.42	21.41	26.62	22.84
	5-Year High	36.22	26.44	32.68	23.8
	5-Year Low	14.71	13.24	11.1	15.3
	5-Year Median	21.77	18.92	14.46	17.85
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	20.4	11.93	14.23	16.73
	5-Year High	22.63	21.94	14.35	16.96
	5-Year Low	7.37	6.33	5.19	9.55
	5-Year Median	12.24	9	7.41	13.25
P/S F12M	Current	5.38	2.01	1.5	4.56
	5-Year High	5.72	2.09	1.5	4.56
	5-Year Low	1.52	0.95	0.86	3.2
	5-Year Median	2.8	1.4	1.22	3.68

As of 2/11/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 17% (44 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
ArcBest Corporation (ARCB)	Outperform	2
Saia, Inc. (SAIA)	Outperform	2
XPO Logistics, Inc. (XPO)	Outperform	1
FedEx Corporation (FDX)	Neutral	3
J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc. (JBHT)	Neutral	3
Landstar System, Inc. (LSTR)	Neutral	3
Ryder System, Inc. (R)	Neutral	3
United Parcel Service, Inc. (UPS)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Transportation - Truck				Industry Peers		
	ODFL	X Industry	S&P 500	ARCB	JBHT	SAIA
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Outperform	Neutral	Outperform
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	2	3	2
VGM Score	A	-	-	A	A	A
Market Cap	24.41 B	1.43 B	27.72 B	1.40 B	15.57 B	5.25 B
# of Analysts	9	5	13	7	10	9
Dividend Yield	0.29%	0.36%	1.42%	0.58%	0.76%	0.00%
Value Score	C	-	-	A	A	B
Cash/Price	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.29	0.02	0.01
EV/EBITDA	22.06	7.28	14.81	5.62	13.41	19.37
PEG F1	3.92	1.61	2.38	0.97	1.61	1.63
P/B	7.34	2.37	3.81	1.69	5.99	5.46
P/CF	26.14	7.44	15.29	6.88	15.06	19.24
P/E F1	29.14	15.59	20.64	13.71	24.13	30.10
P/S TTM	6.08	1.32	3.04	0.48	1.62	2.88
Earnings Yield	3.43%	6.51%	4.77%	7.30%	4.15%	3.32%
Debt/Equity	0.03	0.15	0.68	0.26	0.50	0.05
Cash Flow (\$/share)	7.96	5.35	6.77	8.02	9.78	10.44
Growth Score	B	-	-	B	A	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	25.11%	15.91%	9.27%	34.47%	9.21%	25.84%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	25.63%	30.54%	13.85%	24.63%	28.80%	28.29%
Current Cash Flow Growth	7.45%	3.60%	3.46%	7.98%	0.27%	18.18%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	14.72%	7.16%	7.74%	7.65%	6.15%	15.99%
Current Ratio	3.33	1.50	1.38	1.50	1.65	0.99
Debt/Capital	2.92%	12.77%	41.31%	20.76%	33.42%	4.98%
Net Margin	16.75%	4.65%	10.58%	2.42%	5.25%	7.59%
Return on Equity	21.53%	11.10%	14.86%	10.79%	20.74%	15.38%
Sales/Assets	0.96	1.17	0.51	1.63	1.70	1.17
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	14.90%	10.05%	6.30%	10.85%	12.16%	11.89%
Momentum Score	A	-	-	A	B	A
Daily Price Change	-0.45%	-0.14%	0.21%	-2.42%	0.41%	-0.66%
1-Week Price Change	7.96%	7.25%	4.58%	7.68%	7.42%	6.17%
4-Week Price Change	0.26%	2.69%	1.11%	15.22%	-3.05%	4.17%
12-Week Price Change	1.22%	8.44%	8.61%	43.49%	10.12%	18.25%
52-Week Price Change	39.95%	28.97%	8.77%	125.77%	28.97%	110.54%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	677,633	193,495	2,095,832	200,203	703,492	186,788
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	2.51%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.72%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	4.64%	3.95%	0.59%	8.38%	1.63%	6.81%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	5.56%	4.84%	1.77%	15.30%	1.50%	8.47%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	9.63%	11.11%	0.22%	31.35%	1.11%	12.37%

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	A
VGM Score	A

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

This report contains independent commentary to be used for informational purposes only. The analysts contributing to this report do not hold any shares of this stock. The analysts contributing to this report do not serve on the board of the company that issued this stock. The EPS and revenue forecasts are the Zacks Consensus estimates, unless indicated otherwise on the reports first page. Additionally, the analysts contributing to this report certify that the views expressed herein accurately reflect the analysts personal views as to the subject securities and issuers. ZIR certifies that no part of the analysts compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the specific recommendation or views expressed by the analyst in the report.

Additional information on the securities mentioned in this report is available upon request. This report is based on data obtained from sources we believe to be reliable, but is not guaranteed as to accuracy and does not purport to be complete. Any opinions expressed herein are subject to change.

ZIR is not an investment advisor and the report should not be construed as advice designed to meet the particular investment needs of any investor. Prior to making any investment decision, you are advised to consult with your broker, investment advisor, or other appropriate tax or financial professional to determine the suitability of any investment. This report and others like it are published regularly and not in response to episodic market activity or events affecting the securities industry.

This report is not to be construed as an offer or the solicitation of an offer to buy or sell the securities herein mentioned. ZIR or its officers, employees or customers may have a position long or short in the securities mentioned and buy or sell the securities from time to time. ZIR is not a broker-dealer. ZIR may enter into arms-length agreements with broker-dealers to provide this research to their clients. Zacks and its staff are not involved in investment banking activities for the stock issuer covered in this report.

ZIR uses the following rating system for the securities it covers. **Outperform-** ZIR expects that the subject company will outperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Neutral-** ZIR expects that the company will perform in line with the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Underperform-** ZIR expects the company will underperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months.

No part of this report can be reprinted, republished or transmitted electronically without the prior written authorization of ZIR.

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 forward-looking 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 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.