

Paylocity Holding (PCTY)

\$176.38 (As of 06/11/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$185.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:
Neutral

(Since: 07/30/20)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:D

Value: D

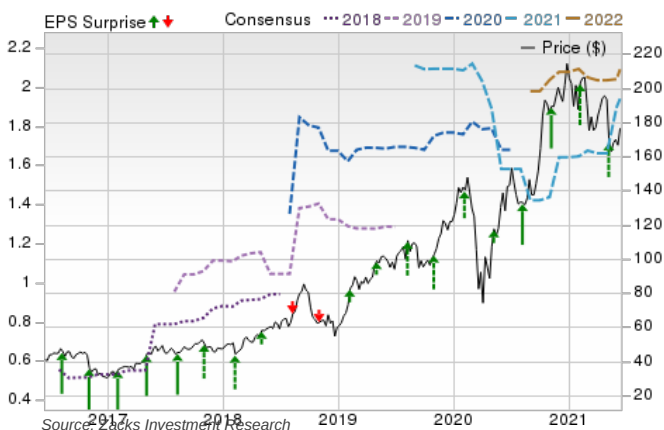
Growth: C

Momentum: A

Summary

Paylocity is benefiting from the growing adoption of its solutions among clients with less than 50 employees. Moreover, healthy momentum in the company's core and upper end of the market is a tailwind. Further, the release of Learning Management System and Community portal, which garnered a positive feedback from clients, is encouraging. Also, the addition of on-demand pay to its portfolio is likely to boost client wins going forward. Additionally, Paylocity's regular investments in technological upgrades, along with product innovation, will continue to boost its top line. Nonetheless, we anticipate near-term headwinds to margin due to lower interest rates. Moreover, concerns over global economic growth might undermine Paylocity's near-term growth prospects. Additionally, heightening competition from ADP and Paychex are concerns.

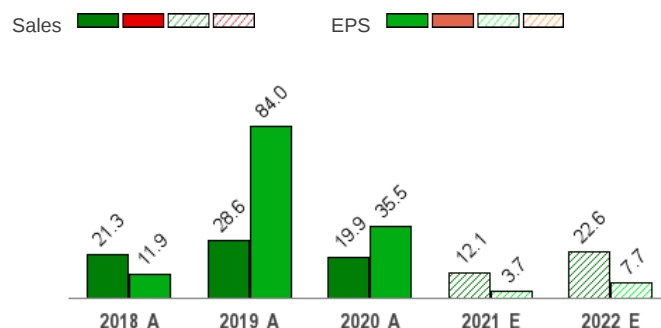
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$218.34 - \$124.75
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	166,481
Market Cap	\$9.6 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	-14.3%
Beta	1.25
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Internet - Software
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 20% (200 out of 250)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	33.3%
Last Sales Surprise	0.3%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	5.4%
Expected Report Date	08/05/2021
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	89.5
P/E F1	90.9
PEG F1	4.6
P/S TTM	16.1

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	168 E	180 E	227 E	199 E	771 E
2021	136 A	146 A	186 A	162 E	629 E
2020	127 A	132 A	172 A	131 A	561 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.34 E	\$0.41 E	\$0.89 E	\$0.44 E	\$2.09 E
2021	\$0.38 A	\$0.39 A	\$0.88 A	\$0.29 E	\$1.94 E
2020	\$0.36 A	\$0.36 A	\$0.83 A	\$0.32 A	\$1.87 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 06/11/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 06/14/2021.

Overview

Illinois-based Paylocity Holding Corporation offers cloud-based payroll and human capital management (HCM) software solutions to medium-sized organizations across the U.S.

The company defines medium-sized organizations as those with employee strength between 20 and 1,000. Paylocity served approximately 25,000 clients (excluding clients acquired as part of the BeneFLEX acquisition) across the U.S. at the end of fiscal 2020.

The company, through its broad product portfolio, helps organizations to make strategic human capital decision, enhance their human resource, payroll, and finance capabilities.

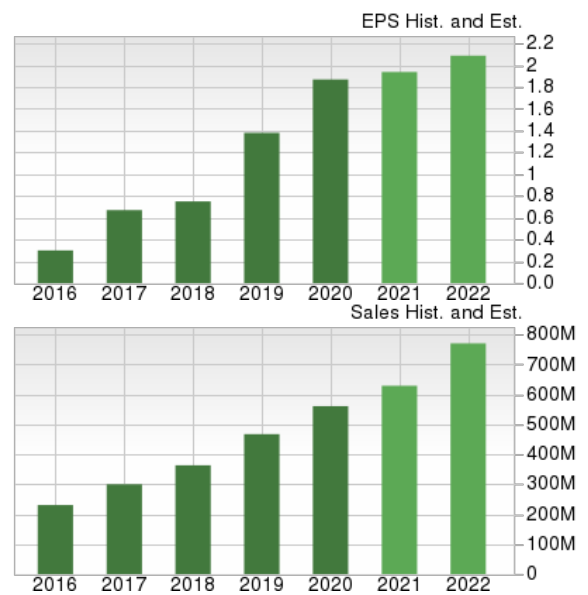
The company's key products include Paylocity Web Pay that provides enterprise-grade payroll processing and administration; Paylocity HR, a set of HR capabilities that improves HR compliance, reporting capabilities, and management of employee information; Paylocity Impressions, an advanced social media feature that integrates peer-to-peer collaboration and recognition in employees; Performance Management, which is used for employee performance appraisal process; Self-Service HR Portals designed to provide employees and managers access to critical payroll and HR information; Paylocity Web Onboarding that enables new employees to acquire necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors and events management; Paylocity Web Time, a time-and-attendance solution; and Paylocity Web Benefits and Paylocity Enterprise Benefits, powered by swift, which per the company "benefit management solutions that integrate with insurance carrier systems to provide automated administrative processes".

Paylocity reported revenues of \$561.3 million in fiscal 2020, up 20% year over year.

Recurring revenues (97% of total revenues) comprising recurring fees and interest income on funds held for clients increased 22% year over year to \$546.2 million in fiscal 2020.

Recurring fees, attributable to the company's cloud-based payroll and HCM solutions, accounted for 93.4% of total revenues while Interest Income on Funds Held for Clients contributed 4.3%. Implementation services and other revenues generated 2.3%.

Paylocity's main competitors are Automatic Data Processing, Inc., Oracle, Paychex, Inc., Paycom Software, Inc., Paycor, Inc., Cornerstone OnDemand, Inc., Ultimate Software Group, Inc. and Workday, Inc.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Paylocity holds a dominant position in the payroll processing and human capital management market, primarily due to its robust product portfolio. The company continues to frequently upgrade its existing product portfolio as well as launch new products. Additionally, we believe that higher traction of Paylocity's ACA dashboard application that tracks employee count, employee status and health care plan affordability will act as a tailwind for the company in the long run.
- ▲ Paylocity has grown significantly over the years by providing industry-leading service and technology solutions to its clients and their employees. Its solid business model, diversified products and services, and strategic acquisitions have boosted top-line growth. Revenue growth seems to be steady and is positively impacted by higher recurring revenues and higher traction in cloud-based offerings. Higher revenues will expand margins and increase profitability in the long run.
- ▲ Paylocity offers end-to-end SaaS HCM solution that minimizes data-integrity issues across applications. SaaS solutions are easier and affordable to implement and operate than those offered by traditional software providers. It helps organizations update software faster, without the need for any new hardware investments, thereby allowing them to react better to changes in their business environment. In the last few quarters, a significant portion of revenues was generated from clients moving from traditional payroll service providers to the company's SaaS-based services. We are also positive on Paylocity's continued investment in SaaS technology and mobile applications. Paylocity's SaaS-based solution reduces time, risk and headcount related to installing and maintaining applications for on-premise products. SaaS deployments are easy and help in reducing ownership costs for customers. Growth of cloud computing has supported the SaaS delivery model. Gartner expects the global SaaS market to grow from \$104.7 billion in 2020 to \$140.7 billion in 2022. With its SaaS-based applications, we think that Paylocity is well positioned to lead the market.
- ▲ Paylocity expands its client base with the help of direct sales force. The company is gaining market share over the most critical client demand area of HCM, which in turn, supports its growth. The HCM solution includes time and labor management, payroll, talent management and human resources (HR) management applications. These offerings have been increasingly helping clients manage both permanent and temporary workforce. As a result, the company has a huge client base. Notably, continued focus on client retention, on the basis of high client satisfaction, has helped the company to maintain its average annual revenue retention rate of more than 92% for the last several quarters.
- ▲ The acquisition of BeneFLEX has enriched Paylocity's product suite with a host of administration related solutions. BeneFLEX manages employee benefit related plans including the likes of health savings accounts (HSAs), health reimbursement accounts (HRAs), flexible spending accounts (FSAs), and COBRA for the Midwest and California based mid-market clients.
- ▲ Paylocity is a cash rich company with a strong balance sheet. As of Mar 31, 2021, the company had cash and cash equivalents of nearly \$182 million, which is higher than its long-term debt of approximately \$100 million. Additionally, Paylocity's total debt to total capital ratio of 0.31 is lower than the industry average of 0.36. Since it has net cash available on its balance sheet, the existing cash can be used for pursuing strategic acquisitions, investment in growth initiatives and distribution to shareholders.

Paylocity's regular investments in technological upgrades, along with product innovation, will continue to boost its top line.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ Paylocity is likely to be affected by weak economic conditions as employment levels tend to decline and interest rates become more volatile. Lower or falling interest rates generally cause Paylocity's float income to decline. To counter the coronavirus-led economic slowdown, Fed had cut benchmark interest rates multiple times in the last few months and brings it near to zero. These conditions may have an adverse effect on the company's business owing to lower transaction volumes or loss of clients. Potential clients tend to lower their overall spending on payroll and other HCM services. We believe that this will cause Paylocity to come under pressure, thereby reducing revenue growth potential in the future.
- ▼ Competition in the HCM software market is increasing, which could lead to pricing pressure and affect Paylocity's margins. Some of the possible competitors in this space include ADP, Ceridian, Oracle, Paychex., SAP etc., which offer similar services. Moreover, we believe that Paylocity's dominance could be challenged by new entrants. This could make the company take resort to competitive pricing to maintain and capture further market share. This apart, the ongoing trend to invest more in cloud solutions exposes Paylocity to the risk of losing existing "on-premise customers", which can adversely impact its top-line performance, especially in the short run.
- ▼ Paylocity's SaaS network infrastructure is a crucial part of its business operations. These SaaS-based solutions are prone to certain disruptions caused by human error, cyber threats, security breaches etc. Cyber-warfare and espionage attacks are expected to rise. The attacks on Internet of Things (IoT) devices will increase rapidly due to whopping growth in the number of connected objects, poor security and the high value of data on IoT devices. Cyber-attacks and security vulnerabilities might result in lower revenues, higher costs, liability claims, and can be a competitive disadvantage. Paylocity depends upon information technology (IT) networks, cloud-based platforms, and systems to maintain various business processes. These disruptions may lead to increased customer dissatisfaction.
- ▼ We note that Paylocity currently has a trailing 12 month Price/Book Value (P/B) ratio of 21.1. This level compares unfavorably with what the industry saw over the last year. Hence, valuation looks slightly stretched from a P/B perspective.

Competition in the payroll processing sector from new and existing players such as Automatic Data Processing, Oracle Corporation and Paychex remains a major headwind.

Last Earnings Report

Paylocity Tops Q3 Earnings and Revenue Estimates

Paylocity recorded third-quarter fiscal 2021 non-GAAP earnings of 88 cents per share, outpacing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 66 cents. Moreover, the bottom-line figure comes in 5 cents higher than the year-ago quarter's earnings of 83 cents per share.

Paylocity's revenues of \$186.1 million improved 8% year over year and also trumped the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$185.5 million. The top line was driven by an 11% increase in recurring revenues (99% of total revenues), which totaled \$184.9 million. However, interest income on funds held for clients slumped 75% to \$1.1 million.

The company is benefiting from the growing adoption of its solutions among clients with less than 50 employees. Further, healthy momentum in the firm's core and upper end of the market is a tailwind. However, lower interest rates have been negatively impacting the company's interest income on funds held for clients.

Quarter in Detail

The company's non-GAAP gross profit came in at \$136.7 million, up 5.3% year on year. Nonetheless, non-GAAP gross margin contracted 220 basis points (bps) year over year to 73.5%.

Adjusted EBITDA edged down 1.9% from the year-ago quarter to \$66.9 million. Moreover, adjusted EBITDA margin of 36% contracted 380 bps.

Non-GAAP operating income declined to \$57 million from the \$58.7 million reported in the year-ago quarter. Also, non-GAAP operating margin expanded 360 bps to 30.6%.

Paylocity exited the reported quarter with cash, cash equivalents and corporate investments of \$182 million compared with the \$285 million witnessed in the prior quarter. Additionally, as of Mar 31, 2021, the company had a long-term debt of \$100 million.

During the first nine months of fiscal 2021, the company generated \$85.8 million of operating cash flow.

Guidance

Buoyed by the better-than-expected fiscal third-quarter performance, Paylocity raised its fiscal 2021 outlook. Management now expects revenues between \$627.7 million and \$631.7 million, up from the \$623.5-\$628.5 million predicted earlier. Adjusted EBITDA is now projected in the band of \$164.3-\$167.3 million, up from the previous expectations of \$152-\$156 million.

For fourth-quarter fiscal 2021, Paylocity expects revenues of \$159.5-\$163.5 million, indicating 22-25% growth from the year-ago period. Adjusted EBITDA is projected in the band of \$31.5-\$34.5 million.

Quarter Ending	03/2021
Report Date	May 06, 2021
Sales Surprise	0.33%
EPS Surprise	33.33%
Quarterly EPS	0.88
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.97

Recent News

On Apr 28, Paylocity announced the release of an extensive independent study by Deloitte that highlights opportunities for significant time and cost savings through HR automation, freeing up organizations to focus on employee experience and company health.

On Feb 2, Paylocity announced that it has received the Top 100 BEST Award from the Association for Talent Development (ATD) for excellence in building modern employee learning solutions.

On Sep 29, Paylocity appointed Tauhidah Shakir as Vice President of Human Resources, Chief Diversity Officer,

On Sep 22, Paylocity introduced new Premium Video capabilities within its platform to enhance workplace communication.

On Sep 10, Paylocity launched next-generation touchless time clocks to extend its modern time and attendance tools portfolio.

On Jul 28, Paylocity introduces its new feature, Ask an Expert.

On Jul 20, Paylocity unveils its new company logo and tagline to better reflect its role as a trusted HR and payroll solution provider.

On Jul 8, Paylocity unveils COVID-19 Return to Work offerings to help businesses and employees navigate the unprecedented complexity of re-opening and re-energizing the workforce.

Valuation

Shares of Paylocity have decreased 14.4% in the YTD period, while gained 33.8% over the trailing 12-month period. While stocks in the Zacks sub-industry plunged 7.6% in the YTD period, the Zacks Computer & Technology sector gained 14.9% over the same time frame. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector have soared 35.6% and 50%, respectively.

The S&P 500 Index has increased 13.8% in the YTD period while has gained 40.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 12.57X forward 12-month sales, which compares to 8.75X for the Zacks sub-industry, 4.89X for the Zacks sector and 4.73X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 16.74X and as low as 4.50X with a 5-year median of 7.77X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$185 price target reflects 13.20X forward 12-month sales.

The table below shows summary valuation data for PCTY

Valuation Multiples - PCTY					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F12M	Current	12.57	8.75	4.89	4.73
	5-Year High	16.74	10.48	4.89	4.74
	5-Year Low	4.50	5.00	2.81	3.21
	5-Year Median	7.77	6.31	3.53	3.72
P/B TTM	Current	21.10	11.39	9.85	7.07
	5-Year High	30.13	14.70	9.85	7.07
	5-Year Low	10.60	2.89	4.44	3.84
	5-Year Median	17.35	6.55	5.87	5.02
EV/Sales TTM	Current	15.71	10.36	5.61	4.87
	5-Year High	20.19	14.11	5.80	4.87
	5-Year Low	5.51	3.12	3.09	2.65
	5-Year Median	9.50	6.47	4.00	3.64

As of 06/11/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 20% (200 out of 250)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Avalara, Inc. (AVLR)	Neutral	3
Calix, Inc (CALX)	Neutral	3
Coupa Software, Inc. (COUP)	Neutral	3
Datadog, Inc. (DDOG)	Neutral	3
MongoDB, Inc. (MDB)	Neutral	4
Datto Holding Corp. (MSP)	Neutral	3
New Relic, Inc. (NEWR)	Neutral	3
Snowflake Inc. (SNOW)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Internet - Software				Industry Peers		
	PCTY	X Industry	S&P 500	CALX	COUP	MDB
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	4
VGM Score	D	-	-	C	C	D
Market Cap	9.61 B	1.61 B	30.51 B	2.94 B	17.22 B	20.76 B
# of Analysts	7	4	12	3	9	5
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.28%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	D	-	-	D	F	D
Cash/Price	0.02	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.05
EV/EBITDA	91.21	-3.60	17.43	56.35	871.79	-158.11
PEG F1	4.58	3.36	2.13	NA	NA	NA
P/B	21.10	7.87	4.16	9.35	17.19	NA
P/CF	90.10	46.80	17.74	47.64	254.99	NA
P/E F1	91.58	71.42	21.48	41.82	NA	NA
P/S TTM	16.05	7.90	3.50	4.89	29.22	32.35
Earnings Yield	1.10%	0.17%	4.57%	2.39%	-0.06%	-0.39%
Debt/Equity	0.00	0.00	0.66	0.00	0.91	-4.44
Cash Flow (\$/share)	1.96	-0.02	6.83	0.98	0.92	-2.20
Growth Score	C	-	-	B	C	B
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	77.63%	22.20%	9.44%	NA	NA	NA
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	3.67%	-5.63%	21.49%	14.29%	-119.77%	-31.11%
Current Cash Flow Growth	14.04%	-9.94%	0.86%	2,487.81%	109.85%	37.85%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	91.27%	17.53%	7.28%	22.16%	30.15%	-40.73%
Current Ratio	1.07	1.88	1.39	2.83	0.77	3.33
Debt/Capital	0.00%	3.53%	41.51%	0.00%	47.84%	97.75%
Net Margin	10.67%	-13.29%	11.95%	10.15%	-45.08%	-43.16%
Return on Equity	15.28%	-10.44%	16.36%	29.40%	-19.32%	-648.36%
Sales/Assets	0.25	0.52	0.51	1.50	0.22	0.47
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	12.13%	15.17%	9.41%	16.28%	26.40%	32.15%
Momentum Score	A	-	-	C	A	F
Daily Price Change	1.05%	0.20%	0.19%	2.03%	4.83%	1.39%
1-Week Price Change	5.93%	3.38%	0.41%	1.28%	1.75%	5.97%
4-Week Price Change	8.30%	9.44%	1.76%	13.03%	1.39%	27.92%
12-Week Price Change	0.70%	-2.68%	8.54%	1.98%	-5.82%	10.38%
52-Week Price Change	37.73%	47.63%	39.66%	263.67%	4.58%	72.51%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	166,481	449,212	1,744,383	348,071	1,414,946	805,092
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	5.44%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	18.51%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	5.44%	0.00%	0.03%	0.00%	18.51%	-4.08%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	35.78%	-5.06%	3.52%	20.90%	-55.24%	-3.88%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.27%	-15.31%

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	D
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	A
VGM Score	D

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

Disclosures

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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.