

Planet Fitness (PLNT)

\$78.35 (As of 03/19/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$67.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation: Underperform

(Since: 02/12/21)

Prior Recommendation: Neutral

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

5-Strong Sell

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:F

Value: F

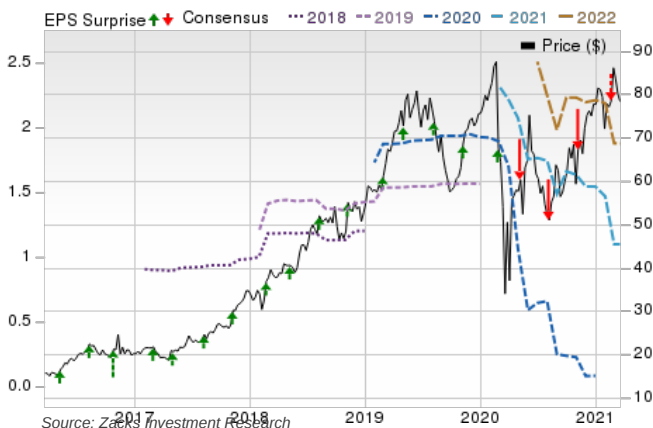
Growth: F

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of Planet Fitness have underperformed the industry so far this year. The dismal performance can be primarily attributed to the coronavirus pandemic. Owing to the rising number of cases, several of its stores had to be closed again to comply with the local guidelines. Although the company has implemented enhanced sanitation measures and social-distancing protocols upon reopening, traffic and memberships have been declining consistently due to a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. Given the pandemic, the company is also witnessing slowdown in new store developments and remodels. Owing to the uncertainty and significant business impacts of COVID-19, the company has not provided any guidance for 2021. Meanwhile, earnings estimates for 2021 have declined over the past 30 days, depicting analysts' concern regarding the stock growth potential.

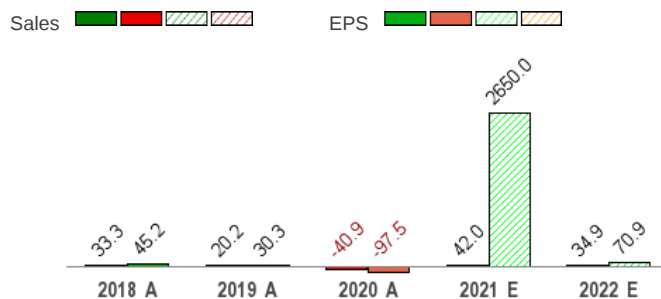
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$90.34 - \$31.22
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,587,845
Market Cap	\$6.8 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	0.9%
Beta	1.32
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Leisure and Recreation Services
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 21% (200 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-26.1%
Last Sales Surprise	-3.5%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-25.1%
Expected Report Date	05/04/2021
Earnings ESP	-7.0%
P/E TTM	2,611.7
P/E F1	71.2
PEG F1	3.3
P/S TTM	16.7

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	180 E	207 E	203 E	214 E	780 E
2021	124 E	136 E	150 E	169 E	578 E
2020	127 A	40 A	105 A	134 A	407 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.45 E	\$0.54 E	\$0.48 E	\$0.53 E	\$1.88 E
2021	\$0.18 E	\$0.26 E	\$0.31 E	\$0.38 E	\$1.10 E
2020	\$0.16 A	-\$0.32 A	\$0.02 A	\$0.17 A	\$0.04 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 03/19/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 03/22/2021.

Overview

Planet Fitness, headquartered in Hampton, NH, was formed in 1992. It is one of the leading franchisors and operators of fitness centers in the United States. As of Dec 31, 2020, the company had approximately 13.5 million members as well as 2,124 stores in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Panama, Mexico and Australia. As of Dec 31, 2020, more than 95% of all franchise stores were owned and operated by a franchisee group.

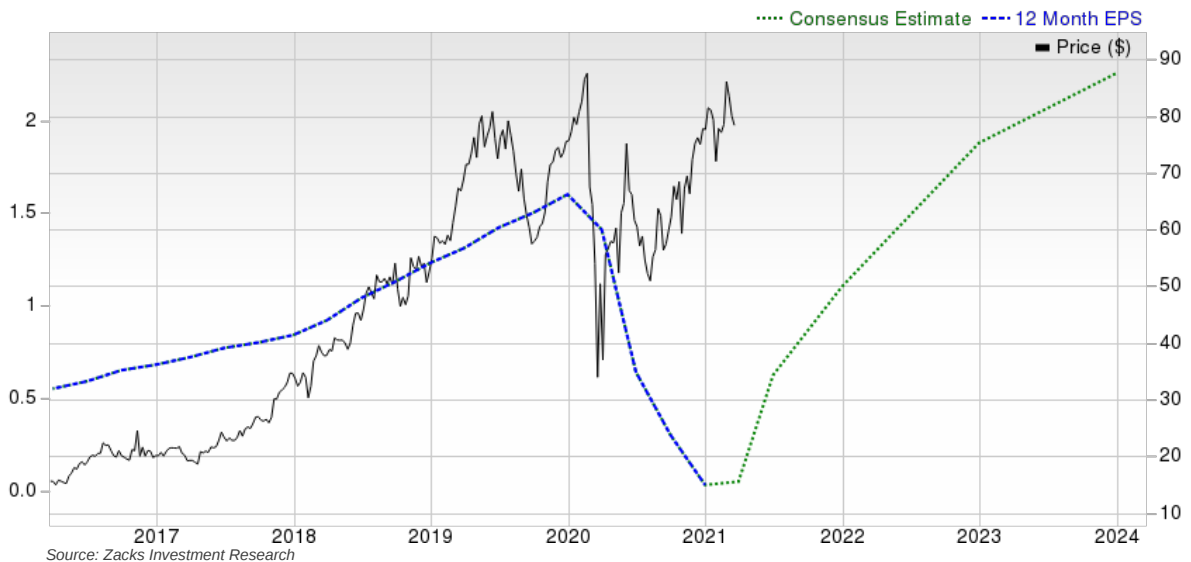
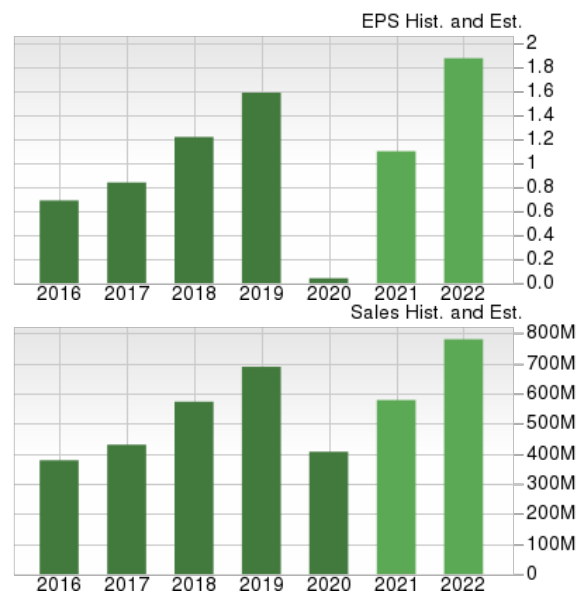
Planet Fitness reports its financial numbers under three segments — Franchise, Corporate-Owned Stores, and Equipment.

Franchise Segment (50.7% of total revenues in 2020): The segment is involved in franchising business in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. The segment generates revenues through royalty fees, franchise fees, placement revenue, other fees and commission income.

Corporate-Owned Store Segment (28.8%): The segment generates revenues through monthly membership charges, enrollment, annual and prepaid fees paid members, and retail sales.

Equipment Segment (20.5%): Revenues at this segment are realized through sales of fitness equipment to franchisee-owned stores in the United States. Notably, franchisee-owned stores replace its equipment after five to seven years based on the life of a specific equipment.

Planet Fitness has enough liquidity to survive the coronavirus pandemic for some time. As of Dec 31, 2020, the company's cash balance totaled \$439.5 million compared with \$419.7 million as of Sep 30, 2020. Although the coronavirus pandemic has negatively impacted the company's operations and cash flows during the fourth quarter, the company stated that it has enough liquidity to meet its debt service requirements and obligations under its tax benefit arrangements, capital expenditures and working capital needs for at least the next 12 months.



Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ **Coronavirus Likely to Hurt 2021 Results:** The coronavirus pandemic has affected the company's business on a large scale. Owing to the rising number of cases, several of its stores had to be closed again to comply with the local guidelines. During the fourth quarter, the company witnessed temporary closures in California as well as parts of Canada and Panama. Also, its membership base also contracted significantly due to the same. Although the company has implemented enhanced sanitation measures and social-distancing protocols upon reopening, traffic has been declining persistently owing to the rising number of COVID-19 cases. This along with a slowdown in new store developments remains a concern. Owing to the uncertainty and significant business impacts of COVID-19, the company has not provided any guidance for 2021.
- ▼ **Q4 Top & Bottom Lines Decline Sharply:** Planet Fitness reported dismal fourth-quarter 2020 results, wherein earnings and revenues missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Moreover, the top and the bottom lines declined sharply year over year owing to the coronavirus pandemic. The company reported adjusted earnings per share of 17 cents compared with 44 cents reported in the prior-year quarter. The top line also declined 30.1% from the year-ago quarter primarily due to dismal performance by Franchise, Corporate-owned Stores and Equipment segments.
- ▼ **Cyclical Nature of the Industry is Concerning:** The leisure industry is cyclical as worsening global economic conditions might dent Planet Fitness' revenues and profits. Markedly, consumer demand for services is closely linked to the performance of the general economy and also sensitive to business and personal discretionary spending levels.
- ▼ **Economic Slowdown & Other Risks:** Planet Fitness relies heavily on franchisees rather than corporate-owned stores. While this franchise business helps in reducing the company's costs, it bears a number of risks that can lead to a crack in the business model. First, only a small portion of revenues comes from equipment sales and corporate-owned stores. In case of an economic slowdown, wherein demand fluctuates, Planet Fitness will be exposed to the threat of reduced royalty fees and lesser sales from equipment. Second, Planet Fitness' business rests on its brand image. Increasing reliance on franchisee exposes the company to the risk of blemishing its own brand name, in case any third-party franchisee action increases. Also, the company's business could be damaged in the event of any third-party misappropriation, dilution, infringement or other violation of intellectual property.

Slowdown in new store developments owing to the pandemic, remains a concern.

Risks

- **Low-cost Business Model:** Although the nature of the business is traditional/generic, the company's strategy to attract customers with a \$10-a-month membership fee and a no-frills atmosphere has helped it gain a significant share in existing market and expand market size. The low-cost model has also helped Planet Fitness to tap into the market that is enthusiastic enough to join a cheaper second gym. Given the financial strength of its business model, the company witnessed no permanent store closures and franchisee bankruptcies amid the ongoing pandemic.
 - **Reopening of Stores To Drive Growth:** Following the closure of the company's stores in March, the company implemented a reopening approach on May 1. Notably, it reopened two stores in Georgia and one in Utah, in accordance with local official guidelines. Keeping in mind the safety of its team and members, the company plans to make additional store reopenings in the coming periods as well. As of Dec 31, 2020, 1,760 stores were reopened, of which 1,682 were franchisee-owned stores and 78 were corporate-owned stores.
 - **Strategic Efforts Bode Well:** In an effort to expand its presence, Planet Fitness has been focusing on strategic partnerships and international expansions. The company collaborated with iFit, a leader in online streaming home workouts. With this partnership, the company also initiated a series of new workouts with minimal or no equipment, thereby making it available to everyone exclusively on the Planet Fitness App. It will be available for both members and non-members free of cost. In Jan 2020, the company also joined forces with Biggest Loser, thus expanding its reach to viewers interested in health and fitness. Despite the coronavirus crisis, management indicated that several private-equity backed franchise groups have expressed interest in further investments in the Planet Fitness brand. In January 2021, the company initiated promotions targeting casual first-time gym goers. Backed by this initiative, the company witnessed an uptick in membership sign-ups with 13.8 million members (as of January-end), compared with 13.5 million members as of December 2020. Although, memberships have increased sequentially, it is still below the pre-pandemic level.
 - **Increased Focus on Digitalization Bodes Well:** Apart from attracting new members to its brand, engaging existing members via its mobile app is a priority. The company intends to achieve this by focusing on driving downloads, app usage and enhanced functionality such as referral incentives, in-app messaging, notifications and enhanced account management tools. Moreover, features such as upgrades from classic white card membership to black card are an opportunity to drive rate. Word of mouth marketing, driven by vast membership base through the referral feature in the app, extends the reach of its marketing machine. Nonetheless, the company intends to capitalize its size and scale to further expand its brand awareness through its 13.5 million members. Planet Fitness has accelerated its digital initiatives during the coronavirus-induced shutdowns. During the second quarter of 2020, the company rolled out additional features like in-app messaging and crowd meter detector to enhance customer convenience for better workouts.

Meanwhile, the company is witnessing solid traffic in its digital platform from both existing and non-existing members, particularly for iFit content. Also, the company's United We Move workouts have been witnessing positive response on Facebook across the globe.

Given solid customer engagement in its fitness content, the company is currently testing a digital only subscription membership for \$5.99/month through its mobile app "PF plus." In this, the company intends to provide more premium content apart from the free content, which is already available. This includes live daily workouts, digital fitness classes (accessible through home and gym) and aggressive workout series to help customers advance over time. Markedly, with this initiative, the company is optimistic regarding the future conversion of non-members as well.
 - **Solid Brand Presence:** Planet Fitness is one of the largest and fastest growing franchisors as well as operators of fitness centers in the United States. As of Dec 31, 2020, the company had approximately 13.5 million members as well as 2,124 stores in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Panama, Mexico and Australia.
 - **Enough Liquidity to Tide Over Coronavirus Crisis:** Planet Fitness stated it has enough liquidity to survive the coronavirus pandemic for some time. As of Dec 31, 2020, the company's cash balance totaled \$439.5 million compared with \$419.7 million as of Sep 30, 2020. Although the coronavirus pandemic has negatively impacted the company's operations and cash flows during the fourth quarter, the company stated that it has enough liquidity to meet its debt service requirements and obligations under its tax benefit arrangements, capital expenditures and working capital needs for at least the next 12 months. Meanwhile, long-term debt (net of current maturities) during the fourth quarter amounted to \$1,676.4 million compared with \$1,679.2 million at the end of third-quarter 2020.
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Last Earnings Report

Planet Fitness Q4 Earnings & Revenues Miss Estimates

Planet Fitness reported dismal fourth-quarter 2020 results, with earnings and revenues missing the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Further, the metrics declined sharply year over year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, management stated that the company is witnessing net member growth and improved usage on the back of its marketing activities. Going forward, the company intends to focus on expanding its store footprint and digitalization to boost its fitness offerings. Also, the company is optimistic about long-term growth opportunities, given the continuity in vaccine rollouts.

Quarter Ending **12/2020**

Report Date	Feb 18, 2021
Sales Surprise	-3.49%
EPS Surprise	-26.09%
Quarterly EPS	0.17
Annual EPS (TTM)	0.03

Quarterly Details

The company reported adjusted earnings per share (EPS) of 17 cents, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 23 cents by 26.1%. In the prior-year quarter, the company had reported adjusted EPS of 44 cents.

Quarterly revenues of \$133.8 million lagged the consensus mark of \$139 million by 3.7%. The top line also declined 30.1% from the year-ago quarter's levels primarily due to the dismal performance across the Franchise, Corporate-owned Stores and Equipment segments.

Franchise segment revenues fell 8.8% year over year to \$66.9 million. The downside was primarily caused by temporary store closures owing to COVID-19, lower membership levels and equipment placement revenues. However, this was partially offset by higher royalties on annual fee billings.

The Corporate-owned Stores segment's revenues fell 5.6% year over year to \$38.9 million. The decline was mainly due to temporary store closures and reduced membership levels owing to the pandemic. However, this was partially offset by revenues accumulated from the acquisition of 12 franchisee-owned stores (in December 2019) and the opening of nine new corporate-owned stores (since Oct 1, 2019).

In the Equipment segment, revenues plunged 63.7% year over year to \$28 million on account of lower equipment sales to new and existing franchisee-owned stores. Also, extensions for all new store development (12 to 18-months) and re-equipment investment obligations lead to the downtrend.

Moreover, EBITDA in the Franchise segment declined 14.1% year over year to \$43.6 million. The decline was primarily caused by temporary shutdowns owing to COVID-19 and decline in membership levels. At the Corporate-owned stores segment, EBITDA fell 18.6% year over year to \$12.3 million. EBITDA in the Equipment segment slumped 83.2% year over year to \$3.1 million.

Total adjusted EBITDA at the end of the fourth quarter deteriorated to \$51.1 million from \$76.6 million in the year-ago quarter.

Other Financial Details

As of Dec 31, 2020, cash and cash equivalents totaled \$439.5 million compared with \$436.3 million as of Dec 31, 2019. Long-term debt (net of current maturities) amounted to \$1,676.4 million at the end of fourth-quarter 2020 compared with \$1,687.5 million at 2019-end.

2020 Highlights

Total revenues in 2020 came in at \$406.6 million compared with \$688.8 million in 2019.

Adjusted EBITDA in 2020 came in at \$120.4 million compared with \$282.2 million in 2019.

In 2020, adjusted diluted EPS came in at 4 cents compared with \$1.59 in the previous year.

2021 Outlook

Owing to the uncertainty tied to the crisis, the company did not provide any guidance for 2021.

Valuation

Planet Fitness' shares are up by 0.9% in the year-to-date period and up 109.1% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry is up by 24.4% and the Zacks Consumer Discretionary sector is up by 8.6% in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry was up by 138.4% while sector was up by 93.6%.

The S&P 500 index is up 4.5% in the year-to-date period and 76.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 10.88x forward 12-month sales, which compares to 3.91x for the Zacks sub-industry, 3.07x for the Zacks sector and 4.52x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 12.22x and as low as 2.99x, with a 5-year median of 7.49x. Our Underperform recommendation indicates that the stock will perform worse-than the market. Our \$67 price target reflects 9.3x forward 12-month sales.

The table below shows summary valuation data for PLNT.

Valuation Multiples - PLNT					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F12M	Current	10.88	3.91	3.07	4.52
	5-Year High	12.22	3.91	3.07	4.52
	5-Year Low	2.99	0.74	1.72	3.21
	5-Year Median	7.49	1.8	2.51	3.69
P/CF	Current	207.6	N/A	19.32	23.91
	5-Year High	235	55.43	19.7	24.29
	5-Year Low	7.26	N/A	9.36	12.87
	5-Year Median	24.63	8.26	13.63	18.62
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	57.65	N/A	14.77	17.39
	5-Year High	64.06	16.15	17.97	17.68
	5-Year Low	12.3	N/A	8.32	9.62
	5-Year Median	22.06	9.05	12.29	13.33

As of 03/19/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 21% (200 out of 253)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Bluegreen Vacations Corporation (BXG)	Neutral	3
Clarus Corporation (CLAR)	Neutral	2
Cinemark Holdings Inc (CNK)	Neutral	3
Camping World Holdings Inc. (CWH)	Neutral	2
Drive Shack Inc. (DS)	Neutral	NA
Marcus Corporation The (MCS)	Neutral	3
Peloton Interactive, Inc. (PTON)	Neutral	3
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. (SEAS)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Leisure And Recreation Services				Industry Peers		
	PLNT	X Industry	S&P 500	BXG	CLAR	DS
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Underperform	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	5	-	-	3	2	-
VGM Score	F	-	-	B	A	-
Market Cap	6.78 B	941.23 M	28.48 B	703.09 M	538.43 M	233.46 M
# of Analysts	10	4	13	2	3	0
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.38%	0.00%	0.58%	0.00%
Value Score	F	-	-	A	D	-
Cash/Price	0.07	0.15	0.06	0.35	0.03	0.08
EV/EBITDA	62.68	6.43	15.90	15.27	39.30	-10.88
PEG F1	3.30	2.19	2.36	NA	NA	NA
P/B	NA	1.75	3.90	1.91	2.61	NA
P/CF	106.99	19.31	15.91	18.33	20.80	NA
P/E F1	71.23	26.09	21.22	19.40	17.32	NA
P/S TTM	16.68	2.94	3.30	1.35	2.40	1.06
Earnings Yield	1.40%	-4.55%	4.61%	5.15%	5.76%	-14.41%
Debt/Equity	-2.48	0.24	0.67	1.64	0.15	-1.37
Cash Flow (\$/share)	0.73	-0.32	6.78	0.53	0.83	-0.55
Growth Score	F	-	-	C	A	NA
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	-10.14%	-2.35%	9.32%	NA	508.31%	NA
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	2,652.50%	49.34%	14.54%	92.31%	41.90%	45.65%
Current Cash Flow Growth	-67.78%	-106.84%	0.72%	-39.34%	-6.03%	-1.19%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	-6.25%	-1.10%	7.32%	-16.91%	-5.02%	NA
Current Ratio	5.07	1.22	1.39	9.50	3.59	1.84
Debt/Capital	NA%	58.85%	41.42%	62.16%	13.02%	87.52%
Net Margin	-3.69%	-38.10%	10.59%	1.58%	2.48%	-25.62%
Return on Equity	-0.58%	-22.68%	14.75%	8.29%	8.62%	NA
Sales/Assets	0.22	0.24	0.51	0.41	0.88	0.47
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	42.26%	11.55%	7.02%	30.14%	25.96%	17.98%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	F	A	-
Daily Price Change	-2.77%	0.00%	-0.12%	-0.61%	-1.77%	0.58%
1-Week Price Change	-4.07%	2.56%	2.96%	2.38%	-0.06%	33.62%
4-Week Price Change	-1.78%	12.52%	3.72%	26.96%	-1.32%	37.15%
12-Week Price Change	0.78%	30.77%	8.75%	39.57%	11.47%	23.93%
52-Week Price Change	140.26%	153.26%	72.55%	153.26%	95.21%	160.90%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,587,845	282,355	2,394,762	39,390	178,180	3,836,335
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-25.10%	-9.28%	0.00%	-14.53%	6.94%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-28.78%	-16.40%	2.10%	-12.28%	8.82%	10.71%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-39.46%	-8.82%	0.00%	-17.39%	-6.25%	0.00%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	F
Growth Score	F
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	F

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 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.