

Ross Stores, Inc. (ROST)

\$85.28 (As of 10/28/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$90.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 06/04/20)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: C

Growth: B

Momentum: B

Summary

Shares of Ross Stores have underperformed the industry year to date. The stock's dismal run on the bourses can be attributable to second-quarter fiscal 2020 results, wherein both top and bottom lines declined year over year. Results were affected by temporary COVID-19-related store closures, including all Ross Dress for Less and dd's DISCOUNTS stores. Going ahead, management noted that business trends are likely to remain drab during the fiscal third quarter due to the COVID-19 impacts on demand and economy. As a result, management refrained from providing top and bottom-line guidance for fiscal 2020. However, its store reopening efforts seem encouraging. The company continues to expect opening 39 new stores this fall and 66 in fiscal 2020. Apart from these, declining costs for the past two quarters act as upsides.

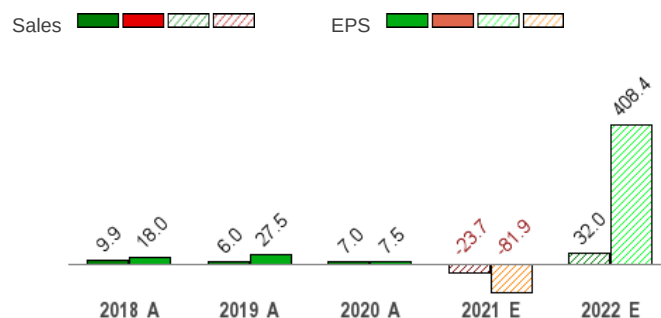
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$124.16 - \$56.30
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,741,583
Market Cap	\$30.4 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	-26.8%
Beta	0.72
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Retail - Discount Stores
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 48% (123 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	58.1%
Last Sales Surprise	2.6%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.0%
Expected Report Date	11/19/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	45.1
P/E F1	102.8
PEG F1	10.3
P/S TTM	2.4

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	3,520 E	3,826 E	4,051 E	4,644 E	16,150 E
2021	1,843 A	2,685 A	3,436 E	4,242 E	12,238 E
2020	3,797 A	3,980 A	3,849 A	4,413 A	16,039 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$1.00 E	\$1.11 E	\$1.00 E	\$1.24 E	\$4.22 E
2021	-\$0.29 A	-\$0.13 A	\$0.61 E	\$1.04 E	\$0.83 E
2020	\$1.13 A	\$1.14 A	\$1.03 A	\$1.28 A	\$4.58 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 10/28/2020. The reports text is as of 10/29/2020.

Overview

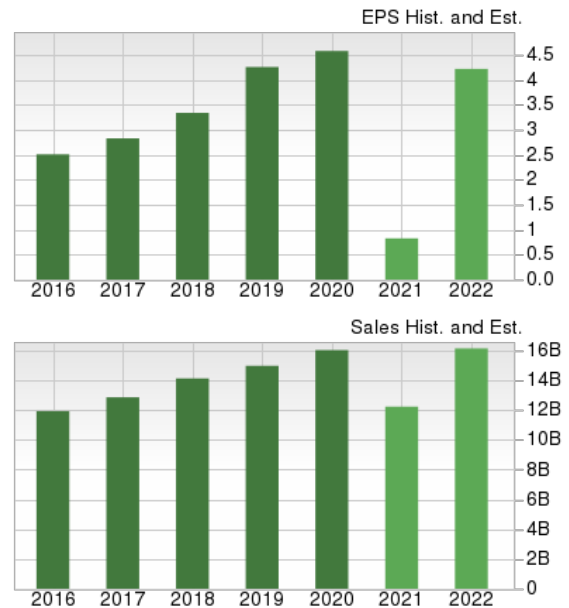
Based in Dublin, CA, Ross Stores Inc. operates as an off-price retailer of apparel and home accessories, primarily in the United States. The company operates its stores under the Ross Dress for Less (Ross) and dd's DISCOUNTS names. The company's stores are located mostly in community and neighborhood shopping centers in heavily populated urban and suburban areas.

Ross Stores primarily offers in-season, branded, and designer apparel, footwear, accessories and other home-related merchandise for everyone in the family. This format primarily targets middle-income households. Prices offered at Ross are generally 20% to 60% below the regular prices of most department and specialty stores.

dd's DISCOUNTS features more moderately-priced first-quality, in-season, name brand apparel, accessories, footwear, and home fashions for the entire family. These stores target moderate-income households. The dd's DISCOUNTS stores offer products at a 20% to 70% lesser price than the moderate department and discount stores.

Ross Stores remains focused with its store expansion initiatives over the years. Further, the company's efforts to expand base by making efforts to increase penetration in the existing as well as new markets. In this regard, it opened 26 stores across nine different states in February and March.

As of Aug 1, 2020, Ross Stores operated 1,832 outlets, including 1,566 Ross Dress for Less stores and 266 dd's DISCOUNTS stores.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ **Store Re-opening Efforts:** Ross Stores started store re-opening efforts with governments easing restrictions gradually. The company re-opened roughly 700 stores on May 14 in a phased manner. Also, it remains committed to follow the health guidelines and government regulations, such as ensuring proper sanitation of stores and workspaces, providing personal protective equipment to store associates and practicing social distancing norms. Further, the company's distribution center network resumed operations from the end of May. Going ahead, sales from reopened stores might be able to provide some cushion to the company's top line in the near term.
- ▲ **Store Expansion Plan:** Ross Stores has been consistent with the execution of its store expansion plans over the years. The company's store expansion efforts are focused on continually increasing penetration in the existing as well as new markets. Although management didn't open any new store in the second quarter due to the rising uncertainty in consumer demand and shopping patterns, it has recently opened 39 stores thus achieving its target of opening 66 stores in fiscal 2020. The company currently operates 1,566 Ross stores and 266 dd's DISCOUNTS stores across 39 states, the District of Columbia and Guam. Earlier, it projected to expand the Ross chain of stores to 2,400 locations alongside operating about 600 dd's DISCOUNTS stores over the long term.
- ▲ **Lower Costs Bodes Well:** Ross Stores' has been witnessing a decline in costs for the past two quarters. Cost of goods sold (COGS) fell 26.9% to \$2,080.1 million during the second quarter of fiscal 2020. Although selling, general and administrative (SG&A) as a percentage of sales expanded 450 basis points, SG&A expenses decreased 12.2% to \$519.5 million. Prior to this, COGS and SG&A expenses declined 30% and 25.6%, respectively, in the fiscal first quarter. Persistence of this trend is likely to favorably impact the company's bottom line in the near future.
- ▲ **Financial Flexibility:** Ross Stores' cash and cash equivalents at the end of second-quarter fiscal 2020 increased 42.1% sequentially to \$3,793 million. Further, the company's cash position remains sufficient to fund short term obligations of about \$802.5 million as of Aug 1, 2020. Moreover, long-term debt of \$4,887.5 million (including non-current operating lease liabilities) fell 0.6% sequentially. Apart from these, it has a liquidity of \$4.3 billion with a cash balance of \$3.8 billion and a revolving credit facility of \$500 million, which is likely to keep it afloat amid the pandemic.

Ross Stores' phased store reopening efforts seems encouraging. Also, its plans to expand stores despite the adverse impacts of COVID-19 pandemic as well as declining costs bode well.

Reasons To Sell:

▼ **Stock Appears Overvalued:** Considering price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio, Ross Stores looks pretty overvalued compared with the market at large. The stock has a trailing 12-month P/E ratio of 45.12x compared with 23.15x for the S&P 500. The company's trailing 12-month P/E ratio is above the median level of 26.71x and below the high level of 51.19x, scaled in the past year

▼ **Soft Q2 Results:** Shares of Ross Stores declined 26.8% year to date, against the industry's growth of 11.6%. Although Ross Stores reported better-than-expected second-quarter fiscal 2020 results, both top and bottom lines declined year over year. Results were affected by temporary COVID-19-related store closures, including all Ross Dress for Less and dd's DISCOUNTS stores. Further, costs related to COVID-19 and negative timing of packaway remained concerns. Moreover, comparable store sales have fallen 12% between the date of the reopening of these stores and the end of the fiscal second quarter. Although it witnessed slightly improved sales trends driven by pent-up demand and higher markdowns, the metric was hurt by depleted store inventory levels.

Going ahead, management expects business trends to remain drab during the fiscal third quarter with comparable store sales down mid-teens year over year for the first two and a half weeks. Further, it continues to remain uncertain about the COVID-19 impacts on demand and economy. As a result, management refrained from providing top and bottom-line guidance for fiscal 2020.

▼ **Macroeconomic Factors May Affect Discretionary Sales:** Ross Stores' customers remain sensitive to macroeconomic factors, including credit availability, unemployment levels, interest rate hikes and increase in fuel and energy costs, which may negatively impact their discretionary spending, and in turn the company's growth and profitability. Any unfavorable changes in trade policy may result in higher prices for its customers and may negatively impact their budgets and consequently their discretionary spending.

▼ **Competitive Pressure:** Ross operates in a highly fragmented retail apparel market and faces intense competition from other well-established department stores, specialty stores, discount stores, warehouse stores, other off-price retailers, and manufacturer-owned outlet stores. Many of the company's competitors have larger number of stores, greater market presence, more brand recognition and financial resources that may make it difficult for the company to compete.

Ross Stores' second-quarter fiscal 2020 results were hurt by temporary store closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related costs.

Last Earnings Report

Ross Stores' Q2 Loss Narrower Than Expected, Sales Beat

Ross Stores reported better-than-expected second-quarter fiscal 2020 results. However, both top and bottom lines declined year over year. Results were affected by temporary COVID-19-related store closures, including all Ross Dress for Less and dd's DISCOUNTS stores. Further, loss of sales, as only 75% of stores were open, weighed on operating margin. Moreover, costs related to COVID-19 and negative timing of packaway remained concerns.

Going ahead, management noted that business trends are likely to remain drab during the fiscal third quarter with comparable store sales down mid-teens year over year for the first two and a half weeks.

However, the company started reopening its stores in a phased manner from May 14th and by the end of June, most of its stores were operational. Comparable store sales have fallen 12% between the date of the reopening of these stores and the end of the fiscal second quarter. Although, it witnessed improved sales driven by pent-up demand and higher markdowns, the metric was hurt by depleted store inventory levels. That said, it continues to remain uncertain about the COVID-19 impacts on demand and economy. As a result, management refrained from providing top and bottom-line guidance for fiscal 2020.

Q2 Highlights

Ross Stores posted a loss of 13 cents per share against earnings of \$1.14 per share reported in the prior-year quarter. However, the figure was narrower than the Zacks Consensus Estimate of a loss of 31 cents.

Total sales plunged 32.5% to \$2,684.7 million but surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$2,617 million. Further, sales were hurt by adverse COVID-19 impacts such as shifting consumer demand, mostly in California, Florida, Texas and Arizona, which accounts for 50% of its store base.

Cost of goods sold or COGS declined 26.9% to \$2,080.1 million. Selling, general and administrative (SG&A) expenses decreased 12.2% to \$519.5 million while the metric as a percentage of sales expanded 450 basis points (bps).

Store Update

During the quarter, the company did not open any new stores. It continues to anticipate opening 39 stores this fall season and 66 in fiscal 2020.

Financials

Ross Stores ended the quarter with cash and cash equivalents of \$3,793 million, long-term debt of \$2,285.6 million and total shareholders' equity of \$2,286.3 million. Earlier, the company had already suspended the share repurchase program in light of the ongoing pandemic. Moving ahead, it does not intend to repurchase any shares for the rest of fiscal 2020.

Apart from these, it has a liquidity of \$4.3 billion and a revolving credit facility of \$500 million, which is likely to keep it afloat amid the pandemic.

Quarter Ending	07/2020
Report Date	Aug 20, 2020
Sales Surprise	2.59%
EPS Surprise	58.06%
Quarterly EPS	-0.13
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.89

Recent News

Ross Stores' Expansion Plans on Track, Adds 39 New Stores - Oct 26, 2020

Ross Stores remain on track with its store expansion plans. In this regard, the company has launched 30 Ross Dress for Less stores and nine dd's DISCOUNTS stores across 17 states, to be effective from this month. With these new additions, the company has achieved its target of opening 66 stores in fiscal 2020.

Valuation

Ross Stores shares are down 26.8% in the year-to-date period and nearly 22.7% for the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are up 11.6% and 32% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 14.7% and 37.8%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 5.2% in the year-to-date period and 11.4% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 24.58X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 26.46X for the Zacks sub-industry, 31.14X for the Zacks sector and 20.94X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 39.79X and as low as 12.15X, with a 5-year median of 21.09X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our \$90 price target reflects 25.94X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for ROST

Valuation Multiples - ROST					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	24.58	26.46	31.14	20.94
	5-Year High	39.79	29.98	34.01	23.47
	5-Year Low	12.15	17.93	19.08	15.27
	5-Year Median	21.09	20.18	23.58	17.68
P/S F12M	Current	2	1.47	1.28	3.89
	5-Year High	2.66	1.53	1.32	4.31
	5-Year Low	1.26	0.95	0.84	3.18
	5-Year Median	2.02	1.16	1.01	3.67
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	24.95	26.47	19.79	14.24
	5-Year High	28.96	28.29	21	15.68
	5-Year Low	8.23	10.96	11.14	9.55
	5-Year Median	12.84	14.35	12.99	13.13

As of 10/28/2020

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 48% (123 out of 254)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Big Lots, Inc. (BIG)	Outperform	2
Target Corporation (TGT)	Outperform	2
Walmart Inc. (WMT)	Outperform	3
Burlington Stores, Inc. (BURL)	Neutral	3
Costco Wholesale Corporation (COST)	Neutral	3
Dollar General Corporation (DG)	Neutral	2
Dollar Tree, Inc. (DLTR)	Neutral	4
The TJX Companies, Inc. (TJX)	Underperform	5

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Retail - Discount Stores				Industry Peers		
	ROST	X Industry	S&P 500	BURL	DLTR	TGT
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Outperform
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	4	2
VGM Score	B	-	-	D	A	B
Market Cap	30.36 B	17.20 B	22.55 B	12.90 B	21.50 B	77.70 B
# of Analysts	10	11	13.5	9	10	13
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	1.72%	0.00%	0.00%	1.75%
Value Score	C	-	-	D	B	B
Cash/Price	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.09
EV/EBITDA	11.55	11.60	12.83	16.58	10.32	11.64
PEG F1	10.45	2.99	2.59	NA	1.60	2.99
P/B	10.59	7.14	3.21	49.20	3.15	6.18
P/CF	15.27	15.27	12.37	18.18	10.21	13.33
P/E F1	104.51	21.62	20.16	NA	17.25	21.62
P/S TTM	2.37	0.95	2.47	2.22	0.87	0.92
Earnings Yield	0.97%	3.63%	4.69%	-1.32%	5.80%	4.63%
Debt/Equity	0.80	0.51	0.70	8.24	0.47	1.13
Cash Flow (\$/share)	5.59	6.38	6.92	10.73	8.87	11.64
Growth Score	B	-	-	C	B	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	8.97%	8.97%	10.10%	20.55%	16.74%	6.65%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-81.94%	9.52%	-1.76%	-134.65%	10.34%	12.36%
Current Cash Flow Growth	4.53%	7.36%	5.54%	7.36%	-55.39%	10.26%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	11.61%	9.69%	8.50%	18.02%	19.78%	3.95%
Current Ratio	1.70	1.46	1.37	1.54	1.22	1.11
Debt/Capital	44.36%	33.92%	41.80%	89.18%	32.12%	53.01%
Net Margin	4.25%	3.01%	10.50%	-1.34%	3.61%	4.16%
Return on Equity	22.08%	20.30%	14.93%	-7.61%	18.52%	30.25%
Sales/Assets	1.25	1.33	0.50	0.96	1.22	1.89
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-23.70%	7.28%	-0.39%	-24.94%	7.28%	12.58%
Momentum Score	B	-	-	F	B	F
Daily Price Change	-6.75%	-2.25%	-3.08%	-2.66%	-2.41%	-1.16%
1-Week Price Change	0.33%	-0.65%	0.01%	-1.21%	-0.09%	-2.84%
4-Week Price Change	-8.62%	-1.12%	-2.07%	-5.37%	-0.83%	-1.40%
12-Week Price Change	-3.83%	7.71%	-1.88%	6.21%	-5.47%	19.97%
52-Week Price Change	-22.70%	-7.49%	-3.31%	0.47%	-19.17%	43.81%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	1,741,583	1,346,245	1,770,490	524,642	1,729,844	2,664,281
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.00%	0.19%	0.36%	-4.52%	-0.21%	0.38%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	-24.44%	3.78%	2.98%	-96.77%	3.94%	44.88%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.75%	0.23%	-34.08%	-0.86%	1.55%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

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

Zacks Recommendation

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

Zacks Rank

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

Zacks Style Scores

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

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

Value Score	C
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	B
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.

Disclosures

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Periods:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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