

Patterson Companies (PDCO)

\$30.95 (As of 02/17/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$33.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 02/01/21)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

4-Sell

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: B

Growth: B

Momentum: A

Summary

Patterson Companies has outperformed the industry in a year's time. The company ended second-quarter fiscal 2021 on a strong note, wherein both earnings and revenues beat the consensus mark. Moreover, the company witnessed improved performance across its segments in the quarter under review. Prudent cost-saving approach and solid sales execution worked well for the stock. A broad spectrum of products cushions it against economic downturns in the MedTech space. We believe that a diverse product portfolio, strong veterinary business prospects, accretive acquisitions and partnerships are acting as the primary catalysts. However, the company witnessed a contraction in gross margin in the quarter under review. Due to the uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the company is unable to provide fiscal 2021 financial guidance.

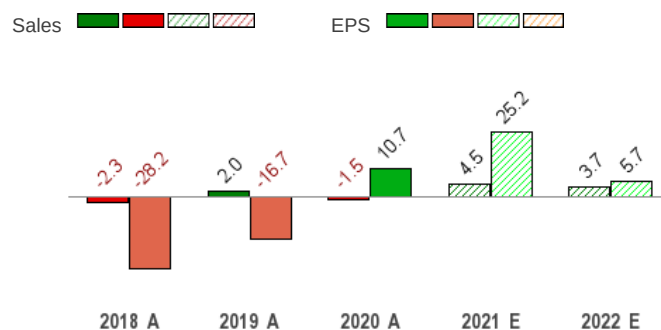
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$36.88 - \$12.93
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	848,984
Market Cap	\$3.2 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	10.3%
Beta	1.63
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$1.04 / 3.3%
Industry	Medical - Dental Supplies
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 39% (98 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	65.8%
Last Sales Surprise	8.8%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.0%
Expected Report Date	02/25/2021
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	17.6
P/E F1	16.0
PEG F1	2.3
P/S TTM	0.6

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	1,390 E	1,551 E	1,521 E	1,496 E	5,952 E
2021	1,246 A	1,553 A	1,490 E	1,461 E	5,738 E
2020	1,329 A	1,419 A	1,456 A	1,286 A	5,490 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.40 E	\$0.59 E	\$0.55 E	\$0.52 E	\$2.05 E
2021	\$0.33 A	\$0.63 A	\$0.51 E	\$0.50 E	\$1.94 E
2020	\$0.27 A	\$0.39 A	\$0.47 A	\$0.43 A	\$1.55 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 02/17/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 02/18/2021.

Overview

Headquartered in St. Paul, MN, Patterson Companies Inc. (PDCO) is one of the leading distributors of dental and animal health products.

The company completed the divestiture of medical business (Patterson Medical) to private equity firm Madison Dearborn Partners (MDP) for \$715 million in cash. Owing to this deal, Patterson Medical was reported as discontinued operations since the first quarter of fiscal 2016.

The company currently distributes its products through two subsidiaries — Patterson Dental and Patterson Animal Health.

Patterson Dental: The segment distributes consumable products (x-ray film, restorative materials, sterilization products and hand instruments); basic and advanced technology dental equipment; practice management and clinical software; patient education systems; and office forms and stationery in the U.S. and Canada.

The company's customers include dentists, dental laboratories, institutions, and other healthcare professionals. Patterson Dental is also the exclusive distributor for Sirona Dental Systems, a leading dental technologies company.

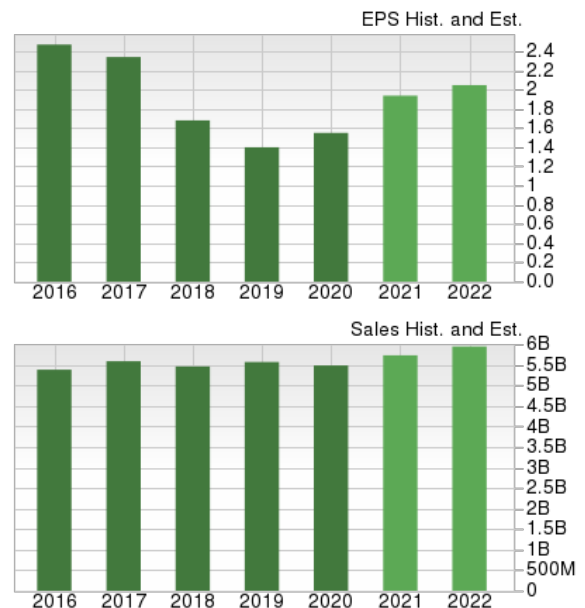
Patterson Animal: Notably, Patterson Animal Health is a leading distributor of veterinary supplies to companion-pet (dogs, cats and other common household pets) veterinary clinics, equine and large animal veterinary clinics, public and private institutions, and shelters across the U.S.

The acquisition of National Veterinary Services Limited (NVS) in 2013 expanded the company's footprint in the U.K. Following the acquisition of Animal Health International, this segment sells products for pets, horses, beef and dairy cattle, poultry and pigs.

FY20 at a Glance

Revenues were \$5.49 billion in FY20.

Patterson Dental registered revenues of \$2.10 billion in FY20, i.e. almost 38.2% of net revenues. Patterson Animal Health registered revenues of almost \$3.34 billion in FY20, i.e. 60.8% of net revenues.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ **Share Price Movement:** Over the past year, shares of Patterson Companies have gained 34% compared with the industry's growth of 16.9%. Broad product portfolio, lucrative prospects in the dental market and solid liquidity position have been benefiting the stock.
- ▲ **Broad Product Spectrum:** Patterson Companies provide a wide range of consumable supplies, equipment and software, and value-added services to its customers. The company's wide range of products hedges it from any meaningful sales shortfall during an economic downturn. Further, Patterson offers world-class service to its customers by delivering frequent, small quantity orders rapidly and reliably from its strategically located distribution centers.

A growing diversified product portfolio, strong veterinary business prospects, accretive acquisitions and strategic partnerships are key growth catalysts, going forward

In fiscal 2019, Patterson Companies launched and integrated a new cloud-based veterinary practice management software – NaVetor – for its Animal Health segment. This software is designed to streamline and simplify workflows for veterinary practices and demonstrates Patterson Companies' commitment to providing innovative solutions to customers.

During the fiscal first quarter of 2020, the company introduced a new private label brand named Pivotal, while continuing to add SKUs to its broader private label portfolio. Patterson Companies stands to gain from private label brands as they enable the company to serve customers with brilliant products at a reasonable price and more attractive margin profile.

- ▲ **Patterson Technology Center:** Patterson Companies' solid technology support infrastructure – the Patterson Technology Center in Effingham Ill, helps it to strengthen its customer base. Per management, Patterson companies is the only company that boasts specially trained staff dedicated solely to the sale and support of technology.

The Patterson Technology Center supports over 80,000 customers nationwide and resolves hardware, software, computer networking or digital technology issues very fast. In fact, management at Patterson confirmed the receipt of the title of technology leader by continually researching, developing and upgrading technology and support to keep pace with growing demand for greater efficiency and profitability for healthcare practices.

- ▲ **Dental Market Holds Promise:** Patterson Companies is expected advantage from the gradual recovery in the dental market and the rebounding dental equipment business (especially in North America), assisted by increased technology marketing/promotional activities. A research report by the Grand View Research suggests that the global dental equipment market is projected to grow at a CAGR 4.9% by 2020.

Per management, the company remains optimistic about serving a strong and stable dental end market.

In the fiscal second quarter, dental sales grew 11.9% year over year to \$631.7 million as dental practices reopened after widespread shutdown and patients started to return, thereby, driving higher demand for dentistry, and the company's broad array of products and value-added services.

- ▲ **Solid Prospects in Animal Health Unit:** Patterson Companies' growing Animal Health unit is a key long-term growth driver. Management at Patterson Companies expects solid margin improvement in the Animal Health Unit through stronger partnerships with product manufacturers and strong sales execution.

Patterson Companies is focused on the enterprise-wide productivity and efficiency initiatives that are essential for optimizing the company's operating model. Primarily on the back of high growth in companion pet population, the veterinary market seems to provide ample growth opportunity for the company. Moreover, the acquisition of Animal Health International is expected to double the size of Patterson Companies' existing veterinary business. It will help the company gain a strong foothold in the animal health market, complementing its existing presence in the companion pet market.

In the fiscal second quarter, the segment sales rose 7.8% on a year-over-year basis to \$914.2 million. According to the company, this resulted from solid internal sales growth of about 12% in its Companion Animal business. Both the company's companion animal and production animal businesses are anticipated to maintain sustained growth in future. In fact, the company remains optimistic that the Animal Health business is well-poised to drive the top line and, thereby, margins in the near term.

- ▲ **Acquisitions Driving Growth:** Patterson Companies has been expanding its business on the back of strategic acquisitions. In recent past, Patterson Dental Supply, Inc., a business unit of Patterson Companies announced that it acquired Fitzpatrick Dental Design, a dental office design and dental equipment dealer located in Moorpark, California.

Since 1987, the company has acquired over 30 dental products distributors in the United States and Canada, which improved its penetration in both the countries. The acquisition of Holt Dental Supply expands the company's local reach while also enhancing its Midwest domination. Patterson's past acquisition of NVS expanded its footprint in the UK veterinary market. Recently, Patterson acquired Animal Health International. We believe that the company will continue to pursue strategic acquisitions that will expand its product portfolio as well as improve its competitive position over the long term.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ **Cutthroat Competition in the Niche Space:** The U.S. dental products distribution industry is highly competitive and consists principally of national, regional and local full-service and mail-order distributors. Patterson faces competition from another national, full-service firm, Henry Schein Dental, a unit of Henry Schein. In addition, there are at least 15 full-service distributors that operate on a regional level and hundreds of small local distributors. Patterson needs to continue to introduce newer products in the market to withstand competitive pressures. Failure to do so will dilute the company's market share.
- ▼ **Supplier Concentration Issue:** Patterson has a significant key supplier concentration. The company's top 10 supply vendor's account for more than 40% of its cost of dental products sold in a fiscal year. Loss of relationship with these vendors will disrupt the supply of raw materials, which in turn will lead to lower sales of Patterson products.
- ▼ **Integration Risks:** Patterson had been on an acquisition spree which is improving its revenue opportunities on one hand and aggravating integration risks on the other. Regular acquisitions are also a distraction for management which is likely to impact organic growth. This may limit Patterson's future expansion and worsen the company's risk profile, going forward.
- ▼ **Challenging Macroeconomic Scenario:** Pricing pressure in the United States and Europe has been a staggering issue over the past few quarters. Healthcare reform in the United States has created a degree of uncertainty for the medical devices companies and has created a less flexible pricing environment. The company also anticipates these trends to persist in the coming quarters. In fact, the company's earnings declined year over year in the fiscal third quarter.

Moreover, the overall macro-economic uncertainty across the globe affects physician office visits, thereby impacting the company's progress. Thus, the company is treading cautiously in the markets it serves, especially Europe and the Americas, as the results from these territories might hurt margins. With growing concerns over healthcare spending taking its toll on players in the medical device space, the stock might suffer due to a sluggish market.
- ▼ **Balance Sheet View:** Patterson Companies exited first-quarter fiscal 2021 with cash and cash equivalents of \$119.6 compared with \$78 million on a sequential basis. Meanwhile, long-term debt came up to \$588 million, marginally up from the \$587.8 million sequentially. The long-term debt level is significantly higher than the quarter's cash and cash equivalent level. Also, we can see that the current debt level came in at \$136 million in the quarter (the company had no current debt in the preceding quarter). So, both the long-term debt level and current debt level are significantly higher than the company's short-term cash level, which is not particularly good when it comes to company's solvency position, as at least during a year of economic downturn, the company does not have sufficient cash for debt repayment.

A rapidly changing healthcare environment in the U.S., unfavorable price movements, declining dental revenues and integration risks pose significant challenges.

Last Earnings Report

Patterson Companies Q2 Earnings Top Estimates, Up Y/Y

Patterson Companies, Inc. reported adjusted earnings per share of 63 cents in second-quarter fiscal 2021, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 65.8%. Moreover, the bottom line improved 61.5% from the prior-year quarter. The upside came on the back of sustained expense discipline, enhanced mix and solid sales execution.

Revenue Details

Net sales in the quarter were \$1.55 billion, outpacing the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 8.8%. Also, the top line increased 9.5% year over year.

Segmental Analysis

The company currently distributes products through subsidiaries — Patterson Dental and Patterson Animal Health.

Dental Segment

This segment provides a complete range of consumable dental products, equipment, software, turnkey digital solutions and value-added services to dentists, and laboratories throughout North America.

In the fiscal second quarter, dental sales grew 11.9% year over year to \$631.7 million.

Dental Consumable

Sales in the sub-segment totaled \$357.8 million, up 17.5% year over year.

Dental Equipment & Software

Sales in the segment climbed 5.3% on a year-over-year basis to \$198.1 million.

Other

This segment comprises technical service, parts and labor, software support services and office supplies. Sales at the segment increased 5.5% on a year-over-year basis to \$75.8 million.

Animal Health Segment

This segment is a leading distributor of veterinary supplies to clinics, public and private institutions and shelters across the United States. In the fiscal second quarter, the segment sales rose 7.8% on a year-over-year basis to \$914.2 million.

Corporate

Sales at the segment were \$7.2 million, which improved 21.7% from \$5.9 million in the year-ago quarter.

Margin Analysis

Gross profit in the reported quarter was \$320.4 million, up 6.3% year over year. As a percentage of revenues, gross margin of 20.6% contracted 70 basis points (bps) on a year-over-year basis.

Operating expenses in the reported quarter totaled \$246.7 million, declining 22.8% from the prior-year quarter.

The company reported operating income of \$73.7 million, against the year-ago quarter's operating loss of \$18.1 million.

Financial Position

The company exited the fiscal second quarter with cash and cash equivalents of \$139.5 million, up from \$119.6 million on a sequential basis.

Cumulative net cash used in operating activities in the fiscal second quarter were \$423 million, significantly wider than the year-ago quarter's net cash utilized in operating activities of \$14.7 million.

Fiscal 2021 Guidance

Patterson Companies refrained from issuing fiscal 2021 financial guidance at this time citing the persistent uncertainty with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on business operations.

Quarter Ending	10/2020
Report Date	Dec 02, 2020
Sales Surprise	8.81%
EPS Surprise	65.79%
Quarterly EPS	0.63
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.86

Valuation

Patterson Companies' shares are up 20.3% and 34% in the past six months and the trailing 12-month periods, respectively. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and Zacks Medical sector are up 17.9% and 6.9% in the past six months period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and sector are up 16.9% and 5.3%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 17.5% in the past six months period and 18.1% the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 15.5X Forward 12-months earnings, which compares to 19.2X for the Zacks sub-industry, 22.8X for the Zacks sector and 22.9X the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 20.4X and as low as 9.1X, with a 5-year median of 15.8X.

Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$33 price target reflects 16.5X forward 12-months earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for PDCO.

Valuation Multiples - PDCO					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	15.5	19.22	22.84	22.92
	5-Year High	20.35	19.77	22.86	23.8
	5-Year Low	9.13	13.63	15.9	15.3
	5-Year Median	15.84	16.64	19.13	17.84
P/S F12M	Current	0.51	0.43	2.85	4.59
	5-Year High	0.86	0.43	3.17	4.59
	5-Year Low	0.23	0.23	2.26	3.21
	5-Year Median	0.44	0.29	2.84	3.68
P/B TTM	Current	3.39	5.5	4.54	6.7
	5-Year High	3.71	5.52	5.11	6.7
	5-Year Low	0.85	2.54	3.02	3.84
	5-Year Median	2.52	3.45	4.37	4.96

As of 02/17/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 39% (98 out of 253)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Align Technology, Inc. (ALGN)	Outperform	1
Danaher Corporation (DHR)	Outperform	2
IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. (IDXX)	Outperform	2
AmerisourceBergen Corporation (ABC)	Neutral	3
Henry Schein, Inc. (HSIC)	Neutral	3
Integra LifeSciences Holdings Corporation (IART)	Neutral	3
DENTSPLY SIRONA Inc. (XRAY)	Neutral	2
Zimmer Biomet Holdings, Inc. (ZBH)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Medical - Dental Supplies				Industry Peers		
	PDCO	X Industry	S&P 500	ABC	HSIC	IDXX
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Outperform
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	4	-	-	3	3	2
VGM Score	B	-	-	A	B	C
Market Cap	3.15 B	3.46 B	27.78 B	21.16 B	10.08 B	45.97 B
# of Analysts	8	5	13	8	9	5
Dividend Yield	3.18%	0.00%	1.41%	1.70%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	B	-	-	A	A	F
Cash/Price	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.23	0.05	0.01
EV/EBITDA	15.99	16.22	14.78	-4.28	10.09	72.72
PEG F1	2.27	2.41	2.37	1.06	2.12	4.63
P/B	3.53	5.00	3.81	NA	2.66	72.54
P/CF	3.29	16.45	15.45	10.54	15.16	68.00
P/E F1	15.95	22.77	20.87	12.17	19.33	73.16
P/S TTM	0.57	3.52	3.07	0.11	1.05	16.99
Earnings Yield	5.94%	3.25%	4.71%	8.21%	5.17%	1.37%
Debt/Equity	0.66	0.19	0.68	-7.12	0.13	1.36
Cash Flow (\$/share)	9.54	2.56	6.70	9.99	4.28	7.95
Growth Score	B	-	-	A	C	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	-12.32%	8.67%	9.32%	9.03%	1.73%	25.28%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	25.00%	31.01%	13.98%	7.48%	24.22%	9.63%
Current Cash Flow Growth	327.70%	3.15%	2.56%	2.02%	-13.79%	31.42%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	27.55%	12.09%	7.55%	7.86%	2.76%	19.33%
Current Ratio	1.54	1.66	1.38	0.99	1.49	1.82
Debt/Capital	39.72%	26.57%	41.31%	47.71%	17.60%	57.57%
Net Margin	-9.15%	-0.08%	10.60%	-1.66%	6.14%	21.49%
Return on Equity	17.57%	13.35%	14.86%	108.70%	11.60%	159.90%
Sales/Assets	1.90	0.81	0.51	4.50	1.29	1.32
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	4.51%	10.64%	6.46%	7.25%	10.64%	12.62%
Momentum Score	A	-	-	F	D	D
Daily Price Change	-3.89%	-0.20%	-0.05%	1.88%	-8.09%	0.41%
1-Week Price Change	4.64%	0.00%	1.44%	-4.11%	-0.96%	8.24%
4-Week Price Change	-0.82%	5.25%	1.42%	1.46%	-7.57%	9.15%
12-Week Price Change	14.02%	15.76%	6.38%	2.13%	1.15%	21.02%
52-Week Price Change	34.02%	26.74%	8.82%	10.70%	-11.99%	85.71%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	848,984	267,427	2,013,641	1,136,754	678,567	415,526
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-1.98%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.68%	1.79%	-1.07%	10.42%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	21.47%	0.00%	1.97%	1.79%	-0.92%	11.79%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.27%	-0.32%	-0.60%	9.84%

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	B
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	A
VGM Score	B

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

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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.