

S&P Global, Inc. (SPGI)

\$368.39 (As of 09/01/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$390.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 03/17/20)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: D

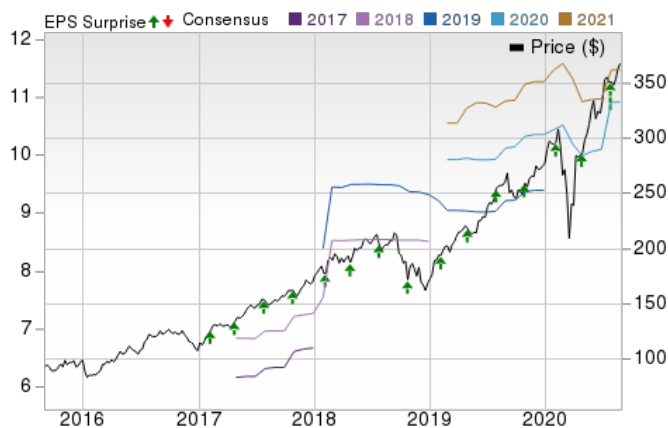
Growth: A

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of S&P Global have outperformed its industry in the past year. The outperformance partly reflects better-than-expected earnings and revenue performance in the last four quarters. The company remains well poised to gain from growing demand for business information services. Buyouts have helped it innovate, increase differentiated content and develop new products. Effective management execution has helped it generate solid cash flow which is utilized for growth initiatives. Dividend payments and share buybacks boost investors' confidence and positively impact earnings per share. On the flip side, S&P Global remains vulnerable to proceedings, investigations and inquiries with respect to the ratings provided, leading to legal charges, damages or fines. High debt may limit the company's future expansion and worsen its risk profile.

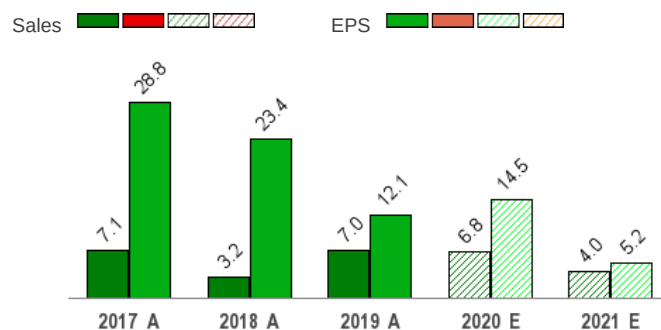
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$369.77 - \$186.06
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	656,984
Market Cap	\$88.8 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	34.9%
Beta	1.03
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$2.68 / 0.7%
Industry	Business - Information Services
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 22% (56 out of 251)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	23.2%
Last Sales Surprise	7.6%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.0%
Expected Report Date	11/03/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%
P/E TTM	33.1
P/E F1	33.8
PEG F1	3.4
P/S TTM	12.4

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	1,793 E	1,872 E	1,822 E	1,851 E	7,443 E
2020	1,786 A	1,943 A	1,708 E	1,709 E	7,155 E
2019	1,571 A	1,704 A	1,689 A	1,735 A	6,699 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$2.75 E	\$2.87 E	\$2.82 E	\$2.87 E	\$11.48 E
2020	\$2.73 A	\$3.40 A	\$2.47 E	\$2.43 E	\$10.91 E
2019	\$2.11 A	\$2.43 A	\$2.46 A	\$2.53 A	\$9.53 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 09/01/2020. The reports text is as of 09/02/2020.

Overview

Incorporated in December 1925, S&P Global Inc. is a leading provider of transparent and independent ratings, benchmarks, analytics and data to the capital and commodity markets worldwide.

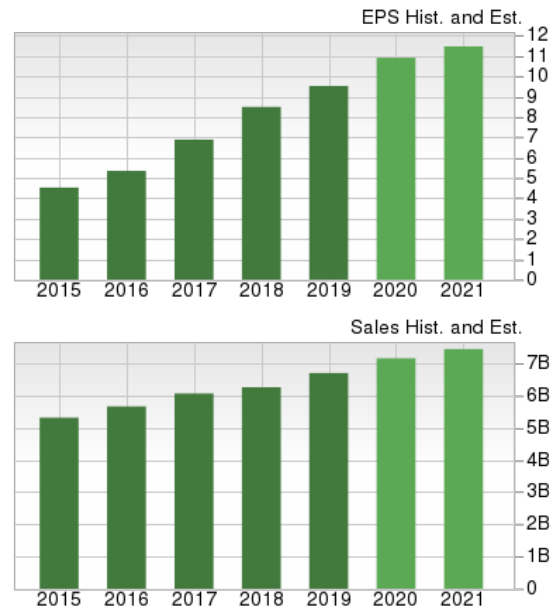
The company operates through four reportable segments: S&P Global Ratings ("Ratings"), S&P Global Market Intelligence ("Market Intelligence"), S&P Global Platts ("Platts") and S&P Dow Jones Indices ("Indices").

Ratings (46% of total revenues in 2019): Ratings operates as an independent provider of credit ratings, research, and analytics, offering investors and other market participants information, ratings and benchmarks. With offices in more than 25 countries globally, Ratings holds an important position in the world's financial infrastructure. Ratings revenues is differentiated between transaction and non-transaction revenues.

Market Intelligence (29%): It is specialized in helping investment professionals, government agencies, corporations and universities — track performance, generate alpha, identify investment ideas, understand competitive and industry dynamics, perform evaluations and assess credit risk. It mainly serves investment managers, investment banks, private equity firms, insurance companies, commercial banks, corporations, professional services firms, government agencies and regulators. Desktop, Data Management Solutions and Risk Services are the business lines included in the segment.

Platts (13%): Platts operates as an independent provider of information and benchmark prices for the commodity and energy markets. It specializes in offering essential price data, analytics and industry insight. It mainly serves producers, traders and intermediaries within the energy, petrochemicals, metals and agriculture markets. Platts' revenues is generated from subscription revenues, non-subscription revenues and sales usage-based royalties.

Indices (13%): Indices is a global index provider that maintains a wide variety of valuation and index benchmarks for investment advisors, wealth managers and institutional investors. Indices mainly derives revenue from asset-linked fees based on the S&P and Dow Jones indices and also from subscription and transaction revenues.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

▲ S&P Global is well poised to gain from growing **demand for business information services**. Constantly increasing volume of data from private and government organizations has augmented the demand for improved enterprise-wide financial performance visibility. Augmented demand for news, information, and analytics solutions will drive the growth of the market. Further, the industry is benefiting from rising demand for risk mitigation. Changes in market dynamics are more or less a constant phenomenon and keep companies exposed to credit fund and operational risks. Accurate market and financial information is required for risk mitigation and that spurs demand for business information services.

Acquisitions enable S&P Global innovate, increase differentiated content and develop new products.

▲ **Acquisition** is a key growth strategy for S&P Global and help it continuously innovate, increase differentiated content and develop new products. In 2019, the company has made acquisitions of ESG Ratings Business (from RobecoSAM), Canadian Enerdata, Live Rice Index and Orion technology center. ESG Ratings Business boosts S&P Global's position as a premier resource for essential ESG Data, ratings, benchmarks and insights. Canadian Enerdata enhances S&P Global's Platts division's energy analytical capabilities and strengthens its foothold in North American natural gas market. Live Rice Index is a great addition to S&P Global's Platts global agriculture offering. Orion technology center provides access to the latest technologies and global communications infrastructure to the company's employees. In 2018, the company has made acquisitions of RateWatch, Kensho and Panjiva. RateWatch is a great addition to S&P Global's bank data offering. The Kensho acquisition is expected to help S&P Global to improve its core operations by applying actionable insights through the use of AI solutions and sophisticated algorithms, thereby augmenting its efficacy. Panjiva buyout is likely to enhance the company's Global Market Intelligence's data and analytical offerings for diverse customers across the globe, generating higher revenues. Going ahead, we expect S&P Global to continue adding advanced technology and data sets through acquisitions, which in turn, should boost the company's top- and bottom-line growth.

▲ We are impressed with S&P Global's endeavours to reward its shareholders through **share repurchases and dividend payments**. In 2019, S&P Global returned \$1.8 billion to shareholders with \$1.2 billion in share repurchases and \$560 million in dividends. In 2018, the company returned \$2.2 billion to shareholders, which includes \$1.7 billion through share repurchases and \$503 million in dividend payments. In 2017, the company returned \$1.4 billion to shareholders, which includes \$1.0 billion through share repurchases and \$421 million in dividend payments. In 2016, the company returned \$1.5 billion to shareholders which includes \$1.1 billion through share repurchases and \$380 million in dividend payments. Such shareholder friendly moves indicate the company's commitment to create value for shareholders and underline its confidence in its business. These initiatives not only instill investors' confidence but also positively impact earnings per share.

▲ S&P Global's shares have gained 42.4% over the past year, outperforming the industry's 0.7% growth of the industry. The **outperformance** partly reflects better-than-expected earnings and revenue performance in the last four quarters. While the company's bottom line continued to gain from revenue growth and benefits of productivity initiatives, the top line performed well on the back of strength across all the segments namely S&P Global Ratings, S&P Global Market Intelligence, S&P Global Platts and S&P Dow Jones Indices.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ S&P Global remains vulnerable to proceedings, investigations and inquiries with respect to the ratings provided, leading to **legal charges**, damages or fines. The company had earlier faced a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against its subsidiary, Standard & Poor's Financial Services or S&P Ratings. The company was accused of deliberately providing high ratings over the 2004–2007 time frame to underperforming U.S. collateralized debt obligations and residential mortgage-backed securities, thus triggering off the housing market collapse. Such lawsuits have hampered the credibility of the company and adversely impacted its financial results.
- ▼ S&P Global has a **debt-laden balance sheet**. Total debt at the end of second-quarter 2020 was \$4.5 billion, in line with \$4.5 billion at the end of the prior quarter. The company's total debt to total capital ratio of 0.94 is higher than the industry's 0.60. An increase in debt to capitalization ratio indicates higher risk of insolvency in challenging times. Further, the company's cash and cash equivalent of \$2.7 billion at the end of the second quarter was well below this debt level, underscoring that the company doesn't have enough cash to meet this debt burden. The company has no short-term debt to clear off.
- ▼ The market for credit ratings, financial research, investment advisory services, market data, index-based products and commodities price assessments is **highly competitive**. S&P Global's four reportable segments — Ratings, Market Intelligence, Platts and Indices — competes globally on the basis of several attributes such as quality of their offerings, client service, reputation, price, geographic base, range of products and technological innovation. Industry bellwethers, Moody's Corp. and Fitch Ratings through their investor friendly moves may hurt S&P Global's market share, and in turn weigh upon the top line and strain margins.

S&P Global has a debt-laden balance sheet and operates in a highly competitive market.

Last Earnings Report

S&P Global Surpasses Q2 Earnings & Revenue Estimates

S&P Global reported better-than-expected second-quarter 2020 results.

Adjusted earnings per share of \$3.40 beat the consensus mark by 23.2% and improved 40% year over year on the back of revenue growth in S&P Global Ratings and reduced expenses from COVID-19-related management actions. Revenues of \$1.94 billion beat the consensus estimate by 7.6% and improved 14% year over year.

Quarter Ending **06/2020**

Report Date	Jul 28, 2020
Sales Surprise	7.56%
EPS Surprise	23.19%
Quarterly EPS	3.40
Annual EPS (TTM)	11.12

Segmental Revenues

Ratings revenues of \$1 billion increased 26% year over year owing to solid global investment-grade issuance, including record quarterly U.S. investment-grade issuance. Transaction revenues increased 48% to \$624 million owing to an increase in global bond issuance, partially offset by decreased bank loan rating activity. Non-transaction revenues grew 1% to \$382 million. Market Intelligence revenues were up 6% year over year to \$516 million, primarily driven by growth in Data Management Solutions, Credit Risk Solutions, and Desktop and the inclusion of 451 Research.

Platts revenues rose 2% to \$217 million, backed by growth in both core subscription business and Global Trading Services. S&P Dow Jones Indices revenues increased 2% to \$240 million, driven by 20% growth in exchange-traded derivative fees and 6% increase in data and custom subscriptions.

Operating Results

Adjusted operating profit margin improved 740 basis points (bps) to 58.7%, owing to revenue growth in S&P Global Ratings and reduced expenses from coronavirus-related management actions. Segment wise, Ratings adjusted operating profit increased 47% to \$695 million. Adjusted operating profit margin improved 1,020 bps to 69.1%. Market Intelligence adjusted operating profit improved 13% to \$177 million. Adjusted operating profit margin improved 220 bps to 34.4%. Platts' adjusted operating profit increased 9% to \$127 million and adjusted operating profit margin increased 400 bps to 58.3%. S&P Dow Jones adjusted operating profit increased 5% to \$172 million. Adjusted operating profit margin improved 210 bps to 71.9%.

Balance Sheet and Cash Flow

S&P Global exited second-quarter 2020 with cash, cash equivalents, and restricted cash of \$2.68 billion compared with \$1.95 billion at the end of the prior quarter. The company generated \$937 million of cash from operating activities in the reported quarter. Free cash flow was \$889 million. During the reported quarter, the company did not repurchase any new shares. Its existing ASR program was in place and it was completed on Jul 27. The company paid \$162 million in dividends.

2020 Guidance

S&P Global raised its full-year adjusted EPS guidance in the range of \$10.75-\$10.95 from the prior guidance of \$9.95-\$10.15.

Recent News

On **Jul 07, 2020**, S&P Global Market Intelligence announced that it has launched S&P Global RiskGauge Reports that provide credit-risk view of businesses and investments in detail.

On **Jun 30, 2020**, S&P Global announced that it has entered into a strategic agreement with MySky, per which S&P Global will give MySky clients access to Platts' comprehensive database of global jet fuel price assessments.

On **Jun 30, 2020**, S&P Global's Platts has announced that it has launched Asia price assessments for recycled polyethylene terephthalate (R-PET).

On **Jun 23, 2020**, S&P Global's board of directors declared a quarterly cash dividend of 67 cents per share, payable on Sep 10, 2020, to shareholders of record on Aug 26, 2020. The annualized dividend rate is \$2.68 per share.

Valuation

S&P Global shares are up 34.9% in the year-to-date period and 42.4% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry are down 0.1% but those in the Zacks Business Services are up 4.2% respectively, in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Business Services sector are up 0.7% and 6.2% respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 3.8% in the year-to-date period and 15.3% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 32.63X forward 12-month price-to-earnings, which compares to 30.27X for the Zacks sub-industry, 31.36X for the Zacks sector and 23.2X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 33.67X and as low as 16.36X, with a 5-year median of 22.18X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$390.00 price target reflects 34.54X forward 12-month earnings price-to-earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for SPGI

Valuation Multiples - SPGI					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F 12M	Current	32.63	30.27	31.36	23.2
	5-Year High	33.67	30.27	31.36	23.2
	5-Year Low	16.36	19.56	18.68	15.25
	5-Year Median	22.18	22.62	20.95	17.6
P/S F 12M	Current	12.08	7.41	4.35	3.95
	5-Year High	12.19	7.41	4.35	3.95
	5-Year Low	3.74	3.43	3.06	2.53
	5-Year Median	6.85	4.81	3.6	3.07
P/B TTM	Current	NA	10.59	4.92	4.53
	5-Year High	NA	11.41	6.71	4.76
	5-Year Low	NA	4.29	3.28	2.83
	5-Year Median	71.67	6.27	5.22	3.76

As of 09/01/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 22% (56 out of 251)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
FactSet Research Systems Inc. (FDS)	Outperform	2
Nielsen Holdings Plc (NLSN)	Outperform	2
TransUnion (TRU)	Outperform	2
Black Knight Financial Services, Inc. (BKI)	Neutral	3
Experian PLC (EXPGY)	Neutral	3
INTERTEK GP PLC (IKTSY)	Neutral	2
IHS Markit Ltd. (INFO)	Neutral	3
Verisk Analytics, Inc. (VRSK)	Neutral	3

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Business - Information Services				Industry Peers		
	SPGI	X Industry	S&P 500	EXPGY	INFO	NLSN
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Outperform
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	2
VGM Score	C	-	-	B	D	B
Market Cap	88.78 B	10.84 B	23.95 B	33.19 B	34.25 B	5.31 B
# of Analysts	8	6	14	3	9	5
Dividend Yield	0.73%	0.00%	1.61%	1.67%	0.84%	1.61%
Value Score	D	-	-	D	D	A
Cash/Price	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.08
EV/EBITDA	27.03	21.91	13.32	21.12	24.86	8.70
PEG F1	3.38	3.53	3.05	3.13	2.44	NA
P/B	331.28	7.33	3.21	14.55	4.22	2.41
P/CF	35.14	23.09	12.92	22.64	22.80	2.24
P/E F1	33.77	33.76	21.84	37.54	29.30	9.66
P/S TTM	12.41	8.47	2.52	NA	7.89	0.83
Earnings Yield	2.96%	2.86%	4.39%	2.65%	3.41%	10.35%
Debt/Equity	14.74	0.72	0.70	1.77	0.63	3.68
Cash Flow (\$/share)	10.48	3.94	6.93	1.61	3.56	6.64
Growth Score	A	-	-	A	C	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	21.75%	15.78%	10.41%	NA	14.04%	-11.50%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	14.51%	3.29%	-4.75%	-4.58%	5.32%	-14.44%
Current Cash Flow Growth	8.40%	7.63%	5.22%	10.81%	5.92%	-12.59%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	16.19%	12.63%	8.49%	0.25%	24.83%	9.33%
Current Ratio	1.47	1.36	1.35	0.63	0.73	1.18
Debt/Capital	95.95%	41.86%	42.92%	63.90%	38.84%	78.65%
Net Margin	36.19%	11.70%	10.25%	NA	18.43%	-9.89%
Return on Equity	1,072.73%	20.88%	14.66%	NA	10.73%	23.38%
Sales/Assets	0.66	0.50	0.50	NA	0.27	0.45
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	6.81%	0.00%	-1.40%	2.11%	-2.78%	-4.59%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	B	B	F
Daily Price Change	0.54%	0.19%	0.29%	-1.59%	1.54%	-2.62%
1-Week Price Change	1.33%	1.33%	2.59%	3.28%	-1.21%	4.63%
4-Week Price Change	6.54%	0.55%	3.53%	3.02%	-1.01%	1.64%
12-Week Price Change	12.45%	7.04%	2.09%	3.78%	11.00%	-10.68%
52-Week Price Change	42.42%	15.85%	4.31%	16.00%	23.48%	-27.45%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	656,984	101,627	1,816,754	101,627	1,607,423	3,274,698
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%	0.00%	0.20%	0.86%	0.00%	7.73%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	8.46%	4.39%	3.86%	-8.39%	0.45%	7.73%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	NA	-1.04%	1.74%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Style Scores

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

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

Value Score	D
Growth Score	A
Momentum Score	D
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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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.