Service Corporation(SCI)

$53.94 (As of 06/14/21)

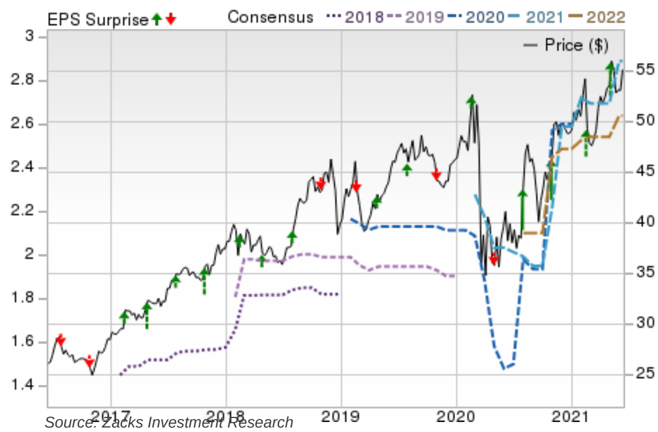
Price Target (6-12 Months): **$57.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 03/03/21) Prior Recommendation: Outperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**2-Buy**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:C
	Value: B | Growth: B | Momentum: F	

Summary

Shares of Service Corporation have outperformed the industry in the past three months. The company has been benefiting from higher funeral services performed and increased burials in its cemeteries, which along with a robust cost structure aided its first-quarter 2021 results. Additionally, the company's focus on making property developments is noteworthy. During the quarter, both earnings and revenues grew year over year and surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Markedly, revenues rose in the Cemetery and Funeral segments. Moreover, management raised its 2021 earnings per share guidance, though it expects earnings and cash flows to be temporarily affected by funeral case volumes in atneed cemetery sales being pulled forward into 2020 and 2021 beginning. Apart from this, escalated corporate general and administrative costs are a concern.

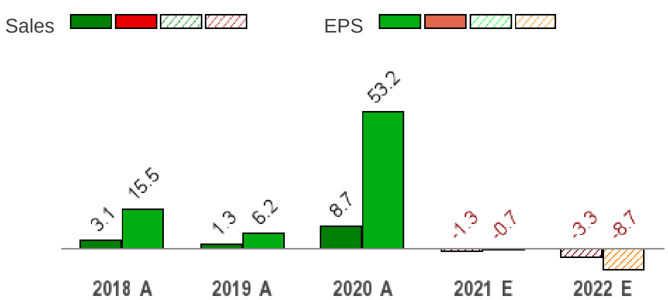
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$56.74 - $36.38**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**707,853**
Market Cap	**$9.1 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**9.9%**
Beta	**0.66**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$0.84 / 1.6%**
Industry	**Funeral Services**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Top 19% (48 out of 251)**
Last EPS Surprise	**34.7%**
Last Sales Surprise	**13.1%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**0.0%**
Expected Report Date	**08/04/2021**
Earnings ESP	**0.0%**
P/E TTM	**14.1**
P/E F1	**18.7**
PEG F1	**1.7**
P/S TTM	**2.4**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	808 E	837 E	804 E	891 E	3,355 E
2021	1,078 A	837 E	744 E	809 E	3,468 E
2020	803 A	820 A	918 A	970 A	3,512 A

EPS Estimates

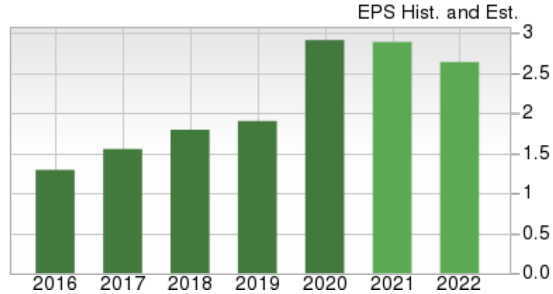
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	$0.63 E	$0.65 E	$0.53 E	$0.81 E	$2.64 E
2021	$1.32 A	$0.66 E	$0.36 E	$0.55 E	$2.89 E
2020	$0.43 A	$0.58 A	$0.79 A	$1.13 A	$2.91 A

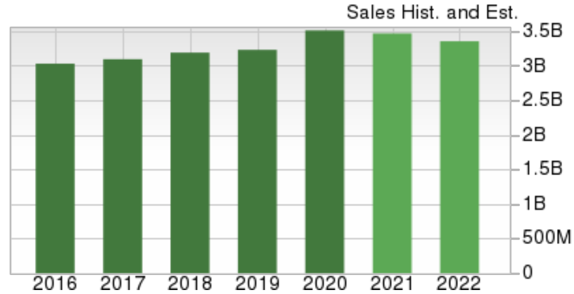
*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 06/14/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 06/15/2021.

Overview

Known for its transcontinental brand namely Dignity Memorial, Service Corporation International has been strengthening its funeral and cemetery businesses for a while now. Notably, the company had a market share of 15-16% in North America's death care industry in 2019. With a wide repertoire of funeral service and cemetery operations, the company remains well-positioned to take advantage of the aging Baby Boomer generation. In this context, Service Corporation's funeral service locations, cemeteries, funeral service/cemetery combination locations, crematoria and other related businesses spread across geographies are noteworthy. Additionally, the company's active acquisition efforts, including 15 funeral homes and seven cemeteries in June 2018, have been accretive.





Further, Service Corporation's cemeteries offer cemetery property interment rights, including developed lots, mausoleum spaces, lawn crypts, niches, and other cremation memorialization and interment options. Addtionally, cemetery merchandise and services, which includes memorial markers and bases, graveside services, flowers and floral placement, other ancillary merchandise, as well as interments among others, are provided at Service Corporation's cemeteries.

As of December 31, 2020, Service Corporation operated 1,470 funeral service locations and 483 cemeteries across 44 states, eight provinces in Canada, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Markedly, cemeteries include 297 funeral service/cemetery combination locations.

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

> The company has been gaining on higher funeral services performed and increased burials in the company’s cemeteries, which along with a solid cost structure aided first-quarter 2021 results.

- **Solid Q1 Results, Pandemic-led Deaths Continue to Aid:** Shares of Service Corporation have gained 9.6% in the past three months, compared with the industry’s increase of 4.1%. The company has been gaining on higher funeral services performed as well as increased burials in the company’s cemeteries amid the pandemic-led increased mortality, which along with a solid cost structure aided its first-quarter 2021 results. During the quarter, both earnings and revenues improved year over year and surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Incidentally, both Funeral and Cemetery segments benefited from higher core revenues. The bottom line was backed by elevated gross profit resulting from increased funeral services and burials performed along with a robust increase in cemetery recognized preneed revenues. Further, the bottom line gained on reduced shares outstanding and a decline in interest expenses.

- **Raised Guidance:** Based on the sturdy performance witnessed during the first quarter, management raised its bottom-line projection for 2021. It now envisions adjusted earnings per share in the range of $2.70-$3.00 compared with $2.50-$2.90 projected earlier. The company’s guidance for the year is wider than usual owing to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 impact. We note that the company’s earnings came in at $2.91 per share in 2020. Additionally, management informed that the company is on track with its long-term earnings growth framework. Accordingly, it will maintain focus on its core strategies that include growing revenues by remaining relevant to client families, leveraging scale and maximizing capital deployment opportunities.

- **Robust Cemetery Revenues:** Revenues in the segment have been increasing for the past few quarters. During the first quarter of 2021, segment revenues rose 53.8% to $458.5 million, thanks to increased core revenues. Core revenues gained from an increase in both atneed and total recognized preneed revenues. Comparable Cemetery revenues improved 53.9% year over year on the back of higher core revenues. This, in turn, was fueled by elevated recognized preneed revenues owing to solid comparable preneed cemetery property sales production. Moreover, growth in atneed revenues, which stemmed from a rise in burials performed, was an upside.

  Comparable preneed cemetery sales production rose 67.1% owing to growth in large sales, sales averages as well as sales velocity. The company continued to gain from an efficient sales force, prudent utilization of customer relationship management system as well as improved conversion rates from direct mail and digital lead campaigns. Further, the company continued to witness elevated conversion and close rates, thanks to customers’ greater awareness of the possible effects of coronavirus. It also saw an increase in location traffic as a result of greater funeral services and burials performed. Solid revenues, together with an improved cost structure, also fueled segment gross profit and margin.

- **Focus on Expansion:** The company remains committed to pursuing strategic buyouts for both its segments and building new funeral homes to generate greater returns. In first-quarter 2021, the company incurred capital expenditures of $42.3 million. The company undertook several cemetery development and construction projects. These investments are touted to be accretive to the company in the near term. Expenditures associated with capital enhancements at current locations and cemetery development are anticipated in a band of $235-$255 million, in 2021.

  In 2018, the company deployed approximately $200 million towards acquisitions. Some notable acquisitions made by the company in the past include Alderwoods Group, Keystone North America, The Neptune Society, and Stewart Enterprises. Also, buyouts in the cemetery segment are aimed at exploiting increased opportunities to cater to Baby Boomers.

- **Financial Analysis:** The company depends on its cash flow from operations as a major source of liquidity. Incidentally, the company’s net cash provided by operating activities amounted to $297.6 million in first-quarter 2021. Further, management expects adjusted net cash from operating activities to be $650-$725 million for 2021. Service Corporation’s strong cash flow helps it undertake efficient capital allocation. The company recently announced an expansion to its share repurchase program, by boosting its authorized buyback level by roughly $414 million. This, together with about $86 million remaining under the current program, takes the company’s total authorization to nearly $500 million, effective May 12, 2021. Apart from this, Service Corporation approved a quarterly cash dividend of 21 cents per share on May 12.

- In the first quarter of 2021, the company spent $140 million toward dividend and share buybacks, including dividends worth roughly $36 million. The company currently has a dividend payout ratio of 22%, a dividend yield of 1.6% and a free cash flow yield of 7.8%. With an annual free cash flow return on investment of 13.8%, the dividend payment is likely to be sustainable. On the debt front, the company’s long-term debt of $3,439.1 million as of Mar 31, 2021, dipped from $3,514.2 million as of Dec 31, 2020. Apart from this, the company repaid its credit facility by $80 million during the first quarter. Impressively, the company’s times interest earned ratio stands at 6.6, higher than the preceding quarter’s ratio of 5.1. The times-interest-earned ratio is very important for some companies as it measures a company's ability to meet its debt obligations based on its current income.

Reasons To Sell:

Tough year-over-year comparisons with a major spike in the number of funerals performed last year is a concern for Service Corporation. Also, corporate general and administrative costs have been rising.

- **Stock Looks Overvalued:** Considering the price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio, Service Corporation looks overvalued when compared with the industry. The stock has a trailing 12-month P/E ratio of 14.12, which is below its high level of 24.28 scaled in a year. Meanwhile, the trailing 12-month P/E ratio for the industry is currently pegged at 13.79.

- **Elevated Costs:** Service Corporation is witnessing elevated corporate general and administrative costs for a while now. During the first quarter of 2021, the metric escalated $4.9 million (or 15.4%) to $36.7 million. Corporate general and administrative costs were up $6.1 million and $11.3 million in the fourth and third quarters of 2020, respectively. Persistence of this trend may hurt margins.

- **Pandemic-Induced High Mortality to Moderate:** On its first-quarter 2021 earnings call, management stated that though the company saw significant year-over-year increases in services performed during January and February, the trends tapered off to an extent in March. This was accountable to tough year-over-year comparisons, even more due to the rollout of vaccines this year. Management continues to anticipate future earnings per share and cash flows to be temporarily affected by funeral case volumes in atneed cemetery sales being pulled forward into 2020 and 2021 beginning.

- **Stiff Competition:** The funeral and cemetery industry is quite competitive in North America. The company competes with various locally-owned, independent operators on grounds of standard, products and pricing. In fact, the company has faced pricing pressure in the past from independent funeral service location and cemetery operators, monument dealers, casket retailers, low-cost funeral providers and more. Also, use of alternative channels, such as e-commerce, to buy funeral related products has increased competition. Failure to keep up with the pressure may hurt the company's financial results and cash flow.

- **Increased Cremations:** Continued rising trend in the number of cremations as another option to the traditional funeral service poses threats to funeral services companies. We note that the average revenue from cremations is usually lower compared to that for traditional burials. In the first quarter of 2021, the company witnessed a rise in core cremation mix.

Last Earnings Report

Service Corporation Q1 Earnings Top Estimates, Revenues Up

Quarter Ending	03/2021
Report Date	May 03, 2021
Sales Surprise	13.05%
EPS Surprise	34.69%
Quarterly EPS	1.32
Annual EPS (TTM)	3.82

Service Corporation posted solid first-quarter 2021 results, with the top and the bottom line increasing year over year and beating the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Moreover, management raised its bottom-line view for 2021. The company posted adjusted earnings of $1.32 per share, which surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 98 cents. Further, the bottom line reflected a sharp rise from earnings of 43 cents reported in the year-ago quarter. Year-over-year growth can be attributed to elevated gross profit resulting from increased funeral services and burials performed along with a robust increase in cemetery recognized preneed revenues. Further, the bottom line gained on reduced shares outstanding and a decline in interest expenses.

Total revenues of $1,078 million advanced nearly 34.2% (or $275 million) year over year, backed by increased funeral and cemetery revenues. Moreover, the figure came ahead of the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $953.6 million. Gross profit amounted to $377.5 million, up $198.5 million year-on-year. Corporate general and administrative costs escalated $4.9 million (or 15.4%) to $36.7 million. Operating income of $342 million increased $190.2 million year over year.

Segment Discussion

Consolidated Funeral revenues rallied 22.7% to $ 619.4 million. Atneed revenues increased 27.7% to $338.1 million, while matured preneed revenues increased 16.3% to $190.2 million. Moreover, core revenues increased 23.3% to $528.3 million. The segment also gained from growth in non-funeral home revenue and recognized preneed revenue. Comparable funeral revenues advanced 21.7% year over year, mainly owing to growth in core funeral revenues, which in turn, were backed by higher core funeral services performed and core average revenue per service. The core cremation rate moved up 20 basis points to 52%. Comparable preneed funeral sales production increased 16.4% driven by higher digital and direct mail leads, rise in location traffic due to higher services performed as well as the gradual return of in-person seminars. Further, the company witnessed 9.2% growth in core funeral locations and a 43.4% rise in preneed production through non-funeral home channel.

Consolidated Cemetery revenues rose 53.8% to $458.5 million, thanks to increased core revenues. Core revenues gained from an increase in both atneed and total recognized preneed revenues. Comparable Cemetery revenues improved 53.9% year over year on the back of higher core revenues. This, in turn, was fueled by elevated recognized preneed revenues owing to solid comparable preneed cemetery property sales production. Moreover, growth in atneed revenues, which stemmed from a rise in burials performed, was an upside. Comparable preneed cemetery sales production rose 67.1% owing to growth in large sales, sales averages as well as sales velocity. The company continued to gain from an efficient sales force, prudent utilization of customer relationship management system as well as improved conversion rates from direct mail and digital lead campaigns. Further, the company continued to witness elevated conversion and close rates, thanks to customers' greater awareness of the possible effects of coronavirus. It also saw an increase in location traffic as a result of greater funeral services and burials performed.

Other Financial Details & Guidance

Service Corporation, ended the quarter with cash and cash equivalents of $243.7 million, long-term debt of $3,439.1 million and total equity of $1,850.7 million. Net cash provided by operating activities amounted to $297.6 million in the first three months of 2021. During the same timeframe, the company incurred capital expenditures of $42.3 million. The company undertook several cemetery development and construction projects. It expects adjusted net cash from operating activities to be $650-$725 million for 2021. Expenditures associated with capital enhancements at current locations and cemetery development are anticipated in a band of $235-$255 million.

Based on the sturdy performance witnessed during the first quarter, management raised its bottom line projection for 2021. It now envisions adjusted earnings per share in the range of $2.70-$3.00 compared with $2.50-$2.90 projected earlier. The company's guidance for the year is wider than usual owing to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 impact. We note that the company's earnings came in at $2.91 per share in 2020.

Additionally, management informed that the company is on track with its long-term earnings growth framework. Accordingly it will maintain focus on its core strategies that include growing revenues by remaining relevant to client families, leveraging scale and maximizing capital deployment opportunities.

Recent News

Service Corporation's Shareholder-Friendly Moves Bode Well - May 12, 2021

Service Corporation announced an expansion to its share repurchase program, by boosting its authorized buyback level by roughly $414 million. This, together with about $86 million remaining under the current program, takes the company's total authorization to nearly $500 million, effective May 12, 2021.

Apart from this, Service Corporation is also focused on rewarding shareholders through regular dividend payments. The company approved a quarterly cash dividend of 21 cents per share, which is payable on Jun 30, 2021, to shareholders of record as of Jun 15.

Valuation

Service Corporation's shares are up 10.7% in the year-to-date period and 38.5% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are up 14.8% and the Zacks Consumer Staples sector gained 8.4% in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry is up 51.5% and sector gained 25.3%.

The S&P 500 index is up 14.5% in the year-to-date period and 40.3% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 19.45X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 16.61X for the Zacks sub-industry, 20.84 for the Zacks sector and 21.85X the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 25.12X and as low as 16.39X, with a 5-year median of 21.65X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our $57 price target reflects 20.42X forward 12-month earnings.

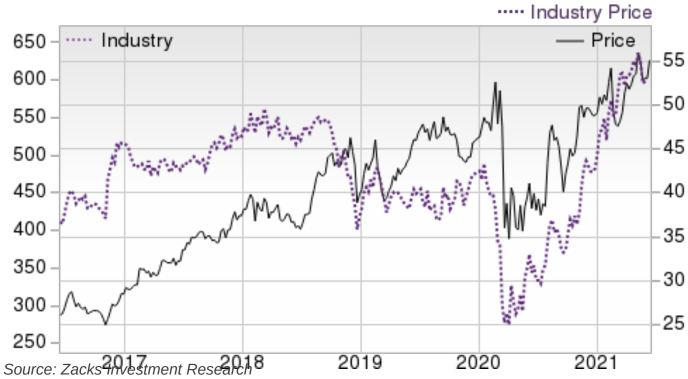
The table below shows summary valuation data for SCI

Valuation Multiples -SCI

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	19.45	16.61	20.84	21.85
	5-Year High	25.12	23.78	22.4	23.83
	5-Year Low	16.39	14.07	16.52	15.31
	5-Year Median	21.65	17.78	19.51	18.05
P/S F12M	Current	2.66	2.09	10.46	4.73
	5-Year High	2.86	2.19	11.95	4.74
	5-Year Low	1.54	1.38	8.58	3.21
	5-Year Median	2.23	1.92	10.32	3.72
EV/EBITDA F12M	Current	11.89	9.56	35.51	17.23
	5-Year High	13.56	12.19	37.87	18.83
	5-Year Low	9.54	7.98	25.78	13.04
	5-Year Median	11.65	9.49	33.96	15.9

As of 06/14/2021 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Top 19% (48 out of 251)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
SP Plus Corporation **(SP)**	Outperform	1
BrightView Holdings, Inc. **(BV)**	Neutral	2
Carriage Services, Inc. **(CSV)**	Neutral	2
1800 FLOWERS.COM, Inc. **(FLWS)**	Neutral	2
Hillenbrand Inc **(HI)**	Neutral	3
H&R Block, Inc. **(HRB)**	Neutral	2
Matthews International Corporation **(MATW)**	Neutral	3
RentACenter, Inc. **(RCII)**	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Funeral Services

	SCI	X Industry	S&P 500	CSV	HI	MATW
				Industry Peers		
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	2	3	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	B	A	A
Market Cap	9.07 B	2.28 B	30.26 B	681.15 M	3.35 B	1.20 B
# of Analysts	3	2.5	12	2	2	1
Dividend Yield	1.56%	1.75%	1.29%	1.06%	1.93%	2.26%
Value Score	B	-	-	A	A	A
Cash/Price	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.10	0.04
EV/EBITDA	11.27	17.90	17.28	14.02	21.79	40.66
PEG F1	1.66	1.04	2.12	1.02	1.04	NA
P/B	4.94	2.71	4.16	2.70	2.71	1.94
P/CF	11.86	10.44	17.62	12.10	9.01	5.59
P/E F1	18.66	13.92	21.40	15.31	12.53	12.11
P/S TTM	2.40	1.59	3.49	1.95	1.23	0.77
Earnings Yield	5.36%	7.25%	4.58%	6.52%	7.98%	8.25%
Debt/Equity	1.86	1.48	0.66	1.71	0.98	1.26
Cash Flow ($/share)	4.55	4.74	6.83	3.12	4.94	6.81
Growth Score	B	-	-	A	A	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	19.21%	4.75%	9.44%	0.03%	9.47%	-2.23%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-0.80%	24.58%	21.49%	32.53%	11.29%	4.32%
Current Cash Flow Growth	29.69%	32.12%	0.86%	34.56%	67.54%	9.08%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	10.03%	7.74%	7.28%	4.11%	14.79%	5.46%
Current Ratio	0.46	1.06	1.39	0.68	1.43	1.85
Debt/Capital	65.01%	59.35%	41.51%	63.03%	49.51%	55.67%
Net Margin	17.50%	7.92%	11.95%	9.53%	6.31%	0.83%
Return on Equity	37.81%	20.52%	16.36%	17.73%	23.11%	17.92%
Sales/Assets	0.27	0.49	0.51	0.31	0.68	0.75
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-1.23%	4.26%	9.48%	4.65%	10.43%	3.87%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	F	B	B
Daily Price Change	-1.95%	-2.06%	0.18%	-1.31%	-2.18%	-2.21%
1-Week Price Change	3.87%	0.16%	0.68%	0.53%	-0.57%	-0.21%
4-Week Price Change	0.41%	-2.20%	2.21%	-0.50%	-3.89%	-6.88%
12-Week Price Change	10.31%	-0.47%	7.98%	3.26%	-10.38%	-4.21%
52-Week Price Change	40.65%	81.33%	38.76%	97.39%	66.47%	96.18%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	707,853	213,306	1,769,004	70,724	326,942	99,671
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-1.40%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.02%	-1.40%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	7.18%	5.75%	3.44%	7.17%	2.31%	4.32%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.99%	0.00%	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	B
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	F
VGM Score	C

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

Additional Disclosure

This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forwardlooking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a mediumterm 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 mostrecent 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.